

Awam Meditation Practice Manual

Commentary by Yogi Khenpo Drimed Dawa

The Practice Manual was developed by myself for our sangha based primarily upon the *Khaton Prayer Book: Practices of the Wish-Fulfilling Gem* by HH Khenchen Lama Rinpoche, Mipham Rinpoche's *The Luminous Path to Liberation*, and adaptations from *The Concise Recitation and Practice of the New Treasure of Dudjom* by HH Dudjom Rinpoche

Conch – inviting all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

A traditional way of inviting the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to join the activity or event, here it is done three times.

Blessing Mantra

Om Sambara Sambara Bimana Sara Maha Zambaba Hung Phat Soha! (3X)

Sometimes referred to as the “blessing mantra”, as here, to bring blessings from the invited guests (Buddhas and Bodhisattvas); or it is called the “multiplying mantra” to multiply the merit of the practice that follows. I think of it as both!

The following text is a version of the “preliminary practices” (*Ngondro*). Variations of these practices are included in most *sadhanas* or practice manuals. There are two main parts: the common and uncommon *ngondro*. (1) The common *ngondro* is also called the *Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind*. These four are (a) suffering (broadly speaking), (b) karma – intentional actions and/or cause and effect, (c) precious human life – this rare opportunity to be born as a human and in this time in which the Buddha taught and his teachings are still available to us (metaphors – the blind turtle, and sperm and seeds), and (d) impermanence and death – everything is subject to change and we all at some point will die, ending this precious opportunity. Change can, of course, be “good” or “bad”, at least as articulated here. In terms of death, there were two primary views in India at the time of the Buddha: (1) nihilism – there is nothing beyond this life, period, and (2) permanence – there is some form of continuation (rebirth or uniting with some god...).

Some of the descriptions of these terms can be rather troubling to Western minds, such as those found in the *Words of My Perfect Teacher* by Patrul Rinpoche (his own teacher even said he had a bit of a harsh approach!). Still, this is the best known and most commonly used source text on *ngondro*, though there are others. So let's look at the first part.

Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind - The Common Ngondro

These four principles are considered to be common to all Buddhist traditions, hence the name. They may be articulated in different ways, but this approach is common within the Tibetan Buddhist lineages.

As I noted, there are four principles here said to “turn the mind” towards the **dharmā** ... the teachings of the Buddha. There is an element of “fear” in this particular approach, which can be very effective for some, especially in more primitive times, but even in some situations even today. Others prefer a more positive approach, so there is no need to be concerned about that. The important point is to be motivated to follow the path and practice. There are many benefits for a wide variety of people here.

Homage to Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri!

It is customary to pay homage to one or more of the Buddhas, teachers, or other significant figures in the tradition related to the text that follows. Here, Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri represent the heart-essence of all of Buddhism. Samantabhadra represents the masculine principle of “skillful means” such as lovingkindness and compassion for all. This also symbolizes the “relative” aspect of practice, this life. His consort Samantabhadri represents the feminine principle of “transcendent wisdom”. This also symbolizes the “absolute” or “ultimate” aspect of practice. They are depicted as being in union, which is like two aspects of the same thing. I think of them as being in the form of a single statue, which looks like two figures, but cannot actually be divided or separated. Nevertheless, there are two figures or representations in the one.

Because I suffer...

Dukka is often translated as “suffering”. However, the stories of the Buddha make it clear that he was talking about a much broader topic like: discontent, dissatisfaction and so forth. “Why can’t we all just get along?” for example. Tibetan teachings list three general types of sufferings. (1) Physical pain and mental obscurations – research shows that meditation (not just Buddhist forms) can be helpful for both of these, though rarely does it completely eliminate physical pain. (2) The dissatisfaction from change – “change is inevitable”; so we may not get what we want or we may get what we don’t want, either can cause dissatisfaction. And (3) is all-encompassing change, that broad, sometimes vague sense of general dissatisfaction with life. Or in some versions of the third version, it is called “suffering on suffering” or one on top of the other; while still dealing with one, here comes yet another! Ouch!

