

8. Establishing a daily Practice

Meditation One: Shakyamuni Buddha Practice with single-pointed concentration and refuge prayer

by: Kendall Magnussen

CD 1: Track 1:

(take 30 minutes for this meditation)

Introduction

For this first meditation, just to become a little bit familiar with the first part of this practice, *A Daily Meditation on Shakyamuni Buddha*, we're going to start with first doing some concentration practice using Shakyamuni Buddha as the object.

With concentration practice there are two qualities of mind that we want to be developing. One is what is called 'clarity'. So, this is trying to have a very clear visualization of the object.

The other is called "intensity", which is holding the object with energy. For example, when we are watching a really good movie, our mind is really engaged. That's the kind of energy, called "ngar", it's like an energy of the mind that you want to have when you are holding your object of concentration. If it lapses into, you're just sort of holding it there, but your mind isn't energized, your mind is kind of dull, then you want to make some adjustments.

With doing concentration practice especially with an object like Shakyamuni Buddha, one of the ways to keep the mind energized is by relating on a personal level to the object. So, I'm going to read the visualization as a meditation that we can do of Shakyamuni Buddha. This will help give us a little bit of an idea of how to connect with Shakyamuni Buddha. You want to think of who Shakyamuni Buddha is and how he relates to you. If it doesn't relate to you, you probably should pick a different object, because it will be really hard for your mind to stay engaged, to develop the level of concentration that we ultimately need to.

So, we'll do that, then after we do some concentration practice, the mantra recitation that we're going to do initially is a little bit different. It's a refuge prayer. It's pretty easy. If you are not familiar with it, you can just listen and then chant.

So, we'll just do that a few times and then we will do Shakyamuni Buddha's mantra, but I want to introduce the chant a little bit, because we will talk about it later.

Body of the Meditation

Again, begin by making sure that the spine is straight. Taking a few deep breaths in and out. Spending a moment and giving ourselves complete permission to let our minds be present in this meditation, not worrying about what has come before or being concerned about what is coming in the future. Allowing ourselves to benefit from this time, right now.

Briefly, calling to mind our motivation, our wish to be of benefit, and to become completely awakened as quickly as possible in order to do that. Then, recognizing that as long as our minds are untrained, unconcentrated, it will be impossible to make real progress in our practice. So, then, in order to fulfill our deepest wishes, we'll do this practice of concentration for the benefit of all living beings.

Visualization

From *A Daily Meditation Practice*:

“Visualize at the level of your forehead about two meters in front of you is a large golden throne. It is beautifully adorned with jewels and supported at each corner by a pair of snow lions. On the throne is a fully developed lotus and on that are sun and full moon disks.

Upon the lotus, sun, and moon is seated Shakyamuni Buddha, who has achieved perfect cessation of all suffering and obscurations and has attained all perfect realizations. He is the manifestation of the omniscient mind of all the buddhas, the ultimate guru. He is inseparable from your root guru, who shows the unmistakable path and is bound with infinite compassion to you and to all sentient beings.

His body, in the nature of golden light, is very magnificent, and he wears the three robes of a monk. His face is beautiful and has a loving smile; his compassionate eyes look toward you but simultaneously encompass all sentient beings. His mind free of all judgmental critical thoughts, he accepts you fully. His eyes are long, narrow, and fine; his gaze is very peaceful. His eyes are half-closed and half-opened

His lips are red. His hair is blue-black; each hair individually curls to the right. On the crown of his head is a crown pinnacle. The palm of his right hand rests on his right knee, the middle finger touching the moon cushion. His left hand rests in his lap in the mudra of meditation. In his left hand he is holding a bowl filled with nectar.

His body is in the vajra posture, and he sits peacefully in the center of interlaced beams of light.

Each feature of his holy body represents an aspect of his omniscient mind and so forth, his inner attainments; each feature also demonstrates the causes, that is, the merit that was collected in the past. No matter how much one looks at Shakyamuni Buddha, one never feels satiated.

The supreme refuge, Shakyamuni Buddha, encompasses the guru, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. From his holy body beams are emitted in all ten

directions; numberless manifestations of Shakyamuni Buddha are carried on each beam to ripen infinite sentient beings.

Looking at me with compassionate eyes, Shakyamuni Buddha says, “Son or daughter of the lineage, if you want to be liberated from the suffering of samsara, I will guide you.” He happily promises this and frees me from the breathless state.”

So, holding this image in our mind as clearly as possible with great energy of mind, allowing our mind to become completely absorbed into the image before us, the Enlightened One, our Teacher. (Pause)

Not being concerned with whether or not we can *see* the Buddha, but rather *feeling* the Buddha’s presence. (Pause)

Holding that feeling strongly in the mind. Acknowledging that there *is* an enlightened One who only wants to teach and guide us, if only we can pay attention. (Pause)

And, so with all our hearts, paying full attention to the Buddha. (Pause)

If the mind fades, concentrate on the brilliance of the golden light emanating from the Buddha’s body. Concentrate on our wish to always be in the presence of teachers and to be able to hear them whenever we have the slightest doubt. (Pause) Realizing that Shakyamuni Buddha is not an image, he is an *experience*. (Pause)

So, hold the meditation for one more minute, trying to give it your undivided attention for the benefit of all. (Pause)

Then, while holding the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha clearly in the mind, doing the meditation on refuge, just listening, bringing the words to your heart as much as possible.

Refuge Meditation (from *A Daily Meditation Practice*)

Around me are seated infinite father and mother sentient beings. They are completely intoxicated with the unimaginable infinite sufferings of each of the six realms. They are wide-eyed, desperately looking for refuge, pitifully calling, screaming.

Think: Continuously circling in samsara’s six realms, I have been tormented by suffering during beginningless rebirths until now. I have still not found the opportunity to be liberated from this.

Fortunately, this time I have received a perfect human body. Because of my good fortune I have met the most sublime teaching, the Buddhadharma, and the Founder, Shakyamuni Buddha. I have no certainty that I will not die today. My death could happen even today. If I should die today, I would have no freedom to choose the realm in which I would reincarnate. I could fall down the precipice into one of the realms of the evil migratory beings. I should think carefully about whether I would be able to bear those sufferings for even one second.

