

Demystifying Tibetan Buddhist Ritual

An interactive beginner
series on everything
you ever wanted to
know about Tibetan
Buddhist ritual but
were afraid to ask!



8-week course with registered
FPMT teacher, Miffi Maxmillion



www.langritangpa.org.au

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Langri Tangpa Centre Inc Study Notes

How to Use This Workbook

Welcome to your workbook towards liberation! This booklet contains all the information you will need for the course. Read ahead if you like, or enjoy the material presented comprehensively during each class.

Included in this workbook:

1. Summary sheets
2. Powerpoint summaries
1. The **summary sheets** can be referred to later as a refresher. They contain the main points and topics discussed during the class.
2. The **powerpoint summaries** are handy to follow during the class presentation.

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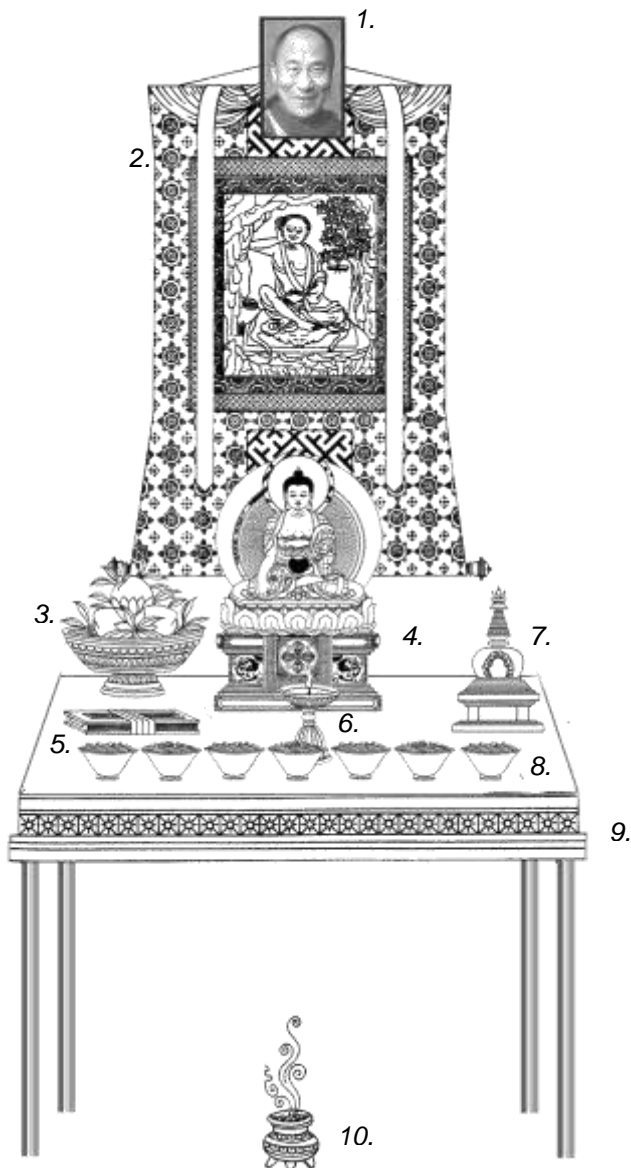
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Keep Yourself Nice

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Setting Up Your Altar



- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Picture of the guru | 6. Butter light offering |
| 2. Thangka of a Buddha | 7. Stupa |
| 3. Bowl of fruit offering | 8. Water offering bowls |
| 4. Statue of Buddha | 9. Table at hip level |
| 5. Tibetan text | 10. Incense in pot of sand |

What goes on an altar?

- Building an altar is not about worshipping idols - but a reminder of universal qualities.
- It is a tool to engage with the ultimate qualities of an enlightened being. It is also a powerful method to accumulate virtue by offering and prostrating.
- It has images or representations of the holy body, speech and mind of a Buddha.
- Offerings, especially of light and the water bowls, but also incense, flowers.
- Photos of your gurus and teachers.
- Make it so that just looking at the altar makes you happy and inspired, so we want to go there often.
- You can set it up and take it down each day, or leave it permanently.

What to offer

- Light - brings the benefit of a long life, and also symbolises wisdom. In the west we are lucky - can use electricity! Bless immediately (even light switch), otherwise fall asleep uncontrollably in teachings. Snuff out the candles, don't blow them out (so we are not spitting at Buddha or blowing away life-force).
- Incense - offered in a bowl of sand or a holder on the floor, not on altar (so don't offer ashes). Symbolises morality.
- Flowers - fake flowers are fine. Dried flowers, or poisonous ones not so good,

and make sure to cut the thorns off roses. Acquired properly (flowers not picked from someone else's garden). Symbolises compassion, our virtues.

- Food - biscuits or fruit. Clean, the best we have (not the scraps!). Don't put the rejects and keep the best for yourself! You can even offer the shopping, then put it away half an hour later. Symbolises the spiritual nourishment of realisations.
- Water - there are 2 types of offering bowls (sutra water bowls and tantra offerings), this is the water-bowl practice. Forgetting to bless causes forgetfulness or discomfort. Purifies ignorance, and a short-temper!

Setting up an Altar

STEPS	COMMENTS
1. Placing the altar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above hips, no lower than knees (otherwise causes sleep) • Not at foot of bed (where feet point), and with a screen so not confused with sex
2. Buddha in the centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents buddha's body. A statue, picture or photo • Make sure the details are correct (try not to have just a head!) Art may be bad, but no such thing as a bad buddha! • Can wrap in white scarf for respect
3. Text to right of buddha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents buddha's speech • Lam rim, or wisdom sutra (diamond cutter or heart sutra) • Can have a book or a paper in a frame
4. Stupa to left of buddha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents buddha's mind • All it's dimensions represent something • Sometimes wrapped in white scarf • Can also have a bell (and dorje)
5. Guru in centre at top	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing higher than the guru • Without the guru we would not have any of the others
6. Offering of light	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LZR like to have it on 24/7 • Light represents wisdom dispelling the darkness of ignorance. A steady flame represents long life and health
7. Water bowl offerings in front	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have them a level lower than the images and statues • Can learn how to offer them at the Dharma kit-bag course • Usually 7, but can have one nice bowl, or 3 • Practice of generosity without pride of substance (eg. gold) • Change the water each day
8. Other offerings (optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember to bless all the offerings as you make them! • Food (bowl of fruit, bags of shopping, then put away later) • Flowers (keep fresh or have fake, but not dried!) • Incense (on the floor so we don't offer ash) • Other things important to you, eg. LY with toy airplane

Some handy hints...

- It is better to have a clean and plain altar, rather than an elaborate and dusty one.
- Don't offer cigarette smoke! Offer what is personally precious to you.
- Lama Zopa Rinpoche recommends putting an altar in every room, and offering light to it.
- If your relatives get upset, keep the altar hidden or discreet. Use a medicine cupboard and keep the doors closed, or you can just set it up and take it down as you go.
- It's a work in progress, and a joyous adventure, relax and enjoy!

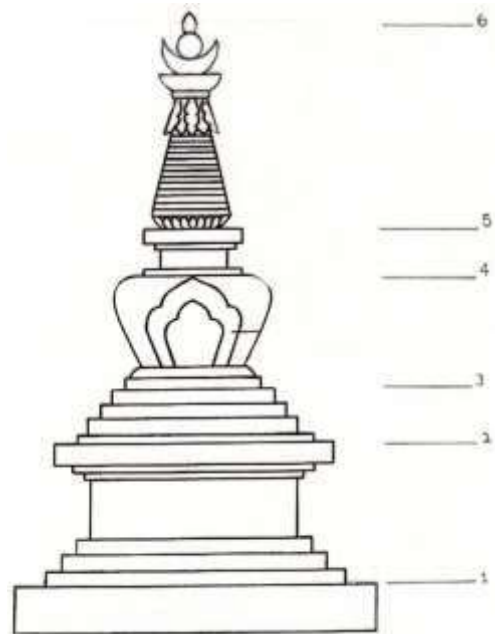
Stupas and Holy Relics

What is a stupa?

- 'Stupa' is a Sanskrit word meaning 'to heap' or 'to pile up', and it refers to the mound-like shape of the earliest stupas. Since then the stupa has evolved into an expression of the Buddha's holy mind. They are called 'the embodiment of wisdom', and reveal the path to enlightenment - how an ordinary mind can be transformed into an enlightened mind.
- The Buddha himself outlined the basic design by folding his robe many times into a cube and then putting his bowl over it. He gave instructions that when he passed away his body should be cremated and the relics divided up into 4 different monuments, erected in places marking important milestones in the Buddha's life (Lumbini, where he was born; Bodhgaya where he attained enlightenment; Sarnath, the site of his first teaching; and Kushinigar where he died).
- A stupa is constructed according to the texts of sutra and tantra, and filled in a strict procedure with many holy objects, including many scriptures, rolled mantras, holy relics, precious stones, medicines, statues and pictures of the buddhas.

Symbolism of the stupa

- There are 3 main types of Buddhist practice: the foundation or Base; the Path; and the final stage, or the Result. The stupa shows all three.
- A stupa has the entire representation of how the buddha, from the very basis or beginning, trained on the path and finally perfected himself.
- The base (1) and the throne (2) of the stupa are the ethical foundation of all Buddhist practice. The steps (3), vase (4), and harmika (5) are the path, the actual practices. Then the pinnacle (6) represents the result of the practices, the enlightened mind.

