

HOW TO HELP
YOUR LOVED
ONES ENJOY
DEATH AND
GO HAPPILY
TO THEIR
NEXT REBIRTH



A HANDBOOK BY
LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

Helping our loved ones at the time of death is
the best service we can offer them, our greatest gift. Why?
Because death is the most important time of life:
it's at death that the next rebirth is determined.

LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE



LAMA THUBTEN ZOPA RINPOCHE

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

In this handbook, Lama Zopa Rinpoche gives a huge amount of advice about how to help our loved ones before, during, and after death. And every word of it is to serve one purpose, perfectly expressed in the title: to help our loved ones enjoy death, as Rinpoche often puts it, and go happily to their next rebirth.

For a Buddhist, the ideal way to die is to die gradually, contrary to an often-stated view that it's best to die in our sleep so that we don't know about it. And the reason is clear: given that most of us live in denial of this natural event, our loved ones need time to get ready for death, at peace and unafraid, so that they can, indeed, go happily to their next rebirth, either a precious human rebirth in which they can continue to practice their spiritual path or rebirth in a pure land, such as Buddha Amitabha's, in which they can easily become a buddha and thus be qualified to perfectly help others.

As Rinpoche says in the Prologue: "When suddenly one day one of your loved ones dies and you don't know what to do to help, you'll feel so confused, so lost. Knowing how to help others at the time of death is such important education to have."

Because Rinpoche gives so much advice, and because for most of us death is a difficult thing to come to terms with – our loved one's or our own – working out which practices to do can be daunting. Therefore the actual advice, the things to do, have been identified as eighty-seven distinct practices in **Parts Three, Four, and Five**, the heart of the book, and are structured chronologically to help us clearly know what to do when.

The actual practices themselves, numbered from 1 to 87 – many of which are recommended several times throughout the various stages – are all together in **Part Six: the Actual Practices, in Numerical Order**.

Part One: How to Think About Death and Reincarnation and **Part Two: How We Go From One Life to the Next** contain Rinpoche's teachings

about what happens at death; how attachment is one of the worst obstacles to a good death; the death process itself; the crucial role at the time of death of craving and grasping, two of the twelve links of dependent arising; the need to pray to be reborn in Amitabha's pure land; and a moving chapter about how the great meditators spend their lives preparing for death because that's when they can access their subtlest level of consciousness, the clear light, and use it to become enlightened.

Fifty-nine of the eighty-seven practices are recommended first in **Part Three: The Practices to Do During the Months and Weeks Before Death** and are divided into six chapters, which cover what to see and touch, what to think about, what to hear, what to meditate on, what to do to purify negative karma, and, finally, what to do during the hours before death.

The next seventeen practices, as well as many of the earlier ones, are recommended for the hours or days that the mind is still in the body. **Part Four: The Practices to Do During the Hours and Days After the Breath Has Stopped** covers five different scenarios in which our loved ones could die. The practices recommended are essentially the same for each situation, with some variations, but it's helpful to see them listed clearly for each scenario: if your loved one is at home when they die, if your loved one is in hospital when they die, if your loved one has offered their organs, if your loved one dies suddenly, and if your loved one has high realizations and is meditating at the time of death.

The remaining eleven practices, as well as, again, many of the earlier ones, are recommended for the weeks after the mind has left the body. **Part Five: The Practices to Do After the Mind Has Left the Body** has four chapters, which cover how to prepare your loved one's body for cremation or burial, the funeral service, how to bless your loved one's ashes and include them in holy objects, and practices to do during the forty-nine days after death.

The essence of the incredibly compassionate and wise advice given by Rinpoche during the past forty-five years is here, for us to select from, according to the needs of our loved ones. Even if we choose to simply recite the Medicine Buddha mantra, and nothing else, "understand the essential points," as Rinpoche advises throughout the book, "and do the best you can."

And, of course, by helping our loved ones prepare for their death and rebirth, we are preparing for our own.

GRATITUDE

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Wisdom Publications in Boston will be publishing this material as a book entitled *Preparing for Death: How to Meet Life's Final Challenge Without Fear* in 2016.

Robina Courtin
March 20, 2015

PROLOGUE

WE MUST PREPARE FOR DEATH

OUR GREATEST GIFT TO OTHERS

When suddenly one day one of your loved ones dies and you don't know what to do to help, you'll feel so confused, so lost. Recently a Buddhist student of mine told me that this is what happened for her when her father died unexpectedly. That made me think that knowing how to help others at the time of death is such important education to have.

As you get older, you'll definitely hear about people dying – your family will die, your friends will die (your enemies too!) – so you will need to be prepared to help. This doesn't just apply to people who work with the dying; everyone should learn to know how to help.

Helping our loved ones at the time of death is the best service we can offer them, our greatest gift. Why? Because death is the most important time of life: it's at death that the next rebirth is determined. By providing the right support, the right environment, you can help your loved one die peacefully, with virtuous thoughts, and thus have a good rebirth.

THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS ARE PARAMOUNT

We need to deal with the physical needs of our loved ones at the time of death, of course, but the spiritual needs are paramount. To die with a happy mind, a peaceful mind, *that* is a spiritual concern. Some people are prepared for it but most are not, because they never think about death.

HOW TO HELP?

Buddhist teachings explain that the best spiritual practitioners are joyful when they are dying, as if they're going home to see their family after a long absence. Less accomplished practitioners are happy and comfortable at the time of death and are fully confident that they will have a happy rebirth. And even the least accomplished practitioners die without worry or fear; death does not bother them at all.

Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism has so many powerful methods to help people before they die, while they are dying, and even after death. There are two aspects to helping a dying person.

Help Your Loved One Be Peaceful First, the most important thing is to help the person prepare psychologically so that they die with a positive and happy mind. To die without anger or clinging is vital for a happy death and a good rebirth, and so that should be foremost in our thoughts when we are around a dying person. The help we give can result in a better rebirth and a swift path to attaining all realizations and eventually enlightenment. This gift is absolutely priceless, more valuable than universes full of wish-granting jewels.

Practices That Help And second, there are many spiritual practices that can be done before, during, and after death that can help your loved one die well and receive a perfect human rebirth or rebirth in the pure realm of a buddha. I will explain what to do at each stage.

You don't need to think, "Oh, I don't know what to do." Remember, as a Buddhist, the foundation of all the practices is refuge: relying on Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. At the time of death, for example, with strong faith you could visualize Buddha above the head of your loved one and pray strongly that they purify all their negative karma immediately and achieve a good rebirth. Even if you don't know any other practices, other sophisticated things, this would definitely help.

HELPING THOSE WHO CAN'T UNDERSTAND

As for babies and small children or a person who has lost their capacity to understand because of coma or dementia – animals too – there is not much that they themselves can do. The least we can do is help them be peaceful and thus die with a happy mind.

But not only that. Receiving benefit from many of the practices in chapters 13 through 18 doesn't depend upon the person's or animal's understanding: merely hearing the sounds of mantras, prayers, and teachings or seeing holy images will leave positive imprints on their mind, which can activate virtuous karmic seeds at the time of death, allowing them to receive a good rebirth. This is our precious gift to them.

**BEFORE YOU HELP OTHERS AT DEATH,
YOU NEED TO PREPARE FOR YOUR OWN DEATH**

Before you can help someone else you need to learn how to prepare for your own death. If you look at your mind and how much attachment you have, I think you will see that there is a lot of work to be done before you face death, and this is true of almost everybody. Have you freed yourself from attachment to your possessions? To your loved one and friends? To your career and reputation? Could you separate from your body happily tomorrow?

WRITE IT DOWN!

So write down what you want to practice at the time of your death, how you want to die. Write it down in your diary right now! Whether you die gradually or suddenly, you need to know this. Otherwise, when death comes, or when the doctor tells you that you have cancer, you will have no time to prepare, and because of attachment to this life you'll panic. You will have no renunciation, only grasping at this life.

At the time of death it'll be like, "You mean you didn't prepare anything? Nothing? You don't know what to do?" You didn't plan anything. You never thought about it. You haven't had a good, strong practice of Dharma: collecting extensive merits, purifying, meditating on the path to enlightenment, planting the seeds of the path in your mind.

If it's like that, at the time of death there will no difference between somebody who doesn't know any Dharma at all and somebody who does know Dharma but didn't practice. How very, very sad.

So prepare now, write down now what you are going to practice, what you intend to do, then when the time of death comes you will be able to do it easily. That's *very* intelligent, I would say; that's the action of a very, very intelligent person.

DON'T WAIT UNTIL DEATH COMES

But preparing for a happy death depends not just on practices at the time of death; a happy death depends upon how we live our life every day, every moment. Practicing patience when someone is angry with us or provokes us or disrespects us, for example, is practical preparation for death. Practicing like this every day protects us from creating negative

karma, and that makes death lighter, less fearful. The future depends on the present.

Practicing every day and preparing for the time of your death is far more important than going to the hospital to check the body, because death can happen at any time – even for healthy people. Today, many people have died, healthy as well as unhealthy.

When you know how to die with full confidence that you won't be reborn in the lower realms, that definitely you will have a good rebirth, a good future; that death is just change, that you're leaving this old, sick body for a new, healthy one – *then* you are qualified to help others who are dying. You will be able to explain things skillfully, according to their minds. You will create the right conditions so that it's easy for their minds to be transformed into virtue at the time of death. You will know how to help them die with a happy mind.

And not only that: once you're familiar with what to do you can tell others what they can do to help you at the time of your own death.

THE SOURCES

I will use as a basis for the advice in this book an explanation that Chöden Rinpoche gave at Land of Medicine Buddha, in Soquel, California, in July 2002. I will mention just some of the things that Rinpoche taught so that you get the essence of Rinpoche's advice, which is extremely precious, very useful. I will give advice that I have received from some of my other lamas as well.

I will also use a book called *Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead*, written by Thupten Sangay and published by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala, India. (I don't think it has been translated into English.) It was written to educate the Tibetan people outside of their country about their traditions. It is very, very useful.

It explains what to do at the time of death and immediately after the person has died; how to request a lama, a guru, to do the practice of transferring the consciousness of the loved one to a pure land (*phowa*, in Tibetan), and how to make offerings to the lamas. It explains how to go about having astrological readings done after death, which determines what to do during the days before the body is removed, how to pack the body and remove it and whether it should be moved today, tomorrow,

etc.; what offerings should be made to the monasteries, the holy objects, the beggars, etc.

It also explains what to do during the forty-nine days that the mind is in the intermediate state between lives (*bardo*, in Tibetan): what prayers and practices should be done during the first week, the second, and so forth, and, finally, what to do on the forty-ninth day.

I won't go into all these details here. But I will explain some of the most important points relating to the weeks and days before death, the time of death itself, and the days and weeks afterwards.

PART ONE

HOW TO THINK ABOUT DEATH
AND REINCARNATION



SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA

His Holiness the Dalai Lama said that while giving teachings one time on *The Heart Sutra* “I became quite sure that when the Buddha was preaching this text I myself was one of the poor Indians listening on the fringes of the crowd.”

CHAPTER 1

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH?

OUR CONSCIOUSNESS, OUR MIND, CONTINUES AFTER DEATH

What happens at death and afterwards is such an important subject, yet very few people seem to want to know anything about it. We will definitely die but we don't seem willing to acknowledge that fact and so we ignore it. It is like we have all the symptoms of cancer but because knowing the truth might be frightening we never go to the doctor. Unless we face death with facts we will just be terrified for no reason.

What *does* happen after death? We know what happens to the body. We can see how the breathing stops, the heart stops, the organs cease to function, and the body starts to decompose. Is that the end of us? If we did not have consciousness, a mind, that is separate from the body, that would be the end. But the mind is not the body: it is nonmaterial energy. The simple fact is that the mind connects with a body for a certain period of time, then when the person dies the mind continues, and because of karma – past actions done by the person that leave seeds in the mind that ripen as their future experiences – it goes to another body. This is what is called reincarnation.

Even though the body completely disappears until not even a single atom of what we once called “body” can be found, the consciousness continues. Because of our deep craving for the physical we enter an “intermediate state” – a state between lives – and then take another body, pushed into whatever rebirth in samsara that our karma dictates. (See chapters 7, 8, and 9.)

Before giving his explanations about what to do at the time of death, Chöden Rinpoche explained that “samara” refers to the continuity of these aggregates – our body and mind – joining the next life aggregates, caused by karma and delusion. Another meaning, Rinpoche said, is circling from birth to death to the intermediate state, and again birth, death and intermediate state: continuously circling like this.

We have no control over where we are born, unlike highly realized beings, such as the *arhats* and higher bodhisattvas, who have completely ceased even the seed of the fundamental ignorance that holds the self and everything else as existing from its own side, which is the root cause of rebirth in *samsara*. (See chapters 10 and 24.)

REINCARNATION IS NOT JUST SOME ASIAN SUPERSTITION

Western society does not have a culture that accepts reincarnation, so Westerners often presume it is an Asian superstition. Because it is not talked about they think it can't be real. It is like the reluctance Westerners had to accept acupuncture, for example, when it was first introduced to the West. People found it impossible to believe that sticking a needle in one part of the body relieved the pain in another part, simply because they had no knowledge of the wind energies that control our body. These days, acupuncture is much more accepted, mainly because it is seen to be effective. In the same way, people in the West are hearing about reincarnation more and starting to accept it, or at least not write it off as primitive religious superstition.

There is a meditation where you see that this moment of mind is the direct result of the previous moment of mind; that the previous moment of mind is the direct result of the moment of mind before that, and so on. Because there can be no result without cause and because the main cause of a moment of mind must be its previous moment, we can trace these moments of mind back to last week and last year and twenty years ago, right back to how the moment of mind at birth must be caused by the moment of mind at the last moment in the womb, and even further, to the first moment of life in the womb at the time of conception. The first moment of mind of this life must have had a cause, and that cause must have been the previous moment of that mind, the mind of the last moment of the intermediate state; and that can be traced back to the last moment of the previous life. And so forth.

REINCARNATION HASN'T BEEN DISPROVED

That we can't remember our previous life is because our mind is too clouded, not because there has been no previous life. In the West this is not studied. There are degrees in university on how organisms function, but the process of death and rebirth is like a big, black hole about

which there is no clarity. Scientists can explain how the cells break down and the brain stops functioning but can never seem to go beyond that, and they can never address the question of what actually happens to us at death.

They can show that we were once in a womb – but what caused us to enter our mother’s womb? They explain things on a physical level, but there is no scientific explanation of the mental experience, the cause of the mind leaving one body and taking another. They have no mechanism that can measure and determine the mental life we lead in this life, so of course they cannot deal with past and future lives and how they are connected.

This is something we need to really investigate, because by accepting karma and reincarnation we are going against a lot of contemporary scientific thinking. If a consciousness that is separate from the body doesn’t exist, what experiences pleasure and pain, what creates the cause of happiness and suffering? If this consciousness doesn’t exist, what is the base of this sense of self that is so strong within us? If we deny the mind we deny the universe because it is only through the mind that the universe exists. If nothing exists, nothing matters.

WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING KARMA AND THE NATURE OF MIND, SCIENCE IS INCOMPLETE

We are skeptical when we shouldn’t be and not skeptical when we should. What we need to do is escape from ignorance in order to be free from suffering, and skepticism of past and future lives does nothing to help us do this. Without fully seeing mental evolution it is extremely difficult to understand physical evolution. They are not one but are nevertheless related. That’s why what is explained in science books is incomplete. Science explains about the first conscious entities coming from the oceans and slowly evolving into animals, one of which is the human being, but there is no understanding of *why* this was happening. It is a wonderful account of the physical aspect of the evolution of life, but it ignores the mental aspect – and the mental aspect is primary. The explanation of evolution is incomplete without recognition of mind.

The deeper explanation of life on this planet needs the explanation of karma and how suffering is created by negative actions and happiness by positive actions. Even if the scientists could photograph and record the

various realms of existence – the higher realms of the gods, the lower realms of the hell beings, and so forth – how could they understand that the mind caused them? To avoid suffering and achieve happiness we need to see and accept this explanation, but it is very subtle and beyond our current capacity to know other than superficially.

WE NEED THE EXPLANATIONS OF THE BUDDHA

This is not something we should take lightly. We need to investigate whether the Buddha is indeed a reliable source. The more convinced we are in the words of the Buddha the more faith we will have in all his teachings and the more we will be able to transform our mind. When we investigate we will see that the Buddha is the perfect guide, either through our own analysis of his teachings or the fact that countless practitioners have been led from suffering to full enlightenment using his guidance.

Just look at the great practitioners such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama: what they know is faultless and totally based on the wisdom of the Buddha. To feel that we know more than these highly realized beings is arrogant and self-defeating – we can cause ourselves so much suffering by going against their advice.

As the great practitioners of the past progressed along the path to enlightenment their understanding of reality increased and they saw things that we can't even imagine. This was all the product of the mind, not of machines. The great bodhisattva yogis such as Milarepa, who lived in Tibet in the eleventh century, had minds so powerful that they could influence their bodies, being able to fly, for example, or take many forms.

THE GREAT BODHISATTVAS REMEMBER THEIR PAST LIVES

These great beings could also see past and future lives just as we can see the table in front of us, and they could see the different realms of existence as clearly. To them these were not merely logical possibilities but actual objects of knowledge, things that they experienced as very real with their own minds. They had control over where they reincarnated and so could choose their future rebirth to be of most benefit to others. Everything they experienced confirmed the truth of the Dharma that the Buddha taught.

Even if you find it difficult to accept the logic of reincarnation, there are plenty of accounts of people who have actually remembered past

lives. As a two-year-old, His Holiness the Dalai Lama immediately recognized his attendant from when he was the previous Dalai Lama the first time he saw him, even remembering his name.

People like His Holiness rarely like to talk about remembering their past lives because it is more skillful to appear in the aspect of a normal monk. I remember one time in Wisconsin at the center of Geshe Lhundup Sopa when His Holiness was talking about bodhichitta – the wish to attain enlightenment in order benefit each and every sentient being – His Holiness said, “I have absolutely no realization of bodhichitta but I have great devotion in bodhichitta; and I have absolutely no realization of emptiness but I have strong faith in emptiness.” This is typical of His Holiness’s humility.

Soon afterwards in a private interview with the organizers of the center, one of the people there said that if His Holiness has no realizations then it is totally hopeless for the rest of us. His Holiness, with his great compassion, couldn’t bear this person thinking that it’s hopeless, so felt he had to say something. His Holiness admitted that actually he could remember when the Buddha was in India. (And he talked about this in the book *In Exile from the Land of Snows*: “During a discourse I recently delivered on *The Heart Sutra* I became quite sure that when the Buddha was preaching this text I myself was one of the poor Indians listening on the fringes of the crowd.”) This casual remark is amazing: His Holiness was around at the time of the Buddha and he could still remember it!

It seems that there was a bodhisattva to whom the Buddha predicted that if he recited certain prayers he would be reborn in the snow lands of Tibet and become the Compassion Buddha, Chenrezig, to spread Buddhadharma in Tibet and guide all the Tibetan sentient beings. Evidently, all the Dharma kings of Tibet are also manifestations of this bodhisattva and each was instrumental in starting and spreading the Dharma in Tibet. This is why there is such a special connection between the Tibetan people and Chenrezig, the Compassion Buddha.

Now, of course, His Holiness’s influence has spread well beyond Tibet and he is able to benefit the sentient beings of the entire world, traveling constantly to so many countries, giving teachings and initiations, and being a living example of bodhichitta.

If His Holiness can remember a life that happened over 2,500 years ago, then there is no question that the other highly realized practitioners can remember previous lives also.

ORDINARY PEOPLE REMEMBER THEIR PAST LIVES

Besides the high lamas who can remember past lives, there are stories of very ordinary people who have been able to remember. Many of these have been verified. For example, there was a girl in the Punjab, in India, who could very clearly remember many things about her previous life: the town she lived in, her house, her parents, and so forth. One day she just remembered, and she led her present-life parents to a village not far from where she lived and showed them a house, saying that was where she had lived in her last life. When she saw the people living there she recognized them as her previous parents and knew their names, although of course they were older and more wrinkled. She knew each of the rooms in the house and could tell if something had been moved or changed. For many years I kept a photo of her and her two sets of parents, a very precious photo. His Holiness the Dalai Lama heard about this girl and sent somebody to visit her.

There are many examples like this. But of course most of us can't even remember our birth, let alone what happened before that. I think the reason most of the people who do remember previous lives are Asian is because Asian society is a lot more open to reincarnation than Western society. Even if a Western child did remember something, probably their parents would presume it was some strange fantasy and not investigate.

WE NEED TO QUESTION OUR ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT REALITY

It is very interesting to analyze the society we live in and the unquestioned beliefs of that society. If we do analyze we will see the cracks in what seems to be the truth. Many Westerners believe in neither reincarnation nor the Christian heaven. When you die everything finishes; it's just a big blank nothing. The body and the mind both cease to exist. Is that what really happens? It's very good to check what assumptions we have and see whether they are based on a firm understanding or on the suppositions of our society.

CHAPTER 2

EVERYONE DIES, SO THERE'S NO NEED TO BE AFRAID

WE WILL DIE, BUT WE DON'T BELIEVE IT

One thing we can be sure of is that we will die. But we have this feeling that we won't die. It might not be spoken, it might be quite unconscious, but we live with this belief all the time. We say to our friends, "See you next week!" and the assumption is "I won't die." We work one more hour in order to get our pay and the assumption is we will still be alive on payday. Every day we live with this belief we won't die. Right up until the day we die we carry around this belief in permanence, like a heavy weight, which totally deceives us, blinding us to reality.

DEATH BELIEVES IN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Nobody escapes death. It is not a class thing, or a race thing, it does not depend on where we live, what education we have, or how much money we have in the bank. Death believes totally in equal opportunity. A president or a rich executive is as likely to die as a beggar; a college professor is as likely to die as an illiterate farmer.

Think of the people you know who have died: your friends, your parents, your aunts and uncles, your grandparents and great grandparents, perhaps even your children or grandchildren. Go back through your family tree, as far back as you can. Generation upon generation of your family have come before you, hundreds and hundreds of people, and yet how many survive now? Four? Five? Not many, I am sure.

Of the remaining family members, whose turn will be next? Nobody knows. Perhaps you have a rich parent or grandparent and you expect to inherit their money and property. Don't count on it! Maybe you have a ninety-year-old grandmother, but she might have to attend your funeral. Nothing is certain except the fact that in a hundred years none of your current family will be alive.

In the history of this world there has never been one person who has escaped death. If we think of the billions of humans who have lived on this planet from the very first humans, we will see that not one has been able to stay alive forever. A few have been able to prolong their lives a little; many, many have shortened theirs a lot; but all have had to die. Not one human being, not one sentient being, since the evolution of life has been able to hold on indefinitely to that most precious thing called life.

THERE IS NOWHERE TO HIDE

Nobody escapes death and there is nowhere in the world or beyond the world where we can go to escape death. Not even Disneyland! We can go to Disneyland to stay forever young and we will still age at the same rate and we will still die.

We can build the deepest, thickest fallout shelter to protect ourselves from the nuclear bombs that could destroy us, like so many Americans did in the middle of the last century, but we cannot escape death. None of those Americans died from an atomic bomb, but most died, and those still alive will die one day.

We can bury ourselves in the middle of a huge mountain made of diamonds, something so solid and indestructible, but that will not stop death. There is no sanctuary that will hide us from death.

Even if we leave the Earth we won't leave death behind. We can buy a ticket on a rocket that will take us to other planets and even out of the solar system, maybe even to another galaxy, but when we get there death will be waiting for us.

LIFE IS SLIPPING AWAY EVERY DAY

And the reality is with every passing second we are getting closer to death. In *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, Shantideva says,

Remaining neither day nor night,
Life is always slipping by
And never getting any longer,
Why will death not come to one like me?

IN FACT, WE COULD DIE TODAY

And not only is death definite; the time of our death is most uncertain.

Death can happen at any moment, from our next breath to many years from now. We just don't know. If we think about all the "certainties" in life – our next birthday, tonight's dinner, our favorite television program on Friday – we will see that they are just assumptions, because no matter how probable they might be to happen we might very well not be here to experience them.

Whether we say it or not, there is the thought that we are healthy and young – and that's even if we're sixty – and that life is pretty good and it will continue just like this. To feel we won't die is dangerous and to think that we won't die soon because we are not old or sick is wrong. All around us we will see that young, healthy people die any time. Babies die, teenagers die; at any age, for any reason, our life can suddenly cease.

WE HAVE NO CHOICE: WE MUST PREPARE FOR DEATH, THEN THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR

Living in denial of the fact that we will die causes so many of our problems. If we don't prepare for death, our life will be full of dissatisfaction. Elvis Presley was rich and loved by millions and yet during his last show he was crying and miserable because he knew he had wasted his life. He had made so many records and he was better known than anybody else in the world, but he could see how empty his life had been. It is tragic, but this is the story of so many people, famous and unknown.

If we can't stop death – and we can't, at least not until we have cut the root of samsara, of death and rebirth – then the only other thing we can do is prepare for death. When we die the consciousness will not cease to exist. That is a basic fact of karma. Our consciousness existed before this human life and will continue to exist after the destruction of this body. In fact, our consciousness is beginningless.

Right now we have the freedom to think about what is worthwhile in life and to change our life so it is truly meaningful. Then we will be ready to die with a happy mind, to die with satisfaction.

CHAPTER 3

DEATH IS EASY WHEN WE'VE GIVEN UP ATTACHMENT

ATTACHMENT MAKES DEATH SO DIFFICULT

Death itself is not what causes fear. It is simply the consciousness leaving the body; one labels death on that event. There is no terrifying death from its own side; the terrifying death is made up by our own mind. We have made death terrifying.

What causes the worry and fear, what makes death so difficult is attachment, desire, clinging: to this life, to the body, possessions, family, friends and so forth. This clinging makes death difficult, bringing so much worry and fear. And we cause this ourselves.

Attachment makes our mind not free. Because of not wanting to be separated from these things, we can't let go, we don't want to die. Attachment tortures us. And then this causes so much worry and fear in the minds of family and friends, and there is nothing they can do to help.

If we die without having let go of attachment, our past negative karma will cause us to be reborn in an unfortunate realm – the hells, the hungry ghosts, the animals. The most harmful thing at the time of death is attachment.

The fundamental thing to do in order for our mind to be free at the time of death, in order to have no worries, no fears, for there to be nothing that ties our mind – to not be like the bird who has such a strong wish to fly but cannot because its legs are fastened by a rope that is bolted to the rock face; the thing to do is give up attachment.

ATTACHMENT IS THE MAIN PUSH BEHIND SAMBARA

In relation to taking refuge in the Dharma, the Refuge prayer mentions “the supreme cessation of attachment” when it talks about the cessation of suffering and its causes – it doesn't say cessation of anger, it doesn't say cessation of ignorance, it doesn't say cessation of pride, and so forth (there are many delusions). Why specifically attachment?

Because it's the main push behind samsara, this cycle of death and rebirth; the main cause.

There is attachment that motivates negative actions, which cause rebirth in the lower realms. Then there is attachment to wanting to be reborn in the human realm, for example, as a result of which we create virtuous karma, which causes that rebirth. And then, as described in the twelve links of dependent arising, which I discuss in chapter 8, at the time of death the eighth and ninth links, craving and grasping – strong attachment, in other words – arise and nourish the seed that was left on the mental continuum by the past karma (the second link) because of the root ignorance (the first), making it ready to produce the next life.

So you can see that even the nearest cause of the next rebirth in samsara is this attachment at the time of death. It is what ties us to samsara continuously, has been tying us to samsara continuously, and will continue to tie us to samsara, because our consciousness has existed since beginningless time and will continue to exist forever. Until we have cut the causes of samsara, body after body will keep coming, like the assembly line in a car factory.

ATTACHMENT TO THE BODY

Our greatest attachment is to our body and so the greatest suffering at the time of death is when we are about to be separated from it. At the time of death, a kangaroo, a slug, a human – whatever the being is – feels so much fear: we can't stand the thought of dying, of leaving this body, no matter how much suffering it has caused us.

What is the body? Just a skeleton plastered over with bits of flesh and muscle. Inside there are the organs, veins, blood, and other fluids; a layer of skin covers it and it is adorned with hair, nails, and teeth. In their natural state none of these things is attractive. The body is filled with filthy and smelly substances and what comes out of the body is also unappealing. Why be so attached to this body and suffer so much?

At the time of death, clinging to the body causes unimaginable suffering. Breaking this attachment is vital to dying with a peaceful and happy mind. Understanding this can help anybody – Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish or even somebody who believes that there is only one life and that they will soon cease to exist entirely. Even if a

person has suffered greatly in their life, they will die peacefully if we help them understand this important point.

What happens if you don't let go of this attachment? Chöden Rinpoche told a story about a woman who was very attached to her beautiful body. She was on a boat that sank and her body was washed up on the shore. Because of her attachment she was reborn as a huge worm that lived in the corpse, slithering in and out through the mouth and the lower doors, totally attached to it.

LAUGH AT SAMBARA

One day Buddha's heart disciple Shariputra, who was excellent in wisdom, passed the house of some villagers on his alms round. He looked in and saw a man eating his lunch, with his son on his knee and his dog at his feet, which he was hitting. Shariputra thought to himself:

He eats his father's flesh and beats his mother.

The enemy he killed sits on his knee.

A wife gnaws her husband's bones.

What a farce samsara is!

Because of his clairvoyance Shariputra could see that the man's father, who had died, would always eat fish from a pond behind the house so was reborn as a fish there. The mother had been very attached to the house so after she died she was reborn as the man's dog. The man himself had killed an enemy for raping his wife, and because the enemy was so attached to her he was reborn as her son.

In other words: while the son eats his father's flesh, his mother, the dog, eats the bones of her husband, the fish, and is being beaten by her son. His enemy, his own child, is sitting on his knee.

GIVE UP ATTACHMENT, ENJOY DEATH

Therefore we need to generate renunciation of samsara by doing strong meditation on, thinking about, the shortcomings of samsaric happiness, which is caused by attachment. As soon as we investigate the nature of this kind of hallucinated happiness, we discover that it is only suffering. Then we can cut this emotional pain, free our mind from attachment, and die with a happy mind.

So don't wait until you're close to death to practice renunciation. If

you practice in your daily life, freeing your mind from the bondage of the emotional pain of attachment, your mind will be trained. You'll be like the military, prepared to defeat the enemy whenever he attacks.

Practicing in daily life, you train the mind not only to know that death is definite but also that it can occur any year, any month, any week, any day, even in this moment. If suddenly death comes right now you will be well prepared. There will be nothing to bother you, nothing to be upset or angry about, nothing to regret, no reason for sadness. For you death will be easy; you will be able to guide your consciousness to the pure land of a buddha or a good human rebirth.

For the person who has practiced like this, who has lived a sincere, ethical life, who has not harmed others, who has been kind and treated them with compassion and a good heart – for this person there will always be a good result, a good ending to life. This is logical. During their life there is more peace and happiness, more satisfaction, more fulfillment in their heart, therefore at the time of death there will be no worries; death won't frighten them (even if they don't believe in reincarnation). For them there is no fear, no guilt; they are satisfied, confident, relaxed, peaceful. It's just another change, a change of life.

A few years ago when I was in Adelaide, Australia, I heard in a radio interview a lady say that she was not afraid of death. "I know where I'm going," she said. I really hoped that the interviewer would pursue it, would go further, but he didn't. I think for him her comment was unexpected; it obviously wasn't a normal thing to talk about. I think in the West there are people like her: the way they've lived their life reflects in the way they approach death; it shows.

The way you live your life is like a test, an examination. If you have created many problems, harmed sentient beings, been immoral, unethical, very selfish, not only will there be a lot of suffering in your life but also a lot of fear at death: a feeling that you're going towards a great, frightening darkness.

At the moment, given that we're still in samsara and can't stop death, that we have to experience death, then at least we can enjoy death, go through the process with a happy mind. The main thing to do to accomplish this is make the effort to meditate on the methods to free ourselves of attachment, to let go. Then our mind will be free – like releasing the bird whose legs are fastened: now it can fly. Now we can have a peaceful, happy death and a good rebirth.

CHAPTER 4

GET READY FOR DEATH BY LIVING LIFE WITH A GOOD HEART

THE PURPOSE OF OUR LIFE IS TO HELP OTHERS

There are many Buddhist practices but the very essence is developing a good heart: love and compassion. This means we want to help sentient beings as much as possible and not harm them in any way. This is the basis of morality, of ethics, and within that lies the whole of the Dharma. Within that there are all the beneficial attitudes that we need to cultivate: equanimity, generosity, patience, loving kindness, and especially bodhichitta.

Living our life with a good heart is so important for the happiness – temporary happiness and the ultimate happiness of enlightenment – of the six-realm sentient beings: the hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, gods and demi-gods, as well as the intermediate state beings. Your good heart is so important for the happiness and peace of the numberless beings of this world, the people and the animals; for the happiness of your country, your family, your society, your organization. Their happiness depends upon your good heart, comes from your good heart. This is the most important thing in life.

A good heart is the very meaning of life. If we can hold the welfare of all beings in our heart in whatever we do, we will never harm others again. Wherever we are, whatever we do, whoever we are with, if we always remain aware that the purpose of our life is to help others, to give happiness to others, we will never create the causes of suffering, either for ourselves or others. Then we become the source of happiness for everybody around us – every being – and they become the cause of our enlightenment.

Everything we do in our daily life should be fueled by the wish to make others happy. When we meet people we should feel that our job in meeting them is to make them happy. When we eat we should feel we are eating to get the energy to help others. When we work we should

feel our job is to benefit others. When we walk, every step is in order to benefit others.