Although it is extremely unlikely, if I were to achieve the body of a deva or a human, I would still be ceaselessly tormented by many hundreds of sufferings, such as rebirth, old age, sickness and death, dissatisfaction, anxiety, lack of fulfillment, relationship problems, and so forth. And after that, I would again fall down into the lower realms. There is nothing to trust about being in the upper realms.

Thus, during this one time that I have obtained a perfect human body, with freedoms and richnesses, I am being guided by the sublime virtuous friend who reveals the path, and I have the wisdom to discriminate between the shortcomings of samsara and the benefits of liberation. Therefore, I should quickly achieve liberation from this terrifying samsara.

Yet, to liberate only myself from samsara is not at all sufficient; this is not the meaning of my life. Numberless sentient beings equaling the limitless sky are wandering in the suffering states of samsara. They have all been my fathers and mothers; therefore, I must liberate them and lead them to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment.

Who is the refuge and guide who liberates from the great oceans of beginningless samsara? There is no other except the Three Sublime Ones. Therefore, together, I and each and every migratory being equaling the sky go for refuge to the Guru Triple Gem: the Founder, the fully enlightened one; the Dharma, the scriptural understanding and realizations; and the Sangha, the transcendental assembly.

And as we recite the refuge chant, feeling from the depths of our hearts our wish to be guided, blessed, and protected. And, especially contact that longing in our hearts and our wish to make our lives as meaningful as possible. So, as we recite the refuge prayer, first visualizing streams of white nectar and light flowing down from Shakyamuni Buddha purifying ourselves and those around us of all defilements, all mental veils, all sufferings.

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|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| NAMO GURUBHYA | (To the guru, I go for refuge.) |
| NAMO BUDDHAYA | (To the Buddha, I go for refuge.) |
| NAMO DHARMAYA | (To the Dharma, I go for refuge.) |
| NAMO SANGHAYA | (To the Sangha, I go for refuge.) |

Then, visualizing a final purifying stream of white nectar and light pouring forth from holy guru Shakyamuni Buddha's body and mind cleansing myself and all beings of all sufferings and the causes of sufferings.

As we recite the refuge chant again, then visualizing that golden beams of nectar and light come forth from Shakyamuni Buddha's body and mind filling our own body and mind with all happiness and the causes of happiness, especially all the realizations on the path to enlightenment, and, in particular, the realizations of bodhichitta and the wisdom realizing emptiness.

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|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| NAMO GURUBHYA | (To the guru, I go for refuge.) |
| NAMO BUDDHAYA | (To the Buddha, I go for refuge.) |

NAMO DHARMAYA
NAMO SANGHAYA

(To the Dharma, I go for refuge.)
(To the Sangha, I go for refuge.)

Then, in response to our sincere request for refuge, for protection, for guidance, for blessings, Shakyamuni Buddha then comes to the crown of our heads, melts into a stream of golden light and descends to our hearts becoming inseparably mixed with our minds.
(Pause)

Dedication

Feeling the presence of awakening very strongly within our minds and dedicating the power of this virtuous energy to the swift enlightenment of all living beings. May I myself quickly become an awakened one, becoming exactly what is needed to benefit for all.

And whatever form Shakyamuni Buddha takes in my life to teach me, may I always receive those teachings unobstructedly and be able to put them into practice exactly in the manner in which they were intended.

Concluding Remarks

The way we'll go through this practice is we'll be doing little bits and pieces more intensively and then, the last session, we'll do it as a complete practice, hopefully in a period of time that is reasonable for us to be doing. I think sometimes it is hard to get the taste of it when you try to do the whole thing each time. Also, depending on one's mood, sometimes it's nicer to focus more on some parts than others. One of the things I'll mention tomorrow is sometimes when our practice feels stuck, there are a few things that we can do to help get unstuck. Purification practices are one, trying to accumulate merit is another, and the last is to make heartfelt requests.

The refuge chant is a nice way to make heartfelt requests to our teachers, whether we visualize them as Shakyamuni Buddha or anything else. It's got the right tones for it. It's nice to sometimes go into the wilderness when you need some guidance and just chant the refuge chant.

Thank you very much.

CD 1: Track 2

Refuge Chant

NAMO GURUBHYA
NAMO BUDDHAYA
NAMO DHARMAYA
NAMO SANGHAYA

(To the guru, I go for refuge.)
(To the Buddha, I go for refuge.)
(To the Dharma, I go for refuge.)
(To the Sangha, I go for refuge.)

8. Establishing a Daily Practice

Meditation Two: Shakyamuni Buddha with Extensive Seven-Limbed Prayer and Mantra recitation

by: Kendall Magnussen

CD 1: Track 3:

(take 30 minutes for this meditation)

Introduction

This is a meditation done on the basis of *A Daily Meditation Practice* for Shakyamuni Buddha put together by Lama Zopa Rinpoche with a special emphasis on the seven-limbed practice and doing the meditations of refuge and bodhichitta.

Preparation

To begin, checking to make sure that the spine is straight; that the arms are rounded and relaxed; the hands in the lap with the right on top of the left with the thumbs in a gentle triangle; the shoulders relaxed; the head just slightly tilted forward; the mouth and jaw relaxed and the gaze just lightly beyond the nose towards the floor.

Taking a few long deep breaths, allowing ourselves to relax into the meditation posture, and be completely present. Then, to develop a neutral state of mind to set the motivation, we'll count the inhalations and exhalations from one to ten, silently to ourselves, keeping attention on the breath. (Pause)

Motivation

Then, briefly, setting our motivation for this practice. Recognizing that our lives are very special, with incredible opportunity to study spiritual teachings at our leisure, to even have the space, and the time, and the quiet to do something like meditate; and to live in a culture where there is a free exchange of ideas; where we can ask the questions of our heart – and find answers. And so, wanting to take advantage of this opportunity that we have, recognizing that it won't last forever.