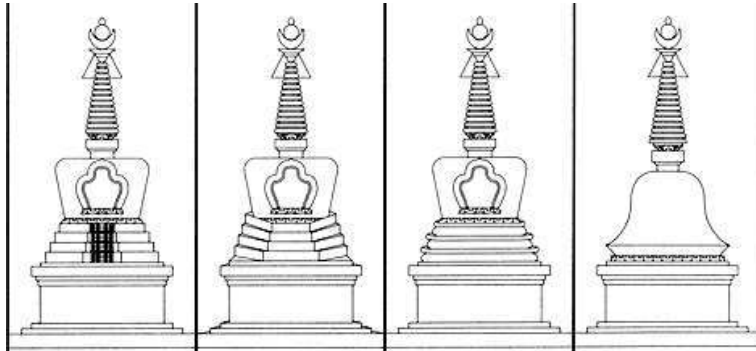
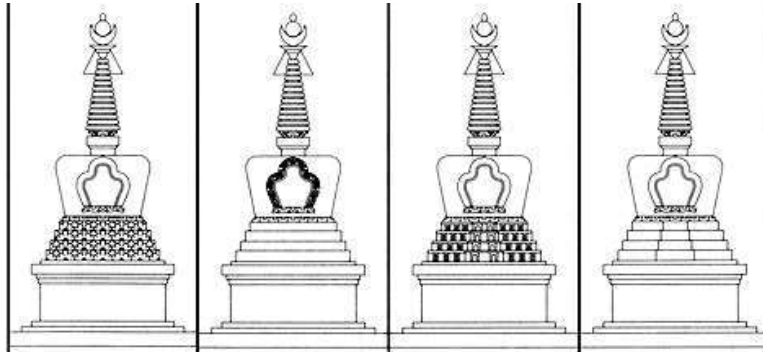


10 traditional purposes of stupas

1. To remind one of a teacher
2. To act as a reliquary containing the relics of a teacher, embodying the enlightened mind, and serving as the focal point for the continuation of the buddha-activity of a teacher
3. To magnetise enlightened energy
4. To speed a teacher's rebirth
5. To promote longevity
6. To create peace and harmony in society
7. To magnetise wealth
8. To turn back invading armies
9. To pacify physical and mental illness, pestilence, and disease
10. To actualise enlightenment

The 8 types of stupa

1. Birth
2. Enlightenment
3. Turning of the Wheel
4. Miracles



5. Descent from Tushita Heaven
6. Reconciliation of the Sangha
7. Victory
8. Parinirvana

What are holy relics?

- Holy beings manifest relics and remains out of kindness for us, so that we can collect merit and purify obscurations. Thus, they are considered very holy and precious.
- The Buddha emanated many kinds of relics out of compassion for us. We cannot see the actual body of the Buddha, but we do have the fortune to see his relics. They inspire us to attain liberation and enlightenment - the sole purpose of producing relics.
- Scriptural teachings say only those with exceptionally high realisations (realisation of mind isolation in completion stage HYT) will produce relics (they will also be able to attain enlightenment in that one lifetime!).
- Due to the power of the holy objects, even if one makes offering to them with impure motivation such as anger or attachment, it still becomes only the cause for omniscience.



Types of relics

- There are 300 different types of relics in the world. The 5 kinds of genuine relics housed in Geshe Lama Konchog's stupa : the Buddha Dharma Relic; the Pill Relic; the Body Relic; the Holy Remains and Bodily Parts Relic; and the Dharmakaya, Truth Body Relic.
- Relics found when Geshe Lama Konchog's body was cremated: right-turning conch-shape tooth relic, tongue relic with self-emanating image of Tara, big white relic, red relic and black relics (body, speech and mind), black shining Vajra Yogini hair, crystallised heart, the five colour relics (red, yellow, black, white, green) of the 5 wisdoms showing signs of the attainment of the Dhayani Buddha states, and many pearl relics.
- Relics continue to grow in number. The pearl relics have been observed growing in size, generating a bump on the side, and then dividing and multiplying in number.

Water Bowl Offerings

About this practice

- The water bowl offering is a simple yet profound practice given especially to the Tibetans by Lama Atisha. Water (especially the crystal clear mountain water of Tibet) has eight properties that bring about eight benefits, and we should think about these as we make the offering.
- Geshe-la says water is really kind because you don't need a lot of wealth or material possessions to practice generosity and generate merit; you can just offer water.
- It is like having Buddha to tea! Try to do it as nice as possible. Don't worry about doing it wrong; just do the best you can. Geshe-la also spends several hours each night polishing his offering bowls, so then it is very easy to think of it as something precious.

Some handy hints

- Offer clean water. If we only drink bottled water ourselves; that is also what we should offer to the Buddha.
- Empty them before you go to bed or in late afternoon if you get too tired at night. Or you can leave them there 24 hours, and in morning tip them out and immediately fill them again. LZR likes to offer all the bowls in all the centres around the world, so he knows they are full! Don't leave the water in the bowls and watch the level go down each day, as it puts in place the causes of poverty!
- Tibetans usually offer an odd number of bowls, usually 7, sometimes 3 or even just 1.
- Better to have bigger bowls than ones too small. They should be wider at top than bottom, and it is good if they have a lip so it is easier to pour.
- Set aside a cloth and jug just for making offerings, and not for general household use.



8 qualities that bring about 8 benefits

1. Cool: your ethics will become pure because the water you offer is cool.
2. Delicious: because the water is delicious you will come to enjoy most delicious food.
3. Light: the lightness of the water means your mind and body will become pliant and supple.
4. Soft: the water's softness results in a gentle mindstream.
5. Clear: a clear mind will result from the water's clarity, and you will be able to understand any object or topic very easily.
6. Odourless: its lack of odour will purify you of karmic obscurations.
7. Kind to the stomach: because the water does not hurt your stomach your body will be free of illness.
8. Easy on the throat: this means you will come to have pleasant speech.

*Cool, delicious, light, and soft,
Clear, odourless, easy on the throat,
And kind to the stomach is the water
With the eight properties.*



Usually seven water bowls are set up left to right each morning, offered to the Triple Gem, and then emptied the same evening.

How to make water bowl offerings

STEPS	COMMENTS
1. Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take the jug (used only for offering water) and fill it with the water you normally drink (bottled or tap).
2. Clean the first bowl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With a special cloth, wipe the first bowl 3 times away (clockwise) from you, thinking that you purify all negativities. Then wipe 3 times towards you (anti-clockwise), drawing the qualities of the Buddha's body, speech and mind toward you.
3. Fill the first bowl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fill the bowl almost to the top and place it back on the altar. Put the jug down.
4. Transfer the water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pick up the second bowl and wipe it 3 times one way and 3 times the other, as before. Pick up the first bowl and transfer almost all the water into the second, leaving about 1 cm in the bowl. Place both bowls down about $\frac{1}{2}$ cm apart (1 rice grain). As we put each bowl down think "I hope always to be close to my guru". Repeat this process with the rest of the bowls, working from left to right down the line.
5. Fill the bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When there is a little water in each of the bowls, pick up the jug, holding it in both hands, and fill each bowl almost to the top (not too full - leave about 1cm so they are easy to empty). When pouring the water, constantly recite "OM, AH, HUM" to bless as you offer. Also try to remember the 8 qualities and 8 benefits and the 4-line verse.
6. Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you have finished filling the bowls, light some incense and make 3 prostrations. Then you can sit down for meditation, or go about your day.
7. Emptying the bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empty the bowls at the end of the day (or late afternoon if you get too tired). Empty them in reverse order (right to left), and do whatever you like with the water (in garden, drink it, wash cloths). Place the bowls upside down (so not making empty offerings), leaning each bowl on top of the other to help them dry.

Tantric Offerings

- What are they? There are many different types of offerings that we make at puja - offering bowls, mandalas, tormas - and there are different reasons for each of these, and each has a physical representation on the altar.
- Who can make them? If we haven't had an initiation, then in the puja we think that the others, as Tara, are offering them. You need to be able to self-generate as the deity in order to bless them, but everyone can offer them. You can only self-generate if you have permission, if you have become a suitable vessel by having an initiation.
- When do we make them? We only them set up when we are going to do the particular practice, and we take down again afterwards. The bowls are set up differently for different practices, and the number of bowls and their direction often changes. The way to set these up is described and explained in the sadhana or commentary.
- What do we offer? As a deity, we transform ordinary substance like water and flowers into the primordial awareness of indivisible bliss and emptiness. They appear as substances made of light, they have the nature of emptiness, and their function is to bestow special uncontaminated great bliss.
- What do they symbolise? We offer the actual physical substance, and these symbolise different qualities.