...due to my own actions,

“Actions” here refers to karma. In Buddhism generally we are referring to “intentional actions” (though some sources just use “actions”. Primarily this has to do with ethics, that is, how *our* actions affect others (or visa versa). Are we doing “good” or “bad”? And how do we know? Ethics are about relationships. A general rule in Buddhism, and easy to recall and apply, is to “do good, or at least to no harm, for the benefit of all beings”. Remember, it is

about our intention, not necessarily the outcome. But our intention does need to be genuine, not superficial. This may also involve making some sacrifices on our part, since the focus is on *other* beings, not ourselves. Sometimes it doesn't work out. Then we do what we can to make it better. And sometimes it is beyond anything we can actually do. That is okay. We do the best we can!

“...and I now have this precious human life...”

There are a number of factors that constitute this being a *precious* human life. First, we are human. Because of our ability to make *conscious* choices, communicate with verbal languages, etc., we are in a better state than other life forms to use our time and abilities to achieve “full awakening” (also called enlightenment, realization, liberation, etc.). We have also been born at a time the Buddha lived and taught the dharma. His teachings have survived to our lifetimes. These and other factors make this opportunity precious! But only if we take advantage of it. It is not necessarily simple or easy. It takes time and effort to study and practice, as well as live this life as a Buddhist. But as the Buddha said, it is like awakening from a dream that seemed “real” at the time, but is nothing like the actual awake experience. We are told that he proclaimed, “Profound peace, natural simplicity, uncompounded luminosity, I have found the nectar-like Dharma”.

There is also a story about a blind turtle that lived at the bottom of an ocean. Once every 100 years it would go to the surface, upon which a yoke was tossed about by the wind and waves. The chance of a precious human life is said to be the same as the likelihood of that turtle poking his head through the yoke as it surfaced. Infinitesimally small!

Or just look at the opportunity in terms of your current existence. What was the chance of being born at all? (Consider the odds of one particular sperm among the 20 billion produced by one male in one lifetime meeting one particular egg among 300-500 produced by your mother in one lifetime – about 2,250 generations of *modern* humans would be only 1 in 13,500,000,000,000, ignoring the vast history of life on this planet before that! Again, infinitesimally small odds!

“...without knowing when I will die,”

Life is uncertain. We know neither when we will die or how. We just know that at some time, somehow, we will. This adds an element of urgency to this opportunity. Some will postpone it until later, “I don't have the time right now. I'll do it when I retire.” Or other statements. But we never know if that time will actually arrive.

“...for the benefit of all beings”

This is another element. Specifically, this refers to all “sentient beings”. In the East, this means all *sentient* beings, any life form that has a consciousness that differentiates “happiness” and “suffering”. It is said that “all sentient beings want happiness and do not want suffering”. But that can be difficult to discern. Practically speaking, we consider all

visible beings to be “sentient” in Buddhism. There are 5 general ethical guidelines for non-monastics like ourselves that were common at the time of the Buddha across most all traditions:

1. Do not kill
2. Do not steal (take what is not given)
3. No sexual misconduct (adultery – sex with someone not your spouse, or underage, or “protected” – engaged), but has been extended generally to include the laws of the location in which you live like rape, abuse, harassment)
4. Do not lie
5. No intoxication (later changed more broadly to “no greed”)

In Buddhism, these are treated as “guidelines” rather than hard and fast rules. There are just too many possible variations where rigid rules create even worse results, so it depends upon the situation. However, though some degree of flexibility is generally helpful, it can also be abused to make excuses for bad behavior, as well as some cases where it is difficult to know the right thing to do in the first place. Always just do the best you can, and learn from any mistakes you might make.

Getting back to our list – “do not kill”. This includes insects! In my home I just let the tiny ones be. They don’t live long anyway. The larger ones, I do my best to catch and release outside. If by chance I accidentally injure one in the process, I say a short prayer or *mantra* for them, such as *Om Mani Padme Hung* and let them go. If I accidentally kill an insect, I do another practice called *phowa* – transference of consciousness, but that is beyond this talk.

“Do not steal” or take what is not given is self-explanatory. It is especially egregious to take something from a temple or dharma center.

“No sexual misconduct” is also fairly straight forward, but it does have some complications not originally identified in Buddhism due to the inclusion of “sexual yoga” in Tibetan Buddhist practices. Monastics take vows of celibacy, but sex is a powerful force and too often a challenge for even them to control. Most lay practitioners do not take vows of celibacy. Nevertheless, it is important not to abuse others in any way, including sexually. This includes adultery (probably the original form of sexual misconduct), as well as rape, underaged or engaged women, and other forms of abuse or harassment.