Whenever we see an insect we should think that we are here to give happiness to that insect. Whenever we hear a bird we should think that we are here to give happiness to that bird. Whenever a friend phones we should think that we are here to give happiness to that friend. Whenever we have a confrontation at our office we should think that we are here to give happiness to the person who is confronting us.

Whatever we do we should think, “I am doing this to make others happy. This is my job; this is my purpose in life.” From the moment we wake up to the moment we go to sleep this should be the motivation for every action we do. With a good heart, with a mind sincerely wishing to benefit others, our life will make sense.

WITH A GOOD HEART, WE ARE BRAVE IN THE FACE OF PROBLEMS

When we have a heart full of loving kindness and compassion, rather than becoming upset or depressed when problems arise we remain happy. Even if there are serious problems in our life we won't be bothered by them. Even if our business fails or we are diagnosed with cancer, since our whole focus is on the happiness of others we will still be joyful amid having to deal with our own problems. When somebody becomes angry with us, because all we are concerned about is that person's happiness we won't react with anger or indignation; we will do whatever is necessary to help them.

WITH A GOOD HEART, OUR OWN WISHES ARE FULFILLED

Helping others subdues our own mind, making it softer and softer, more and more patient, more and more tolerant, more and more compassionate, more and more loving and kind. Thus everything we do for others becomes a cause for our own happiness. Without expectation or desire for it, we effortlessly achieve whatever we need in this life: comfort, health, leisure, protection, money – what normal people fight for all their lives. And then when we get these things, we use them not for ourselves but for serving others.

And we don't only get what we need now. Helping others gives us a better future rebirth and eventually leads us to liberation from samsara and the peerless happiness of enlightenment.

WITH A GOOD HEART, DEATH IS EASY

What makes death easy is not being a scholar in Buddhist philosophy; that alone cannot help you not have fear at the time of death. What helps most at the time of death is having a very good heart. Being learned, being wise, doesn't help. Pure morality should help, but when there is a good heart pure morality comes.

There was an older monk at one of the monasteries, not learned but with a very good heart. He went to see his guru, Geshe Urgyen Tseten, one of the main teachers there, and said he wanted to do a three-year Vajrayogini retreat. Geshe Urgyen asked him, "Do you know what the three principal aspects of the path are?" He didn't know, he couldn't say; he could not inform his teacher of these: renunciation, bodhichitta, and emptiness. Geshe-la said, "How can you do a three-year retreat? You don't even know the three principal aspects of the path!"

Nevertheless, the monk did the retreat. And when he died, he died in meditation. He didn't even know the essence of Buddhism, he couldn't tell his teacher when he asked him, but he finished the retreat and died in meditation. Can you imagine?

The point is, he lived a normal life with a very good heart – as well as guru devotion, of course. There are many monks in the monasteries like this, who don't have a reputation for being learned but who die in meditation or in the lion position, like the Buddha when he passed away (which I discuss on page 41 in chapter 5 and in practice 55 in chapter 18).

Among being learned, having pure morality, and having a good heart, the good heart is the main one. (I'm not saying that if you're learned you'll have difficulties; I'm not saying that.)

Even if you have no education but you have a good heart, your mind is happy. You have real happiness, real peace. Whereas even if you have everything else but not a good heart, your life will be filled with problems.

WITH A GOOD HEART, WE WILL DIE WITHOUT FEAR

By living with love and compassion we are living our life in the best possible way, and we can be confident of dying with compassion, with a happy, peaceful mind, and thus getting a good rebirth.

By living life with a good heart we will die free from guilt and fear. We will be satisfied with our life and have no sense of things undone. Even though we have enjoyed our life and lived it to the full, there will

be no regret at having to leave it. Because of this selfless attitude we have not clung to the objects of attachment of this life and so at the time of death we will accept that we must leave everything behind.

As we have seen, attachment to this life is what brings fear at the time of death. For somebody who believes in reincarnation, death is just a transition from one happy state to another. But even for somebody who doesn't believe in reincarnation, the effect of having led a sincere and compassionate life is to die without fear or regret.

As we are dying it is natural to look back on our life. It will be a bit like a school exam. We will be forced to honestly examine just what our life has meant. If it has been a life of selfishness, during which we have always placed our own interests before the interests of others, causing problems for others and harming them, we will see very clearly that our life has been a complete waste of time.

Morality isn't some system of behavior imposed by a religion; it is a natural understanding of the right thing to do. We don't need a lama or a priest to explain we have harmed others because of our selfish concerns. Knowing this, whether we consciously see it or not, our mind is filled with dread and fear, and great regret that it has all been pointless. Life has been futile and a terrible darkness awaits us – I have heard people express this many times.

Whether you believe in a religion or not, whether you think there is something after death or not, if you are good-hearted and compassionate you will have a special sort of courage. You will die with a calm and happy mind and peace will radiate from you. Everybody around you will be aware of this very special quality and your death will be a great lesson for others.

CHAPTER 5

THE BEST WAY TO LIVE AND DIE: PRACTICE THE FIVE POWERS

The five powers are five ways to strengthen our life and prepare ourselves for death. It's a practice in the tradition of mind training, or thought transformation (*lojong*, in Tibetan), in Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism. The seven-point mind training practice says, "The Mahayana instruction for transferring consciousness is only the five powers. Therefore, cherish this conduct!"

The texts in this tradition list two different orders to the five: one to practice in life and one to practice close to the time of death. The five at the time of death direct our mind to our next rebirth.

THE FIVE POWERS AT THE TIME OF DEATH

The five powers in life are: intention, training, the white seed, blaming the ego, and prayer. The order at death is different:

- (1) the power of the white seed
- (2) the power of planning
- (3) the power of blaming the ego
- (4) the power of prayer
- (5) the power of training

THE BEST WAY TO TRANSFER YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS

In the tantric teachings, the Vajrayana, there is a special method for transferring your consciousness after death to a pure land, called phowa. (See practice 48 in chapter 16, practice 62 in chapter 19, and practice 81 in chapter 29.) However, even knowing by heart this method doesn't mean that it will work when you practice it at the time of death, that there won't be obstacles to the achievement of the pure lands. If there is no foundation – renunciation of this life and of future samsara; and bodhichitta – just knowing the technique of phowa will not be enough.



COMPASSION BUDDHA

If the only thing your loved one knows is this mantra and, free of attachment to this life, has spent their life chanting it, that is enough. Practice 21.

There's a story about an old monk in Tibet who knew the technique very well and was trying to shoot his consciousness into the pure land of Tushita. But he wasn't having success. His guru, who was nearby, could see that the monk's attachment to his butter tea was causing him difficulties, and he immediately sent a young monk with a message: that the butter tea is better in Tushita, the pure land of Buddha Maitreya. As soon as the young monk whispered the message in his ear, the old monk was able to let go of this one last thing, his consciousness was released, and he was reborn in Tushita.

In Tibet, you see, for the monks in the monasteries there weren't too many enjoyments, only their tea, which is made with butter and salt. They really prized the butter in the tea, which would float on top and would then remain at the bottom of the cup when the tea was finished. Tibetans call this *shakh* – there are many kinds of *shakh*, such as thick *shakh*, and so on. I think the equivalent for Westerners must be ice cream or chocolate!

Anyway, an even better way to guarantee that you transfer your consciousness to a pure land or a good rebirth, safer than phowa, a method that you can have confidence in, is the five powers.

BODHICHTTA IS THE HEART OF THE FIVE POWERS

With the five powers you make your heart practice bodhichitta: you split yourself off from self-cherishing and live your life with bodhichitta. If you are able to do this, then, no question, you will be able to practice the five powers at the time of death. There will be no obstacles to going to a pure land or receiving a perfect human rebirth – whatever you wish.

There are many things that can be explained in order to help us practice in daily life, but this is the essence. Therefore we need to know the outline of both sets of the five powers. The order here is for those at the time of death.

(1) THE POWER OF THE WHITE SEED: GIVE AWAY ALL YOUR POSSESSIONS BEFORE YOU DIE

The first power is to accumulate merit. Accumulating merit during life means creating positive karma and purifying negative karma – but at death it is too late for that. The main thing at the time of death is to cut attachment, clinging, so we must give away our things, either mentally

or actually. It is extremely urgent to let go of your material possessions, especially those that you are most strongly attached to. (I discuss this in practice 9 in chapter 14 as well.)

The great enlightened being Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo said that if you give away what you are attached to, nothing – not even another person’s creating root merits on your behalf – will be more helpful to you after your death.

You can do this by writing it down in a will – but even if you do make a will, in your heart you can offer everything to Guru, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Even if there is nobody around to hear you, from your heart think, “I am offering these things to the Guru Three Rare Sublime Ones.” Having offered them, think it belongs to them; then there will be no more clinging. By making offerings like this, you are not only letting go but also creating inconceivable merit. Why? Because of the power of these four objects of offering: Guru, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. Make the dedication right now in your heart, because death can come any day, any moment.

Even though material possessions, the samsaric perfections, are essenceless, still you can make them worthwhile. You could dedicate them towards preserving and spreading the teachings of the Buddha, or dedicate your possessions to holy objects. It all depends on how much your heart is open and on how well you understand the law of cause and effect. Understanding and faith in karma opens up skies of opportunity to be most beneficial. Most beneficial for whom? – for other sentient beings. And if something is most beneficial for others, just naturally it will be most beneficial for you.

Of the things that terrify us at death, the loss of what we are attached to, as we discussed – our body, possessions, and loved ones – is the most frightening. Clinging to even our altar, our buddha statues, and our Dharma books is still attachment.

So, having given everything away, there will be no regrets and no worries caused by attachment.

DIE WITH THE SIX PERFECTIONS

Another approach, as explained in the teachings, is to die with the six perfections: charity, morality, patience, perseverance, concentration, wisdom.

You could divide your belongings into three parts: offer the first part to the Guru Three Rare Sublime Ones to collect merit, use one part to make charity to sentient beings, and use one part for a party and so forth. To do any of these is **charity**.

For **morality**, you should confess and abstain from the vows of individual liberation, generate bodhichitta, and engage in the bodhisattva vows.

Patience: If you have a grudge from the past, offer forgiveness. If the person is around you now, dedicate one part of your material possessions and tell the person, “I have just this much; please forgive me.” If the other person is unable to accept, be patient and let there be no unhappiness in your mind.

Regarding **perseverance**, whatever you do, do it with joy.

The other two, **concentration** and **wisdom**, are contained in these practices.

(2) THE POWER OF PLANNING: REMEMBER BODHICHITTA

This can also be called the **power of intention**, or the **power of motivation**, or the **power of the attitude**. It is the same at death as it is when we practice the five powers in our lifetime, although the texts list it in a different order. During our lifetime we constantly check our motivation to ensure it is as vast and positive as possible. Every morning we would think, “The purpose of my life is to free every sentient being from suffering and its causes and bring them every happiness. Today, that is my job and I will do nothing else but that.”

Here, the motivation is exactly the same but now we are extending it to the intermediate state period and into the next life and all future lives. With devotion, totally give yourself up to the Three Rare Sublime Ones, completely relying on Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Motivate very strongly again and again, thinking, “From now until I achieve enlightenment – before the time of death, while I am dying, in the intermediate state, and in all future lives – I will never allow myself to come under the control of self-cherishing and I will never separate from bodhichitta.”

Set the intention to be really careful for however many seconds there are from now until the time of death. Put all your effort into this, just as someone crossing over a dangerous bridge would pay full attention to making sure they do not fall off. To be able to recognize the signs at the time of death and immediately and easily think these thoughts depends

on having practiced every day, and especially so when you are sick. Even if you can explain these practices with your mouth, unless you have actually attempted to do them there will be no benefit at all.

So think: “Whatever I experience as I face death and move through the death process and into the next rebirth, I will always only ever think of benefiting others.” With such a pure, altruistic motivation, we can be assured of a wonderful death and a very positive rebirth.

Imagine how terrible rebirth in the lower realms is. Besides the intense and continuous suffering, the sentient beings have no possibility of creating virtuous actions and therefore no possibility of escaping the suffering.

Think of what happens when occasionally they escape and are reborn in the human realm. It’s like the briefest of holidays for a poor person who has won a luxury cruise but tomorrow must return to their life of poverty. Like everybody, they only want happiness and can’t bear the thought of even the slightest suffering, and yet, weighed down by the delusions and negative karma that have plagued them for eons, they’re incapable of doing anything other than create more negative karma. In their brief time in the human realm they have the potential but not the means to create the causes for happiness, so they spend their life creating negative actions and guaranteeing more rebirths in the lower realms. It is so pitiful.

There is no way we can help our kind mother sentient beings while we ourselves are overcome with suffering, so we must do everything we can to ensure a better future rebirth. That means destroying selfishness and embracing the mind of bodhichitta. This attitude is so important in our daily life, but it is crucial as we face death.

This is the power of planning.

(3) THE POWER OF BLAMING THE EGO: GIVE UP SELF-CHERISHING AT THE TIME OF DEATH

The next power is called the **power of blaming the ego** or the **power of destruction**. It’s the same during life but here comes third. What we blame is the ego; what we destroy is the self-cherishing. When we examine where all our problems in this life have come from and the source of all the problems we will face during death and in our next life, we will see that it all comes down to the self-cherishing attitude.

It might seem that our life would be perfect if it weren't for all the external factors that keep interfering and bringing us suffering. But if we examine deeply it will be very obvious that if we didn't have the attitude of self-cherishing we simply wouldn't suffer, no matter what situation arises in our life,

This is what we need to destroy, not any external enemy. This is where the blame lies for every tiny bit of suffering we have ever had to experience. Without the inner enemy there is no outer enemy. We need to put the blame on this real cause of all our misery and give the problems to this enemy, not the external condition that we currently blame. If we do that we will destroy self-cherishing completely and attain liberation from suffering.

This power loads all the problems of our life onto this internal enemy. Everything that has ever gone wrong we pour onto this trouble-maker. Every undesirable thing, in both our worldly and spiritual life, every obstacle to our worldly happiness and our spiritual progress, we lay on top of the self-cherishing attitude, smothering it like piling ashes over fire to kill it. Every undesirable thing has come from the self-cherishing attitude: relationship problems, illnesses, disharmony, losing our job, feeling people don't love us, having things stolen and so forth and so on – we would run out of paper if we tried to write down all the suffering, petty and major, that the self-cherishing mind has brought us.

We are mistaken to blame the mugger who takes our wallet or the person who steals our partner, but we are totally justified and right in blaming and begrudging this sneakiest of thieves, the self-cherishing mind that promises happiness but steals all our merit and delivers only suffering.

KICK OUT SELF-CHERISHING!

It is the self-cherishing thought that brings every difficulty to everyone on this Earth – from the beggar up to the king, prime minister, or billionaire. Therefore, you should decide not to allow yourself to come under the control of this attitude, but to kick it out immediately. Cast it off, renounce from the heart the great demon of self-cherishing.

As Nagarjuna says, when a fire spark jumps on your head or clothing, immediately you shake it off, not allowing it to remain there for even a

second. Like that, engage in the practice of immediately abandoning self-cherishing the moment it arises.

(4) THE POWER OF PRAYER: DIE WITH BODHICHITTA

During life the power of prayer is the last, but at the time of death it comes fourth. Pabongka Rinpoche explained that it doesn't mean praying to be born in a pure land; rather, it means praying to take upon yourself all the sufferings, defilements, and negative karmas of all sentient beings, and to generate bodhichitta.

Pray strongly: "May I never be separated from bodhichitta, the supreme altruistic mind, now as I am dying, when I enter the intermediate state, and when I finally take rebirth."

Pray also: "May I be able to practice in order to meet again the guru who reveals the teachings on lojong and bodhichitta."

(5) THE POWER OF TRAINING: DIE LIKE THE BUDDHA, IN THE LION POSITION, AND TRANSFER YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS TO A PURE LAND

This can also be referred to as the **power of acquaintance** or **habituation**. Kunna Lama Rinpoche mentioned that in the teachings it says, "With familiarity, there is nothing that doesn't get easier." In life this power means mainly training in bodhichitta, but at the time of death it refers to the way we die.

When your mind is thoroughly habituated with bodhichitta, at the time of death, due to the force of this mind training you can meditate on bodhichitta while trying to transfer your consciousness. Pabongka Rinpoche explains that this is the power of training and there is nothing more than this, nothing extra.

At the time of death, it's good to follow the example of our kind compassionate Buddha when he passed away into the sorrowless state and lie in the lion position. Lie on the right side, your head towards the north – which means you're facing west, which is where the pure land of Amitabha is. Your legs are stretched out, the right hand under the right cheek and the ring finger blocking the right nostril, and the left arm stretched out along your left side. The breath coming through the right nostril is the breath of attachment, so stopping it helps the mind

to not be controlled by attachment, to not die with attachment but with virtuous thoughts instead.

Dying like this is referred to as “transference of conduct”: this “conduct,” this position, helps transfer the consciousness to a pure land. Remembering the Buddha plants the seed of enlightenment and immediately protects you from being born in the lower realms. Recollecting the Buddha also makes it easy not to be controlled by delusion and easy to give rise to bodhichitta.

I discuss this more in practice 55 in chapter 18.

INTEGRATE LIFE AND DEATH WITH THE FIVE POWERS

Practicing the five powers is the best way to lead our life and the best preparation for making the end of our life happy, so we must integrate our entire life with this practice. To grow crops you need a field, to build a house you need land: this practice is the foundation of all our practices – *sadhanas*, mantras, prostrations, and so forth. And it prevents us from creating obstacles on the path.

Practicing the five powers destroys self-cherishing and stabilizes our guru devotion, supporting us during our life and preparing us for death. When death comes we will practice it easily because we have practiced it during our lifetime. We will have a happy death.

The five powers is the best psychology of all and the best, deepest meditation.

CHAPTER 6

PRAY TO BE REBORN IN AMITABHA BUDDHA'S PURE LAND

WE NEED THE STRONG DESIRE TO BE REBORN IN THE BLISSFUL REALM OF AMITABHA

In order to achieve enlightenment quickly for sentient beings – not for yourself, for sentient beings – we need to make sure we go to a pure land after we die. Guru Rinpoche Padmasambhava mentions this. And in many of his teachings Lama Tsongkhapa says we should pray to be born especially in Amitabha's pure land, The Blissful Realm (Dewachen, in Tibetan; Sukhavati, in Sanskrit), because it is easy for us ordinary people, those with delusions, to be born there. I was surprised by that. In his text, *The Benefits of The Blissful Realm*, for example, Lama Tsongkhapa says, "When reciting prayers to be reborn in the pure lands of the buddhas, one should mainly focus on being reborn in Sukhavati." (See practice 11 in chapter 15.)

In fact, one of the eight prayers to benefit the dead that are traditionally recited in the Gelug Tibetan monasteries is Lama Tsongkhapa's "Prayer to Be Reborn in the Blissful Realm of Amitabha Buddha" (practice 66 in chapter 20). And it's said that if you recite daily another of the eight, "The King of Prayers" (practice 64 in chapter 20), you will definitely be born there. Of course, these prayers traditionally being recited after death doesn't mean they can't be done before death; these prayers can be recited any time.

IT IS NOT EASY TO BE REBORN IN MOST PURE LANDS

There are numberless pure lands where you can practice tantra and achieve enlightenment. There are Vajrayogini's and Heruka's pure lands, where you can definitely become enlightened. And Tushita, Maitreya Buddha's pure land. And, of course, you can pray to be born in Shambhala, which is a place related to Kalachakra.



AMITABHA BUDDHA

**It is easy for us ordinary beings, those with delusions,
to be born in Amitabha Buddha's pure land. Practices 11, 64, 66.**

However, to be born in many of the pure lands is very difficult. For some you need to have achieved the eighth level of the Mahayana path. To be reborn in the lowest pure lands you need to have cut the ego, the ignorance holding the I as truly existent: you need to have actualized the happiness, the bliss, of the ultimate reality of no self. And to be born in Tushita you need to have very pure morality. So it's very difficult.

If you don't have these realizations, if you still have delusions, even if you pray to go to these pure lands you won't succeed. Many of the pure lands, in other words, are not where ordinary beings can be reborn.

ORDINARY PEOPLE CAN BE REBORN IN THE BLISSFUL REALM, AND WE CAN ACHIEVE ENLIGHTENMENT THERE

However, as I mentioned, ordinary beings, those who have delusions and for whom it is difficult to be born in most pure lands, can easily take rebirth in Amitabha's pure land (unless, of course, you have committed the five heavy negative actions).

And not only that. According to my root guru Trijang Rinpoche you can practice tantra and become enlightened in The Blissful Realm. It's also said that you can get enlightened more quickly there than in other pure lands. And once you are there whatever you wish will be achieved, and from there you can go to any other pure land. So it is much more special than other pure lands.

However, some lamas say that you can't get enlightened in The Blissful Realm. Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, for example, says that having been there you have to reincarnate back in our world, this southern continent, in order to practice tantra and achieve enlightenment. And other lamas say that after being there you will at least never be reborn in the lower realms again.

AMITABHA BUDDHA'S PRAYER

It is because of Amitabha Buddha's prayer that it is easy for those who have delusions to take rebirth in his pure land. Savior Amitabha himself accepted that we ordinary beings can be born there. In the *Arya Amitabha Sutra* it says, "Whoever hears the name of Amitabha and dedicates the merits to be born there will be born there." This is Amitabha's prayer. There is no pure land easier for us ordinary beings to go to than Amitabha Buddha's pure land, so we should make effort to be born there.

EVERYTHING EXISTS ON THE TIP OF THE WISH

There are several causes to take birth in The Blissful Realm.

First, we should always pray to be born there: this is one of the main causes. Without praying to be born in The Blissful Realm, it's not definite that you will be. There's a saying, "Everything exists on the tip of the wish." Whatever happens depends upon your intention. Whatever prayer, whatever wish you make from the heart, will be successful.

Second, we should think about the beauty of The Blissful Realm, how fantastic it is there, how much better than the ordinary world: this makes you desire to be born there. There, you will hear teachings directly from Amitabha Buddha, who is surrounded by Chenrezig, Vajrapani, and innumerable buddhas and bodhisattvas. It is incredibly joyful there, and there are unlimited qualities.

Third, we should practice bodhichitta, then we will be born there as a Mahayanist.

Shakyamuni Buddha's holy mouth mentioned that putting your palms together and generating devotion for Amitabha Buddha and The Blissful Realm for just one second creates much, much more merit than making charity to sentient beings of "a great thousand of three thousand world systems" filled with jewels (see note 21 on page 385).

FLY LIKE AN EAGLE TO AMITABHA'S PURE LAND

Before you die you can practice Amitabha phowa, which prepares you to transfer your consciousness to The Blissful Realm at the time of death (practice 48 in chapter 16 and practice 81 in chapter 29). Padmasambhava mentions that during their training before death the best practitioners can see signs of realizations within a day; the less capable ones can see signs of success within two days, and the least capable, three days.

Milarepa's disciple Rechungpa said that having done the phowa retreat, as soon as your consciousness leaves the body at the time of death "you will fly like an eagle" straight to Amitabha's pure land.

This practice can also be done on your behalf. A lama can do it as soon as your breath stops (practice 62 in chapter 19); or it can be done during the forty-nine days after your death (practice 81 in chapter 29).

HELP OTHERS BE BORN THERE

One of the practices you can do to help your loved one who is dying, even if they're not Buddhist, is to talk about Amitabha's pure land. Tell them how beautiful it is there, that the enjoyments there are much better than here, as Lama Tsongkhapa's describes in his *Benefits of The Blissful Realm*: practice 11 in chapter 15.

And you need to say the name, "The Blissful Realm," or "Sukhavati," or "Dewachen," because that is what their mind holds on to. It's like a rope that they can hold on to while they're climbing a mountain that pulls them up when they're in danger of falling: it saves them. Hearing the name of Amitabha's pure land helps their consciousness let go of this world: their body, their family, their possessions; to not be attached.

PART TWO

HOW WE GO FROM ONE LIFE TO THE NEXT

CHAPTER 7

WHAT HAPPENS AT DEATH?

WHEN DOES DEATH OCCUR?

Death occurs when the consciousness, the mind, separates from the body. Even when the breath has stopped – this is what is called the “outer breath” – or the brain doesn’t function, or the heart doesn’t beat, the person is not dead until the mind, the consciousness, leaves the body. There is still the “inner breath,” and for this to stop and the consciousness to leave the body can take anywhere from a few seconds to three days after the outer breath has ceased (or even longer for experienced meditators; see chapters 10 and 24).

Dr. Adrian Feldmann, an Australian medical doctor who’s one of the most senior FPMT monks, explained how he saw a person whose heart had stopped, who was clinically dead, but who started to function again. And I read a story in a newspaper in Kalam pur, in India, about a man who had been declared dead, who’d been put into a coffin and taken to the graveyard to be buried, who then came back to life. In fact, this had happened to him many times. I heard another story about the father of a family in Nepal who was taken to the *ghats* at a temple for burning. They washed his feet, to purify negative karma I think, ceremoniously carried the body around the funeral pyre three times, then lit the fire – and then he came back to life.

There are many, many stories like this. These things happen because it’s hard to tell when a person has died if you go by just the heart or the breath or brain activity.

THE COMPONENTS OF A PERSON

In order to better understand the process of death, which I describe in chapter 9, it’s helpful to understand what makes up a person, the one who dies.

FIVE AGGREGATES

Buddha explained that a person is made up of five “aggregates”: form, feeling, discrimination, compounding aggregates, and consciousness.

Form refers to our body. Feeling and discrimination are two of the mental factors that we experience day to day; all the rest, such as jealousy, patience, and love, etc., are included in compounding aggregates. Consciousness refers to the six consciousnesses: the five senses and mental consciousness.

FOUR ELEMENTS

Our body is made up of the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind.

GROSS, SUBTLE, AND EXTREMELY SUBTLE BODY AND MIND, OR CONSCIOUSNESS

According to the explanations in highest tantra, there is gross body, subtle body, and extremely subtle, or very subtle, body conjoined respectively with gross consciousness, subtle consciousness, and extremely subtle, or very subtle, consciousness.

The gross body is this one that we can see; the subtle one is made up of channels, winds, and drops; the extremely subtle body is subtle wind.

The sense consciousnesses are gross consciousness. Subtle consciousness includes the various conceptual states of mind called the eighty superstitions, as well as the minds of white appearance, red appearance or increase, and black, or dark, appearance. Finally, there is extremely subtle consciousness, or the mind of clear light.

CHANNELS, WINDS, AND CHAKRAS

The wind energies of the subtle body – more subtle than the air we breathe – carry our mind through a system of 72,000 channels throughout the body. It is said that our consciousness, our mind, “rides” on these winds.

The main channels are the central channel and the right and left channels. They are in the center of the body, measuring between the two breasts, and a little closer to the back.

At various points along these channels there are chakras, the main ones being at the crown, the throat, the heart, the navel and the tip of the

sex organ. The two side channels do not run straight down either side of the central channel but wrap around it at the chakras, forming “knots.”

RED AND WHITE DROPS

At the moment of conception in our mother’s womb, our consciousness mixed with the red drop, or bodhichitta, from the mother and the white drop from the father. The essence of this conjoined white and red bodhichitta – known as the indestructible drop, with its red and white halves, the size of a tiny bean – abides in the very center of our heart chakra. Part of the white bodhichitta also abides at the crown chakra and part of the red at the navel chakra. Our extremely subtle consciousness resides in the indestructible drop.

THE CLEAR LIGHT MIND OF DEATH

While we are alive, the knots at the chakras prevent the winds from entering into and flowing in the central channel. Otherwise these various winds and the states of mind associated with them would all dissolve into the indestructible drop at the heart chakra, at which point our extremely subtle consciousness, the mind of clear light, would manifest and with it we could meditate on emptiness and thus free ourselves from all delusions, eventually becoming enlightened.

Throughout their lives the great meditators train their minds to do this. Lama Yeshe, for example, in his daily tantric practice was able to experience the various visions of the dissolution process that occur naturally at death; in other words, he didn’t need to wait until death to experience them. Lama was able to open the chakras, causing the winds to enter into and flow in the central channel and dissolve at the heart chakra, and thus could meditate in the clear light. Therefore, at the time of death the great yogis can remain in meditation in the clear light for as long as they like, which is what happened with Lama. I discuss this in chapters 10 and 24.

DEATH, INTERMEDIATE STATE, AND REBIRTH

The process of **death** occurs in eight stages, which I explain in chapter 9, and is experienced by those who have bodies constituted from the sperm of the father and the egg of the mother: human beings and some animals.

During the **first four stages** we experience the gradual dissolution of twenty-two of twenty-five components: four of the five aggregates, four of the five types of wisdom – the base-time wisdoms, not the result-time – the four elements, five of the six sense bases, and the five inner sense objects.

The breath has stopped by the end of the **fourth stage**, and by then the gross consciousnesses have ceased.

During the final four stages, the remaining three of the twenty-five components gradually cease: the fifth aggregate, the fifth wisdom, and the sixth sense base.

During the **fifth, sixth, and seventh stages** subtle consciousness gradually dissolves: the eighty superstitions, bringing, in order, the white, red, and dark appearances.

By the **eighth stage**, all that is left is the extremely subtle wind conjoined with the extremely subtle consciousness, the mind of clear light, at the indestructible drop at the heart. Death occurs when the indestructible drop splits open and the conjoined extremely subtle wind and mind leaves the body.

However, for ordinary people the mind can stay in the body for up to three days after the breath stops, although they are not aware. The great yogis, as I mentioned, can meditate in the clear light for as long as they like.

As soon as the mind leaves the body we take a “life” between this life and the next called the **intermediate state**, and up to forty-nine days later will take a new **rebirth**.

CHAPTER 8

THE TWELVE LINKS OF DEPENDENT ARISING

Cyclic existence operates through the twelve links of dependent arising. From **(1) the ignorance** that believes in inherent existence we create **(2) compounded action**, or **karma**, the imprints of which are left on our **(3) consciousness**. (Some authors of the scriptures also count the result consciousness that enters the fertilized egg.) Next is **(4) name and form**, “name” referring to the four mental aggregates and “form” to the physical, the egg and sperm, when the five come together in the womb. When they begin to develop as the fetus they are known as **(5) the six sense bases**.

Then comes **(6) contact**, when the mind connects with external objects through the sense bases of the eyes, ears, and so forth, followed by **(7) feeling** in relation to those objects, either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, which gives rise to **(8) craving** and **(9) grasping**, then **(10) becoming**. Next is **(11) birth**, and finally there is **(12) old age and death**.

THE TWELVE LINKS OF THIS PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH

Let us discuss the twelve links in relation to this human body that we have now. What caused our consciousness to join the egg and sperm in our mother’s body? What made it go there?

In past lives, because of **ignorance** we created both non-virtuous and virtuous **karma**, which planted seeds, left potentials, in the field of our **consciousness**. At the time of death of our life before this one, whether we were a human or an elephant or a kangaroo, **craving** arose – craving to not separate from that body. Then fear arose, because of the attachment to not wanting to leave the body: that’s what causes fear at the time of death. After that, **grasping** arose, a stronger form of attachment, this time – in our case – attachment to receiving a human body.

Now, in the case of someone who is going to be reborn in the hot hells the craving is the same – not wanting to separate from their body

– but the grasping is to heat because they feel very cold. Many times dying people say they feel cold and beg for blankets, but even if you give them two or three it won't be enough: their grasping at heat is so strong. (This could also happen because the fire element is dissolving at that point; see chapter 9.) The grasping at heat activates a negative karmic seed, the second link, which causes their mind to migrate to a hell being's body right after death. The grasping is the very close condition; there were, of course, the previously-created causes: the first link, ignorance, and the second, karma.

GRASPING AT A HUMAN REBIRTH AT THE TIME OF DEATH IS A CAUSE FOR ACHIEVING ONE

In our case, as humans, the very close condition at the time of our past death, just before the gross consciousness ceased, was the grasping at, the wish to receive, a human body. In other words, in order to receive this perfect human rebirth that we have now, we must have had not only the karma of perfect morality and great generosity but also the strong desire – grasping, the ninth link – to have a human body.

When we understand that attachment to this life is never virtuous but attachment at the time of death to either a human life or rebirth in a pure land is virtuous, then we can understand the function of this link of grasping.

In other words, whereas craving and grasping are certainly operating in our daily life in the form of attachment, in the context of the twelve links they are more to do with the connection of one life to the next. The karmic seed that gives rise to the new rebirth is there on our mind, the second link, but it is grasping at the time of death that activates its ripening.

FIVE CAUSES FROM PAST LIVES, SEVEN RESULTS IN THIS LIFE

To summarize: five of the links are causes from past lives: three delusions – the three links of **ignorance**, **craving**, and **grasping**; and two karmas – the two links of **compounded action** and **becoming**.

First there was the delusion **ignorance**, the first link, then the delusions arising at the time of death, the eighth link, **craving**, and ninth, **grasping**. Then there were the two karmas – the second link, in our case a virtuous **karma** (which could have been created thousands, even

millions, of lives ago), and the second karma, **becoming**, the tenth link: the previously created karmic seed made ready by craving and grasping at death: that is what is called becoming.

It is these five that formed these aggregates, this body and mind, this samsara.

Of the seven results that manifest in this life, the eleventh link, **birth**, started at the moment our consciousness joined the fertilized egg. **Old age**, the beginning of the twelfth, **old age and death**, started the next moment in the womb – “old age” is not just what is known in the world: the wrinkles, the white hair, and so forth.

Now, all there is left is **death**.