*Common set-up
for a tantric
sadhana practice*

argham	padyam	pupe	dhupe	aloke	ghande	newinde	shabta
(foot- wash)	(face- wash)	(flowers)	(incense)	(light)	(perfume)	(food)	(music)

Different levels of meaning

- Put it a little simplistically, in Sutra there are two levels of meaning. This means that if we are reading, something and only take it on one level, we have missed at least half the meaning! In tantra there are a minimum of 6 levels of meaning, and up to 30 levels.
- Interpretive (the apparent meaning, the literal image). When it says trees and flowers, it means actual trees and flowers.
- Definitive (the ultimate meaning, the symbolism). When it says trees and flowers, it means various qualities and virtues.
- For example: Water = purify ignorance. Flowers = virtues, compassion. Incense & perfume = morality. Light = wisdom. Food = spiritual nourishment. Music = awaken with the Dharma

Different Types of Offerings at Puja

- Mandala offerings (with gesture or the rice heaps) are made for the purpose of receiving a wealth of resources and realisations. You do not need an initiation to make them; everyone can do them.
- Tantric offerings (offering bowls) are made in order to receive the resources, wealth, or enjoyments of a Buddha. The offerings must be blessed by a deity, and you can only self-generate as the deity if you have permission - that is, if you have had the initiation. If you are at puja, others can bless, and you can still offer them.
- Torma offerings (special ritual cakes) are offered specifically to receive realisations, and usually offered at puja and during retreat. They too must be blessed by a deity.
- Tsog (a mountain of food offering) is made to accumulate incredible merit and a strong connection with the guru. It also must be blessed by the deity but can be offered by everyone. The more food, the more auspicious. After the puja it is auspicious to distribute it all, with nothing held back.

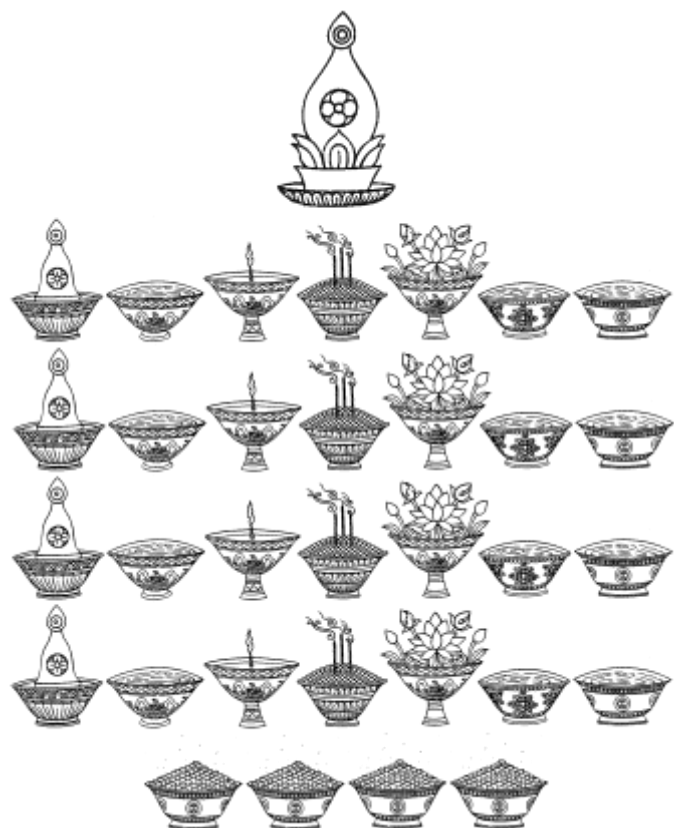


Diagram for Tara puja set-up.

Tara Puja Offering Set-up

- We try to have a physical representation of what we mentally offer, so that in the future we will have resources and physical things to make offerings with.
- Directly in front of the image of Tara we place the torma, usually an egg-less cake.
- We offer 4 sets of bowls, set up right to left (as this is Mother tantra). Music is not set up as a bowl, but is offered during the puja.
- We also set up 4 bowls of rice (or jewels) to represent the 4 mandalas offered during the puja.

Mantras and Malas

Using the Mala (rosary)

- We use malas (rosaries) say mantras on. We combine our body, speech and mind by using a mala. This helps our concentration. When mind begins to wander, our body stops too, and it is easier for us to catch ourselves.
- Use the mala to wrap around your fingers when you make the short mandala offering (if you don't have your mandala set).
- Try not to wear your mala as a fashion accessory! Wear under your clothes, not on top. If you wear it around your wrist, try not to take it to the toilet.
- Have a reasonably plain mala for everyday use - not too ostentatious. If you have a special retreat mala, try to keep it private. After many retreats, the mala becomes a powerful object.



The mala usually has 108 beads, a guru bead at the end, and divider beads at 7, 21 and 28. It also sometimes has a pair of counters on which you can count up to 10,000 mantras.

Daily blessing prayer for the mala

OM RUCHIRA MANI PRAVARTAYA HUM (recite 7x then blow on the mala)

What the mala is made of

- It is not necessary to have malas of different materials for different practices; what is important is the mind. Each material should remind us of its particular qualities. With a bodhi seed mala we remember the qualities of the Buddha. If we have a bone mala it is important to remember impermanence. Crystal, quartz or lotus seed malas are often used for the Chenrezig or Nyung-Ne.
- Most malas have 108 beads, sometimes 111 beads, but we only count 100. After this, you can use the Tibetan counters just like an abacus. When counting prostrations you can use a wrist mala of 25 beads.
- The mala can be threaded with red string from bead shop, with fine elastic or stretchy tubing. If you use red thread, use at least 3 threads, so you can see the frayed ends sticking up before the whole lot breaks.
- The mala also has larger or rough divider beads (because it is by feel) for easy counting. These are usually on 7, 21 and 28 - the usual commitment numbers.

How to hold the mala

- Usually, we hold the mala in the right hand (left hand for mother tantra) - it is not to do with whether you are right or left handed.
- Drape the mala over the top of your fingers and pull the beads towards you with your thumb. Continue in the same direction for each round of the mala.
- Hold the mala at the level of your heart, rather than on your knees or at your crutch. We are trying to bring our subtle energies into the heart area.

8 faults of mantra recitation

Reciting too quickly, too slowly, too loudly, too softly;

Conversing while reciting, having distraction,

Pronouncing the long accents as short, or the short syllables as long.

- 1) Too quickly is when the mantra syllables blur together are not distinct.
- 2) Too slowly, and you will not finish the required mantras within a reasonable time.
- 3) Too loudly is reciting like thunder, so others will hear.
- 4) Too softly is reciting so that you cannot hear the mantra yourself.
- 5) Conversing is interrupting the recitation for conversation.
- 6) Having distraction is allowing your concentration to be lost in mental wandering.
- 7) & 8) Pronouncing the long accents short and the short syllables long is to mispronounce the mantra syllables.

Saying mantras correctly during retreat

- Reciting mantras during the day is different from counting them in retreat. Generally it is good to be reciting mantras all the time, but we are not officially counting them. Usually we only count whole malas that we complete in the meditation session.
- In retreat it is important to verbalise the mantras (how else can we purify our speech?). Geshe Tashi Tsering told me personally that the two essential things to concentrate on in a retreat are to meditate on emptiness and to say the mantras correctly.
- Enunciate each syllable - able to distinguish each syllable distinctly, so move our mouth.
- The mantra must also be audible - so that the collar can hear but shoulders can't. (This is so we don't drive our neighbours crazy in retreat!)
- It is also important not to let wind go when reciting mantras. If you do, subtract a number of mantras for each incident (3 cough, 10 burp, 5 fart, 12 falling asleep). When you feel a yawn coming, suppress it, or you will have to start the mala again!
- Try not to drink during the recitation. If you must take a sip, you have to reverse out of the visualisation step by step, take a sip, and then build the visualisation back up again! It may take up to 10 minutes to do this!
- You can see each bead is a sentient being (like Chenrezig's crystal mala), or that each bead is one of your lifetimes. You can also visualise that as you move each bead an emanation of the deity dissolves into your heart. All this will be in the instructions of your sadhana or commentaries of the practice.

How to Offer the Short Mandala

Short Mandala Offering

sa.zhi pö.kyi j'uk.shing me.tok tram
ri.rap ling.zhi nyi.dä gyän.pa di
sang.gyä zhing.d'u mik.te ül.war gyi
dro.kün nam.dak zhing.la chö.par.shok

[This ground, anointed with perfume, strewn with flowers, adorned with Mount Meru, the four continents, the sun and the moon. Imagined as a Buddha land and offered to you; may all beings enjoy this pure land.]

Inner Mandala

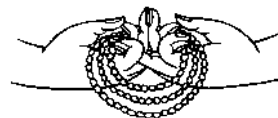
da.g'i cha.dang mong.sum kye.pä.yül
dra.nyen bar.sum lü.d'ang long.chö chä
p'ang.pa me.par b'ül.gy'i leg.zhe.nä
d'ug.sum rang.sar dr'öl.war j'in.gy'i.lob

[Please enjoy and bless me and all sentient beings to be released from the three poisonous minds, for I am offering without attachment my body, enemy, friend and stranger, and all possessions which are the object of my greed, ignorance and hatred.]

The Send-off

IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALA KAMNIRYA TAYAMI

[I send forth this jewelled mandala to you precious gurus.]



Fill in three things you need or want...