“Do not lie” is also fairly straight forward.

“No intoxication” was probably originally “no alcohol”, but this disappeared from some other lists. In other cases it was expanded to “no intoxication”, which could include drugs or other substances. According to the *Vinaya* (the monastic rules, which includes some explanations for each rule), this was later broadened even further to “no greed”. Greed is, of course, one of the key sources of our “suffering” according to the teachings of the Buddha.

“...with joy and devotion!”

It's not just a matter of following the guidelines, doing so with good intention and a strong commitment to do the practices, to follow the ethics, to benefit others ... and to do so with a sense of joy in your heart. *Altruistic intention* means to do it without expecting anything in return. You may feel good about doing it, but you would do it anyway because it is the right thing to do.

“Therefore...” (This is followed by the **Uncommon Ngondro** – refuge, bodhicitta, purification, offerings, and Guru Yoga):

Refuge – *Visualizing the refuge tree:*

In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the “refuge tree” is a depiction of the key figure of that lineage surrounded by other objects and key figures. In our *Nyingma* tradition – the old school, the earliest in Tibet – the central is Padmasambhava, the master credited with bringing Buddhism to Tibet. It had already been there for some time, but he was a key figure according to legend at creating the first lineage. On his right are other Buddhas. On his left are Bodhisattvas. Behind him is an ordered stack of dharma texts. Below him are dharma protectors. Above him are representations of the lineage that followed. And in the sky around them are dakinis (female sky dancers or messengers who help us learn and apply the teachings). Together, these are the Buddha (the teacher), dharma (the teachings), and sangha (the other practitioners at various levels – the community of support).



“I take refuge...”

We take refuge; we seek protection, safety, or shelter from the “sufferings” of this life (*samsara*), as well as guidance and support along the way to Full Awakening (enlightenment).

Begin with cupped hands together at your heart. Raise them above your head, then touch your forehead, throat, and heart as reciting the first line. It is customary to do a full prostration with each of the repetitions of the refuge prayer. If unable to do that, a half prostration is acceptable – touching head, hands and knees to the floor. If unable to do that or if too crowded in the room, just a bow is acceptable. Some lamas will simply indicate that it is not necessary at all.

Prostration is a gesture of reverence in the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, & Sangha), purifying our karma and, especially, our pride. Maintain the visualization as you do these.

“...in the Buddha, the Dharma and Sangha most excellent,”

There are four forms of refuge:

1. OUTER REFUGE: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are the principle ones, referred to as the “three jewels”. The Buddha refers to Siddhartha Gotama, who became Shakyamuni Buddha – THE BUDDHA after 6 years of study and practice, engaging in extreme asceticism, and finally going it alone and attaining Full Awakening, which he then began to share with others over 45 years, according to the legend. The “Dharma” refers to his teachings known as the “sutras” (which also include some from his principal disciples). The Sangha is the group of practitioners. The term is used to represent several different specific groups: (a) the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, (b) the Vidyadharas, lamas, and other great accomplished masters, (c) the monastic community, and (d) all other practitioners. In addition, individual groups of practitioners, e.g., participants at the Awam Tibetan Buddhist Institute, and those who receive specific empowerments from a particular teacher are considered to be other forms of sangha.
2. INNER REFUGE: Guru, Yidam, and Dakini (and or Protector) are the “three” or “four roots”. The Buddha is no longer here, so the Guru represents the Buddha, the source of his teachings to us. The Yidam is a “deity” (not a “god” even though the words are synonyms), a form of a meditational Buddha. They may have been a human being at one point, but most are a manifestation of enlightened mind. Similar to the archetypes described by Carl Jung – universal patterns and images that are part of the collective unconsciousness, these represent symbolic characteristics such as: Chenrezig – male deity of compassion, Tara – female deity of compassion, Manjushri – male deity of wisdom, Prajnaparamita – female deity of wisdom... See the thanka paintings on our walls... The Dakini is more difficult to describe as they come in multiple forms. They are nearly always female. The word means Sky Dancer. They are also said to be messengers who bring insights to advanced practitioners to help them on the path. But another form is all women. Protectors (*dharmapala*) are nonhuman beings which take a variety of forms, mostly wrathful in appearance, more male than female, but there are both. They are said to protect the dharma from sources trying to destroy it or that intend to harm its practitioners. Their wrathful nature is intended to help terrify those wishing to cause harm. Examples are

Mahakala, Yamantaka, Ekajati (see photos in 4 directions in the gompa).