Then, reflecting that to work for our welfare alone is so limited. I am only one. But my life has the potential to benefit many and what a waste if I were to work only for my own happiness when I could become the source of happiness for countless living beings.

So, with a wish to maximize the potential of our lives and receive the blessings of pure enlightenment within us, we will do this practice of meditation on Shakyamuni Buddha.

Body of the Meditation

Visualizing in the space before us on a golden throne, supported by snow lions, seated on a lotus, a radiant sun and moon disk is Shakyamuni Buddha – the source of the sun of

Dharma. He has blue-black hair, red smiling lips, blue eyes. He wears the robes of a monk. His body emanates an aura of golden light. He manifests in our lives as various teachers, has given us the gift of the teachings themselves, and has established the community, the Sangha.

So, first generating the mind of refuge, the mind of entrustment in this perfect energy, in this perfect teacher, in all of these teachings. Thinking of what we are afraid of, that we would like to avoid. Especially thinking of what we would like to achieve with our lives, knowing that we have this great potential, and yet we have not yet managed to actualize it. Knowing that so many living beings are in pain and suffering and wanting to do something about it.

Turning to Shakyamuni Buddha, the essence of all of our teachers and the teachings and completely entrusting ourself under his care, his guidance, and his protection. And seeking his blessings, we recite the refuge prayer:

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|---------------|---------------------------------|
| NAMO GURUBHYA | To the guru, I go for refuge. |
| NAMO BUDDHAYA | To the Buddha, I go for refuge. |
| NAMO DHARMAYA | To the Dharma, I go for refuge. |
| NAMO SANGHAYA | To the Sangha, I go for refuge. |

Then, generating bodhichitta within our mind stream.

First, thinking of just one person in our lives. Someone we know who is struggling, whether in body or in mind, or maybe it is someone who has already passed away and we are concerned what might have happened to them, because they had a difficult death. Trying to bring that person up in our minds as clearly as possible. Seeing how stuck they are.

Maybe there is a situation in our world right now that brings pain in the heart to think about, so much unnecessary suffering, and for what? (Pause)

Then, allowing into our conscious awareness all the various ways that beings are struggling right now: those who are hungry, those who are sick, those who live in countries where there is so much warfare, or strife, or political oppression; and even in countries that are fairly wealthy, even among people who have their every physical need met, there is so much mental torment, so much confusion. Seeing the faces, very clearly and feeling the wish inside to do something about it; and taking responsibility inside to do something about it.

(From A Daily Meditation Practice:)

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to abide in equanimity, free of hatred and attachment.
May they abide in equanimity.

I, myself, will cause them to abide in equanimity.
Please, guru-deity, grant me blessings to be able to do this

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings had happiness and the causes of happiness.

May they have happiness and its causes.

I, myself, will cause them to have happiness and its causes.

Please, guru-deity, grant me blessings to be able to do this.

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were free of suffering and its causes.

May they be free of suffering and its causes.

I, myself, will cause them to be free of suffering and its causes.

Please, guru-deity, grant me blessings to be able to do this.

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were never separated from the happiness of higher rebirth and liberation.

May they never be separated from these.

I, myself, will cause them never to be separated from these.

Please, guru-deity, grant me blessings to be able to do this.

In particular, I must achieve enlightenment quickly in order to free all the numberless kind mother sentient beings from the unimaginable oceans of samsaric suffering and causes of suffering and lead them to peerless full enlightenment. For this purpose, I am going to do this practice of the seven limbs, making requests, and reciting Shakyamuni Buddha's mantra.

Then, very strongly connecting with Shakyamuni Buddha. Seeing Shakyamuni as the teacher, manifesting in various forms to guide us – and as the Buddha that we ourselves will become. So, developing a firm conviction, commitment, and entrustment into that energy. (Pause)

Prostration

Then, the first of the seven limbs: identifying clearly a quality of that enlightened mind that we ourselves wish to achieve and mentally prostrating with our body, speech, and mind, with the wish to achieve that quality ourselves. (Pause)

Offering

Thinking to ourselves, "What would I give for enlightenment, perfect wisdom, perfect compassion, perfect ability? What is that worth to me?" and visualizing making an offering. Walking up to Shakyamuni Buddha and presenting this offering. As we present it, it multiplies, filling all the entire expanse of space.

Shakyamuni Buddha is extremely pleased and accepts this offering. His mind experiences great bliss. All the offerings that we've made absorb into his heart.

Confessing

Then, thinking of actions that we have done, mistakes that we have made, and before Shakyamuni Buddha openly confessing them and admitting them as mistakes. Maybe it was a harsh word, an unkind look. Maybe it was not giving when we were asked. Generating regret in the mind for the mistakes that we have made, and a resolve that the next time, "I'll do it differently."

Rejoicing

Then, rejoicing in the goodness of ourselves, in the effort that we're making right now, and that we must have made in the past to have these conditions; some goodness that we've done to others; some sincere wish of heart, thinking "how wonderful it is." (Pause)

Expanding that rejoicing to include others around us: holy beings, ordinary beings. Thinking of all the good things that are done in this world, "how wonderful it is." (Pause)

Requesting

Then, requesting our teacher to stay with us and never to leave our side until we achieve the liberation and enlightenment that we seek. Offering them a golden throne with a double dorje, representing firmness and stability.

Requesting Teachings

And from the depths of our hearts requesting them to give us blessings, to teach us what we need to know this very day. Imagine that Shakyamuni Buddha receives this request and promises to teach.

Dedication

Then, dedicating all of this positive energy to enlightenment – of ourselves and others.

Mandala offering

Then, as a final great offering, we'll do the mandala. Visualizing the world as we wish that it were, with clean air, and clean waters, everything made of light and luminous, beautiful flowers, and fragrances everywhere; everything beautiful to see, to hear, to smell, to taste, to touch, and to think about; the perfect world that we ourselves wish to quickly bring about. Visualizing that we are holding it in our hands, but that it reflects the entire universe and approaching Shakyamuni Buddha, from our hearts we make this offering:

This ground, anointed with perfume, strewn with flowers,
Adorned with Mount Meru, four continents, the sun and the moon:
I imagine this as a buddha-field and offer it.
May all living beings enjoy this pure land!