For yourself:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

For your friends and family:

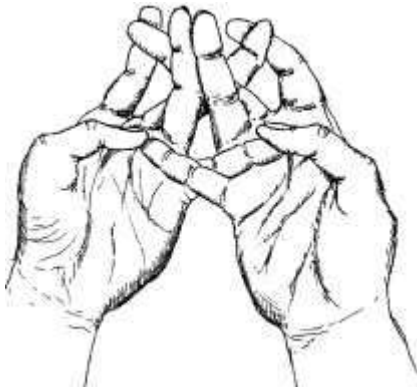
- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

For the world:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

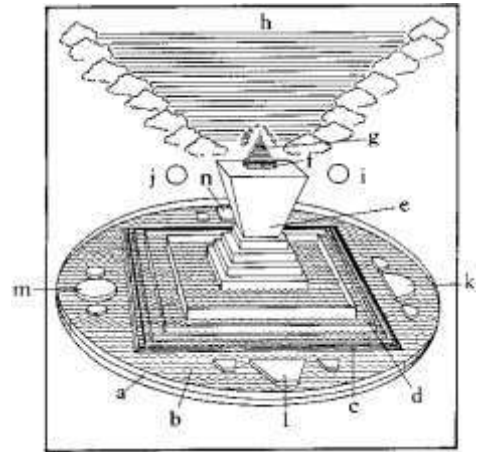
The mala represents the Vajra fence. The adornments are the Buddha's major and minor marks. The flowers have a tantric symbolism, perfume represents ethics. The 4 continents each have their 4 precious possessions, and the sun and the moon symbolise relative and ultimate Bodhicitta.

The inner mandala is offered mainly to control our greed, ignorance and hatred. This is the heart of the Mahayana teaching: nothing is possessed by ourselves - we belong to every sentient being. By this practice attachment is made to lose its grip and makes no sense.



Left: How to position one's fingers in the mandala mudra.

Right: Stylised representation of the mandala world system.



Offering a Short Mandala

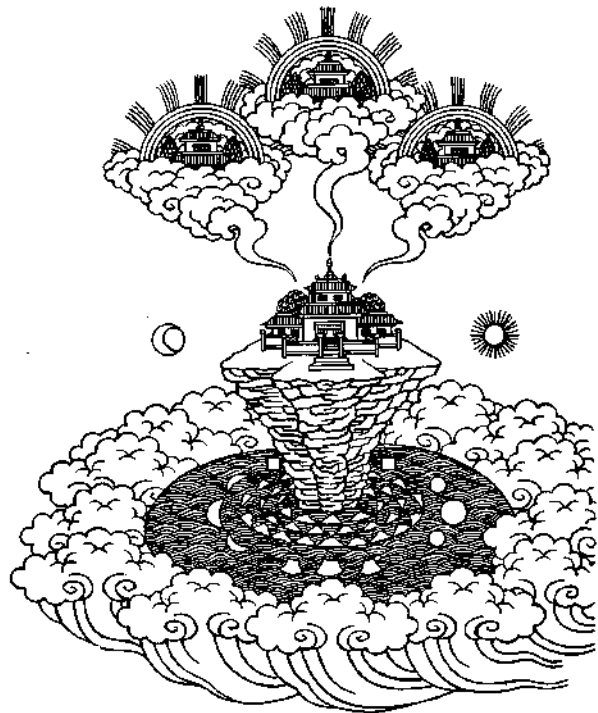
STEPS	COMMENTS
1. Check you have prayer book and rosary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't put prayer book on the floor, but on a stand. Have LTC prayer book open on Tab 2, page 28.
2. Begin singing the prayer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join in after the leader sings the first 3 syllables. Don't worry if you can't sing, it's the feeling that counts.
3. Drape the rosary around your fingers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold hands in front, little fingers next to each other, palms facing yourself. Drape rosary around 3 inner fingers of each hand, between index and middle finger, or hold a few rice grains. Wrap around twice if needed.
4. Put all your fingers back to back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep the rosary draped where it is. We build it up step-by-step, so relax, there is no rush!
5. Cross little fingers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Right over left little finger. Use opposite thumbs to hold them down.
6. Keep ring fingers back to back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep them pointing straight upwards. Symbolises Mt. Meru, mythical centre of the universe.
7. Cross longest fingers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Right over the top of left longest finger. Hook the tips of the middle fingers down with pointer fingers. Use the nearest/opposite pointer. The 4 inner fingers represent 4 human continents. 4 outer fingers represent 8 sub-continents.
8. Recall the visualisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recall who we are offering the mandala to. Recall items from the worksheet. Hold the position until end of the verse. Relax hands.
9. Send-off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While saying the send-off, tip fingers down and toward oneself, rolling through until palms are facing outwards Think that the Buddhas smilingly accept your offering.
10. End	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hands in the prayer position, holding rosary inside palms.

Long Mandala Offering

Riches and generosity

In Buddhism, we achieve untold riches by giving things away. This is encapsulated in the practice of the mandala. The root cause of wealth is generosity. There are many kinds of wealth - we can be rich in leisure time, in love, in confidence, as well as in property or money.

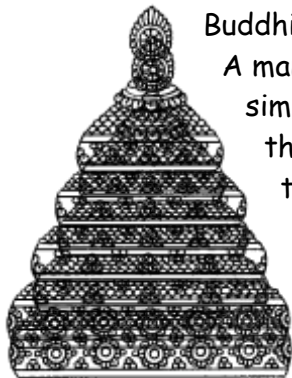
Generosity consists of both the substance and the intention. Even if we don't have a cent, by imagining vast treasures and giving them away, we encourage an atmosphere of richness and openness, we increase our luck/merit.



What is a mandala?

- Broadly speaking, there are many forms of mandalas - both sacred and secular.

Secular mandalas include healing art-works and spontaneous doodles, while sacred mandalas include the designs of Native Americans and the Aztecs, rose windows in cathedrals and Tibetan ritual mandalas.



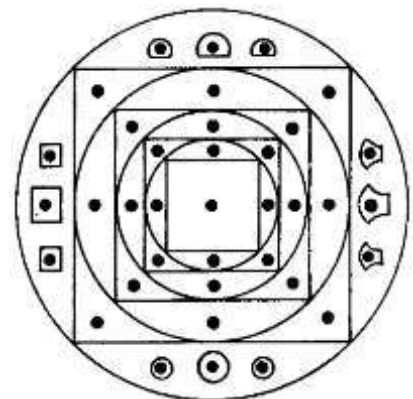
Buddhist mandalas are sacred manifestations of purified environment.

A mandala is a world system as taught in Buddhism that is surprisingly similar to the Christian myth of water and wind moving and breath and then word. It comprises four island-continents around a Mount Meru in the centre. Each continent has two smaller islands flanking it on the side facing away from Mount Meru.

- H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama has often said that we may also imagine the mandala representing the planet earth, the solar system, the galaxy, or the universe as modern science conceives of them today. It makes no difference. The point is that offering a mandala

represents the willingness to give everything in the universe to receive teachings, vows, or empowerment.

- The meaning of offering a mandala? Basically it means extracting the essence. What is this essence? The whole path, from guru devotion to enlightenment. That is why we offer at teachings - to extract the essence of the teaching.
- You don't need an initiation to offer a mandala, anyone can do it. If you are a Buddhist it is best to offer 3 in morning and 3 in the evening, during your prayers, before study.



How it all started...

You may think this is a slightly juvenile activity, and in a way you are right. It all started with a little boy on the beach wanting to make an offering to Buddha. He had nothing to give, so he got a stone, put a handful of sand on it, imagined it as piles of gold, and offered it to the Buddha. As a result of this act of generosity, he was born a Dharma king multitudes of times.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche sums it up

With our visualisation, think sincerely we are making the offering, both physical and imagined. We can also offer things we don't have (trees, orchards, planes etc). We mentally offer the entire universe. All the planets, all the worlds, all the sense objects, especially the things we cling to like our body and our friends. Offer the best quality, the greatest quantity, with as clear a visualisation as possible.

Types of mandalas

- The mandala offering is usually made in meditation, before teachings or initiations, using hand gestures, prayer and visualisation. This combines body, speech and mind into a powerful method.



- The long mandala offering uses a base and rings filed with grains, topped by a conch or dharmachakra. Each heap represents a richness (jewels, food), a quality (compassion, strength, equanimity), or infinite resources (all riches of gods and men), everything needed and all the very best.
- There are more permanent versions, such as the golden 3D mandala on a base offered at initiations and the start of teachings. It has a 5-coloured silk tail, symbolising the 5 aggregates purified into the 5 primordial wisdoms.
- Mandala paintings are like an aerial view of the celestial

palace of the deity, an architectural plan of a pure land. Every atom is a manifestation of the deity and entourage.

- These diagrams of the celestial palace are sometimes built as a 3D scale model, showing multiple levels, often richly decorated, sometimes filling an entire room.
- Sand mandalas are painstakingly constructed over several days. Qualified monks and nuns use a small funnel to place coloured sand grains in a semi-3D pattern. After completion the grains are swept up (to remind us of impermanence) and poured into a river, to bless the creatures living in the water.



Care of your mandala set

- Have 'fat' rice (arborio) or barley, beans, lentils, shells, pearls, beads (not rolling ones)
- Put anything we want in your set, things you value (not poisonous or stolen!)
- Nuns put in their jewellery (if you use opp-shop earrings, take the pointy bits off!)
- Money is great - especially \$2 gold coins (a coin from each country)
- Use talc on your hands if it is humid, hot and sticky!
- Keep base clean and shiny (use brasso) and perfumed.
- Picking weevils out is part of the practice (patience, generosity etc), as is shining it up.