NO DELUSIONS AND KARMA, NO REBIRTH

From this evolution we can understand that if we had freed ourselves of delusions and karma in the past there is no way we could have come into existence. There'd be no reason at all to have taken this human body: to have to experience the suffering of rebirth, the suffering of sickness, the suffering of old age, and the suffering of death – not to mention all the other problems that we experience in daily life that are not included in these four. Because we didn't cease delusions and karma in our past life by following the path, this self, this person, is still caught up in samsara.

Wherever our consciousness goes, this self goes with it, because consciousness is the main base for the existence of self; the gross body exists for a short time and then disintegrates. As long as this self is bound by delusions and karma there is no choice, we will be burdened by these aggregates. Delusions and karma have bound this self to samsara, and no matter how much we do not want this suffering, as long as we are caught up in samsara there is no freedom.

CHAPTER 9

THE STAGES OF DEATH, INTERMEDIATE STATE, AND REBIRTH

Even though we all go through the eight stages at the time of death, what I describe here is a gradual death. Those who die violently or suddenly go through the stages very quickly. And sometimes in a violent death the mind could leave the body immediately and go straight to the intermediate state.

As I mentioned, the great meditators, those who have deeply familiarized themselves with these stages in meditation during their lives, can recognize the stages of death as they occur and can meditate on emptiness throughout. (See chapters 10 and 24.)

But ordinary people don't recognize them. (We go through these stages every time we sleep too, but we don't recognize them then, either.) It's like when you're looking at a person, let's say, but your mind is concentrating on another object, a sound for example, or you're thinking of something else, and even though the person is in front of you, you simply don't see them.

It's the same at death. We don't recognize the visions that occur at each stage of this evolution – first this, then that, then that; now the clear light, now the intermediate state, etc. – because of the pollution of our ignorance and our uncontrolled mind. Even though we might know these stages intellectually, not having trained our minds in the meditation techniques during our lifetime and not having created enough virtuous karma or purified our minds, we can't recognize these experiences as they occur.

But it's possible. I discuss this in chapter 10.

It's good to help your loved one meditate on these stages during the months and weeks before death (practice 39 in chapter 16). They can also become familiar with these stages as they go to sleep (practice 41 in chapter 16).



BUDDHA VAJRASATTVA

**In order to help our loved ones not be afraid of death,
we need to help them purify their negative karma.
The practice of Vajrasattva and the four opponent powers
is an incredibly powerful method. Practice 50.**

And if they have a highest tantra practice you can guide them through the stages of meditation, which I discuss in chapter 10, when you help them with their daily practices (practice 47 in chapter 16).

GROSS CONSCIOUSNESS

(1) THE VISION OF A MIRAGE

As the **aggregate of form** dissolves your body becomes thinner and your limbs become loose and unmanageable.

As the **mirror-like wisdom** dissolves – these and the other four wisdoms are labeled according to the function of the senses – your ability to see many objects at the same time, as a mirror reflects many objects together, ceases; and you cannot see the forms of people and objects clearly.

As the **earth element** dissolves you feel as if you are sinking; you might even reach up as if to hold on to something.

As the **eye sense base** dissolves you can no longer open or close your eyes. If your eyes are open they will remain like that without blinking; this is a sign that you will die within one or two hours. In fact, this is the nearest sign of death.

This is what happened with Lama Yeshe during the last couple of hours before he passed away: he was unable to close his eyes. (See chapter 24.) And I've seen it in other dying people.

As the **inner subtle form** dissolves your body loses its strength completely, and it loses its radiance.

You will have a **vision of a mirage**, an inner vision, like water shimmering in the heat. Your vision blurs; everything seems watery and wavy, like a mirage in the distance.

(2) THE VISION OF SMOKE

As the **aggregate of feeling** dissolves you can no longer experience the three kinds of feelings: pleasure, pain, and indifference; you're indifferent to suffering and happiness.

The **wisdom of equanimity**, which sees these three together, as having the same nature, dissolves.

As the **water element** dissolves the liquids of your body dry up; your mouth feels very dry: this too is a sign that death could be within one or two hours.

As the **ear sense base** dissolves you can no longer distinguish sounds.

As the **inner sound** dissolves you can no longer even hear the buzzing in your ears.

You will have a **vision of smoke**, like a room filled with incense, or smoke from burning green wood swirling about.

YOUR DYING THOUGHTS ACTIVATE THE KARMIC SEED THAT DETERMINES YOUR NEXT REBIRTH

As Pabongka Rinpoche says in *Liberation In the Palm of Your Hand*, your dying thoughts activate the karma that will be the cause of your next rebirth, and the activators of this “throwing karma” are the eighth and ninth links, craving and grasping, as discussed in the twelve links of dependent arising in chapter 8. Rinpoche says that this takes place while the mind is still active and you can still recall virtue or be reminded of it by other people, which is now.

At this point it is so important to be able to control the arising of the disturbing thoughts by remembering the guru, the teachings – renunciation of samsara, karma, emptiness, loving kindness and great compassion, and the rest – which gives us the chance to be born in a buddha’s pure land or to take a perfect human rebirth.

If our last gross thoughts are virtuous the throwing karma will be virtuous; if the last gross thoughts are non-virtuous the throwing karma will be non-virtuous. The karmic seed that ripens is whichever is heavier, the stronger habit – which, as I mentioned, could have been planted hundreds, even millions, of lifetimes ago; if they’re equal, the seed that was planted first will be the one that ripens.

If we die with anger, say, or strong attachment to our life, our loved ones, etc., our birth will be only in the lower realms, nowhere else. Generally, attachment causes rebirth as a hungry ghost; ignorance causes rebirth as an animal, and anger as a hell being. In these lower realms we will experience unimaginable sufferings for an incredible length of time. The suffering in the human realm is nothing in comparison – in fact, it’s like great pleasure in comparison.

At this point, when dying with non-virtuous thoughts five things can occur, although not necessarily all five. They include soiling ourselves, our arms and legs thrashing about, screaming, blood coming from the ears, nose and mouth, and our eyes rolling up. If we have created very heavy negative karma, all five will happen and as we are dying we will

have terrible visions of our future life. We will feel that we are moving from light into darkness.

On the other hand, dying with a virtuous state of mind causes us to have a peaceful and happy death. In fact, if we're like the best spiritual practitioners we will be joyful at the time of death and will have a sense of passing from darkness into light.

(3) THE VISION OF FIRE SPARKS

As the **aggregate of discrimination** dissolves you can no longer recognize your friends and relatives.

As the **wisdom of discriminating awareness**, or **discernment**, dissolves you cannot remember anyone's names; the people around you become blurs.

As the **fire element** dissolves the body's heat gradually ceases; the capacity to digest food ceases.

As the **nose sense base** dissolves, breathing in becomes difficult and weaker and breathing out becomes stronger and longer.

As the **inner sense of smell** dissolves you can no longer smell anything.

You will have a **vision of fire sparks**, like the sparks that come when you burn dry grass, or like starlight, or a sky filled with fireflies.

HOW THE HEAT LEAVES THE BODY

You can judge the type of rebirth you will take by where the heat in your body begins to cease. If you are dying with a positive attitude, which causes a happy rebirth, your feet will get cold first and the heat will eventually only be at the heart.

If you are dying with fear or anger or attachment, for example, which causes a suffering rebirth, the head will get cold first and, again, the heat will eventually only be at the heart.

(4) THE VISION OF A FLAME

As your **aggregate of compounding aggregates** dissolves you can no longer move your body, and your awareness of worldly activities and worldly success and their necessity cease.

As your **all-accomplishing**, or **completion**, **wisdom** dissolves, even if you could hear a name you cannot remember its meaning. In our daily

life we normally remember the meaning of something and then decide to do it; now you can't think of the meaning of anything.

As your **wind element** dissolves your breathing stops.

As your **tongue sense base** dissolves your tongue becomes short and thick and turns blue at the root: this, too, is a sign of imminent death.

As your **body sense base** dissolves you can no longer experience soft or rough sensations.

As your **inner taste** dissolves you can no longer taste anything.

You will see a **vision of a flame** – actually, according to Song Rinpoche, it is more like the light around the flame, a dim red-blue light.

THE OUTER BREATH HAS NOW STOPPED

During the final four stages of death, the last three of the twenty-five components gradually dissolve – the **aggregate of consciousness**, the **wisdom of the sphere of phenomena**, and the **mental sense base**.

SUBTLE CONSCIOUSNESS

During the next three stages, the eighty superstitions – the various delusions; the dualistic, wrong conceptions – gradually dissolve.

(5) THE WHITE VISION

The first thirty-three of the eighty superstitions cease.

The **winds in the right and left channels** move up and open the head chakra, loosening the knots there, and enter the central channel.

This causes the **white bodhichitta at the crown** to melt and flow down the central channel to the heart, touching the central channel as it goes.

Now you experience the **white vision**, the **mind of white appearance**, like very bright moonlight in autumn, or like the almost-white sky caused by the light of the rising moon when everything is covered with snow.

Whereas the previous inner visions had some movement to them, this and the following ones are perfectly still.

(6) THE RED VISION

The next forty of the eighty superstitions dissolve.

The **winds in the right and left channels** move down and open the sex and navel chakras, loosening the knots there, and enter the central channel.

This causes the **red bodhichitta at the navel** to shoot up the central channel to the heart chakra, touching the central channel as it goes.

Now you experience the **red vision**, the **mind of red increase**. It's like the clear red sky, just before the dawn breaks; or like a copper-red reflection in the sky, and it's perfectly still.

(7) THE DARK VISION

The final seven of the eighty superstitions dissolve.

The **red and white bodhichitta meet at the heart chakra**, in the indestructible drop in the central channel, with its red and white halves.

Now you experience the **dark vision**, the **mind of dark appearance**; it's as if you're falling into darkness. Or it's like a dark and empty sky or being in a dark room. At the beginning of this vision you have some awareness and recognize an appearance of darkness, but then you become unconscious.

EXTREMELY SUBTLE CONSCIOUSNESS

(8) THE CLEAR LIGHT VISION

Now the **clear light vision** appears. This is the subtlest level of mind, occurring only after all the grosser consciousnesses have ceased. It's like an autumn dawn, when the sky is so clear, no clouds, no dust. It is not bright like at noon, not red, and not dark. Nothing else appears.

The yogis continue to meditate at this point and can stay as long as they like, as I mentioned in chapter 7 and which I discuss further in chapters 10 and 24. For ordinary people, who have no awareness of what is happening, it could be three days before the mind leaves the body.

HOW THE MIND LEAVES THE BODY AT THE TIME OF DEATH

Death occurs when the indestructible drop splits open and the extremely subtle mind and wind leave your heart chakra in the central channel and, depending on which rebirth you will take, exit the gross body at one point or another.

If you will be reborn in a pure land of a buddha (or the formless realm), your mind leaves from the crown; if you will be reborn as a human being, your mind leaves from the eyes; as a hell being, from the anus; as an animal, from the sex organ; as a hungry ghost, from the mouth.

The consciousness can also leave from the navel, ears, nose, and, I think, from midway between the eyebrows – perhaps this would be the case for someone who will be reborn in the form realm.

SIGNS OF DEATH

When the mind leaves the body of a man, the white bodhichitta continues down the central channel and leaves through the sex organ and the red continues up and leaves through the nostrils; in a woman the white bodhichitta goes up and leaves through the nostrils and the red bodhichitta goes down and leaves through the organ. This is the final sign that the mind has left the body, the actual death. (There are other signs, which I discuss in chapter 25.)

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

The moment the indestructible drop splits open, your extremely subtle consciousness leaves from the heart chakra and becomes the intermediate state being's mind, even before it leaves the gross body. The extremely subtle wind that is the vehicle of the extremely subtle consciousness becomes the condition for the intermediate state being's mind and the very subtle consciousness becomes the condition for the intermediate stage being's body.

You can see the world you just left, your relatives, and your dead body, but the karma is finished so you do not recognize any of it and have no desire to go back.

You then go through the eight stages in reverse order: the dark vision, the red vision, the white vision, the eighty superstitions, etc., then take the body of the intermediate state being. This body, which is subtle and has no resistance to matter, is similar in appearance to the body of the next life.

The longest time spent in the intermediate state is forty-nine days, but if after seven days rebirth hasn't happened yet you will experience what is called a small death, again taking a body in the intermediate state for a further seven days until another small death occurs or a new rebirth is found.

If your mind is not clouded by delusions the intermediate state is a wonderful experience. It is even possible to attain enlightenment in the intermediate state, like Lama Tsongkhapa did.

For a mind clouded by negativity the intermediate state is terrible. There is much fear as you experience karmically-created visions such as feeling pressed down by the earth, stuck in big cracks, being taken by a sea wave, or being in a whirlpool or in a great fire. You suffer because of not recognizing these as visions, the projections of your deluded mind. If you could recognize this there would be less fear. You believe them to be true so there is extreme suffering.

However, even if you have created much negative karma and are destined for the lower realms, there are special practices that can be done by lamas that can influence you in the intermediate state and cause you to take a favorable rebirth such as in a pure land of the buddhas, as I discuss in chapter 6: *phowa* (practice 62 in chapter 16 and practice 81 in chapter 29) and *jangwa* (practice 78 in chapter 28). Of course, success very much depends on your connection with the lama doing the practice, on their skill, and on the heaviness of your obscurations.

REBIRTH AS A HUMAN

As I mentioned, the experience of being reborn is similar to the experience of waking up – but whether we wake up to a pleasant day or a violent storm is another matter! If we are reborn in the lower realms the awakening will be a terrible one.

If from the intermediate state you will take rebirth as a human you will see your future parents in sexual union. If you are to be born as a male you will be attracted to the mother and will have aversion for the father, and if as a female you will be attracted to the father and have aversion for the mother. Because of the habit, the karmic imprint, of attachment to sexual union, the intermediate state being will want to embrace, have sexual intercourse with, the one it's attracted to. But as it approaches it doesn't see the body of the parent, only the sexual organs, which causes anger to arise. This anger becomes the condition for the intermediate state being to die and its mind to enter the mother's womb.

It is easy to see how ordinary birth is caused by delusions and karma.

CHAPTER 10

DEATH IS WHAT THE YOGIS HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR

IT'S POSSIBLE TO GET ENLIGHTENED AT THE TIME OF DEATH

Generally it is not permitted to openly give details of the methods that the great yogis use, however I feel it would be useful to talk briefly about them here.

Death is the moment they have been waiting for. At the point in the death process when all the grosser consciousnesses have ceased and only the extremely subtle consciousness is left, as discussed in chapter 9, the yogis – those who have observed karma well, kept their precepts purely, spent their lives training their minds in the clear light meditation and have been able to recognize the base-time clear light, the imagined, visualized one – are now able to recognize the clear light of death.

They can remain in meditation in the clear light conjoined with emptiness for as long as they wish – one hour, three days, many months; some meditators stay in the clear light meditation in their hermitage for years. His Holiness the Dalai Lama's root guru, Ling Rinpoche, for example, stayed in meditation for thirteen days. Lama Yeshe, too, remained in meditation after passing away.

There are many examples like this. Apparently one of the previous Ganden Throne Holders spent some twenty-one days in meditation. And I remember at Buxa, when we escaped from Tibet, there was a Sera Monastery monk in the same house that I lived in, a very simple monk, who spent many days in meditation after passing away. It seems that the great eighth-century bodhisattva Shantideva spent something like thirty years in meditation after he passed away. At Kopan Monastery I found among Lama's things a note that referred to some text in which this is written. I don't remember the details now.

By concentrating in this subtlest state without distraction, some practitioners achieve enlightenment at this time. They actually realize the three bodies of a buddha: they transform ordinary death into the

wisdom body, *dharmakaya*, ordinary intermediate state into the enjoyment body, *sambhogakaya*, and ordinary rebirth into the emanation body, *nirmanakaya*. Some practitioners can achieve enlightenment in the intermediate state, as Lama Tsongkhapa did.

Many Tibetan lamas have passed away in meditation since Tibetans first came to India as exiles in 1959. For those who ended their lives in Indian hospitals it was difficult to receive permission to leave the body alone for a while. Ordinary Indian people never believed that such a thing as meditating while passing away was possible because they never saw it happen. Their usual concept was that the moment a person died the body should be taken out and burnt before it began to smell.

Thinking that a person was dead as soon as the breath stops, the doctors were amazed that these lamas could stay in meditation for long, long periods without any decay of the body. Far from being a bad smell in the room, there was a fantastic sweet smell due to the power of their realizations.

YOU TOO CAN TRANSFORM DEATH, INTERMEDIATE STATE, AND REBIRTH

The practices these yogis do are available to those who have taken a highest tantra initiation, or empowerment. They are the quickest methods to achieve enlightenment in one brief lifetime of this degenerate time.

These practices have a very special arrangement, and doing the sadhana every day – the complete sadhana, not just simply generating yourself as the deity and reciting the mantra, without the mandala; not like that – is a very important preparation for death. You will understand this when you have received the commentaries on the generation stage and the completion stage practices.

Every time you meditate you are preparing your mental continuum by purifying ordinary death, ordinary intermediate state, and ordinary rebirth, enabling you to actualize the path-time *dharmakaya*, the path-time *sambhogakaya*, and the path-time *nirmanakaya*, thus planting the seeds to achieve the result-time three bodies, or *kayas*.

Whether you do the long version of the sadhana of the deity you are committed to do, or the middle version, they both contain the essence of the generation stage practice: transforming the three experiences into the three bodies of a buddha. Even the short Yamantaka sadhana, for example, has these three important points.

And then on the day you die, because you have trained your mind by meditating like this every day you are able to recognize what's happening: the twenty-five stages of dissolution, without missing any. Then you are able to recognize the clear light, and during the intermediate state and the birth time you will be able to visualize the deity.

When you just recite the words, there is, of course, a positive imprint left on your mind, but you are not strongly preparing your mind as you would if you were to actually meditate. Practicing like this is incredible. It is the quickest way to purify the defilements.

Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche says that if you are busy and can't do much meditation, you could do most of your sadhanas quickly and then spend more time on the practice of your main deity, doing more elaborate meditations. However, in all your sadhanas still you must emphasize the meditation on the three kayas, especially meditating on the divine pride of being the result-time dharmakaya, thinking, "This is me."

Finally, this will lead you to accomplish the completion stage realizations of cutting even the subtle defilements, the dualistic view, and actually achieving the result-time three bodies, enlightenment. By doing these practices you can collect in just a few years the merit that would otherwise take you three countless great eons to collect on the Mahayana Paramitayana path.

This is how you can enjoy death by using the tantric path, the quickest way to achieve enlightenment.

Right now, our mind is full of distractions. To try to stay on an object in meditation in ideal circumstances for even a few minutes is extremely difficult; while we are going through the process of dying it will be even more so. This is why it is so important to train as well and as often as possible, practicing the sadhanas, as well as the purification practices – and, of course, destroying self-cherishing and developing bodhichitta: the weaker the self-cherishing at death, the easier it is to go through the death process with a focused mind.

As we get more control, as our minds become more habituated with these meditations, it's definite that we will be able to control our mind at the time of death. Even though we might not be able to realize this practice – which means actually getting enlightened – by repeated familiarization with it we will at least face death with a happy mind.

PART THREE

PRACTICES TO DO DURING THE MONTHS AND WEEKS BEFORE DEATH



Lotus Pinnacle of Anagolapatha
OM PALMO USINSHISA VIDYALE HUM PHAT



Mani Puja
OM MANI PUNJAYA HUM



Ajikya Mantra
OM AJIKYA MANTRA HUM





Gambhe Svaha
OM GAMBHE SVAHA



Vajrasattva Mantra
OM VASRA SVATA



Vajrasattva Mantra
OM VASRA SVATA

Just by seeing purifies 100,000 eons of negative karma
OM HANU PHASHA BHARA HE YE SVAHA

Just by seeing you become enlightened
ADU KAH SEHA SA MA HUA



Great increasing jewel
OM GREAT INCREASING JEWEL



Mani puja
OM MANI PUJA



Ajikya mantra
OM AJIKYA MANTRA



Mitrupa mantra
OM MITRUPA MANTRA



Buddha's name mantra
OM BUDDHA'S NAME MANTRA



Medicine Buddha mantra
OM MEDICINE BUDDHA MANTRA



Nangulma mantra
OM NANGULMA MANTRA

By hearing this mantra one will never be reborn in the lower realms and one will be liberated and will be able to enlighten all sentient beings from the ocean of samsara

OM DAN DAN DA DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR DZOG PAI SANG GYA RIN CHHEN TSUG TOR CHAN LA CHIAG TSHAL LO

OM DAN DAN DA DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR DZOG PAI SANG GYA RIN CHHEN TSUG TOR CHAN LA CHIAG TSHAL LO



Cheruvig Mantra
OM MANI PADME HUM



Amitabha Mantra
OM AMITABHA HREH

My most dear kindest brother and sister,

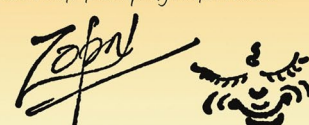
Please look at these mantras quite often; especially, look at these mantras when you are leaving from this old body. Dear one, please don't cling to anything and let yourself become completely free. In this most important moment of life, you don't need to be afraid at all of being born in the lower realms and so forth. I give all my merits of the past, present, and future to you, to have a happy journey and a happy, wonderful, sunshining future. I give my big love to you. All the buddhas and bodhisattvas love you, and you are in their care. May anyone who sees these mantras be immediately reborn in the pure land where one can become enlightened or receive a perfect human body by quickly actualizing the causal vehicle, the three principals of the path, and the result vehicle, the secret mantra Vajrayana, based on correctly devoting and only pleasing one's own holy guru.

You can also pray in this way: "May I take rebirth in whatever place is most beneficial for sentient beings, no matter where it is."

To think this thought again and again is extremely good.

The other choice is to think: "May I be born in Amitabha's blissful field to quickly benefit all sentient beings."

Thank you.
With much love and prayers,
Lama Zopa



LIBERATION CARD

Make something like this for your loved one to look at. Practice 1.

CHAPTER 11

HELPING OTHERS AT THE TIME OF DEATH IS A BIG RESPONSIBILITY

As we've discussed, a good rebirth – a perfect human rebirth or birth in a buddha's pure land such as Amitabha's Blissful Realm, where there's no suffering and where we can achieve enlightenment quickly – depends upon dying peacefully, with virtuous thoughts. If we die with anger or strong attachment or fear our birth will be only in the lower realms.

Therefore, the people surrounding the person who is dying – friends, family, professional carers – have a big responsibility. I will put it this way: Whatever arises in your loved one's mind, whether their thoughts are virtuous or nonvirtuous, very much depends upon you and other helpers, how you behave towards them. It is a great responsibility. If you are not careful, if you do not have this education – that the way you behave affects the mind of the person and therefore their future life – you will only harm them, not help them.

Chöden Rinpoche says that even if you cannot help the person become virtuous, at least help them become neutral – not nonvirtuous, not virtuous. Best, of course, is to help them become virtuous.

HELPERS SHOULD BE CLOSE TO THE DYING PERSON

Rinpoche says that the people who help, who give advice and support, and especially the one who speaks the name of the person's guru in their ear when their breath stops (see practice 60), shouldn't be someone they dislike; in fact, there should be pure *samaya* between them, a pure spiritual relationship.

Also, in order to ensure that attachment doesn't arise in your loved one's mind – especially when the time of death is close – Rinpoche advises that it's best not to allow anyone for whom they have strong attachment to be in their presence; ideally, you shouldn't even mention their name. Of course, if that person can help your loved one, help

them solve their problems or alleviate their fears, then that's okay. But if their presence simply increases their attachment, their fears of separation, then it's very harmful, making it difficult for your loved one to let go.

A PRAYER FOR HELPERS

May whoever
 Sees me,
 Touches me,
 Remembers me,
 Thinks about me,
 Talks about me,
 Praises me,
 Even criticizes me –
 May they immediately be free from all spirit harms
 And negative karma,
 And may they complete the path,
 And achieve full enlightenment as soon as possible.

In this way you become wish-fulfilling for your loved ones – for all sentient beings. As soon as they see you, hear your voice, touch you, or even remember you, they will immediately be free of the fear of death and their mind will be filled with great joy. Then they will be able to go to a pure land, where they can get enlightened.

USE YOUR WISDOM

And remember, as I mentioned at the beginning, your ability to help your loved one depends on what you have practiced throughout your life. The more you understand what you are supposed to do for your own death, the more you will know how to help your loved one. The less you know, the less wisdom you will have. When you know how to die with a peaceful mind, then you can confidently help your loved one. You will be able to create the right conditions so that it's easy for their minds to be transformed into virtue.

You need to be skillful in advising your loved one according to their state of mind, their background, their life; whether they are a

non-believer or have a religion, and if they have a religion what their level of understanding is.

We're not clairvoyant, so we won't know exactly what fits the mind of the person or when the right time is to explain it to them, or even whether they have the karma to listen to the advice or to understand it. Check, analyze how to present the advice: the right time, the right mood, and then educate them however you can, with as much compassion as possible and as much wisdom, with skillful means.

MERELY HEARING SOME OF THE PRACTICES CAN HELP

But remember, as I mentioned and as Rinpoche has advised, even if the dying person doesn't have faith in Buddha's teachings it's still good for them to hear the practices; that receiving the benefits of reciting or hearing them doesn't require devotion.

CHAPTER 12

CREATE A CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR A PEACEFUL DEATH

MAKE THE PLACE BEAUTIFUL

You should make the room as beautiful as possible: a calm, peaceful, serene, holy environment is so important. There should be beautiful views, beautiful art, flowers – flowers give a very special spiritual feeling.

The point is to help put positive imprints on your loved one's mind. If their mind is elevated they will not be afraid of dying.

DISPLAY HOLY OBJECTS SUCH AS STATUES, IMAGES, STUPAS, TEXTS, PRAYER WHEELS

Display images of the buddhas and your loved one's gurus. If they're not Buddhist you could have images from their own religion, such as Mary or Jesus or Shiva. Also display stupas, prayers wheels, texts, etc., ready to use for blessings. Put things around nicely.

THE POSITION OF THE BED

If possible, your loved one should be lying with their head pointing towards the north, which means they are facing the west, which is where Amitabha Buddha's pure land is.

This prepares them for the practice of going to sleep in the lion posture (practice 40 in chapter 16), which in turn prepares them for dying in this position (practice 55 in chapter 18), which is how Buddha himself passed away. Lying like this reminds them of the Buddha, that they're following in his footsteps.

NO TOBACCO

Do not allow anyone to smoke anywhere near the dying person. Besides causing physical problems, without question smoking is harmful spiritually. It pollutes the subtle nervous system, the channels, etc.

According to the great lama, Panchen Lama Chökyi Gyaltsen – who composed the incredible teaching, *Guru Puja*, as well as many other teachings, including a text on *mahamudra* – when someone asked him to perform phowa at the time of death the first thing he would ask is whether the person smoked, and if they did he wouldn't do the practice. It seems that smoking makes it difficult to transfer the consciousness to a pure land.

NO PETS, ANIMAL SKINS

You should not allow any cats and dogs in the room with your loved one, especially cats – it's said that their hair is polluted.

Here in *Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead* the author says that if the person who is dying is lying on an animal skin you should remove it before they die; the same if they're wearing an animal skin or are covered by one. It says that being around animal skins at the time of death makes transference of consciousness to a pure land more difficult, even if it's a lama who is performing phowa. I haven't heard this said in other teachings, but it says it here. Also, it is said that the skins make the body smelly.

A CALM AND PEACEFUL ENVIRONMENT

You must not create a situation that disturbs your loved one's mind, makes them angry or upset. Don't have anyone emotional in the room, especially when death is close. It is best that people don't cry within hearing distance of your loved one as this creates clinging in their mind.

And you should not hold on to them. Crying and pleading with them not to die won't keep them alive and will only agitate them and make their death more difficult.

In other words, you should create an environment that is calm and peaceful. This cannot be stressed enough.

CHAPTER 13

THE PRACTICES: WHAT TO SEE AND TOUCH

WHAT YOU NEED

- Pictures and statues of gurus, buddhas
- Written mantras to see
- Text to touch
- Stupa to touch
- Prayer wheel to touch
- Blessed cord to wear

Perhaps you can't take all the advice here if your loved one is not at home or in a private room in a hospital or hospice.

Understand the essential points and do the best you can.

SEE HOLY IMAGES

SHOW STATUES OR PICTURES OF GURUS, BUDDHAS [1]

Make sure the various images of your loved one's guru, the buddhas, etc., are close to their bed where they can see them easily – the picture of the guru should show them with a very happy, joyful, blissful expression. Merely looking at them helps purify negative karma and sows seeds for enlightenment.

You can make something like I made for a dying person. I framed various pictures: the person's root guru, Amitabha, Compassion Buddha, Medicine Buddha, Mitrugpa, etc., as well as the mantras. You can put it where your loved one can see it.

It's also good to write a message, some Dharma advice, and have that put in the frame as well. Seeing that, too, purifies their mind and helps them collect skies of merit.

SHOW THE MITRUGPA MANTRA [2]

I have written out the mantra of Mitrugpa (Akshobhya, in Sanskrit); it can be put next to the dying person's pillow or where they can see it easily. It doesn't matter whether they're Buddhist or non-Buddhist: receiving benefit doesn't depend upon faith.

According to *Giving Breath to the Wretched*, simply seeing this mantra, one of the ten powerful mantras and the five great mantras (practices 21–30 and 31 in chapter 15), purifies even the heaviest of the very heavy negative karmas, avoiding the holy Dharma, which is heavier than destroying all the monasteries, all the statues, stupas, scriptures, every single holy object that exists in this world.

Also purified is the negative karma of having taken things without permission from the Sangha, or having deprived them of receiving things; karmas like that. No question, then, about all other negative karmas.

SHOW THE NAME MANTRA OF THE BUDDHA WHO PROTECTS FROM THE LOWER REALMS [3]

Have your loved one look at this mantra quite often: have it close by. It's the name mantra of Buddha Rinchen Tsugtor Chän, the buddha who protects from the lower realms. (See also practice 19 in chapter 15.)

SHOW THE MANTRA CALLED "JUST BY SEEING" [4]

This mantra is so powerful that just seeing it purifies 100,000 eons of negative karma and causes you to become enlightened.

TOUCH WITH HOLY OBJECTS**BLESS THE BODY WITH TEXTS [5]**

Chöden Rinpoche advises that it is good to put a text near the head of the dying person, or just touch the crown with it, leaving it there.

By Willing, Liberates

There is a very powerful text, the benefits of which are unbelievable, called *By Willing, Liberates* (*Taktrul*, or *Shertor*). There are several *Taktruls*; one is related to peaceful and wrathful concentration, which is used by Trulshig Rinpoche.

I have made a very small version of it – there is good technology these days – so it’s easy to carry with me wherever I go and to put on the heads of people or animals when they die. Again, whether your loved one is a believer or non-believer, the benefits are the same. There is a copy of it in the Liberation Box.

I’d heard about this text, but I wasn’t sure where it came from, its lineage. Years ago, in Bodhgaya, Trulshig Rinpoche told me a story that gave me faith that it must be authentic. In the Solo Khumbu region of Nepal there is a very precious, holy place of Padmasambhava called Maratika. Rinpoche would always go to this incredible place to do long-life retreat for His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Apparently there’s a long-life vase there, as well as a special stone. It is said that whatever you pray for in front of the long-life vase will be achieved, all your wishes will be fulfilled. And I’ve heard that people who can’t have a child pray to the stone for a child, and then they have a child – and the next year they come back and give thanks. Apparently this is very common.

Anyway, Rinpoche told me that Ngawang Chöphel, the main disciple of the Lawudo Lama, built a monastery in Maratika, in 1980; he’s known as the Maratika Lama. He wrote the life story of the Lawudo Lama after he passed away, in 1945. (I don’t remember, but the lamas say that it was my past life.) Apparently Ngawang Chöphel was with the Lawudo Lama in his cave while he was dying, he was there till the very last minute, and the Lawudo Lama described the twenty-five stages of dissolution that occur at the time of death to Ngawang Chöphel as he was experiencing them.

Rinpoche told me that whenever the monks at Maratika Monastery would do pujas in the evening, blowing the *gyeling* and other instruments, all the clouds would disappear from the sky. This would happen so often that the villagers would attack the monastery – they needed the clouds for rain! They tried to burn it down. So Ngawang Chöphel decided to take the villagers to court. I think he must have had to decide between allowing the villagers to attack the monastery and holding a court case, and he chose the court case because to destroy a monastery creates negative karma. Trulshig Rinpoche said to me, “He was a very special person, very religious, but he also held court cases.”

When Ngawang Chöphel passed away, in 1997, he stayed in a meditation state for seven days. Rinpoche went there with this text, *Taktrul*, and put it on his head. When I heard that, then I had faith in it. I thought, “Oh, Rinpoche uses this to help people, to save them from the lower realms. It must be an authentic method.”

Lamrim Chenmo

Chöden Rinpoche advises using Lama Tsongkhapa’s *Lamrim Chenmo*. Rinpoche explains that this text is the essence of Manjushri’s wisdom. The 84,000 teachings of Buddha are included in it: the Lesser Vehicle teachings, the Mahayana *paramita* teachings, the Mahayana tantric teachings – all are embodied in this text.

The knowledge in the mind of Manjushri, the buddha of wisdom, manifests in the form of letters. It’s usually mentioned during commentaries on Lama Tsongkhapa’s texts that when he wrote the *lamrim* he consulted Manjushri and received advice and clarifications on the subtler meaning of all the important points. It’s said, therefore, that the teachings in *Lamrim Chenmo* are the same as Manjushri’s teachings.