Sa zhi pö kyi jug shing me tog tram
Ri rab ling zhi nyi dä gyän pa di

Sang gyä zhing du mig te ül wa yi
Dro kün nam dag zhing la chö par shog

Then, while still holding out this offering of a perfect world to Shakyamuni Buddha, from our hearts making the prayer of the Three Great Purposes:

I go for refuge to the guru and the Three Precious Rare Sublime Jewels. Please bless my mental continuum. Please bless me and all sentient beings to cease immediately all wrong conceptions, from incorrect devotion to the guru up to the subtle dual view of the white appearance, red increase, and black near-attainment. Please bless me and all sentient beings to actualize immediately all the correct realizations, from guru devotion up to the unification of no more learning. Please pacify immediately all outer and inner obstacles.

IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAMI

Then, it's said while making requests that it's very helpful to imagine that we are holding the feet of our teacher and with great longing and devotion in our hearts, then we make the following requests:

Guru Vajradhara, who encompasses all three objects of refuge,
Taking the form of the virtuous friend in whatever way subdues and
Granting common and sublime realizations –
To you, kind gurus, I make requests.

Whose holy body is created by millions of virtues and goodness;
Whose holy speech fulfills the wishes of all sentient beings;
Whose holy mind sees every existence exactly-
At the holy feet of the principal of the Shakyas, I make requests.

By making offerings and requests with devotion
To the highest sublime field of merit,
You, the savior, who are the sole source of all my happiness and
goodness,
Please grant me blessings and guide me with your pleased holy mind.

Then, visualizing that Shakyamuni Buddha, in response to our requests, comes to the crown of our head. Then, as we recite Shakyamuni Buddha's mantra, visualize that streams of white nectar and light pour forth from Shakyamuni Buddha's body and mind, purifying us of all negativities and mental veils; all suffering, disease, and so forth.

TADYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SVAHA

A final purifying shower streams forth from Shakyamuni Buddha's body and mind, completely cleansing us of all obstacles on the path – inner and outer. Our body and mind become calm and clear, like crystal.

As we recite the mantra again, you receive the blessings of Shakyamuni Buddha's body, speech, and all the realizations of the path in the form of golden nectar and light.

TADYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SVAHA

Shakyamuni then melts into a stream of golden light and descends to our hearts becoming inseparably mixed with our minds. Our body and mind are completely pervaded by the golden light of enlightenment; perfect wisdom, perfect compassion, perfect ability.

We are clarified as pure light beings abiding in the world solely for the purpose of benefiting others. This is me. (Pause)

Dedication

Dedicating all of the positive energy that we've generated during this meditation to the quick enlightenment of each and every living being. May we, ourselves, quickly attain the state of a guru-buddha and become exactly what is needed to benefit for all.

May we generate the bodhichitta which has not been generated and may the bodhichitta which has been generated never decline, but always increase.

8. Establishing a daily Practice

Meditation Three: Shakyamuni Buddha Practice and Lam-rim Meditation on the Precious Human Rebirth

by: Kendall Magnussen

CD 2: Track 1:

Introduction

This is a meditation using *A Daily Meditation Practice* for lam-rim meditation, focusing on using the time that we have available to go more deeply into the lam-rim and in this case, in particular, the precious human rebirth.

Pause after sentences to contemplate the various points as needed.

Motivation

Begin by making sure the spine is straight and take a deep breath in and out. Calling to mind the motivation that we generated earlier – our innate wish to be helpful; our innate wish to stop suffering for ourselves and for others; our innate wish to experience unending happiness and to be able to share that with others; and our wish to be guided and protected, and blessed in order to be able to accomplish our goals.

Visualizing in the space around us our mother and father of this life and all living beings – especially those most familiar to us – imagining that we are doing this practice on their behalf.

So, then, recognizing that there is no way to generate the realizations on the later stages of the path, such as the wisdom realizing emptiness, without first preparing our minds with the realizations of the earlier stages;

And, especially with the wish to recognize the opportunity of our lives, and not waste it, we will do this practice and meditation on the precious human rebirth. Body of the Meditation

Refuge and Bodhichitta

Invite to this place all of our teachers, imagining that they merge together and take on the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha, the radiant sun of the Dharma. Feel Shakyamuni Buddha's presence as much as possible. Generate the mind of refuge by remembering what we are afraid of; what we hope to become; and looking to all enlightened beings, their teachings, and the community of helpers who have seen reality directly, completely entrusting ourselves to their care.

Remember our wish to help others; especially, taking responsibility for the happiness of others. See the urgency of developing our mind as quickly as possible with the mind of bodhichitta.

Seven-Limbed Practice

Then, to prepare our mind for the meditation, doing the seven-limbed prayer –

Recognize a quality within Shakyamuni Buddha that we ourselves wish to develop and making prostration to that;

Making offerings to that;

Admitting a mistake that we've made – with resolve to do it differently next time;

Rejoicing in the goodness of ourselves and others;

Requesting our teachers to stay in our lives, and teach us;

And dedicating all positive energy to enlightenment.

Requests

Especially, in our hearts, requesting Shakyamuni Buddha, the essence of all enlightened activity to please bless our minds to generate quickly the realizations of the path; especially the precious human rebirth.

Shakyamuni Buddha then comes to the crown of our heads and stays there to bless our mind for the meditation.

Lam-Rim Meditation

So, begin the Lam-Rim Prayer, with the first two verses. Thinking of these verses as a further request to Shakyamuni Buddha, imagining that as we recite the verse, we receive both the white nectar light of purification – clearing away those things that block our minds from generating the realization; and golden light – giving us the very essence of the realization within our mind.

The foundation of all good qualities is the kind and venerable guru;

Correct devotion to him is the root of the path.

By clearly seeing this and applying great effort,

Please bless me to rely upon him with great respect.