Practicing the Six Perfections with your mandala set

By cleaning and blessing the mandala base with a special liquid, you practice the perfection of generosity. Checking the grain for insects results in the perfection of moral conduct, and removing insects from the grain without harming them lead to the perfection of patience. By thinking of how fortunate you are to be able to practice Dharma and making the offering with joy, you cultivate joyous effort. By not forgetting the visualisation, you attain concentration. By clearly visualising the colours and objects in the mandala, wisdom is attained. Therefore, offering mandalas helps you to quickly complete the two accumulations of the merits of method and wisdom, as it contains all the six perfections.

How to offer the long mandala

- Each of the following heaps may need only half a handful.
- Try to have each ring overflowing rather than too empty.
- Take your time, all the action happens in the first half of the prayer, then we have the last half and the next short verse to catch up if we need to start again.
- Just concentrate on getting the correct order first, then later as you get used to it you can try to synchronise to the tune and the words.



STEPS	COMMENTS
1. Getting set up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Umze sings first line (not written), then we all join in. • Open your legs out a bit to form a hollow in your lap (or arrange a shallow basin as a 'lap' if you are on a chair) • Open the mandala cloth in your lap, in a diamond shape. • Tuck the closest point of the mandala cloth into your shirt (or wind the ribbon around your neck and fasten). • Weigh the furthest corner down with a book on your desk. • Put the rings on your right knee, making sure they are the right way up (check by looking at the engraved pictures). • Place the dharmachakra on table in front.

2. Preparing the base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With a few grains in left hand (so not empty), hold the mandala base, fingers supporting the inside middle. • Grab a handful of rice with your right hand, wipe with your wrist in a clockwise motion, to clean away all obscurations and negativities, whilst slowly letting go of the grains. • Grab a second handful, and with the side of your fist, wipe in an anti-clockwise direction, towards us, 3 times. • We receive the blessings of body, speech and mind of the Buddha. Remember the objects we are making offerings to. • With a new handful, sprinkle a few grains (vajra ground).
3. First ring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vajra fence: clockwise, a continuous line, starting from closest to you (East) and ending in the same place. • Mount Meru: king of mountains, in the centre. • 4 Continents: 4 cardinal points, start in the east, going clockwise. • 8 Sub-continents: 4 pairs starting in the east (like back-stitch). • 4 precious objects: belong to each of the 4 main continents (mountain of jewels, wish-granting tree, wish-fulfilling cow and an unploughed harvest).
4. Second ring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 precious emblems and treasure vase: large diamond starting closest to you and going clockwise, then the large square, starting to your left and continuing clockwise. • 8 goddesses: the small diamond and square, same procedure.
5. Third ring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A heap for the sun on the right and one for the moon on the left. • A heap for the precious umbrella furthest away from you, and one for the banner of victory closest to you (finish with this as the last thing is auspicious). • Place the dharmachakra on top, then the mandala is complete.
6. Offering it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As we say the Sanskrit "IDAM GURU..." tip the mandala towards you so as to receive blessings from the objects we offered to. (tipping away from you is to receive realisations, but blessings encompasses both!) • Lastly, gently throw a little rice upwards (auspicious), visualise as a rainfall of flowers.
7. Packing it up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put the rings right way up on top of rice grains, pack the dharmachakra in middle, and the base over the very top. • Put front and back corners of cloth together and pull upwards and shake, pull side ends out so all the grains are in the middle. • Roll front and back corners down together, continuing to ends. • Tie once in a knot. • Store in a biscuit tin so not to encourage mice.

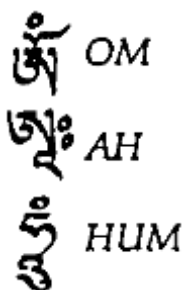
Symbolism of the Mandala Heaps

Preparing the base

- Clockwise direction, clean away all obscurations and negativities; push away or abandon them. Visualise mandalas of air, wind, water and earth, piled one on top of the other. Wiping the base is wiping the earth mandala, cleaning the impurities of the world and the stains in the continuums of sentient beings.
- Anti-clockwise direction, towards us 3 times, we receive the blessings of body, speech and mind of the Buddha. Remember the qualities of the objects we are offering to! Visualising this brings forth all positive things and virtues in the world.

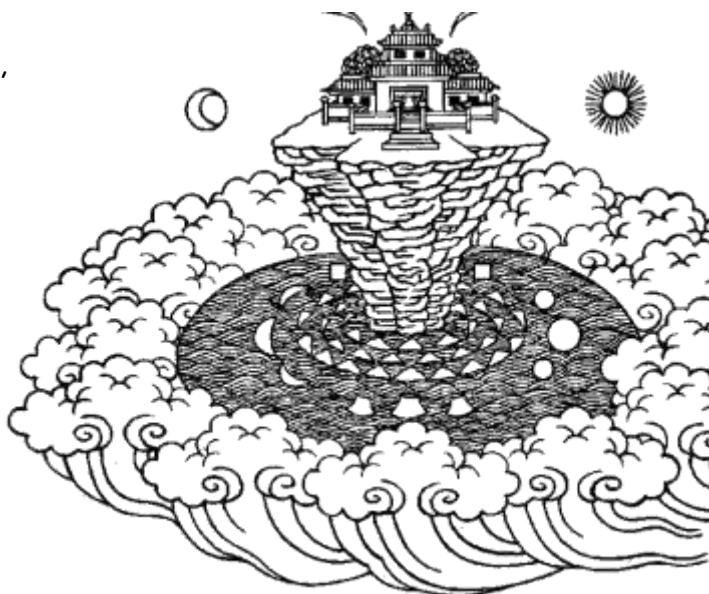
Vajra ground

- Vajra ground: mighty golden ground. First blue wind mandala, then white water mandala, and on top of that powerful golden earth mandala. All round and flat.
 - OM AH HUM is a blessing. "Primordial wisdom of bliss and emptiness of the three indivisible vajras arising in the aspect of the [earth element]."
 - Vajra fence: the iron mountains around the periphery.
 - 7 golden mountains rise up and encircle Mt. Meru (Holding a yoke, Holding the handle of a plough, Supported by lions, beautiful to look at, Horse's nose, Great obeisance, and Periphery)
 - Ocean possessing the 8 qualities (clear, cool, refreshing, smooth, tasty, good for the throat, and doesn't harm the stomach)
- Mount Meru: king of mountains. Is square, the four sides each of a different colour made of precious material. East is silver, west is ruby, north is gold and south is blue, lapis lazuli, sapphire, azure. That is why the sky is blue in our world. Mt. Meru is half above and half below water, surrounded by oceans. Very rich nagas living in these oceans. At the top are protrusions in the 4 intermediate directions, and in the centre is the city Beautiful to look at, in the centre of which is the abode of the 33 gods.



Continents and Sub-continents

- Western continent is rich in cows. Red, round, ruby.
- Eastern continent, people become two bodies. White, odd shape, diamond.
- Southern continent, fruit of the Jambu tree makes a 'jambu' sound when it falls in the water. Blue, triangular, sapphire.
- Northern continent, seven days before death, they hear unpleasant sound. Yellow, square, gold.
- Eight Sub-continents: shaped same as the four continents, only smaller.



Four Precious objects

- Lupagpo (east) has a treasure mountain, which is a huge pile of jewels and precious gems (ruby, sapphire, emerald, diamond, pearl, coral)
- Dzambuling (south) has a precious tree. Made of seven precious substances (golden roots, silver trunk, lapis lazuli branches, crystal leaves, red pearls for flowers, jade petals and diamond fruit). The tree fulfils your every desire, exactly as you would wish (clothes, implements etc). Rustle of its leaves tells the four seals of Dharma. We can't see it due to our karmic misfortune, but it grows near Dzambuling. It grows in the sky near the face of Mt. Meru, into the god realms. The gods get the fruit, while the demi-gods only get the trunk, so they are always at war (thus they are called the jealous gods).
- Balangcho (west) has a precious cow; diamond horn, sapphire hoof, inestimable tail as if made from a wish-fulfilling tree, urine and droppings are gold. Inexhaustible source of whatever one wants (rice, milk etc)
- Draminyan (north) has uncultivated crops in the form of huskless rice. It is a constant food source that doesn't require tending, and meals appear ready-cooked on the stove. It grows back over-night and if you pick the crops in the morning, by the afternoon they are grown back. Colour, taste and nutritional value excellent.