Rinpoche says that in your daily life it’s good to have the text on your altar as an object of prostration, and to make offerings to it. And then when death comes it will be nearby. Rinpoche says that if you have this text near you when you are dying you won’t need someone to perform phowa.

Or you could use any text you like.

BLESS THE BODY WITH A STUPA [6]

You can use a stupa to bless a dying person, in particular a stupa that contains the four dharmakaya relic mantras: Ornament of Enlightenment, Secret Relic, Buddha Stainless Beam, and Buddha Stainless Pinnacle. These mantras – which are usually written in gold on the “life tree” (the central pole within the stupa, which is made of wood) – are what make the stupa powerful.

From time to time place the stupa on your loved one’s chest or let them hold it. Every time the stupa touches them their negative karma is purified.

This is also good to do with babies or with people who don't understand.

To a non-Buddhist you can say that the stupa is for peace or healing or purification.

You can lead your loved one in a meditation involving visualizing light rays coming from the stupa, blessing them (practice 37 in chapter 16).

BLESS THE BODY WITH OR TURN A PRAYER WHEEL [7]

Having a prayer wheel near your loved one is another powerful way of ensuring a good death and a better rebirth. Touching a prayer wheel purifies negative karma and obscurations, so encourage them to turn it, or touch them with it.

In fact, if there is a prayer wheel in the room you don't need to do phowa: at the time of death, the person's simply thinking of a prayer wheel helps shoot their consciousness through the central channel and out of the crown to reincarnate in the pure land of Amitabha.

BLESS THE BODY WITH A BLESSED CORD [8]

A blessed cord (usually a piece of thin red dressmaker's cord) has been blessed with many thousands of mantras such as the Compassion Buddha, or Namgyälma and the other five great mantras (practices 21, 25, and 31 in chapter 15). Tie it around the neck of your loved one, or their wrist or arm.

Don't see these cords as merely a custom, or as something to be put on the altar or put away somewhere in a container. They should be worn: the idea is for them to touch the body. The mantras used for the blessing have so many benefits and can purify so much negative karma.

You can carry blessed cords with you and when a person or animal dies you can put one on the body. Even if they died a long time ago, and no matter where their consciousness is now, this can still help purify their negative karma, the blessings will still have an effect.

CHAPTER 14

THE PRACTICES: WHAT TO THINK ABOUT

WHAT YOU NEED

- Pictures and statues of gurus, buddhas

Perhaps you can't take all the advice here if your loved one is not at home or in a private room in a hospital or hospice.

Understand the essential points and do the best you can.

THINK

MAKE SURE YOUR LOVED ONE HAS GIVEN AWAY THEIR POSSESSIONS [9]

Here in *Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead* the author says that before the person who is dying is unable to speak it's important to make sure that they have made a will or to remind them to make one. (See also the first of the five powers in chapter 5.)

Actually, you don't need to wait until just before they die to do this, and usually in the West people have done this earlier anyway. The point here is to understand how it helps psychologically at the time of death to have decided whom they want to dedicate their possessions to. Because then there is nothing to cling to and they won't die with attachment: they've already dedicated their possessions to the Guru Three Rare Sublime Ones, let's say, or to sentient beings, or for projects that will benefit sentient beings.

In Sydney, one student of the Dharma center there, Vajrayana Institute, left his house to the center. I think he didn't have any family or children, so he offered everything to the center. I suggested some pujas that the center should do for him. (If when you leave something like this to a Dharma center and you don't specify what should be done

with it, the organization has to decide what is the most beneficial way to use the gift.)

Also, writing a will prevents the family from fighting over what's left: the house, the possessions, the money. Sometimes there is so much fighting, even court cases, and people holding grudges, often for years.

There is a Tibetan saying – it's here in *Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead*:

Your last speech is the will,
Your last food is the relics, and
Your last drink is the blessed pills.

In the tantric teachings it is revealed that just before the person stops breathing you can give them blessed pills or relics, which you can obtain from lamas; I discuss this in practices 56 and 57 in chapter 18. This is a common tradition among Tibetans.

TALK ABOUT YOUR LOVED ONE'S GURU, OR BUDDHA, OR GOD [10]

The role of the guru in our life is vital, especially at the time of death. If your loved one has received teachings from a lama during their lifetime and if they feel strong devotion, it is important to remind them of the guru now. This helps them to let go of attachment, to remember the teachings, especially bodhichitta; and then at the time of death it's easy to remain virtuous. Also, talking to them about their guru can reconnect them with their personal deity (see practice 47 in chapter 16).

It is advised in the lamrim that when we are in a critical situation, experiencing heavy obstacles, including at the time of death, making requests to the guru is the best thing to do. When all other methods have failed, remembering the lama is the best solution.

Even if your loved one doesn't have a strong practice, if their connection with their guru is strong the guru can help them go to a pure land: merely hearing the name of their guru is considered a very effective kind of transference of consciousness. Chöden Rinpoche refers to a quotation from *The Kalachakra Tantra*: "Even for one second to recall the name of your guru is the best phowa."

If they don't have a guru but have faith in Buddha, talk about the qualities of any of the enlightened beings: Shakyamuni Buddha, the Compassion Buddha, Amitabha, or whoever they feel close to.

If your loved one has another religion, not Buddhism, an important way to help them generate virtuous thoughts is to talk about God. Describe God as having perfect wisdom or omniscience, loving kindness and compassion for them and all living beings, and the power to help liberate them and others from suffering and lead them to temporary and ultimate happiness. Thinking about God as having no mistakes, being totally pure, having all the qualities, becomes very good refuge for the dying person.

You are describing the meaning of a buddha, actually – infinite wisdom, compassion, and power – but you're not using the Sanskrit word. You could mention just one quality and then let the person think about that, or you could mention all three qualities.

Explain that the nature of their own mind, their heart, is completely pure; that God has compassion for everyone, including them. Help them think that their loving heart is oneness with God, that the kingdom of God is within. This frees them from guilt and anger, allowing them to die with faith and a peaceful mind.

TALK ABOUT AMITABHA'S PURE LAND, OR HEAVEN [11]

Another approach is to talk about the pure lands of the buddhas, such as The Blissful Realm, Sukavati, the pure land of Amitabha. You can read *The Benefits of The Blissful Realm* by Lama Tsongkhapa to them.

As I said in chapter 6, for ordinary people, those who have delusions and for whom it is difficult to take rebirth in most pure lands, it is easy to be born in Amitabha's pure land.

Saying the name of the pure land is important. It's like a rope that the person can hold on to while they're climbing a mountain that pulls them up when they're in danger of falling: it saves them. It's a method to help their consciousness let go of this world: their body, their family, their possessions; to not be attached.

Tell your loved one how beautiful it is there – as described in Lama Tsongkhapa's words. You can tell them how whatever they're attached to is better there, that there are better enjoyments there – this

means you need to know what they normally enjoy – like the monk who was told that the butter tea was better in Tushita (see page 36).

Tell them that there are many wonderful friends in The Blissful Realm, or someone in particular who loves them. Wishing to be there causes them to be reborn there; it directs their consciousness to it. Amitabha Buddha becomes their main refuge.

For somebody who doesn't understand "pure land," saying "Heaven" makes it easier; that's a very common word. "Heaven" has the meaning of eternal; something very beautiful, with great enjoyments. Hearing about it makes it easier for the person's consciousness to leave, for them to die easily, without mental suffering.

You could also read Lama Tsongkhapa's prayer to be reborn in The Blissful Realm (see practice 66).

TALK ABOUT YOUR LOVED ONE'S GOOD QUALITIES [12]

It is important to emphasize all the good, positive things the person has done during their life and not dwell on what they consider to be failures or weaknesses. Tell them: "You have lived a good life, sincere, and you have done many good things."

Whatever compassion your loved one has shown during their life can be used to show how important compassion is and encourage them to feel compassion and loving kindness even as they are dying.

TALK ABOUT COMPASSION, BODHICHITTA [13]

His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that the best way to die is to die with the thought of benefiting others: a "self-supporting death," His Holiness calls it.

It is your responsibility to help your loved one develop compassion. To be thinking of the happiness of others as they die rather than their own terrible circumstances is an amazing thing to do. Compassion is the ultimate attitude to take to the next life. If the person could remember this, without one single doubt they will be saved from the lower realms. To die like this is wonderful.

You can tell them that with this attitude they use their death to achieve enlightenment for others. Their bodhichitta brings all the happiness – this life's happiness, future lives' happiness, liberation from samsara, enlightenment – to numberless sentient beings.

How? Because when they achieve enlightenment – this bodhichitta causes them to achieve enlightenment – they can work perfectly for numberless sentient beings. This voluntary attitude of dedicating themselves to others makes your loved one so happy to experience suffering for others, to experience death for numberless sentient beings.

On the basis of realizing that sentient beings have so much suffering, and on the basis of realizing that sentient beings are so precious, so kind, that they are the ones from whom the dying person has received all their own past, present, and future happiness – on the basis of this, great loving kindness and great compassion arise: the wish that other sentient beings have happiness and that they, the dying person, will give it to them, and the wish that others be free of suffering and that they, the dying person, will free them.

On the basis of this understanding your loved one will be able to enjoy the experience of death for others, for all sentient beings. Psychologically it works like that.

Even if your loved one doesn't have a religion you can explain that so many others are dying right now, that everyone has to go through this experience. Help them think in a broad way, instead of thinking only of themselves.

You could lead your loved one in the *tonglen* meditation (practice 38 in chapter 16).

CHAPTER 15

THE PRACTICES: WHAT TO HEAR

WHAT YOU NEED

- Names of buddhas, written or recorded
- Mantras, written or recorded
- Sutras and teachings, written or recorded

Perhaps you can't take all the advice here if your loved one is not at home or in a private room in a hospital or hospice.

Understand the essential points and do the best you can.

HEAR NAMES OF BUDDHAS

Recite or play the names of the buddhas. As discussed, even if the dying person doesn't have faith in Buddha's teachings, merely hearing the names brings great benefit.

You can recite the names to animals too.

Any buddha the person feels close is good, but in particular you could recite any of the following names, over and over again.

RECITE THE NAMES OF THE SEVEN MEDICINE BUDDHAS [14]

There is a practice in which you visualize the main Medicine Buddha and six others and which includes the prayer of the seven limbs, a mandala offering, etc.; see practice 36 in chapter 16. Here, the practice is to simply recite their names.

There is an entire sutra – *The Medicine Buddha Sutra* – that describes the unbelievable benefits of the Medicine Buddha practices. I think they read it frequently in Chinese temples.

The Medicine Buddha promised that whoever chants his name or mantra will have all their prayers and wishes fulfilled. In the past, when the Medicine Buddha was a bodhisattva, with unbearable



SEVEN MEDICINE BUDDHAS

The main practice to do before, during, and after death is Medicine Buddha. Practices 14, 22, 36.

compassion that encompasses all us sentient beings he made countless prayers to pacify our many problems; prayers for us to achieve all temporary and ultimate happiness, especially during the time of the five degenerations. That time has come; this is our time.

Therefore, all the prayers that the Medicine Buddha made in the past will now be fulfilled. The power and blessings of the Medicine Buddhas are greater and swifter in degenerate times. The power of prayer has been accomplished by the Medicine Buddha, so this practice is very effective in making your prayers succeed. From among the ten powers one is the power of prayer, so pray as if you are the Medicine Buddha's agent, on behalf of your loved one.

I heard a story about someone who was very sick and could not move his body. He was alone in the house, his medicine was in the bathroom, and he was unable to get up off his bed to fetch it. Lying there thinking about how to get his medicine, he turned his head towards the Medicine Buddha statue on his bedside table – and there was his medicine, in the hand of the Medicine Buddha.

RECITE THE NAMES OF THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS OF CONFESSION [15]

Merely hearing the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession purifies many thousands of eons of negative karma and makes it impossible to be reborn in the lower realms. (See also practice 49 in chapter 17, the full practice of prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession.)

HEAR MANTRAS

It is good to chant or play mantras so the dying person can hear them: this can lift them from sadness or depression. In general, all mantras are very powerful: simply hearing them can purify negative karma and protect from the lower realms.

Chant nicely, in an uplifting way, as the Chinese do: the person feels that nothing is more important than Amitabha Buddha, for example. They feel protected, supported, and guided.

Even if a person has no interest in listening to mantras, hearing them leaves a positive imprint on the mind so that sooner or later they

will meet the path and have the ability to practice the teachings, to clear obscurations, and attain enlightenment.

Even if someone gets upset when they hear mantras and dies with an angry mind, it's still better than not hearing mantras and merely being peaceful. The power of Buddha's words can change their rebirth; because the mantras purified their negative karma they might even be reborn in a pure land. Or even if they are reborn in the lower realms, still, because of the imprint left on their mind from hearing the mantras, later they will achieve enlightenment. On the other hand, a person who doesn't hear any mantras might die peacefully, but then after death negative karma ripens.

There are many, many mantras; here are some that I recommend.

RECITE THE MANTRA OF ZUNG OF THE EXALTED COMPLETELY PURE STAINLESS LIGHT AND THE MANTRA TAUGHT BY BUDDHA DRODEN GYÄLWA CHÖ [16]

It is extremely beneficial for you and other helpers to recite these two mantras – the first is the mantra of the Buddha Stainless Beam – a few times every day in the months and weeks before death. As a result, anyone who hears, sees, or touches you has all their negative karma purified. In addition, whatever you touch becomes a holy object.

See also practice 29 in chapter 16.

It is not necessary to recite them at the time of death.

RECITE THE MANTRA FOR ALLEVIATING FEAR OR PAIN [17]

This mantra, which includes the name of one of the eight bodhisattvas, can alleviate pain and calm fears.

You can recite the mantra and help your loved one learn it. If they recite the mantra at least seven times every day they won't have a difficult death, they won't experience frightening karmic appearances. Their death will be very easy, without fear.

Then it's very easy for the people taking care of them. If the person is fearful you will also be scared or worried, and then you can't help them, you won't know what to do.

RECITE THE NAME MANTRA OF HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA OR OF YOUR LOVED ONE'S OWN GURU [18]

You could have the dying person recite His Holiness the Dalai Lama's name mantra, or their own root guru's mantra. While they recite it they could visualize His Holiness or their guru and imagine purifying all their negative karma and defilements. Or you could recite it for them.

RECITE THE NAME MANTRA OF THE BUDDHA WHO PROTECTS FROM THE LOWER REALMS [19]

Khunu Lama Rinpoche would tell people to recite the name mantra of this buddha, Rinchen Tsugtor Chän, who dedicated especially for the sake of sentient beings who hear his name that they won't be reborn in the lower realms. (See also practice 3 in chapter 13.)

Having heard this mantra, it is impossible for any animal or person to be reborn in the lower realms. So don't just recite it to yourself, and don't mumble it: say it loudly so that your loved one can hear it.

If you come across an animal who is dying, this is the first thing you would recite into their ear.

RECITE OTHER MANTRAS, SUCH AS AMITABHA BUDDHA'S [20]

There are many mantras of the various buddhas, such as Amitabha Buddha.

Or you could recite a very special mantra that fulfills all wishes: The great increasing jewel fathomless celestial mansion extremely well-abiding secret holy mantra.

RECITE THE TEN POWERFUL MANTRAS [21–30]

It is good to chant any of the ten powerful mantras mentioned in *Giving Breath to the Wretched* that liberate not only those who are dying but also those already dead, and even those in the lower realms.

The various explanations below of the benefits of reciting mantras (and holy names) are not metaphorical. We do not need to interpret the meaning – the meaning is exactly as stated. Therefore do not have doubt, for the holy gurus have emphasized the benefits received from devotion and belief.

(1) RECITE THE COMPASSION BUDDHA MANTRA [21]

The benefits of reciting the Compassion Buddha mantra are infinite, like the limitless sky. If your loved one doesn't have much intellectual understanding of Dharma and the only thing they know is this mantra and, free of attachment to this life, have spent their life chanting it, that is enough.

This is how it was with my mother (who passed away in 1991). She had no education at all and had very little Dharma knowledge; she didn't even know the alphabet. But she had the biggest heart, filled with loving kindness and compassion for her family, her friends, the people she knew, the animals she tended. Despite her extreme poverty, she was incredibly generous. Whatever food she had she would offer with such a warm heart to whoever was hungry.

And what she did, all day long and at night, was recite the mantra of the Compassion Buddha. This was her main practice.

When she was quite sick I asked His Holiness the Dalai Lama about her death as I thought it would be better to do something before her death rather than after it. Besides all her kindness, since I am her son I felt I had responsibility for her life. His Holiness said, "She won't have a problem when she dies and it is sufficient for her to recite the Compassion Buddha mantra; she doesn't have to do anything else." At the time of death she was so peaceful.

(2) RECITE THE MEDICINE BUDDHA MANTRA [22]

As I mentioned in practice 14 in this chapter, the Medicine Buddha promised that whoever chants his name or mantra will have all their prayers and wishes fulfilled.

Reciting the Medicine Buddha mantra every day will purify negative karma and prevent rebirth in the lower realms. The Medicine Buddha said that even an animal who hears his mantra would never be reborn in the lower realms.

Reciting it and hearing it ceases the gross and subtle defilements and causes enlightenment. So, have the dying person recite the mantra with full trust in Medicine Buddha, or you recite it so they can hear it.

Explain that Medicine Buddha is always with them – in their heart, on their crown, in front of them. There is not one second Medicine Buddha does not see them or have compassion for them.

(3) RECITE THE WISH-GRANTING WHEEL MANTRA [23]

This is the mantra of Buddha Pema Tsugtor, or Lotus Pinnacle of Amoghapasha. Reciting it seven times every day with the thought to benefit others creates the cause to be reborn in the pure lands.

(4) RECITE THE MITRUGPA MANTRA [24]

The mantra of Mitrugpa (Akshobhya, in Sanskrit) is for purifying karmic obscurations.

As I mentioned in practice 2 in chapter 13, merely seeing it purifies the heaviest of the very heavy negative karmas, avoiding the holy Dharma, which is heavier than destroying all the monasteries, all the statues, stupas, scriptures, every single holy object that exists in this world.

Reciting or seeing it also purifies the negative karma of having taken things without permission from the sangha, or having deprived them of receiving things; karmas like that. No question, then, about all other negative karmas.

(5) RECITE THE NAMGYÄLMA MANTRA [25]

Namgyälma is a deity for long life and purification. The mantra has infinite benefits; it is so powerful, it is said, that for anyone who hears it this life will be their last birth in a womb. And if animals hear it they will not be born in the lower realms.

(6) RECITE THE PADMASAMBHAVA MANTRA [26]

According to Guru Rinpoche himself, whoever recites his mantra “will meet with me again and again in this life, in future lives, and in the intermediate state between death and rebirth.”

(7) RECITE THE KUNRIG MANTRA [27]

Kunrig (Vairochana, in Sanskrit) is known as “the king of deities for purifying the lower realms.” It is said that Kunrig practice can even liberate someone who is already in the lower realms.

Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche has explained that in Amdo lay people prepare for their death by taking an initiation of Kunrig, who is white, has three faces, and holds a dharma wheel. Because the Amdo people

have faith that they have purified everything, when death comes they are not worried, they are relaxed, comfortable.

(8) RECITE THE MILAREPA MANTRA [28]

Milarepa himself said that merely remembering his name and thinking about him will cause us to be born in a pure land, where we will meet him and receive teachings. He generated this very special bodhichitta thought in order to offer extensive benefit to sentient beings.

And, depending on the level of our devotion, we can even receive instructions from Milarepa in our dreams.

(9) RECITE THE MANTRA OF ZUNG OF THE EXALTED COMPLETELY PURE STAINLESS LIGHT [29]

As I mentioned in practice 16, whoever hears, sees, or touches a person who has recited this mantra of Buddha Stainless Beam will have their negative karma purified.

(10) RECITE THE MAITREYA BUDDHA MANTRA [30]

Reading and reciting the mantra of Maitreya Buddha's Promise, contemplating the meaning, or merely hearing it – this includes animals – causes one, among other things, not to be reborn in the lower realms. One will follow the path of the ten virtuous actions and receive all the enjoyments one seeks. And when Maitreya Buddha shows the twelve deeds of a Buddha he will lead this sentient being from poverty.

Even the sentient beings in a hell: Maitreya will definitely find them and give them the prediction of the time of their enlightenment.

RECITE THE FIVE GREAT MANTRAS, WHICH INCLUDE THE MANTRA OF STAINLESS PINNACLE [31]

Four of the five great mantras are among the ten powerful mantras; the fifth is the mantra of Buddha Stainless Pinnacle (Tsugtor Drime, in Tibetan).

Kunrig [27]

Mitrugpa [24]

Namgyälma [25]

Stainless Pinnacle
Wish-granting Wheel [23]

These five are mentioned in *Giving Breath to the Wretched*, and reciting them, as I mentioned, liberates not only those who are dying but also those already dead, and even those in the lower realms.

The mantra of Buddha Stainless Pinnacle has many benefits. You can attach it above a doorway, and every time anyone passes beneath it – whether human or animal, even insects – one thousand eons of their negative karma will be purified.

HEAR SUTRAS

RECITE THE SUTRA FOR ALLEVIATING PAIN [32]

It is said that listening to *The Great Noble Sutra on Entering the City of Vaishali* can help alleviate the pain of those who are sick or dying.

RECITE THE HEART SUTRA [33] OR THE VAJRA CUTTER SUTRA [34]

It is mentioned in a sutra called *Roaring Sound of the Lion* that the merit of merely listening to teachings on emptiness, the perfection of wisdom – the topic of these two sutras – is far greater than practicing the other five perfections for ten thousand eons. Even having faith in emptiness can purify the heaviest of negative karmas.

The minute you have even the mere idea of the understanding of dependent arising – that's the reason things are empty – you are beginning to liberate yourself from all the sufferings of samsara.

HEAR TEACHINGS

PLAY RECORDINGS OR VIDEOS OF TEACHINGS [35]

It is good for your loved one to receive the blessings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's holy speech, so play recordings or watch videos of his teachings. Of course, you can play recordings of the teachings of other lamas as well, especially the person's own lama.

Hearing the subject matter, especially bodhichitta, reminds them to practice, inspires their mind, arouses devotion and, of course, helps them avoid being born in the lower realms.

CHAPTER 16

THE PRACTICES: WHAT TO MEDITATE ON

WHAT YOU NEED

- Pictures and statues of gurus, buddhas
- The Medicine Buddha practice, written or recorded
- Stupa for meditating
- Your loved one's daily practices, written or recorded
- Other meditations

Perhaps you can't take all the advice here if your loved one is not at home or in a private room in a hospital or hospice.

Understand the essential points and do the best you can.

PRAY AND MEDITATE

RECITE THE MEDICINE BUDDHA PRACTICE [36]

The main practice to do before, during, and after death is Medicine Buddha. As I mentioned in practice 14 in chapter 15, there is an entire sutra – *The Medicine Buddha Sutra* – that describes the unbelievable benefits of this practice, and that the Medicine Buddha himself made a promise that whoever chants his name or mantra will have all their prayers and wishes fulfilled.

I translated a short version of the practice many years ago in which you visualize the seven Medicine Buddhas – the main Medicine Buddha and six others – above your head. It's very powerful, and unique, with the the prayer of the seven limbs, a mandala offering, etc., then a strong requesting prayer to each buddha, recited seven times.

Alternatively, a simpler way to practice it is to visualize just the main Medicine Buddha above your head and as you recite the mantra you imagine nectar flowing from the Medicine Buddha, purifying you.

MEDITATE USING STUPAS [37]

Stupas and other holy objects can be used for purifying or healing meditation. Lead your loved one in the meditation.

As I mentioned in practice 6 in chapter 13, what makes a stupa powerful is the presence in them of the four dharmakaya relic mantras, usually written in gold on the “life tree,” the central wooden pole within the stupa.

MEDITATE ON TONGLÉN, GIVING AND TAKING [38]

If your loved one has a compassionate nature, a brave mind, they will be able to do tonglén: giving and taking. It is a profound and powerful practice in which they can use their own suffering, in particular their death, to develop compassion for others. Rather than rejecting death as something to fear, they can use it to develop the ultimate good heart of bodhichitta.

First your loved one generates great compassion by visualizing **taking** upon themselves the suffering and causes of suffering of the numberless other living beings, imagining that this destroys their own self-cherishing, the source of all problems.

Then they generate great loving kindness by imagining **giving** others everything they have: their body, their relatives and friends, their possessions, their merit, and their happiness.

Encourage them to think, “Even as I am dying I will try to make my death beneficial for all other living beings. I prayed in the past to take upon myself the suffering of others. I am now experiencing my death on behalf of everyone who is dying now and who will have to die in the future. How wonderful it would be for all of them to be free from the suffering of death and for me alone to experience it! May they have this ultimate happiness!”

If they have faith in Jesus Christ you can remind them to think, as he did, that by dying they are taking upon themselves the suffering of others so that others can be free of it. Other saints think like this too. In this way, as they have to experience death anyway, they make it most meaningful.

MEDITATE ON THE DEATH PROCESS [39]

Help your loved one become familiar with the death process (which

I discuss in chapter 9) by leading them through a meditation on the various stages: the dissolution of the elements, the senses, all the way to the extremely subtle consciousness. Help them learn to recognize the visions, and at each stage get them to think, with strong determination: “I must recognize the clear light and definitely meditate on bliss and voidness.”

They can also practice this as they go to sleep: see practice 41 in this chapter.

SLEEP MEDITATIONS [40–44]

We need sleep because we don’t have realizations, but we can use it to prepare for death. You can explain to your loved one that sleep is like sustenance for the body, just like food; to think of it like that. There are various ways they can use sleep to create virtue.

SLEEP IN THE LION POSITION [40]

You could have the person go to sleep in the lion position, which is the position that our compassionate Buddha lay in when he passed away and which is recommended at the time of death; I discuss this in chapter 5 and in practice 55 in chapter 18. Practicing sleeping in this position makes it easier to adopt it at the time of death. Better to do this than lie in the position of the frog with the legs splayed!

Every time the person goes to sleep like this they can think about Buddha, how he passed into the sorrowless state and that they’re following in his footsteps. Recollecting Buddha before they become absorbed in sleep leaves a very positive imprint on their mind. As many thoughts of the Buddha they have is as many seeds they plant to achieve enlightenment.

Then at the time of death the thought of the Buddha will come to their mind very easily. There’ll be no worries and they’ll be saved by this last thought.

Also, going to sleep like this protects from nightmares. And it prevents spirits from harming us while we’re asleep: when we go to sleep one night we’re not coughing, let’s say, but when we wake up in the morning we have a cough. It can happen like this.

The person doesn’t need to spend the whole night in this position, just when they first go to sleep.

MEDITATE ON THE PROCESS OF GOING TO SLEEP [41]

As I mention in chapter 9, the stages of dissolution that occur at death also occur when we go to sleep, but because it all happens very quickly and because of our lack of control we don't recognize them.

If your loved can go through the stages when they go to sleep they will find it much easier to recognize the stages at the time of death. (They can also familiarize themselves with it as a meditation when they're awake: practice 39.)

As they lie there they can imagine the whole process: the mirage-like vision, the smoke-like vision, and so forth, each stage taking them into a more and more subtle state. When they visualize the clear light they can try to see their "I" as empty of inherent existence. If they can get some feeling for this, their entire night will be profoundly transformed. This, in turn, will be enormously helpful at the time of death.

Holding for even a few seconds the feeling of the oneness of the clear light vision and the emptiness of the self is a profound mind and a wonderful one to fall asleep with.

They can learn to extend the awareness to the whole duration of sleep, including dreaming: remember, passing from sleep into a dream is similar to passing from this life to the intermediate state. Now while we are dreaming we rarely recognize dreams as dreams, but it is possible to train our mind to do this.

SLEEP WITH BODHICHITTA [42]

Encourage your loved one to go to sleep with the thought of bodhichitta.

Think: "The purpose of my life is to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment: the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless gods and demi-gods, the numberless intermediate state beings. Therefore I must achieve enlightenment. Therefore I am going to go to sleep."

SLEEP IN THE GURU'S LAP [43]

Your loved one could go to sleep with guru devotion. With the virtuous thought of compassion, they imagine that their head is in the lap of

their guru, visualized as the buddha they feel closest to. They should strongly take refuge. Visualize radiant white light coming from the Guru Buddha's holy body and pouring into theirs. All their negativities are purified and they become oneness with the guru's holy qualities.

This protects them, and it makes it easier to remember the guru at the time of death.

SLEEP WITH EMPTINESS [44]

If your loved one has studied emptiness you can talk to them about how all the fears and problems that everybody faces come from the wrong view of seeing everything, even life, as existing from its own side.

They could go to sleep while thinking about emptiness and dependent arising. Or they could sleep with the thought that everything is a dream, is a mirage, is an illusion – actually, not *is* an illusion but *like* an illusion. Seeing everything *as if* it is an illusion cuts the grasping at the appearance of it as existing inherently, from its own side. In their heart they can understand that the I is empty, everything is empty.

Sleeping Yoga If they have received a highest tantra initiation, they could practice sleeping yoga, either with creativity or without creativity. “Without creativity” refers to basically meditating on emptiness while falling asleep – see practice 41.

As discussed in chapters 10 and 24, the great tantric practitioners who can recognize the clear light at sleep are able to recognize the clear light of death, no question.

“With creativity” refers to going to sleep while meditating on the deity's mandala. When they wake up they would arise from the clear light according to whichever deity they practice.

If your loved one practices a deity within the lower tantras, such as the Compassion Buddha as explained in the *nyungnā* fasting practice, they would visualize themselves as the Compassion Buddha dissolving into the syllable HRIH, and then the HRIH gradually dissolving into emptiness, or into the mandala.

MEDITATE ON THE EMPTINESS OF DEATH [45]

Remind your loved one that death is natural, that the mind that clings

is what makes death terrifying. Death is merely the mind separating from the body, and this is labeled “death.”

You can tell them that in emptiness there is no such thing as birth and death. They can think: “Death appears to be real and existing from its own side and I believe it to exist in this way, but actually this is a hallucination. There is no such thing. It is totally empty.” Encourage them to keep their mind in that state.

You can remind them that they are striving to attain enlightenment for all sentient beings, and that even before then, when they reach the state of the *arya-bodhisattva* and perceive emptiness directly, they will have transcended disease, old age, and death. This is what awaits them so there is no reason to fear death.

MEDITATE ON THE EMPTINESS OF THE MIND [46]

You can help your loved one think about how their mind is empty because it is a dependent-arising; to meditate on the emptiness of the mind that appears to be not merely labeled by thought.

Tell them that the base of the label “mind” is that which is formless, that which is not obstructed, not obscured by substantial phenomena, and therefore is clear, which means that phenomena can appear to it, that it can perceive phenomena – just like a mirror, which, because it is not obscured by the substantial phenomenon of dust, is clear, which means that objects can be reflected in it, it can reflect objects.

That is the base. And “mind” is the label that is simply imputed by their own thought on the base. Mind is merely imputed by thought *because* there is this phenomenon that is formless, not obstructed by phenomena, clear, and that perceives objects.

So, what is their mind? It is nothing *except* what is merely imputed by a thought. They can see now that there is no such thing as mind existing from its own side. There is a mind that exists in mere name, merely imputed by thought, but it is empty of existing from its own side. And while the mind is empty, it is existing. How is it existing? It exists in mere name, merely imputed by thought. It is unified with emptiness and dependent arising.

This is how all phenomena exist.

HELP YOUR LOVED ONE WITH THEIR DAILY PRACTICES [47]

It is very good to recite your loved one's daily practices for them, especially their main sadhana if they have received initiations – the visualizations, prayers, and mantras. They can meditate as you recite. Helping them strengthen the connection with their particular deity, and with the guru, is a precious gift.

They should meditate on and strongly wish to be reborn into the pure land of that buddha.

HELP YOUR LOVED ONE PRACTICE PHOWA [48]

As I mentioned in chapter 6 and elsewhere, it is possible to be reborn in a pure land by practicing phowa, transference of consciousness. This practice is one of the six yogas of Naropa. In fact, it is said that even someone who has led a very negative life, if they're careful at death and with the help of this practice, they can be born in a pure land.

The practice can be done either by the dying person – they forcefully push their own consciousness from their body just before death and send it to a pure land – or by their guru or another lama, or even a close friend.

If your loved one has their own practice of phowa the right time to practice it is now, the months and weeks before death. Lama Tsongkhapa said that you can do phowa up to six months before you die.

Why so long in advance? Why not wait until death is close? Because when the actual death comes the person may be very sick and in much pain and their mind not clear, or other problems could occur. So to be safe, rather than waiting until the time of death, phowa should be practiced in advance, when the mind is clear.

If it is to be performed by a lama it should happen as soon as the person's breath stops (practice 62 in chapter 19), not before.

It can also be done by a lama during the forty-nine days after the mind has left the body (practice 81 in chapter 29).

If it is to be performed by you and your Dharma friends, you can recite the Amitabha phowa practice written by Lama Yeshe (practice 81 in chapter 29) during the forty-nine days after the mind has left the body.

CHAPTER 17

THE PRACTICES: WHAT TO DO TO PURIFY NEGATIVE KARMA

WHAT YOU NEED

- **Pictures and statues of gurus, buddhas**
- **Practice of Prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession**
- **Practice of Vajrasattva and the Four Opponent Powers**
- **Practice of Samayavajra**
- **Practice of *tsog***
- **Practice of self-initiation**

The negative karma that we have already created is what causes fear, so in order to not be afraid of death, for it not to be frightening, we need to purify our negative karma. The purification practices are the solution; then we will have a happy death, and it will be much easier to attain liberation and actualize the path to enlightenment.