Understanding that the precious freedom of this rebirth is found only once,

Is greatly meaningful, and is difficult to find again,

Please bless me to generate the mind that unceasingly,

Day and night, takes its essence.

To meditate on the precious human rebirth: First, recognize the situation that we find ourselves in.

Richnesses

Currently, we have a human life. We have intelligence. We have strength still in our bodies. We have some inclination for spiritual practices. More than just having faith in those practices, we actually have some interest to put them into practice ourselves. And, we are free from being involved in any extreme negativity in our lives. (Pause)

We live in a place and in a time where the sun of the Buddha's teachings is still here. We are still in the age of a Buddha's teachings existing in this world. Not only do the Buddha's teachings exist in this world, but people are still gaining experience and freedom by putting them into practice. There are still places to go and receive the teachings. There are still people who are supporting the teachings.

Dharma is not a moneymaking operation. Without benefactors and sponsors, it doesn't continue to exist. There are still people who wish to take up the ordained life and be the beacon of Buddha's teachings in this world.

First, recognizing the blessings that we have, the opportunity that we have. (Pause)

If we think about it, with all this richness in our life, there is nothing to stop us from freedom. There is nothing standing in our way.

For us, it's only a matter of making effort.

Freedoms

If we think about, even just the human beings in this world – over six billion human beings – in all the various countries where they live; in all the various situations of life that they find themselves in. Of all those six billion human beings, how of them even live in a place where they could meet the Dharma; where they could even hear the word, “enlightenment”, “freedom”.

In most of Africa? Not possible.

In most of the Middle East? Not possible.

Even in those countries where Dharma is available, it is just in small little pockets. In one very big city, there might be a few Dharma centers, but if I think of the entire population of that city; and how many even come across a Dharma teaching, and register it within their mind – it is so small.

Even in India, where there are so many Buddhists now, it is only 1% of the population of India. (Pause) Even in countries that are said to be Buddhist countries, in many cases the teachings have degenerated and the complete teachings are not available; and true practitioners and teachers are not to be found – easily.

Rare and Difficult to Find

In fact, it's not so easy. There is not a place, not one country in this whole planet where you know you can go and find pure Dharma everywhere. Of all the living beings in those places where Dharma can be found – where teachings to enlightenment can be found – how many ever hear the teachings?

Of those who hear them, how many have any interest?

Of those who have any interest, how many have leisure, fortune, freedom – to be able to pursue that interest?

Of those who have that leisure, that fortune, that interest – how many have met a teacher who has the qualities that they wish to develop themselves?

Of those who have met their teacher, how many have recognized it?

Of all those who have met the teachings; who have interest; who have leisure and freedom and fortune to pursue that interest; who have met their teachers; and recognize their teachers – how many, actually, pursue the teachings?

How many actually devote their lives to freedom – to enlightenment?

Of all the people I went to school with; the people in my family; the people in my hometown; how many ever think, “enlightenment,” “freedom,” even consider the possibility that the end of suffering is possible – even in my own family?

This situation that I find myself in is extremely rare. It is not common in this world to even *think* like this.

So, what am I going to do with it?

What it is possible to achieve with my life

Many people have some deep-seated aspiration, some suspicion that another reality, another experience of life is possible, but they have not met the method. But, I have met the method. What am I going to do with it?

People all around me are suffering – from sickness; aging; death; dissatisfied mind; mental and physical dis-ease, all the time. I have come into contact with the teachings that claim they can stop all these sufferings forever.

How can I not try to pursue them?

If there were some opportunity that I had to stop the death of all living beings; to stop war; to stop famine; to stop disease – and I were not to try – how unfortunate that would be.

Rare by way of causes

How lucky I am! It's said in the teachings that a precious human rebirth comes about only with causes: having practiced generosity, morality, patience, and, especially, making prayers. I prayed to receive this life. I prayed to have this opportunity. I prayed to have this view. I

prayed to meet these teachings. I prayed for a method to fulfill my deepest longings. I prayed to perfect my mind.

Now, all the causes and conditions have come together. In this life, my prayers have been answered. What am I going to do with it? (Pause)

This is the life I prayed for. I did it! Now, what am I going to do with it? (Pause)

These are the teachings I searched for. Now, I have this chance to attain freedom, perfection. Now, I have this chance to help this world – to *really* help this world.

What am I going to do with it?

Conclusion

So, asking Shakyamuni Buddha from the depths of our hearts to please bless us to recognize this precious opportunity that we have found; to not forget it; and to use it to the best of our abilities – recognizing that nothing stands in our way to freedom, to enlightenment. All we have to do is make effort.

How lucky we are!

So, repeating the second verse of the prayer:

Understanding that the precious freedom of this rebirth is found only once,
Is greatly meaningful, and is difficult to find again,
Please bless me to generate the mind that unceasingly,
Day and night, takes its essence.

Continue with the prayer:

This life is as impermanent as a water bubble;
Remember how quickly it decays and death comes.
After death, just like a shadow follows the body,
The results of black and white karma follow.

Finding firm and definite conviction in this,
Please bless me always to be careful
To abandon even the slightest negativities
And accomplish all virtuous deeds.

Seeking samsaric pleasures is the door to all suffering;
They are uncertain and cannot be relied upon.
Recognizing these shortcomings,
Please bless me to generate the strong wish for the bliss of liberation.

Led by this pure thought,
Mindfulness, alertness, and great caution arise.
The root of the teachings is keeping the pratimoksha vows:
Please bless me to accomplish this essential practice.
Just as I have fallen into the sea of samsara,
So have all mother migratory beings.
Please bless me to see this, train in supreme bodhichitta,
And bear the responsibility of freeing migratory beings.

Even if I develop only bodhichitta, but I don't practice the three types of morality,
I will not achieve enlightenment.
With my clear recognition of this,
Please bless me to practice the bodhisattva vows with great energy.

Once I have pacified distractions to wrong objects
And correctly analyzed the meaning of reality,
Please bless me to generate quickly within my mindstream
The unified path of calm abiding and special insight.