Seven Precious Emblems (Seven Factors of Enlightenment)

- Inestimable Wheel (khorlo rinpoche) Mindfulness. With the power to lead the four great kings with the four branches of an army of the Chakravartin. It is a thousand-spoked wheel made of gold from the Jambu river, like the sun in beauty and emission of light rays. It rises into the sky, can travel upon such a road for a day. Dedicate for the continued teaching of the Dharma.
- Inestimable Jewel (norbu rinpoche) Joy. Can give rise to all the intentions in one's mind, prevent untimely death and infectious disease. Made of blue lapis lazuli, hexagonal, emits light rays of five colours as bright as the sun. When it's hot, the rays are cooling, when it's cold, the rays are warm. Dedicate for the development of the Dharma centre.
- Inestimable Queen (tsunmo rinpoche) Tranquillity/pliancy. Eight qualities (agreeable mind, gives birth to many sons, of similar class, high status, no jealousy towards other women, no idle speech, no wrong views, if without home or kitchen, will not fall under the power of sense objects). Appealing form, beautiful to look at. Smells nice, gives supreme pleasure with her touch. She can eliminate mental sorrows, hunger, thirst, of beings in whatever land she dwells. Without the five faults of women (competitiveness, miserliness, attachment to inappropriate things, enjoyment of dwelling in inappropriate places, delight of killing in the kitchen). She preserves all the teachings and is the object of our success in the merit field.



- Inestimable Minister (lonpo rinpoche) Concentration. Head of the household possessing the divine eye, and clarity of mind for both Dharma and politics. He increases and stabilises wealth, protects with loving-kindness and compassion, makes all beings happy, no deceit or maliciousness. He is free from the 5 shortcomings (jealousy etc).
- Precious Elephant (langpo rinpoche) Wisdom. Can wage war in 3 places (water, land and space), victorious over legions of enemies. White and has 6 tusks, knows all his riders thoughts and can be lead simply by rubbing him. Does not harm other beings and goes slowly so as not to disturb his rider. Empty of "ordinary elephantness" and can circumambulate his continent 3 times in a day. Dedicate that all beings may go to enlightenment by attaining the Mahayana path.
- Precious Horse (tachog rinpoche) Energy. Vitality and lustre, no sickness. White, saddle and bridle made of divine jewels, can circumambulate a continent 3 times in a day without tiredness. Coat gleams like a peacock when sweating. Dedicate that we may all have supreme physical powers too.
- Precious General (magpon rinpoche) Equanimity/impartiality. Clever and skilled. 4 army divisions (regiments of elephant, horse, charioteer, foot soldier. Can turn back all acts of war that beset one's country. Abandoned harming others. Untiring, cannot be discouraged, knows the kings thoughts. Dedicate that we can overcome all inner and outer obstacles.
- Great Treasure Vase (terchenpo I Bumpa) full of any treasure one may desire, the vase of plenty, made of gold, encrusted with jewels. Round belly, long neck, drooping lip, flat base. Decorated with wish-fulfilling tree and divine cloth on its handle. Dedicate that we may be able to offer all goodness to sentient beings.

8 goddesses (2-armed)



- (gegma) white, goddess of sensuality; wrathful fists hold 5 pointed vajras. All different colours, very beautiful. They dance and sing carrying the many things they are offering.
- (trengwama) yellow, goddess of garlands; garland precious vajras bestowing empowerment on all offering objects.
- (luma) red, goddess of song, holding vajra representing a lute which she plays.



- (garma) goddess of dance, legs and face white, neck and body red, waist and arms blue, thighs light yellow, rest is blue. Hands hold 3 pointed vajra, dancing.



- (metogma) yellow, goddess of flowers, vajras symbolising vessel for flowers and a rain of flowers.
- (dugpoma) white, goddess of incense, holding incense offering vessel, and other hand wrathfully grasped in lifting mudra.
- (nangselpa) pink goddess of light, or clear appearance, right hand vajra symbolises wicks of butter lamps, left offers at heart level.
- (drichabma) various coloured goddess of perfume, left holds conch of perfume at heart, right applies it.

The sun and the moon

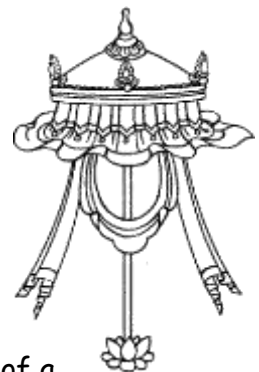
- Sun disc (nyima) made of glass, warm rays eliminate gross and subtle darkness of continents. On top is a golden horn, stairs of precious substances, fire-cleaned earth, and a peak on which the children of gods sing, dance and play. Imagine as inner and outer characteristics.
- Moon disc (dawa) cool rays eliminate gross darkness of the continents. On top is same as for the sun. They also represent wisdom and method (conventional Bodhicitta) when offered together.

Auspicious symbols

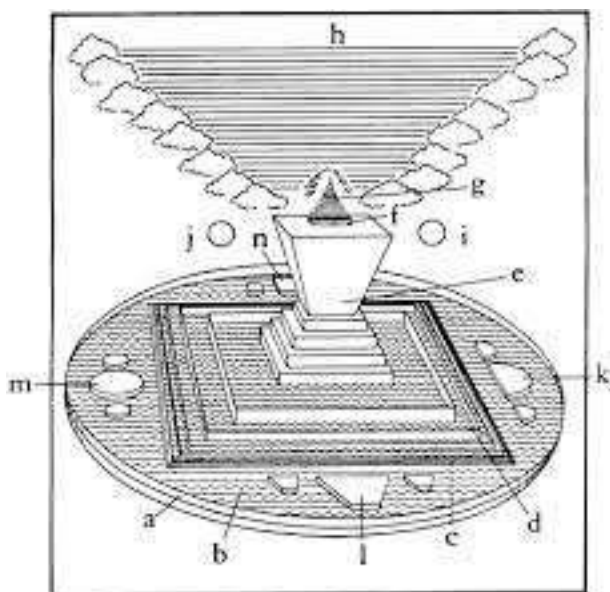
- Precious Umbrella (rinpoche dug), protection. White, made of divine substances, jewelled handle, 1,000 gold spokes, lapis lazuli tip, pearl ornaments. Symbolises the protection that the Dharma gives us.



- Victory Banner (chogle nampar gyalwai gyaltsen) is one of the terms used to describe a Buddha. Perfect cessation of suffering, conquering all the delusions and becoming a Dharma holder. Offering this creates auspicious conditions for you to attain the state of a victor. It has the 3 auspicious animals on it. On tip of handle is half moon and precious vajra. On 3 layers of divine silk are many small golden bells that give a pleasant sound (of the Dharma).



- Wheel of Dharma represents all most precious possessions of gods and humans without exception (37 & 23 heaps) or the top of mount Meru (7 heaps). Goes on top of everything because the Dharma will help us transcend the world. Beams of light radiate out liberating all sentient beings.



Offering it

- Offer to the guru, in form of Buddha, the deity, the buddhas and bodhisattvas all around, make this offering to them, everything you hold dear and precious, especially the Dharma on top.
- If we can remember emptiness and our bodhicitta motivation, even better! This is the rationale why and how the whole process works! "Because subject, object and offering do not exist from their own side, they are merely labelled. Therefore they are changeable, and can be transformed and become a cause for enlightenment."

How To Do A Short Prostration



With hands in the prostration mudra, touch the crown, forehead, throat, and heart.



Touch the four places to the ground (hands first, then knees), and lightly touch the forehead to the ground.

What is a prostration?

A prostration is where you touch the 5 places to the ground. There are both long and short versions. If you cannot physically do them, imagine that you are doing so, standing (or sitting) with your hands in the prostration mudra. Buddhists do 3 prostrations each morning and night, as well as when entering a gumpa, and before and after teachings.

Who do we make prostrations to? The Three Jewels: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. Why do we prostrate? To draw closer to the qualities we aspire to and to wipe away negativities such as pride, doubt, and aversion. If it is too crowded at teachings, imagine you are doing them.

There are 3 elements of a prostration. (1) Mental prostrations (these are the most important), remembering the qualities of the buddha, (2) verbal prostrations (when we say prayers, or "OM AH HUM" or "I prostrate") that purify speech, and (3) physical prostrations, that purify negativities and problems of the body (just do the best you can).

What to think and visualise

- Imagine coloured light and nectar radiating from the corresponding places of the Buddha, entering you and completely purifying you.
- Hands on crown creates cause to obtain Buddha's ushnisha. Visualise a replica of the Buddha you are prostrating to absorb into you, blessing you.
- Hands to forehead creates the cause for a buddha's treasure hair, also purifies negativities of the body. White light.
- Hands to throat purifies negative actions made by speech, and creates the cause to obtain melodious speech of a Buddha with 64 qualities. Red light.
- Hands to heart, purifies negative actions created by mind, and creates the cause to obtain the qualities of Buddha's mind of uncontaminated wisdom. Blue light.
- As you go down, remind yourself about the graduated path to enlightenment. When your head touches the ground think "May I attain Buddhahood."
- As you come up swinging your arms behind you, think that you take all the suffering of sentient beings and place it upon the self-cherishing attitude.