You can lead your loved one in various purification practices, depending on their level of practice: Prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession, for example, and Practice of Vajrasattva and the Four Opponent Powers.

If they have taken a highest tantra initiation, you could help them with other practices, such as Samayavajra and the offering of *tsog*. And if they have completed the deity's retreat and the fire puja, one of the most powerful ways for them to purify is to take a self-initiation. It purifies everything: general negative karma and particular negative karma, as well as the vows of individual liberation, bodhisattva vows, and tantric vows and commitments.

When you lead your loved one in these practices it is very important to remind them to generate strong faith that they have purified the various negative karmas, broken vows, and obscurations collected during beginningless rebirths. How much we purify depends on how



THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS OF CONFESSION

Merely hearing the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession makes it impossible to be reborn in the lower realms. Practices 15, 49.

much faith we have that we have purified, in just the same way that how much blessing we receive from the buddhas depends on how strong our devotion is.

This is the way our own mind creates enlightenment. Enlightenment is the creation of our own pure mind, our positive thoughts. Hell is created by our own mind as well: the impure mind, the negative thoughts. All happiness and all suffering of all sentient beings are the products, the creations, of our own minds, depending on whether we are peaceful or unpeaceful, virtuous or nonvirtuous, good-hearted or self-centered.

With these purification practices you can help your loved one make their life most fruitful and most satisfying. They are prepared for death at any moment.

PURIFY WITH THE PRACTICE OF PROSTRATIONS TO THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS OF CONFESSION [49]

This practice contains the four opponent powers. Merely hearing the names of these thirty-five buddhas purifies many thousands of eons of negative karma and makes it impossible to be reborn in the lower realms. See also practice 15: reciting the names of these thirty-five buddhas.

PURIFY WITH THE PRACTICE OF VAJRASATTVA AND THE FOUR OPPONENT POWERS [50]

The Vajrasattva recitation-meditation, which also includes the four opponent powers, is an incredibly powerful method. Practicing it at the end of every day prevents negative karma from multiplying. It also helps purify that day's negative karma, as well as the negative karma created since the time we were born and in all our previous lives.

PURIFY WITH THE PRACTICE OF SAMAYAVAJRA [51]

The practice of Samayavajra (Damtsig Dorje, in Tibetan) is a powerful practice that purifies in particular the negative karmas accumulated in the relationship with the guru. Since first meeting the Dharma and taking all three levels of vows, we have continually broken and degenerated our commitments – our pledges to our gurus – especially

the tantric commitments. Because of their compassion all our gurus have manifested as Samayavajra so that we can purify all these negative karmas.

PURIFY WITH AN ABBREVIATED OFFERING OF TSOG [52]

Another very powerful way to help your loved one purify broken vows of individual liberation, bodhisattva vows, and tantric vows and commitments, as well as to collect merits, is to offer tsog. It is one of the main causes to achieve the Heruka and Vajrayogini pure lands, to be born there.

PURIFY WITH AN OFFERING OF TSOG TO VAJRASATTVA BY LAMA YESHE [53]

When Lama Yeshe wrote the Vajrasattva tsog offering in 1982 he said he composed it “in case students were getting bored with the older pujas. It’s shorter, too, and therefore suits our busy lifestyles!”

This tsog offering can be made to other highest tantra deities by substituting that deity’s name for Vajrasattva’s and by blessing the offerings in accordance with the yoga method of that deity and reciting that deity’s mantra.

PURIFY WITH THE SELF-INITIATION OF YOUR LOVED ONE’S MAIN DEITY [54]

Chöden Rinpoche says that if the person who is passing away is qualified to take the self-initiation – that is, they have received a highest tantra initiation and have completed the retreat and fire puja – and cannot themselves do it, they can invite someone else to recite the prayers for them while they meditate on the meaning.

Of course, if there is a lama nearby, according to Rinpoche it is good to take the initiation again.

Taking a self-initiation purifies not only degenerations of tantric vows, such as root downfalls, but also broken bodhisattva and individual liberation root and secondary vows. With this practice you plant the seeds to achieve the bodies of the buddha (as discussed in chapter 10), thus leaving such strong imprints of the tantric path on your mind, which causes you to quickly gain realizations of the path to enlightenment.

Rinpoche explained that one of his gurus – an ex-abbot of Sera Je Monastery, Khensur Rinpoche Losang Wangchuk, also my guru, who was one of the top, most famous learned ones from Tibet – knew that he was not going to live long so started taking the self-initiation in the Tibetan fifth month and did it every day until he passed away in the seventh month. He made preparations for death like this.

While I was with Lama Yeshe a couple of months before he passed away – we were at a farmhouse near Delhi, in India – every day I would read the Heruka self-initiation to Lama, the middle-length version. Before that we'd been at Kopan Monastery where I'd given the November course. Lama was not planning to go, but I insisted. At the end of the course Lama gave the bodhisattva vows. It was Lama's last teaching.

Anyway, while I recited, Lama would meditate. In Lama's case, of course, as somebody who had achieved the clear light and the illusory body, who had already overcome death, there was no need for these practices.

CHAPTER 18

AND FINALLY, WHAT TO DO DURING THE HOURS BEFORE DEATH

WHAT YOU NEED

- **Blessed pills and relics for the tongue**
- **Pictures and statues of gurus, buddhas**
- **Mantras to see**
- **Text to touch**
- **Stupa to touch**
- **Prayer wheel to touch**
- **Blessed cord to wear**
- **Written mantras for the body**
- **Medicine Buddha practice for reciting**
- **Other practices, mantras, etc., for reciting**

BE QUIET

Now that death is close, it is extremely important – essential – that your loved one is not disturbed. Do not create any situation that disturbs their mind. This is the main point. Helping them avoid strong attachment and the other delusions during this time gives them a chance to have virtuous thoughts. If they have a peaceful, happy mind they will have a peaceful, happy death.

Only the sounds of prayers and mantras should be heard.

RECOGNIZE THE STAGES OF DEATH

If you have studied the death process (chapter 9) you will be able to recognize the stages the person's consciousness goes through as they gradually die – the twenty-five stages of dissolution, the various signs, etc. – and thus be more skillful in helping them.

Perhaps you can't take all the advice here if your loved one is not at home or in a private room in a hospital or hospice.

Understand the essential points and do the best you can.

HAVE YOUR LOVED ONE LIE IN THE LION POSITION [55]

As discussed in the fifth of the five powers in chapter 5, it's good to have your loved one follow the example of our kind, compassionate Buddha when he passed away into the sorrowless state and have them lie in the lion position. (Of course, if they are a practitioner they can sit in the meditation posture. It's not necessary; it's up to the individual.)

If they've practiced sleeping in this position (practice 40) it will be easier now.

Lying in this position helps virtuous thoughts arise in the person's mind at the time of death; it makes it easy for this to happen. And it reminds them of the Buddha, that they're following in his footsteps. At the time of death there will be no worries, they'll be saved by this last thought of reflecting on the Buddha.

And lying in this position naturally helps the consciousness leave through the crown, which means your loved one will go to a pure land.

TASTE

OFFER A MANI PILL FROM HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA [56]

As advised in *Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead*, it is good to give the person who is dying a mani pill. This blesses and purifies your loved one's mind, helping them generate virtuous thoughts.

You should crush the pill, mix it with water, and put a little into your loved one's mouth, making sure they swallow it. Chöden Rinpoche says it's important to do this before the outer breath has stopped, because after that you should not touch the body, as discussed on page 114 in chapter 19.

These pills contain many blessed substances and relics of enlightened beings, bodhisattvas, and great yogis. They have been blessed with the prayers of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the actual Compassion Buddha, for the benefit of sentient beings; and many

great lamas, meditators, and sangha have also prayed day and night, for many days, continuously blessing them.

You can give the pills to children and people who don't have the ability to understand, as well as to animals.

OFFER A RELIC OF THE BUDDHA [57]

Another method to help the dying person avoid being reborn in the lower realms is to give them a relic of a buddha; you put it into their mouth.

Again, the relic must be put in the mouth before the breath has stopped, otherwise, as it says here in *Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead*, it will just sit there and not go down the throat. Also, offering the relic after the breath has stopped could delay the death.

As with the blessed pills, the relic can be given to children and animals.

THINK

TALK ABOUT THE GURU, THE BUDDHA, AMITABHA BUDDHA'S PURE LAND, YOUR LOVED ONE'S GOOD QUALITIES, COMPASSION [10–13]

If your loved one has a relationship with a guru it is good to remind them now, to talk about him, to say his name. As I discuss in practice 10 in chapter 14 this is one of the best methods for transferring the consciousness to a pure land.

And it's good to mention the buddhas, such as Amitabha and his pure land, The Blissful Realm: as I mention in chapter 6, this is a cause for being reborn there.

SEE HOLY IMAGES, MANTRAS

SHOW HOLY IMAGES, MANTRAS [1–4]

Especially now, at the time of death, have the dying person look at the images of the gurus or buddhas, or the mantras, as discussed in chapter 13. It's one-hundred-percent certain that they won't be reborn in the lower realms.

TOUCH WITH HOLY OBJECTS

BLESS THE BODY WITH TEXTS [5]

Touch the crown of your loved one's head with texts such as Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*, or *By Willing, Liberates*, as discussed in chapter 13, or any text you like. You could leave it there, touching the body.

BLESS THE BODY WITH STUPA, PRAYER WHEEL, BLESSED CORD [6–8]

Now that the time of death is close it is good to touch the body with a stupa or a prayer wheel, as well as put a blessed cord around their neck or wrist, as discussed in chapter 13. Place the stupa so that it is touching your loved one's crown.

Merely being touched by holy objects purifies so much negative karma and helps the person receive a higher rebirth. You can leave the objects there, touching the body.

BLESS THE BODY WITH WRITTEN MANTRAS [58]

Place a sheet of paper or card with mantras written on it face down on the person's body so that the words touch the skin; any part of the body would do.

I have written out eleven mantras, a small version of which is in the Liberation Box; included are some of the five great mantras (practice 31) and ten powerful mantras (practices 21–30), as well as the mantra of Vajra Armor.

Or you could use any of the five great mantras or the ten powerful mantras. *Namgyälma* (practice 25), which is included in both groups (and is also in the Liberation Box), is one of the best for the dying; or *Kunrig* (practice 27), *Mitrugpa* (practice 24), *Stainless Pinnacle* (practice 31) – any mantras you like can be used.

PRAY AND MEDITATE

You could have a group of monks and nuns or friends join you to do practices such as Medicine Buddha, recite mantras, or any of the practices below, making sure that your loved one can hear the recitations.

People who care about the dying person practicing together is very powerful. It is mentioned in the lojong teachings that doing prayers in a group is much more beneficial than doing them alone. As well as benefiting the person you're praying for it's also inspiring for you and the others; you are supporting each other in purifying negative karma and collecting merit to achieve enlightenment quickly.

And remember to dedicate for your loved one's future rebirth. Now is the time to dedicate strongly for their future life to be a most precious one: either that they take a perfect human rebirth, meet the Dharma and a perfectly qualified Mahayana teacher, practice, and become enlightened as quickly as possible; or that they take rebirth in a pure land.

RECITE THE MEDICINE BUDDHA PRACTICE [36]

As I mentioned, the main practice to do before, during, and after death is Medicine Buddha. The benefits are incredible, for your loved one and, of course, for you.

RECITE YOUR LOVED ONE'S DAILY PRACTICES [47]

It is very good to recite the person's daily practices, especially their main sadhana – the visualizations, prayers, and mantras. This helps them strengthen their connection with their particular deity and their guru.

RECITE PURIFICATION PRACTICES [49–54]

Recite any of the purification practices, especially if they have taken a highest tantra initiation. But even if they haven't, as I mentioned, practices such as Prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession and Vajrasattva and the Four Opponent Powers can calm their fears and help them have a happy death by purifying their negative karma.

HEAR

RECITE OR PLAY THE NAMES OF THE BUDDHAS [14–15]

Especially now, when death is close, it is good to recite or play the names of the buddhas. Even if your loved one doesn't have faith in Buddha's teachings, this can help.

RECITE OR PLAY MANTRAS [18–31]

Recite the name mantra of His Holiness the Dalai Lama or of your loved one's own guru, or the mantras of the buddhas they feel close to.

As I mentioned, chant nicely, in an uplifting way, especially now.

RECITE OR PLAY SUTRAS [32–34]

You could recite either the sutra to alleviate pain and fear or the sutras relating to emptiness.

ORGANIZE**SPONSOR MONASTERIES, DHARMA CENTERS, OR FRIENDS TO PERFORM PRACTICES SUCH AS MEDICINE BUDDHA [59]**

You can make offering to other people who are not there – monks and nuns in monasteries or Dharma centers, or friends – and request them to perform Medicine Buddha or other practices for your loved one.

PART FOUR

PRACTICES TO DO DURING
THE HOURS AND DAYS AFTER
THE BREATH HAS STOPPED



SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA PASSING AWAY
Have your loved one lie in the lion position, like our
compassionate Buddha did when he passed away. Practice 55.

CHAPTER 19

THE PRACTICES: WHAT TO DO AS SOON AS THE BREATH STOPS

WHAT YOU NEED

- Blessed substances for the crown

Perhaps you can't take all the advice here if your loved one is not at home or in a private room in a hospital or hospice.

Understand the essential points and do the best you can.

NO TOUCHING

DO NOT TOUCH THE BODY

Now that your loved one's breath has stopped, apart from putting the blessed substances on the crown (practice 61 in this chapter) you should not touch the body.

It's possible that touching the wrong part of the body before the mind leaves can disturb the person, causing their consciousness to leave at that point (see page 62 in chapter 9) and take a lower realm rebirth. If the consciousness leaves through the mouth, for example, they will be reborn as a hungry ghost.

HEAR

SHOUT IN YOUR LOVED ONE'S EAR THE NAME OF THEIR GURU, OR THE BUDDHA [60]

The very first thing you should do as soon as the person's breath stops is shout loudly into their ear the name of their lama, or of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, or the name of the buddha they usually pray to, or any buddha, and remind them to take refuge.

As I mentioned in practice 10 in chapter 14, hearing the name of their guru is considered a very effective kind of transference of

consciousness. Chöden Rinpoche refers to a quotation from *The Kalachakra Tantra*: “To recall the name of your guru for even one second is the best phowa.”

This is even true for someone who has created the five heavy negative actions: if they have devotion in their guru, merely hearing the name of their lama can help their consciousness take a good rebirth.

TOUCH WITH BLESSED SUBSTANCES

PUT BLESSED SUBSTANCES ON YOUR LOVED ONE’S CROWN [61]

Next you can put blessed substances on the crown, at the chakra, which is near the back of the head.

- a phowa pill
- an inner-offering pill
- a mani pill
- sand from a Kalachakra mandala

You can use butter and honey to help them stick. (Be sure not to touch any other part of the body, as discussed above.) Doing this helps your loved one’s consciousness go to the crown chakra so that it leaves from there, causing it to go to a pure land.

The phowa pills consist of the ashes of the great yogis and bodhisattvas, also relics of buddhas – I made some using Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo’s ashes. Some lamas also use these while they’re doing phowa. If hearing, taking a blessing from, touching, seeing, or even remembering great Heruka practitioners like Pabongka Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe can liberate us from all our negative karmas, then there’s no question that it’s the same when we have contact with their ashes.

If you don’t have phowa pills you can use an inner-offering pill made by high lamas.

The mani pills are from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

The sand is from a Kalachakra mandala, also blessed by His Holiness.

When the body is taken out, you can keep the pill or sand and use it for others who die.

ORGANIZE

REQUEST A LAMA TO PERFORM PHOWA [62]

Assuming that your loved one has requested this, now is the time to invite a lama to perform phowa. You should request this immediately after the breath has stopped and, except for putting the blessed substances on the crown (practice 61), before you touch the body.

The lama can either come to where the body is or, as advised in *Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead*, “Do the practice from a distance.” If the latter, it’s important you tell him in what direction your loved one’s head is pointing; this helps the phowa be more precise.

It is said that phowa can be done only after the breath has stopped, not before (except if the dying person is doing it themselves, as discussed in practice 48 in chapter 16). Because phowa has the power to transfer the consciousness from the body, if it’s done before death there is a risk the mind could leave before it’s ready.

There was a lama in Tibet who heard that some people were going to be executed by the Chinese. He somehow managed to get the execution delayed and then sat in meditation and did the practice – and the people waiting to be executed simply collapsed in a heap, their consciousnesses having left their bodies, presumably for a pure land. They didn’t need the bullets of the Chinese soldiers! The lama not only saved the people from whatever rebirth was awaiting them, he also saved the soldiers from the negative karma of killing.

When there is a very strong connection between the dying person and their guru it is possible in some circumstances that the guru can help their mind move away from negativity and towards virtue – even if the person’s mind is in the intermediate state – so that they take a good rebirth, even a pure land.

When a high lama transfers somebody’s consciousness to a pure realm, many special signs happen, such as rainbows in the sky or white light emitting from the person’s body.

However, if your loved one is an accomplished meditator actually in meditation there is no need to do phowa; they can take care of themselves.

Phowa can also be practiced during the forty-nine days after death, as discussed in practice 81 in chapter 29.

NOW FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS IN

Chapter 20: If Your Loved One Is at Home When They Die

Chapter 21: If Your Loved One Is in Hospital or Hospice When They Die

Chapter 22: If Your Loved One Has Offered Their Organs

Chapter 23: If Your Loved One Dies Suddenly

**Chapter 24: If Your Loved One Has High Realizations
and Is Meditating When They Die**

CHAPTER 20

THE PRACTICES: IF YOUR LOVED ONE IS AT HOME WHEN THEY DIE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Lights for offering
- Text for the body
- Stupa for the body
- Prayer wheel for body
- Blessed cord for the body
- Written mantras for the body
- Medicine Buddha practice, written or recorded
- The eight prayers to benefit the dead, written or recorded, or “The King of Prayers”
- Any other practices you would like to do

Because it can take up to three days for the mind to leave the body – in other words, for death to occur – it is ideal to leave the body undisturbed for that long.

After following the instructions in chapter 19 as soon as the breath stops, do any of the following practices.

Perhaps you can't take all the advice here, but understand the essential points and do the best you can.

REMEMBER: NO PETS

Especially now that the breath has stopped you should not allow cats or dogs in the room, especially cats. As discussed on page 74 in chapter 12, it is said that the hair of the cat is polluted.

Also, if a cat sits on the dead body it's possible a spirit could follow it and enter the body.

REMEMBER: BE QUIET

Continue to keep the environment peaceful and quiet. Only the sounds of prayers and mantras should be heard.

OFFER**OFFER LIGHTS IN FRONT OF THE BODY [63]**

Chöden Rinpoche said that as long as the body is in the house you must always offer a light nearby. In Tibet, of course, they would offer a butter lamp; you can use any kind of lights: electric, candles, etc.

This is not an offering to the body but to the Three Rare Sublime Ones. It is mentioned in the Heruka root tantra that one will achieve realizations if one offers lights – hundreds, thousands of lights. There are many statements like this in the teachings.

Another reason to have lights on – you could keep the room lights on – is that it helps prevent a spirit from entering the body, which is a danger. You should have the lights on all the time, day and night.

By the way, Rinpoche explained that the wick of a butter lamp in front of the body is heavy and dark, which means the light is unclear. The pollution from the body affects the light, Rinpoche said, and it's always like this.

TOUCH WITH HOLY OBJECTS**BLESS THE BODY WITH TEXT, STUPA, PRAYER WHEEL, BLESSED CORD [5-8] OR WRITTEN MANTRAS [58]**

As discussed in chapters 13 and 18, if you haven't already put a text, a stupa, a prayer wheel, a blessed cord, or written mantras on your loved one's body, it is beneficial to do so now.

Be very careful not to disturb the body.

PRAY AND MEDITATE

If there is a monastery or Dharma center nearby you can invite the monks or nuns to come to the house and perform prayers and pujas near the body continuously until it is taken out. However, in the West it is rare for this to happen because the opportunity is not there.

Or you could invite friends to come and do the practices mentioned below at different times throughout the three days, or groups of you can take turns. As I mentioned, doing prayers and practices in groups has more benefit than doing them alone.

RECITE THE MEDICINE BUDDHA NAMES [14], MANTRA [22], OR PRACTICE [36]

The main practice to do before, during, and after death is Medicine Buddha – meditating, reciting the names, or saying the mantra.

As I mentioned in practice 14 in chapter 15, the Medicine Buddha made a promise that all your prayers and wishes will succeed if you chant his name and mantra.

RECITE THE EIGHT PRAYERS TO BENEFIT THE DEAD [64–71]

These prayers are usually recited in the Gelug Tibetan monasteries when someone dies. Recite as many times as you like.

- (1) “The King of Prayers”
- (2) “The Dedication Chapter From Shantideva’s *Bodhicharyavatara*”
- (3) “The Prayer to Be Reborn in The Blissful Realm of Amitabha Buddha” by Lama Tsongkhapa
- (4) “The Prayer for the Beginning, Middle, and End of Practice” by Lama Tsongkhapa
- (5) “Until Buddhahood”
- (6) “A Daily Prayer to Bodhisattva Maitreya Taught by Buddha Shakyamuni”
- (7) “A Prayer for the Statue of Maitreya”
- (8) “The Prayer for Spontaneous Bliss” by the Second Dalai Lama Gendun Gyatso

RECITE “THE KING OF PRAYERS” [64]

If you can’t recite all eight, recite at least “The King of Prayers.” In commentaries it is said that this prayer contains “ten numberless times 100,000 prayers of the bodhisattvas.” It is said to be very, very powerful for purification and collecting extensive merit.

And, as I mention in chapter 6, if you recite it daily you will definitely be reborn in Amitabha’s pure land, The Blissful Realm.

There are many other practices that you could do during the three days.

RECITE GURU PUJA [72]

Guru Puja is an incredible practice to do. It's got everything in it, including phowa.

You could recite just the refuge section. Whatever practices you do – jangwa, phowa, self-initiation – the foundation is refuge, relying on Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. So take strong refuge in the Guru Buddha, whom you visualize above the head of the your loved one – or you could visualize the entire merit field or just Shakyamuni Buddha. Then, as you recite a few malas of each of the refuge mantras, you pray that they purify all their negative karma immediately and be born in the pure lands of the buddhas or receive a perfect human rebirth.

DO A NYUNGNÄ FASTING RETREAT [73]

It is excellent to do a three-day nyungnä fasting retreat. You could visualize yourself as the Compassion Buddha or see him in front of you, and as you recite the mantra, the long one or short one (practice 21 in chapter 15), you imagine nectar going out from the heart, purifying your loved one.

RECITE THE NAMES OF THE BUDDHAS [14–15]

RECITE THE NAME MANTRA OF GURUS [18]

RECITE OTHER MANTRAS [19–31]

RECITE SUTRAS [33–34]

RECITE YOUR LOVED ONE'S PRACTICES [47]

RECITE PURIFICATION PRACTICES [49–54]

WHEN THE TIME HAS COME TO MOVE THE BODY

CHECK THAT THE MIND HAS LEFT THE BODY [74]

After three days have passed, before you move the body make sure that the mind has left. There are various signs that indicate that the mind is no longer there, described in chapter 25.

TUG AT THE HAIR AT THE CROWN CHAKRA [75]

As discussed in chapter 25, if the indication is that the mind has not yet left the body, tug the hair at the crown chakra a few times – towards the back of the head – or firmly tap on the crown there. Anyway, the first time you touch the body it is auspicious to do this.

If the consciousness is still there, doing this can encourage it to go to the crown chakra and leave from there, which means your loved one will go to a pure land, as I discuss on page 62 in chapter 9.

CONSULT AN ASTROLOGER [76]

Typically, a Tibetan would consult an astrologer immediately after the mind has left the body. Astrology can indicate what practices should be done to prevent your loved one from being born in the lower realms or to help them to take a good rebirth, such as which statue or *thangka* should be made on their behalf; that if you do this or that practice they will have a good rebirth, or be reborn as a monk or a nun, or even a great lama. It can even predict where the good rebirth will be taken.

However, it is said that this usually only works for ordinary people; astrology cannot predict the future of the great holy beings nor very evil people.

You need to tell the Tibetan astrologer which of the twelve animal signs your loved one was born under, as well as the date and time they passed away, even perhaps the hour or whether it was in the morning, the afternoon, etc. It's important to be accurate.

There is astrology in the West, of course, but I'm not sure if it predicts future lives and so forth.

Now you can prepare the body for cremation or burial according to the instructions in chapter 26.

CHAPTER 21

THE PRACTICES: IF YOUR LOVED ONE IS IN HOSPITAL WHEN THEY DIE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Text for the body
- Stupa for the body
- Prayer wheel for body
- Blessed cord for the body
- Written mantras for the body
- Medicine Buddha practice, written or recorded
- The eight prayers to benefit the dead, written or recorded, or “The King of Prayers”
- Any other practices you would like to do

When Lama Yeshe passed away at about five o'clock in the morning of March 4, 1984, Tibetan New Years, at the Cedars Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles, the staff gave us a room to put Lama in while he was in meditation. Lama was there the whole day. I discuss this in chapter 24.

Ask the hospital to allow you as much time as possible with the body of your loved one, even an hour.

After following the instructions in chapter 19 as soon as the breath stops, do any of the following practices.

Perhaps you can't take all the advice here, but understand the essential points and do the best you can.

REMEMBER: BE QUIET

Do your best to keep the environment peaceful and quiet. Only the sounds of prayers and mantras should be heard.

TOUCH WITH HOLY OBJECTS

BLESS THE BODY WITH TEXT, STUPA, PRAYER WHEEL, BLESSED CORD [5–8], OR WRITTEN MANTRAS [58]

As discussed in chapters 13 and 18, if you haven't already put a text, a stupa, a prayer wheel, a blessed cord, or written mantras on your loved one's body, it is beneficial to do so now. But be very careful not to disturb the body.

PRAY AND MEDITATE

AT THE VERY LEAST

RECITE THE MEDICINE BUDDHA NAMES [14], MANTRA [22], OR PRACTICE [36]

The main practice to do before, during, and after death is Medicine Buddha – meditating, reciting the names, saying the mantra.

As I mentioned in practice 14 in chapter 15, the Medicine Buddha made a promise that all your prayers and wishes will succeed if you chant his name and mantra.

IF THERE IS MORE TIME

RECITE THE EIGHT PRAYERS TO BENEFIT THE DEAD [64–71]

These prayers are usually recited in the Gelug Tibetan monasteries when someone dies.

RECITE “THE KING OF PRAYERS” [64]

If you can't recite all eight, recite at least “The King of Prayers.” In commentaries it is said that this prayer contains “ten numberless times 100,000 prayers of the bodhisattvas.” It is said to be very, very powerful for purification and collecting extensive merit.

And, as I mention in chapter 6, if you recite it daily you will definitely be reborn in Amitabha's pure land, The Blissful Realm.

There are many other practices that you could do, depending on the time and your preference.

RECITE THE NAMES OF THE BUDDHAS [14–15]

RECITE THE NAME MANTRA OF GURUS [18]

RECITE OTHER MANTRAS [19–31]

RECITE SUTRAS [33–34]

RECITE YOUR LOVED ONE'S PRACTICES [47]

RECITE PURIFICATION PRACTICES [49–54]

RECITE *GURU PUJA* [72]

WHEN THE TIME HAS COME TO MOVE THE BODY

CHECK THAT THE MIND HAS LEFT THE BODY [74]

Before you move the body make sure that the mind has left. There are various signs that indicate that the mind is no longer there, described in chapter 25.

HELP THE MIND LEAVE THE BODY: TUG AT THE HAIR AT THE CROWN CHAKRA [75]

As discussed in chapter 25, if the indication is that the mind has not yet left the body, tug the hair at the crown chakra a few times – towards the back of the head – or firmly tap on the crown there. Anyway, the first time you touch the body it is auspicious to do this.

If the consciousness is still there, doing this can encourage it to go to the crown chakra and leave from there, which means your loved one would go to a pure land, as described on page 62 in chapter 9.

Now you can prepare the body for cremation or burial according to the instructions in chapter 26.

CHAPTER 22

THE PRACTICES: IF YOUR LOVED ONE HAS OFFERED THEIR ORGANS

WHAT YOU NEED

- Text for the body
- Stupa for the body
- Prayer wheel for body
- Blessed cord for the body
- Written mantras for the body
- Medicine Buddha practice, written or recorded
- The eight prayers to benefit the dead, written or recorded, or “The King of Prayers”
- Any other practices you would like to do

DOES CUTTING OUT THE ORGANS DISTURB THE MIND?

Some people decide to offer their organs to others after they have died. Does this disturb the mind?

It seems that when the person is considered brain-dead the doctors keep the body breathing artificially, and they continue to keep the body breathing when they actually cut out the organs.

I question this. Even if the brain is no longer functioning, if the person has the karma to breathe this means they have the karma to be alive, which of course means the mind is still there.

Also, as we discussed in chapter 7, even if the breath has stopped and the brain is not functioning, some people can come back to life. This means that the usual definition of death is not correct. It’s a big question that has to be discussed with learned great meditators.

However, if the person is brain-dead, they might not feel anything when the organs are cut out. If the person is not in meditation when this happens, I think it doesn’t matter.



BUDDHA AMITAYUS

**Pray that throughout all their future lives
your loved one attains whatever length of life they wish for,
“becoming just like Buddha Amitayus.” Practice 66.**

Also, I think because the person is dying with the thought of benefiting others they wouldn't be disturbed and therefore won't be reborn in the lower realms. Because your loved one is offering their organs to others, they are dying with the thought of making charity, of giving, and that's a virtue. If your loved one has made charity of their body before they passed away, dedicated for others, then it is the same as if they were alive and made charity of their body. It's as if they had chosen to offer their life or their limbs to others when they are alive; many great masters actually did this.

You see, there are no expectations, no worldly mind involved; they are really making charity. As there is no concern about reputation, no thought of power, no thought of getting something, this would be sincere giving, which means the mind is virtuous.

Ask the hospital to allow you as much time as possible with the body of your loved one, even an hour.

Perhaps you can't take all the advice here, but understand the essential points and do the best you can.

REMEMBER: BE QUIET

Do your best to keep the environment peaceful and quiet. Only the sounds of prayers and mantras should be heard.

TOUCH WITH HOLY OBJECTS

BLESS THE BODY WITH TEXT, STUPA, PRAYER WHEEL, BLESSED CORD [5–8], OR WRITTEN MANTRAS [58]

As discussed in chapters 13 and 18, if you haven't already put a text, a stupa, a prayer wheel, a blessed cord, or written mantras on your loved one's body, it is beneficial to do so now. But be very careful not to disturb the body.

PRAY AND MEDITATE**AT THE VERY LEAST****RECITE THE MEDICINE BUDDHA NAMES [14], MANTRA [22], OR PRACTICE [36]**

The main practice to do before, during, and after death is Medicine Buddha – meditating, reciting the names, saying the mantra.

As I mentioned in practice 14 in chapter 15, the Medicine Buddha made a promise that all your prayers and wishes will succeed if you chant his name and mantra.

IF THERE IS MORE TIME**RECITE THE EIGHT PRAYERS TO BENEFIT THE DEAD [64–71]**

These prayers are usually recited in the Gelug Tibetan monasteries when someone dies.

RECITE “THE KING OF PRAYERS” [64]

If you can’t recite all eight, recite at least “The King of Prayers.” In commentaries it is said that this prayer contains “ten numberless times 100,000 prayers of the bodhisattvas.” It is said to be very, very powerful for purification and collecting extensive merit.

And, as I mention in chapter 6, if you recite it daily you will definitely be reborn in Amitabha’s pure land, The Blissful Realm.

There are many other practices that you could do, depending on the time, the situation, and your preference.

RECITE THE NAMES OF THE BUDDHAS [14–15]**RECITE THE NAME MANTRA OF GURUS [18]****RECITE OTHER MANTRAS [19–31]****RECITE SUTRAS [33–34]****RECITE YOUR LOVED ONE’S PRACTICES [47]****RECITE PURIFICATION PRACTICES [49–54]****RECITE *GURU PUJA* [72]**

You can continue to do the practices after the body of your loved one has been taken away for the removal of the organs.

WHEN THE TIME HAS COME TO RECEIVE THE BODY

CHECK THAT THE MIND HAS LEFT THE BODY [74]

After the organs have been removed, even though the body has been touched already, it is still good to make sure the consciousness has left; there are various signs that indicate that the mind is no longer there, described in chapter 25.

HELP THE MIND LEAVE THE BODY: TUG AT THE HAIR AT THE CROWN CHAKRA [75]

As discussed in chapter 25, if the indication is that the mind has not yet left the body, tug the hair at the crown chakra a few times – towards the back of the head – or firmly tap on the crown there.

Doing this can encourage the consciousness to go to the crown chakra and leave from there, which means your loved one would go to a pure land, as described on page 62 in chapter 9.

Now you can prepare the body for cremation or burial according to the instructions in chapter 26.

CHAPTER 23

THE PRACTICES: IF YOUR LOVED ONE DIES SUDDENLY

WHAT YOU NEED

- Text for the body
- Stupa for the body
- Prayer wheel for body
- Blessed cord for the body
- Written mantras for the body
- Medicine Buddha practice, written or recorded
- The eight prayers to benefit the dead, written or recorded, or “The King of Prayers”
- Any other practices you would like to do

If your loved one dies suddenly at home or where you can be undisturbed, there are various practices you can do before you call the emergency services.