3. SECRET REFUGE: Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya are the “three bodies” or “three kayas”, three forms of a Buddha. We take refuge in all these forms. (There are fourth and fifth aspects as well, but much more rarely used).
 - Dharmakaya = “truth body”, the absolute, without form, substance or concept, including “existence” and “nonexistence” (transcendent) ... but everything arises (manifests in our mind) from it (it is also rigpa, Buddhature, etc.)
 - Sambhogakaya = “enjoyment body”, the play of energy, manifestations of mind, e.g., the five Buddhas and their five forms of wisdom; all “deities”
 - Nirmanakaya = “form body”, the physical body, such as Shakyamuni Buddha (Siddhartha Gotama), not limited to “human” form but any form to respond to needs of beings.
4. MOST SECRET REFUGE: Buddhature is our heart-essence, our innate nature, our universal teacher and many other terms, e.g., the luminous nature of mind, pure undefiled mind, the natural and true state of mind, “emptiness” (various meanings), ability to achieve Buddhahood...

The first is most common across all forms of Buddhism. The second is also fairly common in tantra forms. The other two are much more rare, primarily at times in tantra completion stage practices or in Dzogchen.

“...in order to enable all sentient beings to attain enlightenment.”

Our purpose is more than just self-liberation from suffering in this life, but to also benefit *all sentient beings*, aiding them in the same venture as best we can. This is our “altruistic intent” found in all traditions, but particularly emphasized in the principle of **Bodhicitta**. Ultimately, we want all sentient beings to attain Full Awakening (enlightenment, etc.)

“...(3X)” – refuge is traditionally repeated three times

Bodhicitta – The Four Immeasurables - Each of these has a “relative” (everyday) and “absolute” (Full Awakening) component. This can be problematic as some “relative” can create obstacles to Full Awakening.

- **Lovingkindness** – the wish/action for all sentient beings to have “happiness” and its causes:

“May all mother sentient beings, boundless as the sky, have happiness and the causes of happiness”.

“All mother sentient beings” is a fairly common phrase in Tibetan Buddhism. At its core is the idea of “beginningless time”. It is said that there has been a continuum of universes that come and go. This is just one of them. Because of that, and in conjunction with the

principle of *reincarnation*, all beings over infinite time would at some point have been the mother of every other being in the universe. Whether or not you believe this literally is irrelevant to the principle. We should “act as if” it is true. This means that we respect *all* beings. We act as if they have loved us as a loving mother, so we should do likewise to them. This is part of what is known as the “Bodhisattva ideal”. And because time is beginningless, the number of sentient beings is “boundless”, an endless number.

In Buddhism it is common to see the idea that “all sentient beings want happiness and do not want suffering”. The first part of this relates to “lovingkindness”, while the second refers to “compassion”. We, as Bodhisattvas, also want *them* to have happiness. On the relative level, that includes anything that would help them be “happy”, but it should not contribute to their suffering. The actions on our part need to be ethical and should not contribute to their attachments and desires that might take them down “the rabbit hole” or on “the hedonic treadmill” (hedonistic or strong desires for pleasure at any cost). The key here is *our intention*. One could say we do our best without making things worse.

On the absolute level, this “happiness” refers to Full Awakening or Enlightenment. This is generally a much longer and challenging process. What is *their* happiness motivation? One approach is to benefit others by being a role model – BE a Buddha! We may provide instruction, if they ask, or are open to it. But being a role model is one of the best paths for both you and them. (The last thing we want to do is to make them resentful of our efforts!) There are other specific practices that may be done as well, but those are beyond this talk.

- **“Compassion”** – the wish/action for all beings *not* to have suffering and its causes.

“May they be liberated from suffering and the causes of suffering”.

This is like the other half of lovingkindness. Instead of wanting them to have happiness, we want them *not* to have suffering. You might say we want them to have the “good” and not have the “bad” (from a Buddhist view). We talked about forms of suffering earlier. At the relative level, we want them to no longer experience ordinary everyday forms like physical pain and mental anguish. We want them to get what they want, and not get what they do not want. The same principle as above also applies here. Hedonistic desires are not helpful. But perhaps our role model of “altruistic intention” will be noticed and affect their actions. At the absolute level, attainment of Full Awakening eliminates all forms of suffering. That is our goal for both ourselves and for them. Now, to be sure, we may still have some negative experiences. Even the highest of practitioners like HH the Dalai Lama do become ill, lose their loved ones, etc. But they experience minimal affects, knowing the context and the “true nature” of what is going on.