Making a Short Prostration

STEPS	COMMENTS
1. Visualisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visualise objects of refuge in front You lead all surrounding sentient beings in prostrations
2. Place hands in prostration mudra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have thumbs making a little table inside your palms, to hold the jewel of buddha-nature, our great potential
3. Keeping the mudra, place on the crown of your head	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cause for ushnisha Replica of buddha absorbs into you Think "I prostrate to the buddha, dharma, sangha"
4. Keeping the mudra, place hands to forehead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purifies negativities of the body, White light from the Buddha's forehead streams into your forehead Cause for treasure hair of the Buddha
5. Keeping the mudra, place hands at throat level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purifies negativities of speech Cause for 60 melodious qualities of Buddha's speech Red light streams into your throat from the Buddha's throat
6. Keeping the mudra, place hands at heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purifies negativities of mind Cause for mind of uncontaminated wisdom Deep blue light streams from the Buddha's heart into your heart
7. Touch four places to the ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hands first, then knees! Separate your hands and place them on the ground about a foot in front, level with your shoulders, fingers slightly apart Then put knees on the ground (like a child about to crawl) Think you are suppressing 4 negative thoughts
8. Touch head to ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lightly touch forehead to the ground and lift up again Think you attain the enlightened state
9. Standing up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stand up by pushing your knees off the ground with your hands. Careful not to bump person behind with your bum! As you rise up swinging your arms behind you, think you draw all sentient beings out of suffering
10. Repeat process 2 more times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to rise up straight in between each prostration, though you may not have time to during teachings
11. End with hands at heart and pause	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position hands at your heart in prostration mudra Wait until the lama sits down before you take your seat

Long Prostrations



With hands in the prostration mudra, touch the crown, forehead, throat and heart.



Touch the four places to the ground (hands first, then knees). Then stretch your whole body out on the floor, stretch your arms and feet out, and lightly touch the forehead to the ground.



Bring hands up to crown to bless, then come up by first pushing up at level of shoulders, then at the knees.

About long prostrations

- There are many ways to make prostrations a meaningful activity. You can do your prostrations for another person - a sick person or someone who has just died, for people suffering a particular illness, or the beings in each of the realms.
- If you can't physically do prostrations, you can still do mental and verbal ones, by reciting the prayers and imagining you are doing them. Stand (or even sit) with your hands in the prostration mudra. Imagine your body as large as the gompa.
- The prostration practice is a very powerful method of purification. It can be simple, or it can be very elaborate if we include extensive visualisations.

Prayers to recite whilst doing prostrations

1. Ecstatic prostration (x3)
2. General prostration prayer (x3)
3. Names of the 35 buddhas (x3)
4. Names of the 7 medicine buddhas (x1)
5. Confession of moral downfalls (x1)

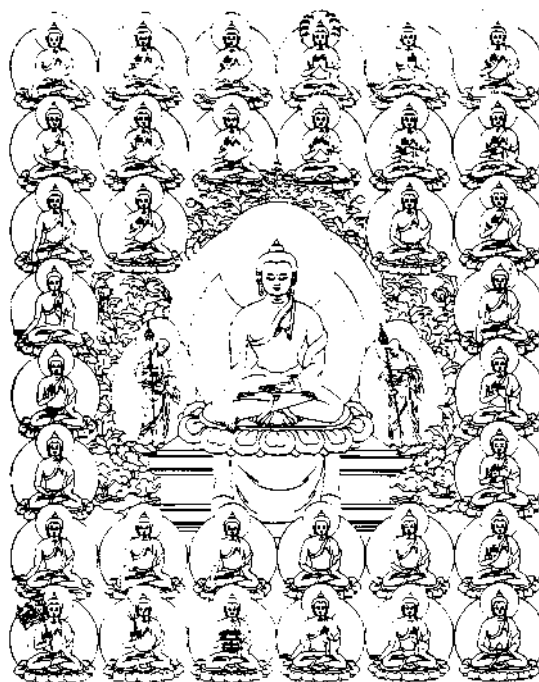
These prayers can be found at the beginning of the FPMT Prayer Book. They take about 10-15 minutes.

Handy hints for prostration sessions

- Use an .mp3 with the prayer on it to prostrate to, and recite along with it. There is no need to synchronise the prayer with the prostration at first, just go at your own pace.
- Use a knee cushion and cloth sliders if you like, and a face washer for your forehead.
- Make sure put down your hands first, then knees. When you come up try to keep your knees together. This stops them becoming inflamed.
- Keep fingers together, not clenched or spread. Make it beautiful, don't slap hands down!
- Go down slowly, come up fast, and don't rest on the ground! Stand up straight in between each prostration, rather than staying bent over (to avoid causes for the lower realms).

Visualisation and symbolism

- You can visualise yourself surrounded by all sentient beings, all making prostrations together, or you can imagine all your previous and future lives prostrating with you now.
- When you visualise the 35 Buddhas in front, visualise coloured light and nectar coming from the heart of each buddha in turn, completely purifying you.
- Hands in the prostration mudra with thumbs together inside, forming a 'table' (holding the jewel of bodhicitta), recognising your potential to become a Buddha.
- Hands on crown creates cause to obtain Buddha's ushnisa.
- Visualise light and nectar radiating from the corresponding place of the Buddha, entering you and completely purifying you.
- Hands to the forehead creates cause for a buddha's treasure hair and purifies the negativities of the body.
- Hands to the neck purifies negative actions made by speech, and creates the cause to obtain the melodious speech of a Buddha with 64 qualities.
- Hands to the heart purifies the negative actions created by mind, and creates the cause to obtain the qualities of a buddha's mind of uncontaminated wisdom
- Visualise that all the negativities of body, speech and mind leave from your lower orifices in form of snakes and scorpions etc, into the jaws of death 7 levels below, who devours them completely and is extremely blissful and satisfied.
- As you part your hands to place them on the ground, think you are letting go of all delusions and negative mind states. Think you are letting go of the dualistic view, the endless elaborations of the mind, and allowing space for the Sambhogakaya to appear.
- When you place your hands and knees on the ground, think you are crushing the five major delusions. Or you can think "I will never react to anger with anger," "I will never react to an accusation with an accusation," "I will never react to a fight with a fight," and "I will never react to an insult with an insult."
- As you gradually go down, remind yourself about the graduated path to enlightenment. Think "May I attain the 5 paths and 10 grounds". When your head touches the ground it is the 11th ground, the path of no-more-learning. Think, "May I attain Buddhahood".
- As you stretch you body on the ground, visualise as many sentient beings liberated as are atoms covered, all the way through the centre of the earth.
- As you come up and swing your arms behind you, think that you take all the suffering of mother sentient beings and placing it upon the self-cherishing attitude. Think that they are all free of suffering.



Mudras and Tantric Implements

Who can and who can't do mudras

- A mudra is a ritual gesture. We perform them during the sadhana or puja, especially when blessing or making offerings. If you do not have the appropriate initiation, you cannot perform the mudras or use the tantric implements. If you are in doubt, ask the retreat leader which ones you are permitted to do.
- If you are qualified to use the mudras you can do them without a dorje and bell, although at Gyume they don't. Usually you leave the mudras if you are not using a bell and dorje.
- You can only do the mudras if you have permission, that is if you have had the appropriate initiation. You do the mudras for specific practice and levels of tantra. The form of the mudras differs depending on which level of tantra, and on what tantric family, the practice belongs to.
- To simplify - if you have an action tantra initiation, you can do action tantra practices with mudras, but you cannot do HYT mudras (because you don't have permission to self-generate). However, if you have an HYT initiation, you are qualified to use action tantra mudras, because they are included within the practice (a little like Russian dolls).

Who can use tantric implements

- Tantric implements include the bell, the dorje and the damaru. You are only permitted to use them if you are qualified, that is, had the appropriate initiation.
- If you have a lower tantra initiation it is OK, but not essential, to have a dorje and bell.
- If you have a HYT initiation, you have a commitment to use dorje and bell (and sometimes damaru), and you are not supposed to go anywhere without them. If you cannot take them physically you can take a photo (or a drawing in the prayer book).

What the implements mean

- It is important to think about what they mean when you are using them. The bell and dorje remind us to make the offerings by holding fast to wisdom and compassion. We need the union of method and wisdom; therefore we also use the dorje and bell together. If we don't have the two together, we cannot achieve Buddhahood.



- Dorje - the meaning is method (bodhicitta), diamond sceptre thunderbolt, masculine principal, compassion.
- Bell - the meaning is wisdom (bell necessarily has a vajra on it), and it always includes the compassion aspect. Feminine principal.
- Damaru - is a ritual drum, and the meaning is method (it fans the tummo fire). Used only in HYT, and in mother tantra you have a commitment to use one.



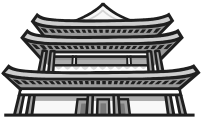
The tantric implements are set up in the top right hand corner of your table; (from right to left) damaru, bell, dorje, inner offering.



How to use the dorje and bell

STEPS	COMMENTS
1. Setting up your table (right to left)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cloth in top right corner of table (or use bell cover). Damaru (placed ready to go, tail neatly and donger free). Bell (with the Buddha's face towards you). Dorje (point facing away from you, tie red thread if unsure). Inner offering (it can also be at far right).
2. Picking them up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is polite to wait until the umze picks theirs up before you do. Either, using just your right hand, first pick up the dorje, then pick up the bell in the same hand. Bring both to your heart, then swap the bell into your left hand. Or, crossing your hands over and picking both bell and dorje up simultaneously, and bringing them to your heart. Careful not to clang! Do silently, it's a meditation.
3. Make the mudras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try not avoid the tongue clanking, by swivelling your wrist so it glides around the edge of the bell when you are doing the mudras You may need to re-affix the tongue of the bell with wire. Make most of the mudras in the vicinity of your heart, and try not to go outside the width of your shoulders. Think "By holding fast to wisdom and compassion, I am making this offering for the benefit of all sentient beings."
4. Offer the music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When just using bell and dorje, the bell is played near the solar plexus. It should sound beautiful (blissful sound of emptiness). Played at specific times, like the 3rd syllable of second line. Play slow, quick flourish to end, muting the sound (not trail off). When also using the damaru, play the bell at the heart, and the damaru near navel. Bell and damaru are played together, never only damaru. The damaru starts a little later.
5. Putting them down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reverse order of picking them up. Transfer the bell to your right hand. Replace first the dorje, then the bell, on table. Adjust the face of Vairochana on bell so that it faces you.
6. Packing up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pack them up as soon as puja is over, or cover with a cloth if you are continuing in the next session (don't leave whilst socialising). Never touch another person's, so don't tidy someone else's away at the end of puja. They are usually kept secret and covered.