Even if they die in a public place, still you can do something before the body is taken away.

After following the instructions in chapter 19 as soon as the breath stops – or when you first discover the body of your loved one – do any of the following practices.

Perhaps you can’t take all the advice here, but understand the essential points and do the best you can.

TOUCH WITH HOLY OBJECTS

**BLESS THE BODY WITH TEXT, STUPA, PRAYER WHEEL,
BLESSED CORD [5–8], OR WRITTEN MANTRAS [58]**

As discussed in chapters 13 and 18, put a holy object or written

mantras on the body of your loved one. But be very careful not to disturb the body.

PRAY AND MEDITATE

AT THE VERY LEAST

**RECITE THE MEDICINE BUDDHA NAMES [14],
MANTRA [22], OR PRACTICE [36]**

The main practice to do before, during, and after death is Medicine Buddha – meditating, reciting the names, saying the mantra.

As I mentioned in practice 14 in chapter 15, the Medicine Buddha made a promise that all your prayers and wishes will succeed if you chant his name and mantra.

IF THERE IS MORE TIME

RECITE THE EIGHT PRAYERS TO BENEFIT THE DEAD [64–71]

These prayers are usually recited in the Gelug Tibetan monasteries when someone dies.

RECITE “THE KING OF PRAYERS” [64]

If you can’t recite all eight, recite at least “The King of Prayers.” In commentaries it is said that this prayer contains “ten numberless times 100,000 prayers of the bodhisattvas.” It is said to be very, very powerful for purification and collecting extensive merit.

And, as I mention in chapter 6, if you recite it daily you will definitely be reborn in Amitabha’s pure land, The Blissful Realm.

There are many other practices that you could do, depending on the time, the situation, and your preference.

RECITE THE NAMES OF THE BUDDHAS [14–15]

RECITE THE NAME MANTRA OF GURUS [18]

RECITE OTHER MANTRAS [19–31]

RECITE SUTRAS [33–34]

RECITE YOUR LOVED ONE'S PRACTICES [47]

RECITE PURIFICATION PRACTICES [49–54]

RECITE *GURU PUJA* [72]

WHEN THE TIME HAS COME TO MOVE THE BODY

CHECK THAT THE MIND HAS LEFT THE BODY [74]

Before you move the body make sure that the mind has left. There are various signs that indicate that the mind is no longer there, described in chapter 25.

HELP THE MIND LEAVE THE BODY: TUG AT THE HAIR AT THE CROWN CHAKRA [75]

As discussed in chapter 25, if the indication is that the mind has not yet left the body, tug the hair at the crown chakra a few times – towards the back of the head – or firmly tap on the crown there. Anyway, the first time you touch the body it is auspicious to do this.

If the consciousness is still there, doing this can encourage it to go to the crown chakra and leave from there, which means your loved one would go to a pure land, as described on page 62 in chapter 9.

Now you can prepare the body for cremation or burial according to the instructions in chapter 26.

CHAPTER 24

IF YOUR LOVED ONE HAS HIGH REALIZATIONS AND IS MEDITATING AT THE TIME OF DEATH

DON'T DISTURB THE MEDITATOR

As I discussed in chapter 10, those with high tantric realizations can remain in meditation in the clear light conjoined with emptiness for as long as they wish – one hour, three days, many months; some meditators stay in the clear light meditation in their hermitage for years.

If your loved one is in meditation, you must not disturb them.

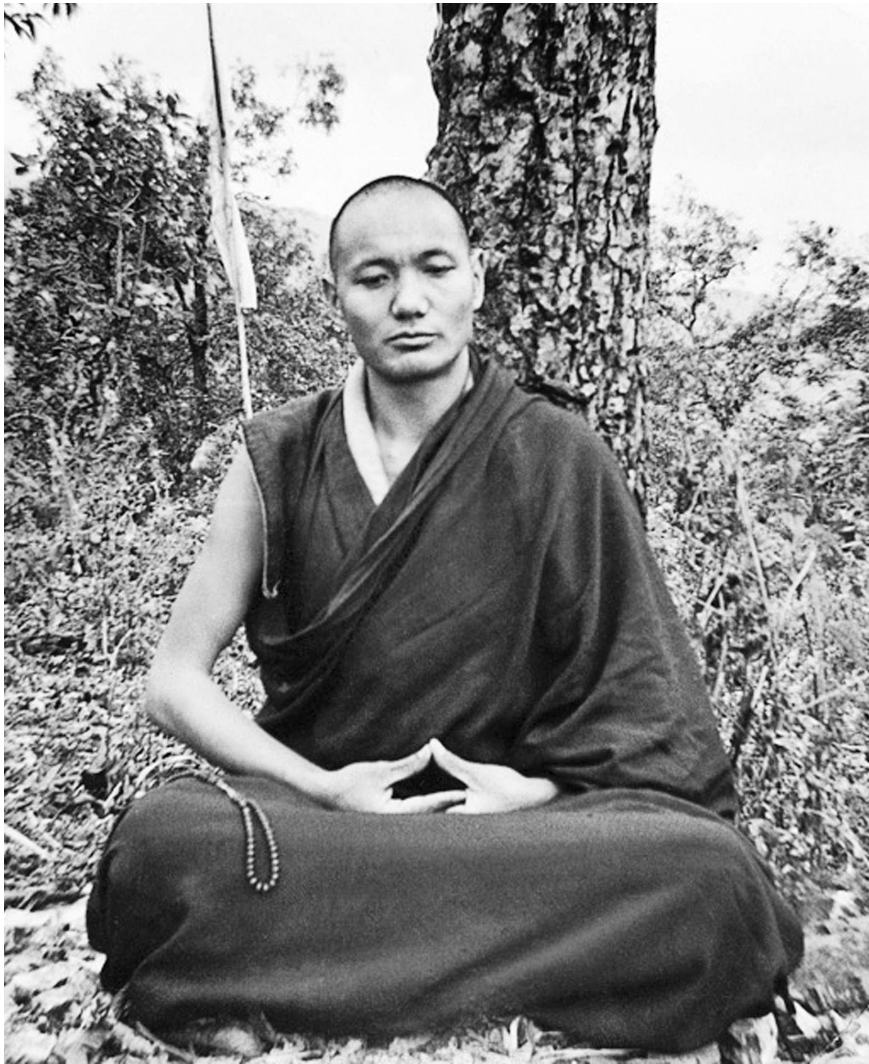
The face of the meditator is very radiant, peaceful, even blissful; they look magnificent, totally different from an ordinary dying person. Sometimes there even seems to be a light at the tip of their nose. While they're in meditation, even though the breath has stopped, there will be no smell of decay. They smell the same as when they were alive. Or, as I mentioned earlier, there could even be a sweet smell.

Here in *Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead* the author says that for somebody who is in meditation you should not consult an astrologer about when to move the body until their meditation is over, otherwise there's the risk that the astrologer might recommend to move the body while the mind is still there.

IF CIRCUMSTANCES DEMAND THAT YOU MOVE THE BODY

However, if the meditation is not over but for various reasons, such as the country's laws, you have no choice but to move the body, you need to request the meditator to end their meditation. While you are requesting them, you can offer music with cymbals, bell, *damaru*, and so forth, as Song Rinpoche advised me when Lama Yeshe was in meditation. Or you could recite the Guhyasamaja root text. More simply, you could put incense very close to the nose of the meditator. And it's very auspicious to recite prayers that they be reborn in a pure land.

In the case of some holy beings, such as Ling Rinpoche and



LAMA THUBTEN YESHE

Here in Mussoorie, India in 1973, Lama passed away in March, 1984, and remained in meditation for many days.

Lama Yeshe, even though their bodies were moved several times, their meditation did not cease and they were not disturbed. As I mentioned before, Ling Rinpoche meditated for thirteen days after the breath had stopped.

LAMA YESHE REMAINED IN MEDITATION FOR MANY DAYS

As I mentioned in chapter 21, Lama Yeshe passed away at the Cedars Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles, a wonderful hospital. Before Lama passed away, the nurses were watching intently throughout the night. The moment Lama's heart stopped people rushed in with a defibrillator and wanted to try to get it started again. It was all very hectic in the room. I had checked with Song Rinpoche, who earlier had come to be with Lama but now was back in Switzerland, and he said to do everything possible to save Lama. The defibrillator is very strong: it pulls the body up violently. Lama opened his eyes for a moment, then his body fell back down. The doctor then said there was no hope. It was about five o'clock in the morning.

This was my first time dealing with someone passing away in the West; I had no experience. Apparently they usually take the body to the mortuary, where they prepare it. But I didn't think we needed to do that; that's for ordinary people, not those who are in the meditation state like Lama.

Anyway, Lama remained in meditation in a private room throughout the day. By the late afternoon we couldn't stay there any longer, so I asked Rinpoche what should be done to release Lama from his meditation. As I mentioned, Rinpoche advised me to play instruments, so I made three prostrations, rang a bell, and requested Lama to stop. I also recited the prayer to be born in a pure land from the Vajrayogini practice and I touched Lama's crown (practice 75).

Of course, Lama didn't need all this as he had already achieved the clear light and illusory body, all the high realizations. Apparently there was a candle and one of the students present in the room said that he saw a second flame leap up from the flame nearby – I didn't see it.

They put Lama's holy body in a box, packed in ice, and took it to a mortuary. The next day one of the students drove it the 350 miles north to Lama's center, Vajrapani Institute near Boulder Creek, very slowly, taking many hours.

When they were preparing Lama's body for the fire puja (see chapter 27), Losang, who had been one of the monks from the first Gelug monastery at Boudhanath Stupa in Nepal and who was familiar with the rituals, reported to Song Rinpoche that even though the body had been lying in the coffin for many days, Lama's limbs were still flexible, and that it was only when they were preparing Lama's body that the white bodhichitta came out.

In other words, it seems that Lama had been in the meditation state for at least five days, even though the body had been moved many times – from the hospital to the mortuary, the long drive from Los Angeles to Boulder Creek, and then preparing it for the fire puja. Song Rinpoche was very surprised.

WHEN THE MEDITATOR'S MIND LEAVES THE BODY

The body of a meditator will start to smell when the meditation is finished – in other words, when the mind leaves – just like the bodies of ordinary people. On the other hand, no matter how long the meditator's mind remains in the body – days, months, or even years – there might not be any smell.

The red and white drops coming out of the body, as with ordinary people, is also a sign that the meditator's mind has left the body. But both drops don't necessarily come out, such as with Lama himself, as well as in the case of Gen Jampa Wangdu, a friend of Lama's who passed away in Dharamsala soon after Lama.

Gen Jampa Wangdu was one of my teachers, from whom I had received the oral transmission of the practice called *chulen*, also known as, "taking the essence." Yogis in isolated places make pills from the essence of flowers, minerals, etc., and can live on just these for long periods of time; they don't need any food, which means they have more time for meditation.

Anyway, after bringing Lama's relics to Switzerland for blessing by Song Rinpoche – although, of course, Lama didn't need that – I went to Dharamsala for teachings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The day after the teachings had finished there was a long-life puja for His Holiness, but I couldn't attend because Gen Jampa Wangdu passed away early that morning after having been in meditation for three days.

One of the tantric monks and I checked to see if the bodhichitta had come out. It seemed that the white bodhichitta had, but not the red. Not only had he had great, great success in achieving the three principal aspects of the path, guru devotion, etc., but also the six yogas of Naropa and the clear light and illusory body and had experienced the transcendental non-dual great bliss voidness.

Another sign that the mind has left the body of a meditator, whether they're sitting up or lying down, is that the head moves. Also, usually the color of their face changes, becoming dark, but Gen Jampa Wangdu's face still looked very bright, exactly the same as when he was alive, no change. When his body was taken to the place behind Tushita Retreat Centre to be offered to the fire, one of his disciples was very worried that Geshe-la was still alive. He requested Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche to come and say prayers and to check. Rinpoche simply looked at Geshe-la's face and could tell immediately that his meditation was over.

Also, it seems that Gen Jampa Wangdu had chosen to pass away on the very day of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's long-life puja so that His Holiness could live a long life. In other words, he sacrificed his own life for His Holiness.

THE GREAT MEDITATORS CAN CHOOSE WHERE TO GO AFTER DEATH

Many great practitioners become enlightened in the intermediate state or go to a pure realm. Many others reincarnate in human form again in order to help sentient beings, as Lama Yeshe did. For great practitioners such as Lama, they can choose their parents and the environment they will be reborn into, and the child they become is completely different from normal people.

CHAPTER 25

MAKE SURE THE MIND HAS LEFT THE BODY BEFORE YOU MOVE IT

CHECK THAT THE MIND HAS LEFT THE BODY [74]

Before you move the body of your loved one it is important to check that the consciousness has already left. There are various signs that indicate that the mind is no longer there.

These signs are visible in both ordinary people and meditators.

No Longer Warm at the Heart

The easiest, most common way to check that the mind has left the body is to put your hand just above the heart chakra, without touching the body. If you feel warmth there, even if every other part of the body is cold, the consciousness is still there.

The White and Red Drops Leave the Body

As we discussed in the death process on page 63 in chapter 9, the consciousness has left the body when, in the male, the white drop (a whitish liquid) leaves through the lower chakra and the red drop (a pinkish liquid) leaves through the nose; for the female it's the opposite.

Not necessarily both will come out of the body, sometimes just one; and sometimes because of chronic disease or longtime illness nothing comes out.

The Body Smells

The body starting to smell like rotten meat indicates that the consciousness has left. One lama, who has experience helping dying people, says that there is a very particular smell that bodies have once the consciousness leaves. Already sick bodies smell, but when the mind goes, he said, the smell is different: a very terrible smell, very deep somehow – sometimes people call it the smell of death.

The Flesh Does Not Respond

Another indication that the mind has left the body is if when you press with your fingers on part of the body the flesh doesn't respond – the impression of your fingers remains.

The Head Moves

For a meditator, another sign that the mind has left the body, as I mention in chapter 24, whether they're sitting up or lying down, is that the head moves.

TUG AT THE HAIR AT THE CROWN CHAKRA [75]

If the indication is that the mind has not yet left the body, tug the hair at the crown chakra a few times – towards the back of the head – or firmly tap on the crown there. Anyway, the first time you touch the body it is auspicious to do this.

If the consciousness is still there, doing this can encourage it to go to the crown chakra and leave from there, which means your loved one would go to a pure land, as I discuss on page 62 in chapter 9.

Rigor Mortis

It is possible that there could be signs of rigor mortis after the breath has stopped but before the mind leaves the body. If so, and after having checked, using the above methods, you think the mind is still there, it's recommended to make the *sur* offering (practice 82) near the body, which can help the person come back to life again.

PART FIVE

PRACTICES TO DO AFTER THE MIND HAS LEFT THE BODY



BUDDHA NAMGYÄLMA

Whoever is touched by the wind that has blown on Namgyälma mantras written on cloth or paper will be purified of their negative karma. Practice 77.

CHAPTER 26

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR LOVED ONE'S BODY FOR CREMATION OR BURIAL

SPRINKLE BLESSED SEEDS, WATER, ETC., ON YOUR LOVED ONE'S BODY [77]

Get some sesame seeds, mustard seeds, water, perfume, talcum powder, or something similar. Now recite the Namgyälma mantra twenty-one times (practice 25 in chapter 15) – the long mantra is better, but the short mantra is okay – or any other mantras that you know, such as the Compassion Buddha mantra (practice 21 in chapter 15).

Having blessed your breath with the recitation, now blow on the seeds or water, etc., blessing them. Now sprinkle it over the body.

Usually I keep a big packet of mustard seeds or baby powder close by. Every day, after I have chanted thousands of various mantras, I blow on the powder or seeds to bless them. I use them whenever I see dead insects or animals, or for people who have died. You could also do this. And you could send the blessed seeds to other people, for them to use when people die.

The Namgyälma mantra is especially powerful for purification of negative karma. For example, whoever is touched by the wind that has blown on mantras written on cloth or paper and placed on a mountain top will be purified of their negative karma. Circumambulating a stupa that contains the mantra purifies the karma to be reborn in the hot hells.

BLESS YOUR LOVED ONE'S BODY WITH WRITTEN MANTRAS [58]

If you have not already put written mantras on the body of your loved one, it is especially good to do so now.

You could use the eleven mantras that I wrote out, as discussed in chapter 18; or the Namgyälma mantra (practice 25 in chapter 15), one of the best to use – you can use the small protection mantra in the Liberation Box. If you like, you could use any of the five great mantras (practice 31) or the ten powerful mantras (practices 21–30).

You can put the sheets of mantras on any part of the body so that the words are touching the skin, or rub the body with them.

Or you can put rolls of the mantras on the body – on the head, for example.

Or you could wrap mantras around the body, the chest, for example, as Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche explained that they do in Amdo in Tibet; they use Mitrugpa mantras.

You should leave the mantras there when the body is buried or cremated. This helps purify negative karma and cause a good rebirth. You can do this for animals as well.

REMEMBER

If the body is to be buried, make sure you keep some hair or nails – a little of each is enough – to be blessed in the jangwa ceremony, practice 78 in chapter 28.

If you have ashes instead, you need just a little for the blessing.

CHAPTER 27

THE FUNERAL SERVICE

You could invite a lama, or a monk or nun, to lead the ceremony. Use any of the practices recommended to do during the forty-nine days after the death of your loved one (see chapter 29). Or you could select verses from these various practices.

You could start with a motivation and then talk about impermanence. You could also talk about your loved one's life and rejoice in all their good actions.

Use whatever structure for the ceremony that suits your culture, including prayers, teachings.

OFFER LIGHTS, FLOWERS ON BEHALF OF YOUR LOVED ONE [84]

You could set up an altar with pictures of your loved one's guru and statues of the buddhas, and you could make extensive offerings. Everyone could participate. As I mention in chapter 29, you could use candles, butter lamps, or electric lights. And you could make other offerings, such as water bowls or flowers.

RECITE MEDICINE BUDDHA MANTRA [14], THE NAMES [22], OR THE PRACTICE [36]

As always, the best practice for your loved one and yourself is Medicine Buddha. You could all recite together.

DEDICATE WITH "THE KING OF PRAYERS" [64]

At the end everyone can dedicate for your loved one's precious human rebirth or rebirth in Amitabha's pure land by reciting "The King of Prayers," or even a few verses.

REMEMBER

As I said in chapter 26, if you will have your loved one's body cremated, don't forget to keep some ashes; or some hair or nails if the body will be buried. You can have them blessed with jangwa, as I discuss in chapter 28.

LAMA YESHE'S FUNERAL FIRE PUJA

This is what I did with all of Lama Yeshe's relics after the offering burning puja at Vajrapani Institute in California. I took them to Switzerland and asked Song Rinpoche to bless them with jangwa – although, of course, as I mentioned before, because of his realizations Lama did not need that.

The relics were divided up and given to the centers around the world. The ashes were offered to the students and they made *tsa-tsas* with them and put them on their altars (see practice 79). They also received the ashes in little capsules – vitamins to strengthen the weak mind!

The ceremony we had for Lama was a Yamantaka offering burning puja. Students came from everywhere. Geshe Sopa came from Wisconsin and Geshe Thinley, one of Lama Yeshe's brothers, came from Australia, where he was resident teacher at Chenrezig Institute.

I had invited Song Rinpoche to come again from Switzerland. Before the burning puja we did many days of practices, including the Heruka Body Mandala self-initiation, Vajrayogini, *Guru Puja*, and we all offered the Vajrasattva tsog written by Lama (practice 53) with prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession (practice 49). We did these practices not for Lama's sake but for our own.

Finally we were ready to offer Lama's holy body to the fire. A special cremation stupa was built according to Song Rinpoche's design. Lama was dressed in the costume of self-initiation, put upright on a chair, tied securely, then carried to the site and placed in the stupa. Rinpoche himself did a lot of work, with his own hands putting in the bricks, putting the firewood around Lama's holy body in the lower part of the stupa, then helping build up the top part and making the holes for offering the ingredients of the burning puja. Everything went so well, the beginning, middle, and end; so neat and perfect.

CHAPTER 28

HOW TO BLESS YOUR LOVED ONE'S ASHES AND INCLUDE THEM IN HOLY OBJECTS

BLESS THE ASHES, HAIR, NAILS, ETC., OF YOUR LOVED ONE WITH JANGWA [78]

As soon after the funeral service as possible you should organize a jangwa practice, during which the buddhas' wisdom is invoked into the remains – as I mentioned, you need only a small amount of the ashes or bones, hair, nails, etc. – thus purifying and blessing them.

Keeping the ashes of your loved one that haven't been blessed has no benefit for the dead or the living. Whereas, as Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche said, now that the ashes are purified and blessed with jangwa they are actual relics or holy objects.

Even if the person died with nonvirtuous thoughts, which usually means it's definite to be born in the lower realms, and they are in the intermediate state, relying on methods such as jangwa can help them change direction and receive a human body instead, or even go to the pure lands. They're on their way to the lower realms but because of the power of the Vajrayana, the power of the Buddha's words, and the power of the concentration of the lama or the person who does the practice, suddenly the person changes their journey.

Then you can dedicate all the merits created by doing the blessing to your loved one, praying that their negative karma is purified and that they receive a perfect human rebirth or rebirth in a pure land, meet the perfectly qualified virtuous friend, hear the holy Dharma, and quickly achieve full enlightenment.

WHO CAN DO THE PRACTICE?

The practice of jangwa is usually performed by qualified lamas. You can ask the lama at your nearest Tibetan Buddhist center to perform the ceremony, or you can ask monks or nuns to do it. If you cannot get

lamas or sangha to do the practice, you and your Dharma friends can do the practice.

Originally jangwa was done in conjunction with Buddha Kunrig, who, as mentioned in practice 27, is known as the king of deities for purifying the lower realms. Eventually jangwa was done with other buddhas as well: Medicine Buddha, Vajrayogini, Maitreya, etc. The practice I recommend is in association with the Medicine Buddha.

Within jangwa, at the end, there is phowa, shooting the consciousness into a pure land.

MAKE TSA-TSAS, STATUES, OR STUPAS USING THE BLESSED ASHES [79]

Now you can do even more to benefit your loved one. Having blessed the ashes with jangwa you can include them in holy objects such as tsa-tsas, stupas, or statues, which brings so much benefit, to your loved one and to you. You yourself can make or sponsor the making of these holy objects.

Some people say that you shouldn't put ordinary people's ashes in holy objects, but as discussed in practice 78, by doing the practice of jangwa the wisdom of the buddhas has been invoked into them, thus purifying and blessing them. This is also stated here in *Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead*.

Including the blessed ashes in tsa-tsas or other holy objects creates inconceivable merit for your loved one, but also for you. Normally you would offer flowers or lights to your loved one at the cemetery, but this doesn't accumulate any merit; it's not even a virtuous action. But now because you are offering to a holy object you create huge amounts of merit.

You can decide which Buddha to use – Medicine Buddha, Amitabha, or the Compassion Buddha, for example – or you could ask a lama or an astrologer which buddha would have the strongest effect in liberating your loved one. Or you could make a stupa.

Alternatively, you could request Dharma centers to make the holy objects for you. There are FPMT Dharma centers set up for this purpose in Australia, India, New Zealand, and the United States, where the holy objects can be made and kept in memorial shrines, where you can visit and make offerings.

THROW BLESSED ASHES INTO THE WIND OR WATER [80]

If you like, you could also throw some of the blessed ashes into the wind from a high mountain or into the sea, a lake, a river, etc. All the sentient beings touched by the ashes in the air or by the water are purified of their obscurations and negative karma.

CHAPTER 29

PRACTICES TO DO DURING THE FORTY-NINE DAYS AFTER DEATH

It can take up to forty-nine days after the mind has left the body for your loved one to take a new rebirth. It is traditional to do prayers, pujas, make offerings, etc. during the seven weeks, dedicated to the person who passed away.

As I mentioned in chapter 18, when people who care about a person do practices together, there is much more benefit.

Ideally, of course, the very best is to do prayers and practices for your loved one throughout the entire seven weeks, day and night. When Lama Pasang passed away at Kopan, Lama Lhundrup had three or four monks at any one time reciting the extensive Medicine Buddha practice, all day every day for the forty-nine days.

Some people do practices once a week for the seven weeks; others every day. Do what you can.

FOUR POSSIBILITIES OF WHAT CAN HAPPEN TO THE MIND AFTER IT LEAVES THE BODY

The karma that was activated at the time of death was virtuous and the mind is still in the intermediate state.

You can pray that your loved one is born in the pure lands where they can achieve enlightenment, or receive a perfect human body where they can meet a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings and then achieve enlightenment.

The karma that was activated at the time of death was virtuous and the mind has already taken rebirth in the human realm or the pure lands.

In this case it's still beneficial to do prayers and practices. Dedicate all the merit from doing these practices for the person who has passed away.



BUDDHA MITRUGPA

The mantra of Buddha Mitrugpa (here with the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession), who is powerful for purifying karmic obscurations, can be used for looking at, reciting, and blessing the body of your loved one.

Practices 1, 2, 24, 58, 87.

The karma that was activated at the time of death was nonvirtuous and the mind is still in the intermediate state.

This means the person will be born in the lower realms. It's possible that prayers and practices can help the mind change direction and instead receive a human body or even a pure land – practices such as phowa (practices 62 and 81) and jangwa (practice 78), as I mentioned in chapters 6 and 9.

The karma that was activated at the time of death was non-virtuous and the mind has already taken birth in the lower realms.

Again, in this case it's even possible to liberate a person from the lower realms, as I discuss in relation to Buddha Kunrig (practice 27) and jangwa (practice 78).

PRAY AND MEDITATE

RECITE MEDICINE BUDDHA PRACTICE [36]

As I mentioned, the main practice to do before, during, and after death is Medicine Buddha. The benefits are incredible, for your loved one and, of course, for you.

As discussed, it's best if family members and friends do it every day, throughout the entire seven weeks, day and night, with a more elaborate puja and more extensive offerings (see practice 84) at the end of each week. Or you could do the practice once a week for the seven weeks. The last puja should have even more extensive offerings, and you should recite “The King of Prayers” (practice 64) at the end.

RECITE THE EIGHT PRAYERS TO BENEFIT THE DEAD [64–71]

These prayers are usually recited in the Gelug Tibetan monasteries when someone dies.

RECITE “THE KING OF PRAYERS” [64]

If you can't recite all eight, recite at least “The King of Prayers.” In commentaries it is said that this prayer contains “ten numberless times 100,000 prayers of the bodhisattvas.” It is said to be very, very powerful for purification and collecting extensive merit.

REQUEST A LAMA TO PRACTICE PHOWA, OR YOU AND YOUR DHARMA FRIENDS CAN PRACTICE AMITABHA PHOWA BY LAMA YESHE [81]

If a lama does the practice: If phowa has not been performed already – either by your loved one (practice 48 in chapter 16) or by a lama as soon as the breath stopped (practice 62 in chapter 19) – it can be performed by a lama now.

As I mentioned in practice 62, when there is a very strong connection between the dying person and their guru it is possible in some circumstances that the guru can help their mind move away from negativity and towards virtue – even if the person’s mind is in the intermediate state – so that they take a good rebirth, even a pure land.

When a high lama transfers somebody’s consciousness to a pure realm, many special signs happen, such as rainbows in the sky or white light emitting from the person’s body.

If you and your friends do the practice: If you cannot request a lama, you and your Dharma friends can do the Amitabha phowa composed by Lama Yeshe.

I once asked Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche how to make a phowa practice effective. Rinpoche said that during our daily Vajrasattva practice we should visualize sentient beings at our heart on a moon disc and then, when we do the purifying meditation we can imagine the nectar beams emitting from Vajrasattva and entering the hearts of the sentient beings, purifying them. By doing this we are better able to transfer someone’s consciousness to a pure land, Rinpoche said.

Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche said that the practice becomes more effective, more powerful, when you do Medicine Buddha meditation beforehand. You recite the names of the seven Medicine Buddhas and the mantra – both included in the practice here. Rinpoche himself does it that way. I remember years ago when one of the dogs at Tushita Retreat Centre in Dharamsala died – we had many dogs there – Rinpoche first did the Medicine Buddha practice. During it I recited each of the seven names seven times.

Normally it is necessary to have received an empowerment into this Amitabha Buddha phowa practice before practicing it, but if you have

faith in the Dharma you can practice it, especially with the motivation of helping your loved one, without the empowerment.

These days there are many people interested in the hospice movement, especially in the West. Practicing phowa is an extraordinary service they can offer others.

MAKE THE OFFERING OF SUR [82]

After they die, all beings except those of the formless realm have to go through the intermediate state. Because their body is subtle, as discussed in chapter 9, their only food is smells – this is all they can have. They are called smell-eaters.

It is excellent to make the offering of the smell of food to them with the practice called sur. The Tibetan word “sur” refers to the smell of roasted barley flour. Chöden Rinpoche advised that the practice can be done three times: in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening.

This practice has many benefits. It pacifies obstacles. It’s an offering to the Guru, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. It’s a practice of charity to all six-realm beings, in particular the intermediate state beings, those who have passed away from the human and other realms and have not yet been reborn. You finish your karmic debts. It’s a method for helping be reborn in the pure lands. It’s a cause of success of whatever wishes you have.

By doing it you collect so much merit, purify obstacles, and all your wishes will be achieved according to the holy Dharma; you will complete the two types of merits and, ultimately, achieve enlightenment.

There’s a story from Ribur Rinpoche about someone imprisoned in Tibet for many years. They were given very small amounts of food: a dish called *tien mo-mos* but they didn’t receive actual *mo-mos*, only small pieces of flour in thin soup that was basically water. Because the prisoners were unbelievably hungry, when they went outside their rooms they would search for bones in the fields, which they would chew. Even this gave them such strength and changed their bodies, of Rinpoche said. They would also poke around with a stick in the feces the Chinese staff, looking for undigested beans, which they would eat.

The Chinese staff kitchen was nearby so the starving Tibetan prisoners would smell the frying food. This Tibetan person said that the smell would help so much! It would sustain him. When he was

freed, he decided that he would offer *sur* every day to the spirits, the smell-eaters, because of his experience of hunger and how the smell of food helped him so much.

There are many other practices that you could do during the forty-nine days.

**RECITE THE HEART SUTRA [33] OR
THE VAJRA CUTTER SUTRA [34]**

MEDITATE ON TONGLÉN, GIVING AND TAKING [38]

You can do sessions of tonglén with recitations of the Compassion Buddha mantra (practice 21).

**OFFER TSOG TO VAJRASATTVA BY LAMA YESHE,
OR TO YOUR LOVED ONE'S MAIN DEITY [53]**

It is extremely good to offer *tsog* to Vajrasattva, the practice composed by Lama Yeshe. Or you could simply recite the Vajrasattva mantra.

RECITE GURU PUJA [72]

As discussed, *Guru Puja* is an incredible practice to do. It's got everything in it, including *phowa*.

You could recite just the refuge section. Whatever practices you do – *jangwa*, *phowa*, self-initiation – the foundation is refuge, relying on Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. So take strong refuge in the Guru Buddha, whom you visualize above the head of your loved one, or you could visualize the entire merit field or just Shakyamuni Buddha. Then, as you recite a few malas of each of the refuge mantras, you pray that they be born in the pure lands or receive a perfect human rebirth.

**RECITE THE SELF-INITIATION OF YOUR LOVED
ONE'S MAIN DEITY [54]**

PRACTICE DORJE KHADRO FIRE PUJA OR OTHER FIRE PUJA [83]

The practice of Dorje Khadro has many benefits. It is very powerful for purifying defilements and negative karma, it restores degenerated *samaya* and vows, and it dispels obstacles.

I received the lineage of this practice from Lama Yeshe at Kopan. It is highly admired and has great blessings as an instruction taught by Vajradhara for success.

DO A RETREAT SUCH AS NYUNGNÄ FASTING RETREAT [73]

It is excellent to spend some time during the forty-nine days in a retreat such as a nyungnä fasting retreat, dedicated to the person who has passed away.

As I mentioned in chapter 20, you'd either visualize yourself as the Compassion Buddha or see him in front, and then as you recite the mantra, the long one or short one (practice 21), you would imagine strong beams of nectar emitted from Chenrezig's heart, purifying your loved one and all sentient beings.

You could recite one hundred thousand mantras, or as many as you like.

Alternatively, you could do a retreat related to the person's main deity, Vajrasattva, Medicine Buddha, or any other retreat you like.

OFFER

OFFER LIGHTS, FLOWERS, ETC., ON BEHALF OF YOUR LOVED ONE [84]

It's good to make light offerings to the Three Rare Sublime Ones on behalf of the person who has passed away, especially at the end of each of the seven weeks; you could use candles, butter lamps, or electric lights. And you could make other offerings, such as water bowls or flowers.

It is very common for the Tibetans to offer hundreds, even thousands, of light offerings; for them this is a very important practice. They make offerings at home, where the person is, but they also go to the monasteries, where there are many precious holy objects.

They do this not only when a family member passes away but generally to collect merit. Sometimes if they cannot make individual butter lamps they bring a pot of liquefied butter and carry it around to all the butter lamps and add a little to each. In this way the lights are offered continuously, in every temple, in every shrine room. This collects so much merit.

In Tibet they go to the most precious historical statue of Shakyamuni Buddha in Lhasa, which was made during the Buddha's time. Every day there are people lined up there to make offerings or prayers. In India they go to the Great Stupa in Bodhgaya and make hundreds of thousands of butter lamp offerings. They go to wherever there are holy objects.