- **“Sympathetic Joy”** – a feeling of peaceful joy that all beings experience happiness or that we feel when we learn of their happiness.

“May they never be separated from the happiness that is free from sorrow”.

This is sometimes expressed as “rejoicing”; we rejoice at the happiness of others (as opposed to being jealous, for example). Their happiness may be at the relative level - ordinary experiences of joy or happiness in everyday life, or it may be absolute level - the happiness of liberation, full awakening, or even progress along the path.

- “**Equanimity**” – either a sense of treating *all* beings equally or an experience of calm or peace and contentment, especially in a difficult situation.

“May they rest in equanimity, free from attachment and aversion.”

Either of the above approaches may represent the relative level. We consider all beings as “precious” (as above in “precious human life”), equal in their opportunity (though perhaps not in their current circumstances) to attain full awakening. We all have the same ability in the nature of our essence: Buddhature. Their challenges or difficulties regarding us or others are considered due to their previous experiences (karma), not us *per se*. We feel compassion and wish them to be free of attachment and aversion now and in the future.

They may also be seen as a source of our own learning. My favorite example is Atisha’s tea boy. When Atisha was called to go to Tibet around 1000 CE, he decided to take his tea boy with him. His students couldn’t believe it! This man was considered as nothing but trouble! How could he even consider taking him with him? He responded by telling his students that the tea boy was one of his own best teachers. The challenges and difficulties were really opportunities to practice, to overcome the all too human tendencies to fight back or defend ourselves. Instead, he taught that one should use this opportunity to be even more like a Buddha. We all face *many* such opportunities in everyday life.

At the absolute level we embody those lessons and live in peace and contentment, no matter what experiences are happening around us. When the Buddha first became awakened, he said “Profound peace, natural simplicity, uncompounded luminosity, I have found a nectar-like Dharma”. Another of my favorite quotes (*Anonymous*) says: “PEACE – it does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart”. Equanimity.

“...(3X)” – We also recite the Four Immeasurables three times.

Vajrasattva Purification

Vajrasattva practice infers the “Four Powers” as being embedded within the practice:

1. The power of **regret** – a reflection on any negative mental and physical actions we have done or recall doing and regretting those actions, usually as a preliminary to the practice itself, but some versions include this as one of the actual steps of the practice.
2. The power of **the antidote** – this is doing the practice itself.
3. The power of **resolve** – a commitment not to do those negative actions again, ever.

4. The power of **reliance** or **support** – the reliance or support from the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha to fulfill that commitment.

“Vajrasattva and Vajratopa appear above me, purifying me and all beings and phenomena with nectar from the place of their union”.

“Vajrasattva and Vajratopa...” are the Buddha of Purification and his consort¹. We visualize them together.

“...appear above me,” they appear just above our head. You may visualize them as if looking from outside of your body, as looking up, or just imagine them being there.

“purifying me and all beings and phenomena with nectar from the place of their union.” The nectar of purification is visualized as flowing from their union into the crown of our head and down throughout our body and washing away (purifying) all negative karma, subtle tendencies, and habitual tendencies from our body, speech, and mind.

(Chant 100-Syllable Mantra (p. 2) to melody while receiving water in left hand. Take into mouth, swallow, wipe the remainder on crown of your head. – We are not currently doing this due to Covid.)

There are various translations of this mantra; this is one. Note that the breaks do not exactly match the way it is recited in the text.

Om – Qualities of Buddha’s body, speech, & mind

Benza Sato (Vajrasattva) – The courageous one with transcendent non-dual wisdom (relative and ultimate/absolute)

Samaya – Sacred word of honor or pledge that cannot be transgressed (commitment, vow)

Manu Palaya – Lead me along the path to you took to enlightenment

Benza Sato Tenopa/ Tishta – Please help me abide closer to the vajra (indestructible) Buddha mind

Drido – Firm and stable based on the absolute true nature

Mé – “I”

Bhawa – Please grant me the ability to realize the true nature of phenomena

Suto Khayo Mé Bhawa – Grant me complete satisfaction

Supo Khayo Mé Bhawa – Increase the positive within me

Anu Rakto Mé Bhawa – Please be in the nature of love that leads me to your state

¹ Vajratopa is also known by other names in other lineages or texts.