Gompa and Sangha Etiquette



Gompa etiquette

- Prostrate 3 times when you enter the gompa and 3 times when you leave. Don't feel compelled to though, wait until you feel comfortable!
- When sitting, try not to point your feet at the altar or teacher (if you must straighten your legs, cover your feet with a scarf). Don't lean against the wall or a pillar (the effort we put into sitting up straight will pay off as realisations).
- Don't stand on the nun's robes or the cloth seat coverings; ask them to lift it up.
- Try not to bring sharp things like scissors, umbrella or knives into the gompa.
- Point or gesture with an open hand, palm upwards and fingers together.
- When drinking or eating in puja, don't start until the puja leader or Geshe does.
- Try to arrive on time and not leave early; otherwise we set a precedent to develop a bad habit that is extremely hard to break.



What to wear

- What not to wear in the gompa: Take off your shoes before entering (except for medical reasons). Don't wear a hat, head scarf or beanie as it symbolises close-mindedness (vessel with the lid on). Try not to wear scant or revealing clothing like singlets or shorts (this applies to both men and women).
- What to wear in the gompa: try to be covered neck to knee, and to keep your shoulders covered. The sangha put in the effort to wear robes in summer, the least we can do is dress appropriately!
- Initiations or teachings: try to wear new or clean clothes.
- Long life pujas: try wear white if you can, and don't wear black.
- Tattoos: Khechok Rinpoche says that it is better to have auspicious animals, protector animals, auspicious symbols etc. If you have a picture of a deity or mantra are representing Buddha 24 hours a day, so you must be very good!



Dharma books and materials

- Be very careful to respect Dharma books, otherwise we create obstacles to our spiritual development. HH the Dalai Lama washes his hands and face before reading a Dharma book.
- Try to have your Dharma books covered (a cloth, pouch or paper bag).
- Don't put Dharma books on the floor or step over them, and don't put anything else on top of them, like pens or your glasses (not even a statue). If we do we put in place the cause for sleepiness in teachings!
- Don't put your notes from teachings or newsletters in the rubbish, but put them in Dharma burning. Cut out pictures of gurus and deities first, then burn the writing whilst reciting OM AH HUM, visualising the words dissolving into you.

Behaviour with monks and nuns

- Respect the vows, even if you do not get on with the person. Just like in martial arts where we respect the uniform, here we respect a holder of the vows. They are part of our refuge.
- There are many benefits for us; in practising mindfulness, in creating the causes to be respected by others, and it is part of our refuge commitments. The benefits for them include that it helps the newly ordained to get accustomed to their role, and it can help them to keep their vows. Our respect helps them put their best selves forward.
- Call the monk and nuns "Venerable", to distinguish them from lay people (in our own mind), even when talking about them. It is worth putting in the effort to say these 3 syllables, because they are our refuge, our teachers.
- Don't contradict the Sangha in public, even if they are wrong.
- Sangha sit at the front of the gumpa, go first when walking or entering.
- It was Lama Yeshe's wish that the sangha sit and eat together at lunch time, unless they are specifically invited elsewhere.
- Don't shake hands or hug unless they do so first - take your cue from them. Instead, put your hands in the prostration mudra and bow slightly.
- Avoid cuddling or flirting in their presence. Show restraint, respect their celibacy vow .
- Don't invite them to watch violent movies, or to a night club or casino, or on a day of shopping. Instead, take them on an outing to a neighbouring Dharma centre, or a clam day in nature, or a Buddhist exhibition.



Geshe etiquette

- Always try to make an offering when requesting advice, teachings, refuge, an initiation or ordination. If requesting ordination prostrate 3 times, no matter what Geshe-la says!
- Offer something that you personally like, and try to offer with a khata (Tibetan offering scarf). It is better to offer a small, yet sincere gift, than spend too much and regret it. Make sure it is clean, of good quality and properly acquired.
- When offering a khata Fold it like a concertina, and open with a flourish. Hold with the opening towards lama (open-minded). Use it to offer all other offerings with. It is better to offer a small and clean khata than a large one with spots on it. Don't get too attached - we are not getting something, but offering - and sometimes the lama keeps the scarf!
- As the geshe enters the room, stand up and bow, wait until he is seated before you sit.
- Prostrate before and after teachings. If there is no room, touch the 3 places and do mental ones. The only time you don't prostrate is after the last teaching, when they are going away, to leave it unfinished so they come back and finish.
- Don't offer 'nude' money, but put it in an envelope. Hand to the attendant or leave on the table (so they don't break their vows by handling money).
- Avoid offering red, or red and white flowers together (symbol of death), nor poisonous flowers, and cut the thorns off roses before you give them.
- Offer a cup of tea with both hands, and put a saucer under glasses or bowls.

Offering Our Food

Why offer our food?

- One of the refuge commitments we have as Buddhists is to always offer our food and drink before eating, even just a mouthful or a lolly.
- By offering our food we can turn the inescapable chore of eating into a practice of vast generosity, and a powerful way to accumulate merit. We offer to all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and then we also offer to all sentient beings, and in particular we remember their kindness in contributing to our meal - many by giving up their own lives.
- Lama Zopa Rinpoche often says that once we have offered our food, the main work is done, and if our meal is cut short, there is no great loss.



"These five trades ought not to be practised by a layman. What five? Trade in weapons, trade in human beings, trade in flesh, trade in alcohol and trade in poisons." - The Buddha

A short teaching on offering food from Lama Zopa Rinpoche

- The Hinayana way of offering food is basically as expressed in the prayer by Nagarjuna, where he says that the purpose of eating food is not to develop the body, to put on weight or become fit - purposes that come only from attachment - but simply to survive in order to practice Dharma. Food should be eaten without the three poisonous minds of ignorance, attachment or anger. With the motivation seeking your own freedom from samsara, offer your food to the Triple Gem and then eat. This is the Hinayana way of eating food.
- The Mahayana Sutra way of eating food is to dedicate every spoonful of food and mouthful of drink to all sentient beings, including those living in your body. In this way you make a connection with all sentient beings such that when, in future lives, they eventually become human, you can reveal the Dharma to them and lead them to enlightenment. The Mahayana way of offering food is thus done with bodhicitta motivation, as are all the daily actions of a Mahayana practitioner, thereby becoming a cause for achieving enlightenment.
- The Mahayana tantra way of eating food is to see yourself, your guru and the deity as one, and make every bite of food and every mouthful of drink a tsog offering. Offer everything you eat and drink to the three: guru, deity and yourself.
- Through this Mahayana practice, which is based on the Hinayana and adorned with the Vajrayana, your life becomes most beneficial, not only for yourself, but for all sentient beings.

Food Offering Prayers

Offering food and drink to the guru

Imagine the food as blissful wisdom nectar inside a vast jewelled vessel. Offer this to a small Buddha visualised at your heart. As you eat or drink, imagine that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha at your heart, who embodies the Triple Gem, experiences bliss from the nectar you have offered. He radiates light which fills your entire body.

OM AH HUM (recite 3x)

la.ma sang.gyä la.ma chö

de.zhin la.ma ge.dün te

kün.gyi je.po la.ma yin

la.ma nam.la kyab.su chi

The guru is Buddha, the guru is Dharma,

The guru is Sangha also.

The guru is the creator of all (happiness).

To all gurus, I make this offering.

Mantras for Blessing Meat

Nowhere in the Buddha's teachings will you find the instruction to forgo meat, although you are admonished not to kill or to have someone kill for you. Sometimes you may have to eat meat for health reasons, for reasons of economy, or if you are offered meat by others.

Recite the following mantras, then blow gently on the meat. Due to the force of the karmic connection with the being whose body this meat was, the consciousness of that being will receive blessings.



Medicine Buddha mantra (short)

TADYATHA / OM BHAISHAJYE BHAISHAJYE / MAHA
BHAISHAJYE / RAJA SAMUDGATE SVAHA

[Common pronunciation: TA YA TA / OM BEKANZAY BEKANZAY /
MAHA BEKANZAY / RADZA SAMUDGATAY SOHA]

Mitrugpa Buddha mantra

NAMO RATNATRAYAYA / OM KAMKANI KAMKANI / ROCHANI
ROCHANI / TROTANI TROTANI / TRASANI TRASANI /
PRATIHANA PRATIHANA / SARVA KARMA / PARAM PARA NI ME /
SARVA SATTYA NANCHI / SVAHA



Milarepa's mantra

OM AH GURU HASA VAJRA SARVA SIDDHI PHALA HUM