Having become a pure vessel by training in the general path,
Please bless me to enter
The holy gateway of the fortunate ones:
The supreme vajra vehicle.

At that time, the basis of accomplishing the two attainments
Is keeping pure vows and samaya.
As I have become firmly convinced of this,
Please bless me to protect these vows and pledges like my life.

Then, having realized the importance of the two stages,
The essence of the Vajrayana,
By practicing with great energy, never giving up the four sessions,
Please bless me to realize the teachings of the holy guru.

Like that, may the gurus who show the noble path
And the spiritual friends who practice it have long lives.
Please bless me to pacify completely
All outer and inner hindrances.

In all my lives, never separated from perfect gurus,
May I enjoy the magnificent Dharma.
By completing the qualities of the stages and paths,
May I quickly attain the state of Vajradhara.

Then, we will recite the request:

Glorious and precious root guru
Please abide on the lotus and moon seat on my crown,
And taking care of me with your great kindness,
Bestow upon me the attainments of your holy body, speech, and mind.

Then, Shakyamuni Buddha is extremely pleased with the effort that we've made and promises to remind us of our precious human life and help us to take advantage of this precious opportunity.

Shakyamuni Buddha melts into a stream of golden light, and descends to our hearts becoming inseparably mixed with our minds. Our body and mind are pervaded by this golden light and the potential of our lives is fulfilled.

We are transformed into a pure being of golden light, abiding in this world solely for the purpose of benefiting others. This is me.

Imagine what that would actually feel like.

Dedication

Then, dedicating any positive energy that we have generated during this meditation to the swift enlightenment of each and every living being; to the freedom from suffering in this world and beyond; the attainment of perfect happiness for all living beings.

And that we, ourselves, might especially take advantage of this precious life that we have found; develop all the realizations of the path within our minds; and quickly become exactly what is needed to benefit for all living beings.

8. Establishing a daily Practice

Meditation Four: A Short Vajrasattva Practice

by: Kendall Magnussen

CD 2: Track 2:

(This practice is also available as an individual practice booklet from FPMT Education Department)

Motivation

Begin by making sure the spine is straight. The arms rounded and relaxed with the hands resting in the lap, right on top of the left in a gentle triangle. The shoulders relaxed. The head just slightly tilted forward with the gaze down towards the floor; and the mouth and jaw relaxed.

Taking a few deep breaths in and out. Allowing the body and mind to be completely present. And setting a motivation for the practice, reflecting on our precious human life – the opportunity that we’ve found now that we’ve met the teachings; and the wish to take advantage of this chance as much as possible before we die.

Thinking of those in our lives that we know directly or indirectly that we want to help in some way. Acknowledging that place within our hearts that truly wishes to develop, to awaken our qualities of wisdom, compassion, and ability to help others.

How wonderful it would be to be free of belief in self-concept, free of the prison of the contracted self. Recognizing that even though we might have a great wish to develop realizations in our minds, our mind just feels very dull, blocked, unable to see or understand.

Feeling the great burden of the mountains of negativities - misknowing reality and acting out of ignorance – that have been imprinted on our mind stream; cluttering up our wisdom; counteracting our compassion; blocking our ability. So, wanting to be free of all these blocks, all these mental veils, all these negative habit patterns, and to be free to act in ways beneficial to ourselves and others.

So, with this wish, we’ll do the practice of Vajrasattva.

CD 2: Track 2 - Preliminary Visualization

Visualizing in the space before us Vajrasattva, father and mother, the union of wisdom and method, or compassion, representing the perfect union of our mind with enlightenment. Perfect purity, radiating white light.

And visualizing ourselves surrounded by all living beings, our father on our right side, our mother on our left. Enemies and those beings who agitate us in the space before us; and

friends just behind us. And with a wish that all of us would quickly find perfect happiness, and taking responsibility to bring that about; with a deep wish to free our mind of all that which prevents us from actualizing the path quickly, we recite together the verse of taking refuge:

The Power of Dependence (A): Taking Refuge

I forever take refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha,
And in all the three vehicles,
In the dakinis of secret mantra yoga, in the heroes and heroines,
In the empowering goddesses and the bodhisattvas.
But most of all, I take refuge in my holy guru forever. (3x)

Then meditating on the power of regret, especially calling to mind specific actions of our body, speech, and mind, which only serve to bring about more suffering for ourselves, and others. Realizing that the definition of negative karma is any action which results in suffering, any action motivated by ignorance, ignorant liking of things, and ignorant disliking of things; not understanding the real causes of our experience:

Almost every action I do, twenty-four hours a day, is motivated by worldly concern, attachment to the comfort of this life. It is like this from birth to death in this life and has been like that from beginningless rebirths. Nearly every action I have ever created has been non-virtuous, the cause of suffering. Not only that, but continuously I have also been breaking my pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows. Worst of all, I have created the heaviest of negative karmas in relation to my virtuous friends – getting angry at them, generating wrong views, having non-devotional thoughts towards them, harming their holy body and disobeying their advice. Having these negative imprints on my mental continuum is unbearable. It's as if I've swallowed a lethal poison. I must practice the antidote right away and purify all this negative karma immediately, without a second's delay.

In this way, bring to mind specific actions that we know are not in alignment with our spirit of enlightenment and generating great regret, and a strong sense of urgency to wash this away from our mind stream; not wanting even the slightest residue of imprint.

Then remembering impermanence and death:

Many people my age or younger have died. It's a miracle that I'm still alive and have this incredible opportunity to purify my negative karma. Death is certain but its time is most uncertain. If I were to die right now, I would definitely be born in the lower realms. Because I could not practice Dharma there I would remain in the lower realms for countless eons. Therefore, how unbelievably fortunate I am to be able to purify my negative karma right now, without even a second's delay, by practicing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation.

Generating bodhichitta:

But I am not practicing this Vajrasattva purification for myself alone – the purpose of my life is to release all hell beings, pretas, animals, humans, asuras, suras, and intermediate state beings from all their suffering and its causes and lead them to unsurpassed enlightenment. In order to do this I must first reach enlightenment myself. Therefore, I must purify all my negative karma immediately by practicing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation.