Sarwa Siddhi Mé Prayatsa – Please grant me all the actual attainments (enlightenment)

Sarwa Karma Sutsa Mé – Please grant me all of the virtuous actions

Sitam Shriya Kuru – Please grant me all of your glorious qualities

Hung – Seed syllable signifying the Buddha vajra mind

Ha Ha Ha Ha – The four immeasurables (lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy or rejoicing), four empowerments (vase, secret, wisdom, word), four joys or blisses (joy, supreme joy, special joy, and innate joy), four kayas (nirmanakaya, sambhogakaya, dharmakaya, svabhavikakaya ... latter symbolized the union of all three)

Ho – An exclamation of joy at this accomplishment; or combined with the “Ha’s” represents the wisdoms of each of the Five Buddhas: Akshobya (Mirror-like), Ratnasambhava (Equanimity), Amitabha (Discriminating), Amoghasiddhi (All-accomplishing), and Vairocana (Dharmadhatu – sphere of absolute reality).

Bhagavan – Conqueror, one who has destroyed all negativity, attained all realizations, and passed beyond the bounds of sorrow.

Sarwa Tathagata – All who have gone beyond into the reality of emptiness as it is

Benza (Vajra) – Thunderbolt, diamond, or indestructible (vajra wisdom)

Mamé Muntsa – Do not abandon me

Benzi (Vajra) Bhawa – Grant me the realization of the vajra nature (or Buddhanature)

Maha Samaya Sato – Great Vajrasattva

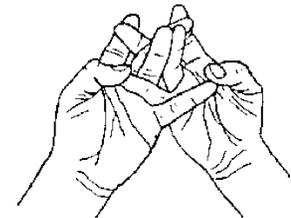
Ah – Seed syllable of Buddha vajra speech

(3X) – It is customary to recite it 3 times (or more in some cases) then snap your fingers and/or ring a dharma bell.

Mandala Offering to the Three Kayas - see hand mudra image

“**Om Ah Hung**” – offering to the body, speech, and mind of the Buddha(s)

“**In the Dharmakaya pure realm, dharmadhatu equality,**” - the sphere of absolute reality



“**The realms of the five Sambhogakaya families self-appear unobstructedly**” – the Five Buddha Families (above, including their consorts, Bodhisattvas, etc.). Each also has a “collection” of attributes (varies): an aggregate, element, color, location, symbol, mudra, poison, wisdom, and activity.

“Along with the array of Nirmanakaya pure realms that fill all of space”. – each Buddha is said to reside with their family in a “pure realm” (like a heaven). These are not physical realms, but mental forms.

“All this I offer as Samantabhadra’s clouds of great bliss”. – Samantabhadra is the Primordial Buddha or Absolute, sometimes called the All Good; the “clouds” represent the entire universe or multiverse, as the case may be, i.e., “everything that is”. “Bliss” refers to the mind of clear light (is that clear and luminous knowing); “emptiness” or transcendent wisdom, or pure awareness.

Mantra recitation (the actual offering):

“Om Ratna Mandala Pudza Mégha Samudra Saparana Samayé Ah Hung” <Snap fingers and/or bell>

Meaning: By the virtue of this offering, may all beings here and now attain the happiness of enlightenment.

Short Seven Limb Prayer

“Whatever merit I have gathered through prostrations, offerings, confession, rejoicing, requesting, and praying – for the sake of the enlightenment of all sentient beings – all this I dedicate.” Self-explanatory. This is said to generate “merit”, which combined with “wisdom” results in our enlightenment. Dedicating it to others is said to result in their enlightenment.

The Seven Line Prayerⁱ & Guru Yoga - Based upon combining these two into a form of Guru Yoga.

“HUNG In the northwest of the land of Orgyen,” - also Uddiyana, located in northern Pakistan area of the Swat Valley, where the Taliban destroyed large cliff statues of the Buddha. Also area of Gandhara kingdom, a source of new texts mostly on birch bark that date to around the 1st century BCE, much older than any other physical text except the steels and stone carvings of Ashoka, the first to unite most of the Indian subcontinent about 250 BCE who became a Buddhist and sent “missionaries” as far as Greece and Alexandria, as well as north and south.