OFFER MONEY ON BEHALF OF YOUR LOVED ONE [85]

Offering money collects an inconceivable amount of merit that you can dedicate for your loved one. You could make these offerings on the holy days in the Tibetan lunar calendar, such as the Buddha days when the merit is multiplied by one hundred million.

If, let's say, you offered one dollar, you would collect the merit of having offered one hundred million dollars. If you offer one cup of tea to a monk or nun in a monastery, it's as if you have offered one hundred million cups of tea.

Years ago I started putting aside money to fund pujas and the making of stupas and prayer wheels. We started with the pujas and now have the FPMT Puja Fund, the main purpose of which is to collect merit by making offerings to the monasteries, such as Sera, Ganden, Drepung, which altogether have six colleges, in particular offering tea and breakfast, as well as some rupees, to each of the monks during pujas.

You, then, could make offerings to:

- The FPMT Puja Fund.
- Your loved one's gurus or your own guru.
- The ordained sangha.
- Lay students who have the same guru as the person who died.
- A Dharma center – a place, in other words, where people can meditate on the path, learn Dharma, and purify their minds and collect merit.
- The sick, the poor, or the homeless.
- Various charities.
- Places that take care of animals.

SPONSOR

SPONSOR DHARMA ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR LOVED ONE'S MONEY [86]

There are many ways you can use your loved one's money in order to help them. For example:

- You could sponsor someone to do a retreat – a monk or nun or a lay person – who can't afford it themselves. You would request them to dedicate all the merits to the person who passed away, the sponsor.
- Use the money to make a contribution to a Dharma center, to buy whatever is needed to help the center spread the Dharma, which benefits sentient beings who come there to learn the Dharma, to meditate, to achieve enlightenment.
- Publish or sponsor the publishing of Dharma books.

MAKE

MAKE HOLY OBJECTS ON BEHALF OF YOUR LOVED ONE [87]

You could make, or have made, holy objects and dedicate for your loved one.

If you decide to make tsa-tsas, unless you have particular advice from an astrologer or a lama you can decide yourself which deity to make. It's common to make Mitrugpa tsa-tsas, which is very powerful for purifying negative karma. Or you could choose Medicine Buddha, the Compassion Buddha, the Thirty-five Buddhas – whichever buddha you like. You could make as many as you like – of course, the more the better.

If you choose to make a stupa, as you insert the four dharmakaya relic mantras – Ornament of Enlightenment, Secret Relic, Zung of the Exalted Completely Pure Stainless Light, and Stainless Pinnacle – you should say the name of your loved one and dedicate for their future rebirth. It is said that if a person is destined to be reborn in the lower realms, doing this can change the situation and help them get a good rebirth.

You could also have statues made or thanngas painted.

PART SIX

THE ACTUAL PRACTICES
IN NUMERICAL ORDER



BUDDHA SAMAYAVAJRA

Because of their compassion all our gurus have manifested as Buddha Samayavajra so that we can purify our broken commitments, our word of honor. Practice 51.

SHOW STATUES OR PICTURES OF GURUS, BUDDHAS

[1]

SEE CHAPTERS 13 AND 18.

See also other practices related to the guru: 10, 18, 35, 43, 47, 60, 72, and 85.

Make sure the various images of your loved one's guru, the buddhas, etc., are close to their bed, where they can see them easily. Merely looking at them helps a dying person purify negative karma and sows seeds for enlightenment.

You can make something like I made for a dying person. I framed various pictures: the person's root guru, Amitabha, Compassion Buddha, Medicine Buddha, Mitrugpa, etc., as well as the mantras (practices 18 and 20–22 and 24). You can put it where your loved one can see it.

It's also good to write a message, some Dharma advice, and have that put in the frame as well. Seeing that, too, purifies their mind and helps them collect skies of merit.

[2] SHOW THE MITRUGPA MANTRA

SEE CHAPTERS 13 AND 18.

See also practice 24.

I have written out the mantra of Mitrugpa (Akshobhya, in Sanskrit); it can be put next to the dying person's pillow or where they can see it easily. It doesn't matter whether they're Buddhist or non-Buddhist: receiving benefit doesn't depend upon faith.

According to *Giving Breath to the Wretched*, simply seeing this mantra, one of the ten powerful mantras (practices 21–30) and the five great mantras (practice 31), purifies even the heaviest of the very heavy negative karmas, avoiding the holy Dharma, which is heavier than destroying all the monasteries, all the statues, stupas, scriptures, every single holy object that exists in this world.

Also purified is the negative karma of having taken things without permission from the sangha, or having deprived them of receiving things; karmas like that. No question, then, about all other negative karmas.

ན་མོ་ར་རྒྱ་ཏུ་ཡུ་ཡ། ཨོྃ་གླི་གླི་ཀི་གླི་གླི་ཀི། རོ་ཅ་ཀི་རོ་ཅ་ཀི།
ཏོ་འ་ཀི་ཏོ་འ་ཀི། ཏུ་ས་ཀི་ཏུ་ས་ཀི། སྤྲི་ཏ་ཀི་སྤྲི་ཏ་ཀི།
སྤྲི་གླི་ཏུ་པ་ཏི་པ་ཏི་མེ་སྤྲི་སྤྲི་ཏུ་ཏུ་ཏུ་ཏུ།

**SHOW THE NAME MANTRA OF THE BUDDHA
WHO PROTECTS FROM THE LOWER REALMS**

[3]

SEE CHAPTERS 13 AND 18.

See also practice 19.

Have your loved one look at this mantra quite often: have it close by.
It's the name mantra of Rinchen Tsugtor Chän, the buddha who
protects from the lower realms.

བཙོམ་ལྷན་འདས། དེ་བཞིན་གསལ་བས་པ།
དགྲ་བཙོམ་པ། ཡང་དག་པར་རྗོགས་པའི་
སངས་རྒྱས་རིན་ཆེན་གཙུག་ཏོར་ཅན་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ལོ།

[4] SHOW MANTRA CALLED “JUST BY SEEING”

SEE CHAPTERS 13 AND 18.

This mantra is so powerful that just seeing it purifies 100,000 eons of negative karma and causes you to become enlightened.

ཨོྃ་ཏཱ་བླ་ཤ་བླ་ར་ཏི་ཡི་ལྷ་བླ།།

BLESS THE BODY WITH TEXTS

[5]

SEE CHAPTERS 13, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

Chöden Rinpoche advises that it is good to put a text near the head of the dying person, or touch the crown with it, leaving it there if you like. You could use either of the below texts, or any text you like.

By Willing, Liberates

There is a very powerful text, the benefits of which are unbelievable, called *By Willing, Liberates* (*Taktrul*, or *Shertor*). I have made a very small version of it – there is good technology these days – so it's easy to carry with me wherever I go and to put on the heads of people or animals when they die.

Again, whether your loved one is a believer or non-believer, the benefits are the same.

There is a copy of it in the Liberation Box.

Lamrim Chenmo

Chöden Rinpoche advises using Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*. Rinpoche explains that this text is the essence of Manjushri's wisdom. The 84,000 teachings of Buddha are included in it: the Lesser Vehicle teachings, the Mahayana paramita teachings, the Mahayana tantric teachings – all are embodied here.

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[6] BLESS THE BODY WITH A STUPA

SEE CHAPTERS 13, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also practice 37.

You can use a stupa to bless a dying person, in particular a stupa that contains the four dharmakaya relic mantras: Ornament of Enlightenment, Secret Relic, Zung of the Exalted Completely Pure Stainless Light, and Stainless Pinnacle. These mantras, usually written in gold on the “life tree” (the central pole within the stupa, which is made of wood), are what make the stupa powerful.

From time to time, place the stupa on your loved one’s chest or let them hold it. Each time the stupa touches them their negative karma is purified.

This is also good to do with babies or with people who don’t understand.

To a non-Buddhist you can say that the stupa is for peace or healing or purification.

You can lead your loved one in a meditation involving visualizing light rays coming from the stupa, blessing them: see practice 37.

There is a stupa in the Liberation Box.

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BLESS THE BODY WITH OR TURN A PRAYER WHEEL [7]

SEE CHAPTERS 13, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

Having a prayer wheel near your loved one is another powerful way of ensuring a good death and a better rebirth. Touching a prayer wheel purifies negative karma and obscurations, so encourage them to turn it, or touch them with it.

In fact, if there is a prayer wheel in the room you don't need to do phowa: at the time of death, the person's simply thinking of a prayer wheel helps shoot their consciousness through the central channel and out of the crown to reincarnate in the pure land of Amitabha.

[8] BLESS THE BODY WITH A BLESSED CORD

SEE CHAPTERS 13, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

A blessed cord (usually a piece of thin red dressmaker's cord) has been blessed with many thousands of mantras such as the Buddha of Compassion, or Namgyälma and the other five great mantras (practices 21, 25, and 31). Tie it around the neck of your loved one, or their wrist or arm.

Don't see these cords as merely a custom, or as something to be put on the altar or put away somewhere in a container. They should be worn: the idea is for them to touch the body. The mantras used for the blessing have so many benefits and can purify so much negative karma.

You can carry blessed cords with you and when a person or animal dies you can put one on the body. Even if they died a long time ago and no matter where their consciousness is now, this can still help purify their negative karma, the blessings will still have an effect.

There is a blessed cord in the Liberation Box.

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MAKE SURE YOUR LOVED ONE HAS GIVEN AWAY THEIR POSSESSIONS [9]

SEE CHAPTER 14.

See also chapter 5.

Here in *Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead* the author says that before the person who is dying is unable to speak it's important to make sure that they have made a will or to remind them to make one. (See also the first of the five powers in chapter 5.)

Actually, you don't need to wait until just before they die to do this, and usually in the West people have done this earlier anyway. The point here is to understand how it helps psychologically at the time of death to have decided whom they want to dedicate their possessions to. Because then there is nothing to cling to and they won't die with attachment: they've already dedicated their possessions to the Guru Three Rare Sublime Ones, let's say, or to sentient beings, or for projects that will benefit sentient beings.

[10] TALK ABOUT YOUR LOVED ONE'S GURU, OR BUDDHA, OR GOD

SEE CHAPTERS 14 AND 18.

See also other practices related to the guru: 1, 18, 35, 43, 47, 60, 72, and 85.

The role of the guru in our life is vital, especially at the time of death. If your loved one has received teachings from a lama during their lifetime and if they feel strong devotion, it is important to remind them of the guru now. This helps them to let go of attachment, to remember the teachings, especially bodhichitta; and then at the time of death it's easy to remain virtuous. Also, talking to them about their guru can reconnect them with their personal deity (see practice 47).

It is advised in the lamrim that when we are in a critical situation, experiencing heavy obstacles, including at the time of death, making requests to the guru is the best thing to do. When all other methods have failed, remembering the lama is the best solution.

Even if your loved one doesn't have a strong practice, if their connection with their guru is strong the guru can help them go to a pure land: merely hearing the name of their guru is considered a very effective kind of transference of consciousness. Chöden Rinpoche refers to a quotation from *The Kalachakra Tantra*: "Even for one second to recall the name of your guru is the best phowa."

If they don't have a guru but have faith in Buddha, talk about the qualities of any of the enlightened beings: Shakyamuni Buddha, Chenrezig, Amitabha, or whoever they feel close to.

If your loved one has another religion, not Buddhism, an important way to help them generate virtuous thoughts is to talk about God. Describe God as having perfect wisdom or omniscience, loving kindness and compassion for them and all living beings, and the power to help liberate them and others from suffering and lead them to temporary and ultimate happiness. Thinking about God as having no mistakes, being totally pure, having all the qualities, becomes very good refuge for the dying person.

You are describing the meaning of a buddha, actually – infinite wisdom, compassion, and power – but you're not using the Sanskrit word. You could mention just one quality and then let the person think about that, or you could mention all three qualities.

Explain that the nature of their own mind, their heart, is completely pure; that God has compassion for everyone, including them. Help them think that their loving heart is oneness with God, that the kingdom of God is within. This frees them from guilt and anger, allowing them to die with faith and a peaceful mind.

[11] TALK ABOUT AMITABHA'S PURE LAND, OR HEAVEN

SEE CHAPTERS 14 AND 18.

See also chapter 6; and other practices related to Amitabha: 20, 64, 66, and 81.

Another approach is to talk about the pure lands of the buddhas, such as The Blissful Realm, the pure land of Amitabha. You can read *The Benefits of The Blissful Realm* (below) by Lama Tsongkhapa to them.

As I said in chapter 6, for ordinary beings, those who have delusions and for whom it is difficult to take rebirth in most pure lands, it is easy to be born in Amitabha's pure land.

Saying the name of the pure land is important. It's like a rope that the person can hold on to while they're climbing a mountain that pulls them up when they're in danger of falling: it saves them. It's a method to help their consciousness let go of this world: their body, their family, their possessions; to not be attached.

Tell your loved one how beautiful it is there – as described in Lama Tsongkhapa's words in the practice below. in the practice below. You can tell them how whatever they're attached to is better there, that there are better enjoyments there – this means you need to know what they normally enjoy – like the monk who was told that the butter tea was better in Tushita (see page 36).

Tell them that there are many wonderful friends in The Blissful Realm, or someone in particular who loves them. Wishing to be there causes them to be born there; it directs their consciousness to it. Amitabha Buddha becomes their main refuge.

For somebody who doesn't understand "pure land," saying "Heaven" makes it easier; that's a very common word. Heaven has the meaning of eternal; something very beautiful, with great enjoyments. Hearing about it makes it easier for the person's consciousness to leave, for them to die easily, without mental suffering.

You could also read Lama Tsongkhapa's prayer to be reborn in The Blissful Realm (see practice 66).

THE BENEFITS OF THE BLISSFUL REALM, BY LAMA TSONGKHAPA

Nama Shri Guru Manjugoshaya.

I prostrate to Amitabha, leader of humans and gods.
Through compassion you always see each migrator as your
own child;
Remembering you just once leaves the fear of the Lord of Death
far behind;
May your eminent activities for migrators be glorious and
without end.

The Buddha praised the supreme buddha-field
Many times in an excellent manner.
Moved by compassion, various prayers were composed
Mentioning the potential to be born in Sukhavati.

Many stainless scriptures explain that the lords of the victorious ones¹ manifested pure lands from their completely established emanation bodies. These buddha-fields came about in accordance with the exalted minds generated and prayers made at the time [the buddhas] were still bodhisattvas, practicing the vast deeds of bodhisattvas.

Due to the Buddha, who taught extensively about the qualities of the pure land of Sukhavati, and to the ones gone to bliss² who often praised their own individual, immeasurable pure lands, it is said that immeasurable bodhisattvas take rebirth in Sukhavati. It is also said that one should make strong aspirations that persons of the present and future times can go to this pure land. Various chapters in sutras and daranis³, while explaining the benefits, mention instructions for different methods to be reborn in Sukhavati.

It is not impossible for persons of the present time to take rebirth in this pure land. Some say that the saturation of the five degenerations⁴ has rapidly decreased the amount of beings born in this pure land. Others say that [pure lands] are only filled with those who are in the retinue of bodhisattvas and that it is difficult to be reborn there because the enormous wealth of those beings and their environment [requires great merit].

Those who are born in Sukhavati have definitely gathered some accumulation of pure [merit]. In short, the greater the aspiration for a particular pure land is, the quicker one will be reborn in that pure land, and, [in general] people are more inclined to being born in Sukhavati. When reciting prayers to be reborn in the pure lands of the buddhas, one should mainly focus on being reborn in Sukhavati.

[THE CAUSES FOR BEING REBORN IN SUKHAVATI]

Which causes should one create in order to be reborn in this pure land? It is said in the *Display of the Pure Land Sutra*:⁵

“Ananda, one should look at the One Gone to Bliss,⁶ take that buddha to heart again and again, create immeasurable amounts of virtue, generate bodhichitta, and with prayers dedicate this all completely to be reborn in that world.

“Then, at the time when death comes close, one will, in front of oneself, face the One Gone to Bliss, the Foe Destroyer, the Completely Fully Enlightened One, Amitabha, surrounded by a great assembly of fully ordained sangha. Seeing the Bhagavan Amitabha, one’s mind will become clear, and when one’s consciousness leaves [the body] one will take birth in the world of Sukhavati.

“Ananda, any son or daughter of the lineage should, during one’s life, perfectly generate the intention to be reborn in this buddha-field. One should generate the mind of the unsurpassed, complete enlightenment for this purpose while thinking how wonderful it will be if one could see Amitabha. One should dedicate one’s root of virtue for this purpose.

“Ananda, one should take the One Gone to Bliss to mind again and again, generate immeasurable amounts of roots of virtue in one’s mental continuum and perfectly direct one’s mind to be reborn in this buddha-field. When one is close to death one comes into the presence of the One Gone to Bliss, the Foe Destroyer, the Completely Fully Enlightened One, Amitabha and sees his color, shape, complexion and his retinue of fully ordained sangha, being emanations of the Buddha. By seeing the One Gone to Bliss one will have stable, serene faith, have the mindfulness of never

forgetting [Amitabha], and when one dies one will be reborn in his buddha-field.”

The first section of this sutra mentions four points that cause one to be reborn in the pure land [of Amitabha]:

- (1) remembering the Victorious One Amitabha again and again;
- (2) accumulating immeasurable amounts of roots of virtue;
- (3) generating the mind of enlightenment; and
- (4) making prayers that dedicate the accumulated virtue toward being reborn in this pure land.

Although one can find persons of both Hinayana and Mahayana vehicles in this pure land, this first section [of this sutra] is related to those who have generated the lineage of the Mahayana. The last section is common [to both vehicles].

The third section explains – as mentioned before – that one should perfectly generate the intention to be reborn in the pure land. This means that one should, after reflecting on the pure land’s qualities again and again, generate, from the depth of one’s heart, the wish to be reborn there.

The middle section mentions that the cause to be reborn in this pure land when passing away is the generation of the wish to see Amitabha in this life. Having generated the mind of enlightenment and continuously accumulated various amounts of roots of virtue, take the Victorious One Amitabha to mind again and again and pray from the depth of one’s heart that one may be reborn in the Mahayana lineage only, within the pure land of Sukhavati.

This is just a small explanation. An important point is to remember the array of qualities of the beings in and the environment of this pure land as has been mentioned in the sutras. In particular, initially when one makes prayers, one should remember the qualities of this pure land. While focusing on the Victorious Amitabha together with his retinue, generate serene, stable faith and have a strong aspiration to be reborn there by reflecting on the marvelous array of qualities of this pure land.

The last important point is the need for generating a strong intention that thinks, “How wonderful it will be if one can witness the object of one’s prayers easily, without obstacles.” The main cause for rebirth in

this pure land is a strong aspiration to be reborn in the Land of Bliss, which combines the wish to witness [this pure land] and with the expressing of the qualities of this pure land.

Initially, it is important to praise this pure land because everything that is said [above] depends on a mind that knows the qualities of this pure land.

THE QUALITIES OF THE TREES BEAUTIFULLY ADORNING THE FIELDS

In the western side of this world system
Is a multitude of hundreds of thousands of buddhas
Each with their own pure land,
All surpassed by marvelous Sukhavati.
The grounds are adorned with precious jewels,
Smooth as the palm of one's hand and pleasant to the touch.
All mountains and hills, made of precious jewels,
Are beautiful, clean and free of dark colors,
Resplendent, pleasant, pure, and surrounded by a garland
Of celestial trees made of seven precious jewels
And of precious palm trees,
Like the moon being surrounded by a constellation of stars.

In this way the grounds are beautified with various celestial trees. Each of these trees has seven roots, seven trunks, seven branches, seven leaves, seven petals, seven flowers and seven fruits. Some say that [the tree has] golden roots, silver trunks, lapis lazuli branches, crystal leaves, cat-eye stone petals, red pearl flowers, and diamond fruits. Some say that the seven parts [of the trees], like the roots and so forth, are each made of one of the seven precious jewels. Some say that each [of the seven parts of the tree] are made of two, three, four, five or six different precious jewels, or each of the parts, like the roots and so forth, are made of the seven precious jewels.

These kinds of celestial trees have crown ornaments, earrings, necklaces, wrist- and upper arm-bracelets, rings, golden belts, golden dresses, dresses made out of pearl and an arrangement of bells made out of precious jewels. In this way the buddha-field is totally filled with an embellishment of hundreds of thousands of various precious jewels, as many as one would wish for.

In the morning a breeze arises from the four directions bringing a variety of extremely nicely scented incense of the gods, blossoming everywhere. This pleasant, fragrant breeze moves the various-colored celestial trees and by looking at [the trees] one sees a variety of beautiful flowers fall on the ground of precious jewels. These flowers pervade this buddha-field, [spreading around each tree for] seven human measures. These flowers are soft like Kantsalitha⁷ cloth and generate bliss when touched. One's feet will sink in the flowers for about four fingers' width [when standing on them] and by raising one's feet [the flowers] will come up [again].

Directly after the morning passes all of the old flowers disappear, and the ground of the buddha-field becomes a solitary, delightful and pure place. Again, like before, a breeze arises from the four directions, spreading new and pure flowers. This process of [old flowers disappearing and the arising of fresh flowers] in the morning also happens in the afternoon, at twilight, at night and at dawn.

The celestial trees, made of the seven precious jewels – gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, cat-eye stone, red pearl and diamond – have immeasurable attractive, beautiful ornaments hanging from them; they possess everything one wishes for.

The roots, trunks, and branches of the trees are smooth, soft, generate bliss upon touching and possess a pleasant fragrance. One can never tire of listening to the explanations of the pleasant [qualities] of the fragrance being spread around.

THE QUALITIES OF THE STREAMS BEAUTIFULLY ADORNING THE FIELDS

Further, different valleys in the fields are beautified with fragrant waters, measuring depths of around twelve yojanas⁸ and widths of one, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or even a hundred thousand yojanas. Entering [these waters] is easy. [The banks], free of mud, are spread with golden sand and covered with nicely scented flowers of the gods, like Utpala flowers, red and white lotuses and water lilies. When one moves the water various birds, like swans, cranes, geese, ducks, parrots, egrets, cuckoos, kunalas, white garudas and peacocks, fly up and make pleasant sounds. The two embankments [on both sides] of these waters are filled with precious celestial incense trees. These [fields], possessing

pleasant sounding water streams with lovely pictorius⁹ trees, agaru trees¹⁰ incense and the best of sandalwood trees, are the foundation for pure sentient beings' spiritual life.

THE QUALITIES OF THE LOTUSES BEAUTIFULLY ADORNING THE FIELDS

Further, these fields are totally covered with a golden maze of lotus flowers resembling the seven precious jewels. Some lotuses are one, two, three, four, five or even ten yojanas big. Each of these precious jewel-like lotuses emanates three hundred sixty thousand million rays of light. At the end of all these light rays are three hundred sixty thousand million bodies of buddhas, gold in color, possessing the thirty-two signs of a great being,¹¹ going to countless, immeasurable world systems teaching the Dharma to sentient beings.

Through the power of the highest prayers
Precious jewel-like lotuses emanating light rays arise,
At the ends of which are emanation bodies satisfying
the [swarming] bees of trainees
With the festival of the honey-like noble Dharma

THE QUALITIES OF THE MANSIONS AND ENJOYMENTS BEAUTIFULLY ADORNING THE FIELDS

Further, these fields are beautified with wonderful mansions. There are numerous hundred thousand-storied high celestial mansions, made of various precious jewels, adorned with precious thrones having variegated divine cushions and calicos spread out on them. The fields are also totally filled with everything one wishes for: incense, garlands, ointments, [fragrant] powders, parasols, victory banners, pennants, musical instruments and cloths of a hundred thousand colors.

In a similar way, nicely scented incense appears everywhere, and from time to time there arise clouds of the incense of the gods, bringing scented rains. Likewise, divine flowers, seven precious jewels, sandalwood powders, parasols, victory banners and pennants fall like rain. Divine canopies, parasols [made] of the seven precious jewels, roofs of the mansions of the gods and celestial fans fill the skies.

Instruments of the gods make melodious sounds
While daughters of the gods perform a play of dances.

It completely has all the enjoyments one wishes for,
 Marvelous treasures pervading grounds and sky.
 Without decline, everything is filled
 Like an ocean of treasures blanketing the golden ground.

This concludes a concise explanation of how to take the qualities of the environment of Sukhavati to mind.

THE COMMON QUALITIES OF THE RESIDENTS BEAUTIFULLY ADORNING THE FIELDS

Further, without making a differentiation between the beings of the three lower states of rebirth and demigods, whoever gets reborn in this [pure land] will never fall back in those four types of rebirth. One will also not have the remaining [four] non-leisures.¹² Sentient beings [born in this pure land] will not be indefinite¹³ in nor be able to lose [the Mahayana lineage].¹⁴ This is reality and definite by itself.

One will only be reborn by the power of prayer and not by the power of karma and afflictions. Sentient beings in this [pure land] are only born miraculously from a precious lotus, and belong to the rebirths of humans and gods. This is only a mere conventional expression of “humans and gods” because the enjoyments are miraculously made manifest like those in the god realms. All the bodies of the beings are adorned with the thirty-two signs.

[When born in this pure land], one will obtain all the five types of clairvoyance. One will have the miraculous clairvoyance, knowing a multitude of more than hundreds of thousands of buddha-fields in one single moment of mind. One will have clairvoyance of previous lives, remembering a multitude of hundreds of thousands of eons of previous births. One will have the clairvoyance of the divine eye, seeing a multitude of hundreds of thousands of world systems. One will have divine ear, hearing the Dharma of a multitude of hundreds of thousands of buddha-fields in one moment. One will have the clairvoyance of others' thoughts, knowing the minds of sentient beings in the multitude of hundreds of thousands of buddha-fields.

In the morning one can visit other buddha-fields and has the opportunity to offer respect and make offerings of all the offering substances [available in those pure lands], created by the power of the buddhas, to a multitude of many hundreds of thousands of buddhas.

This is not possible for sentient beings who have doubt [about the rebirth in this pure land]. Those beings, because of such doubt, are not able to go to other pure lands and offer to the ones gone to bliss, they don't have clairvoyance and they have to stay for a long time in the lotus [in which they are miraculously born] due to the power of their karma.

The sentient beings [in this pure land] don't take coarse food, like that made of the elements; whatever the beings wish for [appears] and can be taken. As has been explained before, the different cloths and ornaments can be found by the mere wish, and wearing them gives satisfaction.

Being adorned with cloths and ornaments, one enjoys a multitude of hundreds of thousands of pleasant melodies of divine songs, beyond satisfaction, coming from the musical instruments of expert musicians who have arisen out of great streams. An assembly of emanations in the form of birds [arisen from these waters] spread similar sounds in the directions of this buddha-field. These [sounds, which are sounds of the Dharma] cause the bodhisattvas to always remember and never be separated from the buddhas.

As explained before, sentient beings are pleased with meeting everything they wish for, and when in front of celestial mansions, retinues of seven thousand sons and daughters of the gods show them a divine play that pleases beings. Initially, qualities of the residents in these pure lands are expressed in order to generate strong aspiration for rebirth in these [lands] so that the different prayers for rebirth in these places can come [to fruition].

The pure sentient beings [in this land] are emanated from good karma.

Their bodies are extremely beautiful, adorned with the [thirty-two] signs.

They have perfectly generated various qualities in their mind streams And are always taken care of by the enjoyment of the Dharma.

Their magical [bodies] travel as fast as lightning without obstruction And they can travel to many buddha-fields and they have the five [wisdom] eyes of the Victorious Ones.

Moreover, having generated the boundless two accumulations They perform the play of happiness and bliss in the pure lands.

THE QUALITIES OF THE RETINUES

The Victorious Ones in this buddha-field have a retinue of sravakas and bodhisattvas. There are three different assemblies of sravakas, the qualities of the first retinue of the sravakas [is as follows]: while a son of the gods can calculate all the stars of a three thousand-fold world system in a day and a night, the immeasurable magical emanations of [such a sravaka] like Maudgalyāyana cannot even be counted in a multitude of hundreds of thousands of years. If counted, only a mere portion can be determined, [one can] never get the fixed number. If this is true for the first assembly, how can the second and third assembly be counted? In this way the retinues of the sravakas are uncountable. Each emanation possesses an aura of light of one arms span width.

The retinues of the bodhisattvas are immeasurable and their qualities are boundless and limitless. They have equanimity, a wish to benefit, and loving kindness toward all sentient beings. They have a mind like Mount Meru and wisdom as vast as an ocean, thoroughly engaged in the nature of the illusion of consciousness itself. They have an accumulation of various qualities and a direct exalted wisdom of the noble ones, which is like Mount Meru. [Their consciousness] being unmistaken, they are like great oceans. They are like [stable] grounds, having patience with the virtue and non-virtue of sentient being¹⁵. Washing away the stains of the afflictions, they are like waterfalls.

They are like kings of fire, burning away all afflictions and conceited minds toward all phenomena. Not attached to the worldly, they are like wind. They are like the sky, free of concepts and penetrating all phenomena thoroughly. Without being polluted with the faults of the world, they are like lotuses. By clearly proclaiming [the difference of what is] Dharma and not Dharma at particular times they are like great thunder dragons. They are like large clouds directly letting the rain of Dharma fall. They are like chief leaders of humans, surpassing great difficulties.

They are like elephants, supremely subdued, and like precious horses, having an utmost subdued mind. They are like forceful, powerful and fearless lions, kings of animals, and like trees they give complete refuge to all sentient beings. They are like Mount Meru, immovable, not moved by the wrong arguments of others. Like the sky they meditate on immeasurable loving kindness and like the great

Brahma they have accumulated all virtue. Giving up the accumulation of abodes they are like birds and having conquered all wrong arguments they are like eagles, the king of birds. Because they are a rare occurrence, they are like the Udumbara flower.¹⁶ They beat Dharma drums, blow Dharma conches, lift up victorious banners of the Dharma, hold Dharma pendants and light great Dharma lamps. They cause delight in the minds of a multitude of many hundreds of thousands of buddhas and are praised by all the Victorious Ones. With great effort in faultless morality they have pure minds, being like lapis lazuli, and, like oceans, they have heard all the Dharma. Each bodhisattva possesses a radiance of a multitude of a hundred thousand yojanas. The two chief disciples, the mahasattvas, the great bodhisattvas, Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani, have a radiance pervading whole world systems.

You are like exalted wisdom oceans, oceans for sentient beings.
 Having the armor of an ocean, like courage lacking cowardice,
 You generated bodhimind in the presence of an ocean of
 Victorious Ones,
 Then searched for an ocean of learning without contentment
 And, having examined the complete Dharma, you became
 excellent scholars.
 You realized the essence of the instructions of the supramundane,
 Fearlessly practiced the Dharma instructions,
 And through effort you always liberate sentient beings.
 With your principle guide, Amitabha,
 You entered the lineage of the Supreme Sage,
 You are great heroes, renowned successors of the Victorious Ones,
 Bodhisattvas of the pure lands.

THE MAIN QUALITIES OF THE PURE LAND

The supreme pure land has marvelous qualities of beings and their environment. In its center is a tree of enlightenment, a large bodhi-tree¹⁷ with a height of one thousand and six hundred yojanas. Its branches, leaves and petals spread out for eight hundred yojanas and the circumference at the root is five hundred yojanas. Its leaves, flowers and fruits spread out throughout and the tree has a variety of a hundred thousand different colors with a diversity of leaves, flowers and fruits.

It has a clear moon-like appearance of precious jewels. It is adorned with precious jewels like those held by Indra,¹⁸ golden strings, beautiful ornaments made of pearls, bouquets of precious jewels, separate necklaces, ornament garlands of blue and red pearl, and ribbons are hanging from the mouths of [decorative] lions. All the precious jewels are decorated with a network of small bells and canopies, perfectly adorned with sea monster heads, crescent-shaped auspicious signs and coiling swastikas.¹⁹ In brief, it is adorned with the objects desired by sentient beings.

When this tree of enlightenment is moved by the wind, a melodious sound arises which can be heard in infinite world systems. If one hears this sound, or sees [the form], inhales its fragrance, tastes its fruits, or is touched by its lights, one will never have an illness of the ear, eye, nose, tongue, or body until enlightenment is achieved. If one takes the tree to mind, then until enlightenment is achieved one's mind will never get distracted. Amitabha the Bhagavan, the one gone to bliss, the foe destroyer, the complete fully enlightened being, the pure one free from passion, is sitting in front of this tree, teaching the Dharma in the midst of an ocean of retinues, who foster and respect him. He is called the Victorious One of Boundless Life (Amitayus) because his life cannot be measured, and he can stay [there] from hundreds of eons until a multitude of hundreds of thousands of eons.

Amitabha is also called the Victorious One of Boundless Light because his radiance pervades in a multitude of hundreds of thousands of buddha-fields in the ten directions, equaling the particles of sand of the river Ganga, and therefore his light rays cannot be measured. This is true, but he can also show the aspect of having only arms span of light rays, depending on the need for [subduing] sentient beings.

The light rays are like stainless crystal, as vast as the sky and they generates bliss in the body and happiness in the mind, supreme happiness in the mind, of whichever sentient being is touched them. The play of this limitless collection of light is like a golden mountain being surrounded [by this brightness].

In a similar way the glorious body of the great sage Amitabha is completely surrounded [by this light]. He surpasses the complete assembly of bodhisattvas and sravakas who are in his retinue. He is beyond samsara, luminous and clear, like a jewel, shining bright light in

all directions; similar to the victorious mountain Mount Meru, being in the center of all other mountains.

Merely seeing this great and supreme buddha, an eminent being with the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks, pleases one's mind. These major and minor marks came into being by countless roots of virtue accumulated over immeasurable eons. Having created these causes Amitabha established this complete beautified body beyond all dimensions.