So, very strongly generating in the mind stream this wish to just be free of all the negativity, all the karmic blocks, all the negative habit patterns that we have created in our minds – in this life, and in lives without beginning, not even knowing what kinds of darkness are still obscuring our mind.

Then visualize:

Above the crown of my head, seated upon a lotus and moon seat, are Vajrasattva father and mother. Their bodies are white; each has one face and two arms. He holds a dorje and bell, she a curved knife and skullcup. They are embracing each other. The father is adorned with six mudras, the mother with five. He sits in the vajra posture, she in the lotus.

Vajrasattva is my root guru, the holy mind of all the buddhas, the dharmakaya, who out of his unbearable compassion, which embraces me and all other sentient beings, appears in this form to purify me and all others.

In this way, your mind is transformed into guru devotion – the root of all blessings and realizations of the path to enlightenment.

On a moon disk at Vajrasattva's heart stands a HUM encircled by a garland of the hundred syllable mantra. A powerful stream of white nectar flows from the HUM and mantra garland and I am cleansed of all sickness, spirit harm, negative karma and obscurations.

OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA / VAJRASATTVA
TVENOPATISHTHA / DRIDHO ME BHAVA / SUTOSHYO ME BHAVA /
SUPOSHYO ME BHAVA / ANURAKTO ME BHAVA / SARVA SIDDHIM ME
PRAYACCHA / SARVA KARMA SU CHAME / CHITTAM SHRIYAM KURU
HUM / HA HA HA HA HO / BHAGAVAN SARVA TATHAGATA / VAJRA
MAME MUNCHA / VAJRA BHAVA MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA AH HUM
PHAT (7x or 21x)

Visualize a final purifying stream of white nectar and light pour forth from Vajrasattva's holy body and mind; and like a very, very strong shower, completely cleanses from our mind, body complex every single negativity, every single mental veil. These wash away completely through the soles of our feet, enter a crack in the earth and are consumed by the Lord of Death amidst a blazing fire.

He becomes completely satiated. His mouth is sealed with a double dorje. He turns and walks away. The crack in the earth is healed, and our body and mind are completely calm and clear, like crystal.

From the crown of my head, Guru Vajrasattva says, “Child of the race, your negativities, obscurations, and broken and damaged pledges have been completely purified.”

Generate strong faith that all is completely purified just as Guru Vajrasattva has said.

The power of restraint: refraining from creating negativities again:

Before Guru Vajrasattva, I vow never again to commit those negative actions from which I can easily abstain and not to commit for a day, an hour or at least a few seconds those negative actions from which I find it difficult to abstain.

Absorption:

Guru Vajrasattva is extremely pleased with your pledge. Vajrasattva father and mother melt into light and dissolve into you. Your body, speech and mind become inseparably one with Guru Vajrasattva’s holy body, speech and mind.

In emptiness, there is no I, creator of negative karma; there is no action of creating negative karma; there is no negative karma created.

Place your mind in that emptiness for a little while. In this way, look at all phenomena as empty – they do not exist from their own side.

Then with this awareness that there is no negative action – with the subject alone, no negative action; with the object alone, no negative action; and it’s impossible to engage in action without subject and object. With this awareness, then we dedicate the merits:

Due to all these merits of the three times collected by all the buddhas, bodhisattvas, myself, and all other sentient beings (which appear to be real, from their own side, but which are empty), may I (who appears to be real but is empty) achieve Guru Vajrasattva’s enlightenment (which appears to be real but is empty) and lead all sentient beings (who appear to be real but are totally empty) to that enlightenment (which appears to be real but is empty) by myself alone (who appears to be real but is also totally empty, non-existent from my own side).

May the precious bodhichitta, the source of all happiness and success for myself and all other sentient beings, be generated within my own mind and

in the minds of all sentient beings without even a second's delay; and may that which has been generated be increased.

May I and all other sentient beings have Lama Tsongkhapa as our direct guru in all our lifetimes, never be separated for even a second from the pure path that is greatly praised by the conqueror buddhas, and actualize the complete path – the three principal paths and the two stages of Highest Yoga Tantra – the root of which is guru devotion, within our minds as quickly as possible.

Just as the brave Manjushri and Samantabhadra realized things as they are, I dedicate all these virtues in the best way that I may follow after them.

Whatever dedication the three time victorious ones gone to bliss have admired as best, in the same way, I also perfectly dedicate all these roots of virtue so that I may perform good works.

8. Establishing a daily Practice

Meditation Five: Concluding Meditation, Mantra chanting and Dissolution

by: Kendall Magnussen

CD 3: Track 1:

To start, make your spine straight. Shakyamuni Buddha is already here since we invoked him earlier, but we'll just remember that presence of pure enlightenment, all of our teachers, all guides, and protectors, and angels, all merging into the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha.

In our heart we have that sincere request to always be guided and protected by this energy and, especially, that we ourselves might quickly be transformed into enlightened ones ourselves, perfectly what is needed to help others.

And wishing to be free of all that which prevents us from attaining enlightenment and wishing to receive all the blessings of the realizations of the path, making that request to Shakyamuni Buddha to please bless our minds.

He comes to the crown of our head and as we recite the mantra we visualize a purifying stream of white nectar and light showering down on us, removing all impurities, all negativities and mental veils; all obstacles to generating the realizations of the path within our mind stream.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHAYAMUNIYE SVAHA

A final purifying stream comes down, cleansing our body and mind. All negativities are washed away and our body and mind are calm and clear, like crystal.

As we recite the mantra again, golden light and beams of nectar pour forth from Shakyamuni Buddha's body and mind, blessing our mind stream with all the qualities and realizations of enlightenment.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHAYAMUNIYE SVAHA

Shakyamuni Buddha then melts into a stream of golden light, enters the crown of our head, and descends to our hearts, becoming inseparably mixed with our body and mind.