“In the heart of a lotus flower,” - Padmasambhava is said to have been born at age 8 with full Buddhist knowledge and understanding in the middle of a (very large) lotus flower in a lake.

“Endowed with the most marvelous attainments,” - fully awakened, but also became a master of tantra and a key figure in the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet in the late 700s. Along with Shantarakshita and King Trisong Detsen, helps oversee the construction of Samye, the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet. He is also said to have hidden many documents

and other objects all over Tibet with help of his consort in Tibet, Yeshe Tsogyal, to be found later when they would be more suitable to the practitioners of that time.

“You are renowned as the lotus-born,” - A reference to his name: Padma (lotus), sambhava (born).

“Surrounded by many hosts of dakinis.” – Described in legends as having many dakinis (“sky dancers”) involved in his activities to spread the dharma.

“Following in your footsteps,” - We choose to follow him as a Buddha (known in Tibet as the second Buddha).

“I pray to you: Come and bless me with your grace!” – We request his blessing in our efforts to achieve Full Awakening.

“Guru Pémé Siddhi Hung” – Guru is great teacher, Peme is a Tibetan pronunciation of Padma (lotus), siddhi (accomplishment: relative are achievements or sometimes magical powers; ultimate or absolute is Full Awakening), Hung is a “seed syllable” at the heart chakra – immovable, unfluctuating, that cannot be disturbed; indestructible heart essence.

“Om Ah Hung Benzra Guru Pémé Siddhi Hung” (108X) – one mala of beads = 108 repetitions. This is the mantra of Padmasambhava. Reciting a mantra is the Buddha’s speech. The meanings are: **Om** – reference to Buddha’s body; **Ah** – reference to Buddha’s speech; **Hung** – reference to Buddha’s mind; **Benzra** – Tibetan pronunciation of Vajra, best translated as “indestructible”; **Guru** – a great teacher; **Pémé** – Tibetan pronunciation of Padma (lotus); **Siddhi Hung** - accomplishments, especially Full Awakening.

The Guru Yoga: Visualize:

“Light radiates from the Guru’s four places into my four places” – The lights are white, red, blue and red (or yellow or the three colors, depending on the text). The four places are the forehead (between the eyebrows), the throat, the heart, and the navel (four finger-widths below, about the middle of the lower abdomen). Light radiates from the four chakras, one in each location.

“purifying my body, speech, mind and all subtle obscurations,” - self-explanatory.

“granting the four empowerments” – The four empowerments are the vase, secret, wisdom, and word empowerments mentioned earlier. Briefly:

- Vase empowerment – purifies our body, plants the seed of Nirmanakaya (see below), empowers us to do the generation-stage practice (visualization, mantra, and meditation), and establishes union of appearance-emptiness.²
- Secret empowerment – purifies our speech, plants the seed of Sambhogakaya, empowers us to do the completion-stage practices (inner heat, four blisses, illusory

² These details vary among traditions and lineages.

body and dream yoga, clear light, the bardos, and transference of consciousness), and establishes the union of luminosity-emptiness.

- Wisdom empowerment – purifies our mind, plants the seed of Dharmakaya, empowers us to do karmamudra practices and establishes the union of bliss-emptiness.
- Word empowerment – purifies subtle obscurations, plants the seed of Svabhavikakaya, empowers us to do Dzogchen (Great Perfection) practices, and establishes the union of awareness-emptiness.

“and planting the four seeds.” - The four seeds are those leading to Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya, Dharmakaya, and Svabhavikakaya described earlier.

“The Guru dissolves into light and merges inseparably into myself.” – The guru dissolves into you; some sources say the mind of the guru dissolves into yours as one inseparable essence.

“Meditation: Dissolve visualization and rest in the natural state of pure awareness.” –

These are the instructions for the meditation. We dissolve the visualization into emptiness, usually from the outside in, to our heart, then complete emptiness, where we rest our mind beyond distractions. If distractions such as thoughts or sensory distractions arise, just let them go (if necessary, you can take a deep breath, rest your brain and the rest of your body on a slow outbreath) and stay in that natural state of “pure awareness” – just being aware without paying attention to anything else.

The lama may ring a bell at the end. It is best to continue in that meditative state, a flow of awareness, without much distraction by what is going on. You can pay sufficient attention to conduct yourself as needed, but stay in the meditative flow at the same time as best you can. Restart it as needed through the rest of your day.