Our body and mind become pervaded by golden light and we are clarified in the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha, a fully enlightened one. From the wish to benefit all beings, we recite the mantra again, sending out streams of golden light from our heart, through every pore of our body. Reaching out to all living beings in all the different realms of existence,

blessing their minds; freeing them from suffering; and bringing them into perfect happiness. Transforming all environments into pure lands.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHAYAMUNIYE SVAHA

All beings and their environments melt into this golden light; which absorbs into our own hearts. Our body and mind are pervaded by golden light. We dissolve from above and below into the place of our hearts. Becoming smaller, and smaller, and smaller, until we completely disappear. No I to be found anywhere.

From this state, from a wish to benefit others, our mind takes the form of a shaft of golden light. This grows in size taking the shape and form of our own bodies; until we arise as pure light beings, abiding in the world solely for the purpose of benefiting others. This is me.

And then, we'll dedicate all the positive energy from all the effort that we've made over this course in the very extensive way that Lama Zopa Rinpoche has written for us.

Dedication

As a result of all my own merits of the three times
And the merits of all the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and sentient beings,
May the altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment be generated in my mind
And in the minds of all sentient beings without even a second's delay,
And may that altruistic wish that has already been generated be increased.

Whatever sufferings sentient beings experience, may it ripen on me
Whatever merit and its resulting happiness I have accumulated, may it ripen upon
others.

In the land encircled by snow mountains,
You are the source of all happiness and goodness
All-powerful Chenrezig, Tenzin Gyatso, (*His Holiness the Dalai Lama*)
Please remain until samsara ends.

May the glorious gurus' lives be long and stable.
May all beings equaling the extent of space have happiness.
May I and others without exception accumulate merit and purify negativities, and
May we be blessed to quickly attain buddhahood.

Due to the merits of the three times created by me and by others, and by the buddhas
and bodhisattvas,
May we be able to meet perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friends in all our future
lives.
From our side may we always see them as enlightened.

May we always perform only actions most pleasing to the holy mind of the virtuous friends.

May we always be able to fulfill their holy wishes immediately:

Because of these merits may my actions never cause
Even the slightest harm to any sentient being.
Instead, may they bring only the greatest of benefit.
Whatever suffering or happy life I experience,
May it be only of the greatest benefit to others,
Causing them to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible

Due to all the merits of the three times accumulated by me and by others,
Merely by seeing, hearing, remembering, touching, or talking to me
May any being be freed in that very second from all their sufferings, diseases, spirit
harms, negative karmas, and obscurations
And abide in the peerless happiness of full enlightenment forever.

Like Lama Tsongkhapa,
May I be able to offer extensive benefits equaling the limitless sky
To all sentient beings and the teachings of Buddha,
From now on in all future lives,
By having all the qualities of Lama Tsongkhapa within me.

Just as the brave Manjushri and Samantabhadra
Realized things as they are,
I dedicate all these virtues in the best way,
That I may follow after them.

Whatever dedication the victorious ones gone to bliss
Of the three times have admired as best,
I shall also perfectly dedicate in the same way all these roots of virtue
So that I may perform good works.

Due to the merits, which are empty from their own side,
Accumulated over the three times by me, and by the buddhas and bodhisattvas,
May I, who am empty from my own side,
Achieve the state of Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, which is empty from its
own side,
And lead all sentient beings, who are empty from their own side,
To that state as quickly as possible by myself alone.

Because of the past, present, and future merit created by me
and by the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and sentient beings,
May I, my family, disciples, and all sentient beings

Be able to actualize completely in this very lifetime
Lama Tsongkhapa's path of unified sutra and tantra,
Which is pure like refined gold.
May this pure teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa
Spread in all directions and flourish forever.

Because of all the merits of the three times created by me and all the buddhas,
bodhisattvas, and other sentient beings,
May there be no wars, famines, disease, quarreling, fighting, or unhappy minds;
May there be great prosperity, and may everything needed be easily obtained.
May all the human beings in the world be guided by spiritual leaders teaching only
Dharma, and
May everyone enjoy the happiness of Dharma.

May everyone have perfect conditions and have only compassion and love for each
other in their mind streams,
And may they only benefit, and never harm each other.
May I and all others be able to live lives of pure moral conduct (like Lama Tsongkhapa
himself),
Train the mind in bodhichitta, and live in pure view and conduct.
In this way, may we be able to complete our lives without corrupting
The pure wisdom of the second Buddha's teachings.

It is only from the kindness of my gurus
That I have met the unequaled teachings of Buddha.
I dedicate all this merit so that all migratory beings without exception
May be guided in the future by kind and holy gurus.

Until samsara ends, may the teaching that benefits
Not be moved away by the winds of the evil superstitions.
May the whole world be always filled with people
Who have understood and found stable faith in the true teachings.

May I pass the time, day and night,
Thinking and examining by what means
This teaching can spread in the minds
Of all sentient beings and me.

Final Dedications

Also spending a moment in silence to send out all this positive energy to those we know of
at this time who are especially in need. May they receive all the benefit of this effort.

May their minds abide in peace. May they be free of fear and may they have only happiness
and the causes of happiness in their minds.

And may anyone who hears this teaching, thinks about this teaching, reads this teaching, or remembers this teaching, or comes into contact in anyway with these teachings, in that moment may they be freed of all suffering. May they achieve their highest goals and quickly become exactly what is needed for the benefit of all.

CD 3: Track 2-6

Miscellaneous Prayers:

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| Track 2 | Mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha |
| Track 3 | Refuge Chant |
| Track 4 | Vajrasattva Mantra |
| Track 5 | Heruka Vajrasattva Mantra |
| Track 6 | Guru Shakyamuni Prayer and Mantra |

CD 3: Tracks 7-11

Ceremony for Taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts

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|----------|---|
| Track 7 | Motivation |
| Track 8 | Preliminary Prayers |
| Track 9 | Prayer for Taking the Precepts |
| Track 10 | Mantra of Pure Morality |
| Track 11 | Dedication Prayers |
| Track 12 | Short Mandala offering - alternate tune |