During autumn nights the sky is free of clouds and totally pervaded by moonlight in the midst of constellations of glittering pearl-like stars. Similarly, [Amitabha] is in the midst of an immeasurable retinue of bodhisattvas with brilliant appearance and having completely matured their mind streams and senses through a vast accumulation of roots of virtue. Amitabha is also in the center of hundreds of thousands of compassionate arhats, leaders of humans, followed by their disciples, all acting with great tranquility, possessing divine eyes, magical powers and clairvoyance.

[Amitabha, you] know all objects of knowledge without obstruction, courageously and indefatigably teaching the Dharma in accordance with the need of trainees. Heroically, you depend on great compassion and work only for the benefit of limitless sentient beings. Being fearless like a powerful lion, king of animals, in the midst of a great assembly of living beings, you spread the sound of the lion's roar in all directions.²⁰ Similarly, in the center of immeasurable retinues [you] free beings from all fears of enemies, spreading the lion-like sound of the vast and profound [teachings] without interruption.

I pay homage to Amitabha!
 You, who sit in front of the tree of enlightenment
 With a magnificent body [arisen from] limitless merit surrounded by
 a great assembly
 You are the refuge for those who wish to go to Sukhavati.

Lord, your mass of light fills world systems.
 Ah, the buddha-field of the Victorious Ones
 Is extremely vast with spacious dimensions.
 Having the complete qualities of all the Victorious Ones
 Your activities are fearless,

Working only for the purpose of all sentient beings
Who are saturated with the wrong doings of the five degenerations.

You are like an enormous, powerful mountain.
Your supreme vigorous [face] is like a moon
With extremely beautiful blue eyes like Utpala flowers.
Whatever has the most excellence is similar to you.
You blaze with splendor, having all the qualities of knowledge
and compassion.
Your eloquent speech is a delight for the assembly surrounding you.
Staying until the end of existence for the purpose of others,
In all circumstances you are the protector of all migrators.

This is a brief explanation of how to take the qualities of the beings [in the pure land] to mind. If one does it more elaborately, think that one is in front of the Victorious One [Amitabha], the Master of the World, and make prayers related to this pure land. Complete the vast practices of the bodhisattvas, and conclude by reflecting on all the qualities of this pure land, as been referred to in prayers, by studying the clear explanations of the sutras.

It is very important to have strong aspiration to born there; one should try to generate this strong aspiration again and again by focusing on the qualities of the pure land as been explained in brief above. The benefits of this are explained in the *Display of the Pure Land Sutra*:²¹

If all the subtle particles that can be found in the world
Are cut and broken down into smaller particles,
And if world systems greater in number than this
Are filled with jewels [and offered],
The merit of the practice of generosity of such [an amount of]
precious jewels
Becomes never equal to the amount of merit that is created with
Joyfully listening with folded hands
To the immeasurable characteristics of the light
And all other special qualities of Sukhavati.

Therefore, one should generate the strong aspiration to go
To the supreme world of Sukhavati
By generating devotion and faith through listening to the qualities
Of [Amitabha,] the One Gone to Bliss.

Whoever hears the name of the world of Sukhavati
[Creates] more merit than the parts of this supreme vast pure land;
The [magnitude] can never be illustrated with examples.
Knowing the perfect teachings of the Buddha,
 which possess wisdom,
One's merit will increase.
Therefore one should listen and clear all doubts,
And with the root of faith obtain the ultimate.

The Buddha explained the qualities of the pure land and how to create causes to be reborn there, witnessed by the exalted wisdom of the Victorious Ones. It is important to generate strong faith without the slightest doubt. It is said that if one has doubt and establishes the causes to be reborn there, one will have the great misfortune to be reborn in this pure land but with obstruction and will have to stay in the womb of the lotus for five hundred years without being able to see the buddhas or listen to the Dharma.

The mere [expression of the] remarks of the qualities of the pure land, seen as an object of aspiration, as explained once before is more than enough for the intelligent ones, who easily understand [the need and way to be reborn there]. But for people like us who are of lesser intelligence, it is said that if there is no [elaborate] explanation one will not generate the wish to be reborn there, will not see this object of aspiration. If one doesn't observe this [pure land] well, by [merely] seeing some of its qualities one will never generate a strong and vast aspiration and [one's awareness of] it will only remain as a mere minor thought.

The way to supplicate the Conqueror in order to easily establish [the rebirth] in the dwelling of the ripening result of the Victorious Ones and their retinue is [to recite the prayer to be reborn there]. (See practice 66.)

TALK ABOUT YOUR LOVED ONE'S GOOD QUALITIES

[12]

SEE CHAPTERS 14 AND 18.

It is important to emphasize all the good, positive things the dying person has done during their life and not dwell on what they consider to be failures or weaknesses. Tell them: “You have lived a good life, sincere, and you have done many good things.”

Whatever compassion your loved one has shown during their life can be used to show how important compassion is and encourage them to feel compassion and loving kindness even as they are dying.

[13] TALK ABOUT COMPASSION, BODHICHITTA

SEE CHAPTERS 14 AND 18.

See also practices 21, 38, and 42.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that the best way to die is to die with the thought of benefiting others: a “self-supporting death,” His Holiness calls it.

It is your responsibility to help your loved one develop compassion. To be thinking of the happiness of others as they die rather than their own terrible circumstances is an amazing thing to do. Compassion is the ultimate attitude to take to the next life. If the person could remember this, without one single doubt they will be saved from the lower realms. To die like this is wonderful.

You can tell them that with this attitude they use their death to achieve enlightenment for others. Their bodhichitta brings all the happiness – this life’s happiness, future lives’ happiness, liberation from samsara, enlightenment – to numberless sentient beings. How? Because when they achieve enlightenment – this bodhichitta causes them to achieve enlightenment – they can work perfectly for numberless sentient beings. This voluntary attitude of dedicating themselves to others makes your loved one so happy to experience suffering for others, to experience death for numberless sentient beings.

On the basis of realizing that sentient beings have so much suffering, and on the basis of realizing that sentient beings are so precious, so kind, that they are the ones from whom the dying person has received all their own past, present, and future happiness – on the basis of this, great loving kindness and great compassion arise: the wish that other sentient beings have happiness and that they, the dying person, will give it to them, and the wish that others be free of suffering and that they, the dying person, will free them.

On the basis of this understanding your loved one will be able to enjoy the experience of death for others, for all sentient beings. Psychologically it works like that.

Even if your loved one doesn't have a religion you can explain that so many others are dying right now, that everyone has to go through this experience. Help them think in a broad way, instead of thinking only of themselves.

You could lead your loved one in the tonglen meditation, practice 38.

[14] **RECITE THE NAMES OF THE SEVEN MEDICINE BUDDHAS**

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 27.

See also other practices related to the Medicine Buddha: 22, 36, 59, and 78.

There is a practice in which you visualize the main Medicine Buddha and six others and which includes the prayer of the seven limbs, a mandala offering, etc.; see practice 36.

Here, the practice is to simply recite their names, as many times as you like.

There is an entire sutra – *The Medicine Buddha Sutra* – that describes the unbelievable benefits of practicing the Medicine Buddha. I think they read it frequently in Chinese temples.

The Medicine Buddha promised that whoever chants his name or mantra will have all their prayers and wishes fulfilled. In the past, when the Medicine Buddha was a bodhisattva, with unbearable compassion that encompasses all us sentient beings he made countless prayers to pacify our many problems; prayers for us to achieve all temporary and ultimate happiness, especially during the time of the five degenerations. That time has come; this is our time.

THE NAMES OF THE SEVEN MEDICINE BUDDHAS

- (1) Buddha Glorious Renowned of Excellent Signs.
- (2) Buddha King of Melodious Sound, Brilliant Radiance of Skill, Fully Adorned with Jewels, Moon, and Lotus.
- (3) Buddha Stainless Excellent Gold.
- (4) Buddha Supreme Glory Free from Sorrow.
- (5) Buddha Melodious Ocean of Dharma Proclaimed.
- (6) Buddha King of Clear Knowing.
- (7) Buddha Medicine Guru, Great King with the Radiance of a Lapis Jewel.

RECITE THE NAMES OF THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS OF CONFESSION

[15]

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also practice 49.

Merely hearing the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession purifies many thousands of eons of negative karma and makes it impossible to be reborn in the lower realms.

Recite the names as many times as you like.

THE NAMES OF THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS OF CONFESSION

SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA

To the Founder, Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Completed Buddha, Glorious Conqueror Shakyamuni Buddha, I prostrate.

FIRST ROW, BLUE, IN THE ASPECT OF AKSHOBHYA

To Tathagata Thoroughly Destroying with Vajra Essence, I prostrate.

To Tathagata Radiant Jewel, I prostrate.

To Tathagata King, Lord of the Nagas, I prostrate. [with a white face]

To Tathagata Army of Heroes, I prostrate.

To Tathagata Delighted Hero, I prostrate.

To Tathagata Jewel Fire, I prostrate.

SECOND ROW, WHITE, IN THE ASPECT OF VAIROCHANA

To Tathagata Jewel Moonlight, I prostrate.

To Tathagata Meaningful to See, I prostrate.

To Tathagata Jewel Moon, I prostrate.

To Tathagata Stainless One, I prostrate.

To Tathagata Bestowed with Courage, I prostrate.

To Tathagata Pure One, I prostrate.

To Tathagata Bestowed with Purity, I prostrate.

THIRD ROW, YELLOW, IN THE ASPECT OF RATNASAMBHAVA

- To Tathagata Water God, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Deity of the Water God, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Goodness, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Sandalwood, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Infinite Splendor, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Light, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Sorrowless Glory, I prostrate.

FOURTH ROW, RED, IN THE ASPECT OF AMITABHA

- To Tathagata Son of Non-craving, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Flower, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Pure Light Rays Clearly Knowing by Play, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Lotus Light Rays Clearly Knowing by Play, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Wealth, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Mindfulness, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Name Widely Renowned, I prostrate.

FIFTH ROW, GREEN, IN THE ASPECT OF AMOGASIDDHI

- To Tathagata King Holding the Victory Banner of Foremost Power, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious One Totally Subduing, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Utterly Victorious in Battle, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Transcendence Through Subduing, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Manifestations Illuminating All, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata All-Subduing Jewel Lotus, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Completed Buddha, King, Lord of the Mountains Firmly Seated on Jewel and Lotus, I prostrate.

RECITE THE MANTRA OF ZUNG OF THE EXALTED COMPLETELY PURE STAINLESS LIGHT AND MANTRA TAUGHT BY BUDDHA DRODEN GYÄLWA CHÖ [16]

SEE CHAPTER 15.

See also practice 29.

It is extremely beneficial for you and other helpers to recite these two mantras – the first is the mantra of the Buddha Stainless Beam – a few times every day in the months and weeks before death. As a result, anyone who hears, sees, or touches you has all their negative karma purified. In addition, whatever you touch becomes a holy object.

It is not necessary to recite them at the time of death.

ZUNG OF THE EXALTED COMPLETELY PURE STAINLESS LIGHT

NAMA NAWA NAWA TEENEN TATHAAGATA GANGA NAM DIVA LUKAA
NEN / KOTINI YUTA SHATA SAHA SRAA NEN / OM VOVORI /
TSARI NI* TSARI / MORI GOLI TSALA WAARI SVAHA
[*indicates a high tone.]

MANTRA TAUGHT BY BUDDHA DRODEN GYÄLWA CHÖ

OM HRI YA DHE SARVA TATHAAGATA HRIDAYA GARBE /
ZOLA DHARMA DHATU GARBE / SANG HARANA AYU
SANGSHODHAYA / PAPAM SARVA TATHAAGATA SAMENDRA
AUSHNI KHA VIMALE BISHUDHE SVAHA

[17] RECITE THE MANTRA FOR ALLEVIATING FEAR OR PAIN

SEE CHAPTER 15.

This mantra, which includes the name of one of the eight bodhisattvas, can alleviate pain and calm fears.

As well as reciting it yourself, help your loved one learn it. If they recite the mantra at least seven times every day they won't have a difficult death, they won't experience frightening karmic appearances. Their death will be very easy, without fear.

Then it's very easy for the people taking care of them. If the person is fearful, you will also be scared or worried, and then you can't help them, you won't know what to do.

OM SHAVADE VADA VISA LINE SVAHA

**RECITE THE NAME MANTRA OF HIS HOLINESS
THE DALAI LAMA OR OF YOUR LOVED
ONE'S OWN GURU**

[18]

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also other practices related to the guru: 1, 10, 35, 43, 47, 60, 72, and 85.

You could have the dying person recite His Holiness the Dalai Lama's name mantra, or their own root guru's mantra. While they recite it they could visualize His Holiness or their guru and imagine purifying all their negative karma and defilements. Or you could recite it for them.

NAME MANTRA OF HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

OM AH GURU VAJRADHARA BHATTARAK MANJUSHRI VAGINDRA
SUMATI JÑANA SHASANA DHARA SAMUDRA SHRI BHADRA SARVA
SIDDHI HUM HUM

[19] RECITE THE NAME MANTRA OF THE BUDDHA WHO PROTECTS FROM THE LOWER REALMS

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also practice 3.

Khunu Lama Rinpoche would tell people to recite the name of this buddha, Rinchen Tsugtor Chän, who dedicated especially for the sake of sentient beings who hear his name that they won't be reborn in the lower realms.

Having heard this mantra, it is impossible for any animal or person to be reborn in the lower realms. So don't just recite it to yourself, and don't mumble it: say it loudly so that your loved one can hear it.

If you come across an animal who is dying, this is the first thing you would recite into their ear.

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG
PAR DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ RIN CHHEN TSUG TOR CHÄN LA
CHHAG TSHÄL LO

RECITE OTHER MANTRAS, SUCH AS AMITABHA BUDDHA'S

[20]

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also chapter 6; and other practices related to Amitabha: 11, 64, 66, and 81.

There are many mantras of the various buddhas, such as
Amitabha Buddha.

OM AMI DEWA HRIH

Also, there is a very special mantra that fulfills all wishes, **The Great Increasing Jewel Fathomless Celestial Mansion Extremely Well-Abiding Secret Holy Mantra.**

OM BIBULA GARBHE MANI PRAPHE / TATHAGATA NI RADE SHA
NE / MANI MANI / SU PRAPHE / BIMALE / SAGARA GAMBHIRE /
HUM HUM / JVALA JVALA / BUDDHA VILOKITE / GUHYA
ADHIKSHTHITE / GARBHE SVAHA

NEAR HEART MANTRA

OM MANI VAJRE HUM

HEART MANTRA

OM MANI DHIRI HUM

[21] RECITE THE COMPASSION BUDDHA MANTRA

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also other practices related to the Compassion Buddha: 13, 38 and 73.

THE FIRST OF THE TEN POWERFUL MANTRAS

The benefits of reciting the Compassion Buddha mantra are infinite, like the limitless sky. If your loved one doesn't have much intellectual understanding of Dharma and the only thing they know is this mantra and, free of attachment to this life, have spent their life chanting it, that is enough.

SHORT MANTRA

OM MANI PADME HUM

LONG MANTRA

NAMO RATNA TRAYAYA / NAMA ARYA JÑANA SAGARA /
VAIROCHANA VYUHA RAJAYA / TATHAGATAYA / ARHATE SAMYAK
SAMBUDDHAYA / NAMA SARVA TATHAGATABHYAH /
ARHATEBHYAH / SAMYAK SAMBUDDHEBHYAH / NAMAH ARYA
AVALOKITESHVARAYA / BODHISATTVAYA / MAHASATTVAYA /
MAHAKARUNIKAYA / TADYATHA / OM DHARA DHARA /
DHIRI DHIRI / DHURU DHURU / ITTI VATTE / CHALE CHALE /
PRACHALE PRACHALE / KUSUME KUSUME VARE / ILI MILI /
CHITI JVALAM / APANAYE SVAHA

RECITE THE MEDICINE BUDDHA MANTRA

[22]

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 27.

See also other practices related to the Medicine Buddha: 14, 36, 59, and 78.

THE SECOND OF THE TEN POWERFUL MANTRAS

As I mention in practice 14, the Medicine Buddha promised that whoever chants his name or mantra will have all their prayers and wishes fulfilled. There is an entire sutra – *The Medicine Buddha Sutra* – that describes the unbelievable benefits of practicing the Medicine Buddha. The Medicine Buddha said that even an animal who hears his mantra will never be reborn in the lower realms.

Reciting it and hearing it ceases the gross and subtle defilements and causes enlightenment. So, have your loved one recite the mantra with full trust in Medicine Buddha, or you recite it so they can hear it.

Explain that Medicine Buddha is always with them – in their heart, on their crown, in front of them. There is not one second Medicine Buddha does not see them or have compassion for them.

SHORT MANTRA

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

Common pronunciation

TAYATA OM BHEKANDZE BHEKANDZE MAHA BHEKANDZE
[BHEKANDZE] RADZA SAMUDGATE SOHA

LONG MANTRA

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE BHAISHAJYE / GURU BAIDURYA / PRABHA
RADJAYA / TATHAGATAYA / ARHATE SAMYAKSAM BUDDHAYA /
TADYATHA / OM BHAISHAJYE BHAISHAJYE MAHA BHAISHAJYE
[BHAISHAJYE] / RAJA SAMUDGATE SVAHA

[23] RECITE THE WISH-GRANTING WHEEL MANTRA

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also practice 31.

THE THIRD OF THE TEN POWERFUL MANTRAS

This is the mantra of Buddha Pema Tsugtor, or Lotus Pinnacle of Amoghapasha. Reciting it seven times every day with the thought to benefit others creates the cause to be reborn in the pure lands.

OM PADMO USHNISHA VIMALE HUM PHAT

RECITE THE MITRUGPA MANTRA

[24]

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also other practices related to Mitrugpa: 31, 58, and 87.

THE FOURTH OF THE TEN POWERFUL MANTRAS

The mantra of Mitrugpa (Akshobhya, in Sanskrit) is for purifying karmic obscurations.

As I mentioned in practice 2, merely seeing it purifies the heaviest of the very heavy negative karmas, avoiding the holy Dharma, which is heavier than destroying all the monasteries, all the statues, stupas, scriptures, every single holy object that exists in this world.

Reciting or seeing it also purifies the negative karma of having taken things without permission from the sangha, or having deprived them of receiving things; karmas like that. No question, then, about all other negative karmas.

NAMO RATNA TRAYAYA / OM KAMKANI KAMKANI ROCHANI
ROCHANI TROTANI TROTANI TRASANI TRASANI PRATIHANA
PRATIHANA SARVA KARMA PARAM PARA NI ME SARVA SATTVA
NANCHA SVAHA

[25] RECITE THE NAMGYÄLMA MANTRA

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also other practices related to Namgyälma: 8, 31, 58, and 77.

THE FIFTH OF THE TEN POWERFUL MANTRAS

Namgyälma is a deity for long life and purification. The mantra has infinite benefits; it is so powerful, it is said, that for anyone who hears it, this life will be their last birth in a womb. And if animals hear it they will not be born in the lower realms.

SHORT MANTRA

OM BHRUM SVAHA / OM AMRITA AYUR DADAI SVAHA

LONG MANTRA

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE / SARVA TRAILOKYA PRATIVISHISHTAYA /
BUDDHAYA TE NAMA TADYATHA / OM BHRUM BHRUM BHRUM
SHODHAYA SHODHAYA / VISHODHAYA VISHODHAYA / ASAMA
SAMANTA / AVABHASA SPHARANA GATI / GAGANA SVABHAVA
VISHUDDHE / ABHISHINCHANTU MAM / SARVA TATHAGATA
SUGATA / VARA VACHANA AMRITA ABHISHEKAIRA /
MAHAMUDRA / MANTRA PADE / AHARA AHARA / MAMA AYUR
SAMDHARANI SHODHAYA SHODHAYA / VISHODHAYA
VISHODHAYA / GAGANA SVABHAVA / VISHUDDHE USHNISHA
VIJAYA / PARISHUDDHE SAHASRA RASMI SANCHO DITE / SARVA
TATHAGATA AVALOKINI / SHAT PARAMITA PARIPURANI / SARVA
TATHAGATA MATE DASHA BHUMI PRATISHTHITE / SARVA
TATHAGATA HRIDAYA / ADHISHTHANA ADHISHTHITE / MUDRE
MUDRE / MAHA MUDRE / VAJRA KAYA / SAMHATANA
PARISHUDDHE / SARVA KARMA AVARANA VISHUDDHE PRATINI
VARTAYA / MAMA AYUR VISHUDDHE / SARVA TATHAGATA
SAMAYA / ADHISHTHANA ADHISHTHITE / OM MUNI MUNI MAHA
MUNI / VIMUNI VIMUNI MAHA VIMUNI / MATI MATI MAHA

MATI / MAMATI / SUMATI / TATHATA BHU DHA KOTI
 PARISHUDDHE / VISPHUTA BUDDHE SHUDDHE / HE HE JAYA JAYA
 VIJAYA VIJAYA / SMARA SMARA / SPHARA SPHARA / SPHARAYA
 SPHARAYA / SARVA BUDDHA ADHISHTHANA ADHISHTHITE /
 SHUDDHE SHUDDHE / BUDDHE BUDDHE / VAJRE VAJRE / MAHA
 VAJRE / SUVAJRE / VAJRA GARBHE / JAYA GARBHE / VIJAYA GARBHE /
 VAJRA JVALA GARBHE / VAJROD BHAVE / VAJRA SAMBHAVE / VAJRE
 VAJRINI / VAJRAMA BHAVATU MAMA SHARIRAM / SARVA SATTVA
 NANCHA KAYA PARISHUDDHIR BHAVATU ME SADA SARVA GATI /
 PARISHUDDHISHCHA / SARVA TATHAGATASHCHA MAM SAMASHVA
 SAYANTU BUDDHE BUDDHE / SIDDHYA SIDDHYA BODHAYA
 BODHAYA / VIBODHAYA VIBODHAYA / MOCHAYA MOCHAYA /
 VIMOCCHAYA VIMOCCHAYA / SHODHAYA SHODHAYA / VISHODHAYA
 VISHODHAYA / SAMANTA RASMI PARISHUDDHE SARVA TATHAGATA
 HRIDAYA / ADHISHTHANA ADHISHTHITE / MUDRE MUDRE MAHA
 MUDRE / MANTRA PADAI SVAHA

After reciting either mantra, say a few times:

OM AMITE / AMITODA BHAVE / AMITE VIKRANTE / AMITA GATRE /
 AMITE GAMINI / AMITA AYUR DADAI GAGANA KIRTI KARE / SARVA
 KLESHA KSHAYAM KARI YE SVAHA

[26] RECITE THE PADMASAMBHAVA MANTRA

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

THE SIXTH OF THE TEN POWERFUL MANTRAS

According to Guru Rinpoche himself, whoever recites his mantra “will meet with me again and again in this life, in future lives, and in the intermediate state between death and rebirth.”

OM AH HUM VAJRA GURU PADMA SIDDHI HUM

RECITE THE KUNRIG MANTRA

[27]

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also other practices related to Kunrig: 31, 58, and 78.

THE SEVENTH OF THE TEN POWERFUL MANTRAS

Kunrig (Vairochana, in Sanskrit) is known as “the king of deities for purifying the lower realms.” It is said that Kunrig practice can even liberate someone who is already in the lower realms.

Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche has explained that in Amdo lay people prepare for their death by taking an initiation of Kunrig, who is white, has three faces, and holds a Dharma wheel. Because the Amdo people have faith that they have purified everything, when death comes they are not worried, they are relaxed, comfortable.

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE / SARVA DURGATE PARI SHODHANIRAJAYA /
TATHAGATAYA / ARHATE SAMYAKSAM BUDDHAYA / TADYATHA /
OM SHODHANI / SHODHANI / SARVA PAPAM VISHODHANI /
SHUDHE VISHUDHE / SARVA KARMA AVARANA VISHODHANI SVAHA

[28] RECITE THE MILAREPA MANTRA

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

THE EIGHTH OF THE TEN POWERFUL MANTRAS

Milarepa himself said that merely remembering his name and thinking about him will cause us to be born in a pure land, where we will meet him and receive teachings. He generated this very special bodhichitta thought in order to offer extensive benefit to sentient beings.

And, depending on the level of our devotion, we can even receive instructions from Milarepa in our dreams.

OM AH GURU HASA VAJRA SARVA SIDDHI PHALA HUM

RECITE THE MANTRA OF ZUNG OF THE EXALTED COMPLETELY PURE STAINLESS LIGHT [29]

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also practices 6 and 16.

THE NINTH OF THE TEN POWERFUL MANTRAS

As I mentioned in practice 16, whoever hears, sees, or touches a person who has recited this mantra of Buddha Stainless Beam will have all their negative karma purified.

NAMA NAWA NAWA TEENEN TATHAAGATA GANGA NAM DIVA LUKAA
NEN / KOTINI YUTA SHATA SAHA SRAA NEN / OM VOVORI /
TSARI NI* TSARI / MORI GOLI TSALA WAARI SVAHA
[*indicates a high tone.]

[30] RECITE THE MAITREYA BUDDHA MANTRA

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

THE TENTH OF THE TEN POWERFUL MANTRAS

Reading and reciting the words of the mantra of Maitreya Buddha's Promise, contemplating the meaning, or merely hearing them – including for animals – causes one, among other things, not to be reborn in the lower realms. Also, one will follow the path of the ten virtuous actions, receive all the enjoyments one seeks and especially, when Maitreya Buddha shows the twelve deeds of a buddha he will lead this sentient being from poverty.

Even the sentient beings in a hell, Maitreya will definitely find them and give them the prediction of the time of their enlightenment.

MANTRA OF MAITREYA BUDDHA'S PROMISE

NAMO RATNA TRAYAYA / NAMO BHAGAVATE SHAKYAMUNIYE /
TATHAGATAYA / ARHATE SAMYAKSAM BUDDHAYA / TADYATHA /
OM AJITE AJITE APARAJITE / AJITAÑCHAYA HA RA HA RA MAITRI
AVALOKITE KARA KARA MAHA SAMAYA SIDDHI BHARA BHARA MAHA
BODHI MANDA BIJA SMARA SMARA AHSMA KAM SAMAYA BODHI
BODHI MAHA BODHI SVAHA

HEART MANTRA

OM MOHI MOHI MAHA MOHI SVAHA

NEAR HEART MANTRA

OM MUNI MUNI SMARA SVAHA

RECITE THE FIVE GREAT MANTRAS, WHICH INCLUDE THE MANTRA OF STAINLESS PINNACLE

[31]

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also practices 23, 24, 25, 27, and 58.

Four of the five great mantras are among the ten powerful mantras; the fifth is the mantra of Buddha Stainless Pinnacle (Tsugtor Drime, in Tibetan).

Kunrig [27]

Mitrugpa [24]

Namgyälma [25]

Stainless Pinnacle

Wish-granting Wheel [23]

These five are mentioned in *Giving Breath to the Wretched*, and reciting them, as I mentioned, liberates not only those who are dying but also those already dead, and even those in the lower realms.

The mantra of Buddha Stainless Pinnacle has many benefits. You can attach it above a doorway, and every time anyone passes beneath it – whether human or animal, even insects – one thousand eons of their negative karma will be purified.

HEART MANTRA OF STAINLESS PINNACLE

OM NAMA STRAIYA DHVIKANAM / SARVA TATHAGATA HRIDAYA
GARBHE JVALA JVALA / DHARMADHATU GARBHE / SAMBHARA MAMA
AYU SAMSHODHAYA MAMA SARVA PAPAM / SARVA TATHAGATA
SAMANTOSHNI SHA VIMALE VISHUDDHE / HUM HUM HUM HUM /
AM VAM SAM JA SVAHA

**[32] RECITE THE SUTRA FOR ALLEVIATING PAIN,
THE GREAT NOBLE SUTRA ON ENTERING THE
CITY OF VAISHALI**

SEE CHAPTERS 15 AND 18.

It is said that listening to *The Great Noble Sutra on Entering the City of Vaishali* can help alleviate the pain of those who are sick or dying.

**THE GREAT NOBLE SUTRA ON ENTERING THE CITY
OF VAISHALI**

In the language of India:

ARYA VAISHALI PRAVESHMA MAHASUTRA

In the language of Tibet:

**'PHAGS PA YANGS PA'I GRONG KHYER DU 'JUG PA'I MDO
CHEN PO**

Homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas!

Thus have I heard. At one time the Bhagavan was residing in a boat-house in the middle of a swamp. Then the Bhagavan spoke to the venerable Ananda: "Ananda, let's proceed to where the city of Vaishali is."

"Let's do accordingly, Venerable Sir." Thus replying, Ananda followed the instructions of the Bhagavan.

Then the Bhagavan traveled through the country of Libriza, arrived at its city of Vaishali, and was sojourning at the Mango Grove of the city of Vaishali.

Then, at that time the Bhagavan spoke to Ananda: "Ananda, go into the city of Vaishali. Place your feet on the doorsills of homes and recite the foundations of these secret mantras and these verses:

BISARATA / BISARATA / BISARATA / BISARATA

[BISARATA means to pacify thoroughly, in this case to pacify epidemics.]

“The Buddha who has loving kindness towards the world spoke thus! It is the noble intent of all the buddhas, the intent of all the *pratyekabuddhas*, the intent of all the arhats and the intent of all those on the path of training. It is the intent of all hearers, the intent of all those who abide by truthful speech, the intent of Dharma teachings, the intent of Brahma, the intent of individual Brahmas, the intent of Shiva of the desire realm, the intent of Indra, the intent of the gods, the intent of the king of demigods, the intent of all demigods, the intent of messengers of demigods and the intent of host of *jungpo* spirits!

BISARATA / BISARATA / BISARATA / BISARATA

“The Buddha who has loving kindness towards the world spoke thus!

MUNCHATA / MUNCHATA

[MUNCHATA *means depart, commanding spirits carrying epidemics to depart or go away.*]

BISARATA

“Go away! May all epidemics be thoroughly pacified!

NIRGACCHATA / NIRGACCHATA / NIRGACCHATA / NIRGACCHATA
[NIRGACCHATA *also means to depart.*]

“The Buddha, the Great God, the God of gods, the Guru of gods has arrived! Therefore, gods together with Indra, gods together with Brahma, gods together with Wangdak and people together with their kings will also come. The kings of the four quarters will also come. Hundreds and thousands of gods, the kings of demigods and hundreds and thousands of demigods will also come. Hundreds and thousands of *jungpo* spirits who have great devotion to the Bhagavan Buddha will also come for the benefit of all sentient beings. These [gods and spirits] may bring about great harm to you. As such:

NIRGACCHATA / NIRGACCHATA / NIRGACCHATA / NIRGACCHATA

“Leave immediately! Among you, may those who harbor hatred be vanquished! May those who possess loving minds and who do not want to harm but rather want to engage in protecting others stay and also assume physical forms!

“The Buddha who has loving kindness towards the world spoke:

SUMU SUMU SUMU SUMU / SUMURU SUMURU SUMURU SUMURU
 SUMURU SUMURU SUMURU SUMURU / MURU MURU MURU MURU
 MURU MURU MURU MURU MURU / MIRI MIRI MIRI MIRI MIRI MIRI
 MIRI MIRI MIRI / MURU MIRI MURU RIMI MURU RIMI MURU RIMI
 MURU RIMI / MURU MIRI MURU RIMI MURU RIMI MURU RIMI /
 MURU MIRI MURU / MIRI MURU MIRI MURU MIRI / MIRU RI TI /
 RI RI RI RI RI RI / RII RII RII RII RII RII / TIMIRI / MIRI MIRI MIRI
 MIRI MIRI MIRI / MIRITI HASIMIRITI MIIRITI MITI SISII SIMII /
 KAMKARA KAMKARATA KAMKARA KAMKARATSA / KAMKARAA
 KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA
 KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA
 KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA
 KAMKARAA / KAMKA ROTIITI KURI SHO KAM KARAA / KAMKARISHI /
 RI RI RI RI RI RI / TIRI TEPHU SVAHA / RIPHU RIPHU RIPHU RIPHU
 RIPHU RIPHU RIPHU RIPHU / NAA THAA NAA NAA THAA THA RIPHU
 RIPHU / NIRGACHHATA RIPHU RIPHU NIRGACHHATA PAALAYATA
 RIPHU RIPHU PAALAYATA

“The Buddha who has a compassionate mind towards the world, who possesses exceptional intent to benefit all beings, who abides in love, who possesses compassion, who abides in joy, and who abides in equanimity will be coming.

KSHIM THREN NIRGACHHATA SVAHA

Taught by the Buddha through his supreme enlightened wisdom and through the power of truth, the foundations of these secret mantras have been established! These verses have been established!

He who has eliminated the miserliness of attachment,
 Who thoroughly eliminated stains,
 And whose mind is without any harmful intent:
 He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

The guide who leads sentient beings
 On the path of liberation
 And who teaches all aspects of the Dharma:
 He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

The teacher on whom all migratory beings rely,
And who, for the sake of all sentient beings,
Attained the state of bliss:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

The Protector who, with a loving mind,
Looks after all these sentient beings eternally
Like His only son:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

Who, for those sentient beings circling in samsara,
Has become an object that can be relied upon,
And who has become an island, savior, and a friend:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

For whom all phenomena have become the object of
direct perception,
Who is pure and does not mislead,
And maintains the purity of his stainless speech:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

The Great Hero whose birth
Brought auspiciousness and meaning,
Accomplishing many purposes:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

Who, when He was born,
The earth together with its forests mightily shook,
Bringing joy and happiness to all beings:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

When he attained the essence of Buddhahood,
Six times the earth mightily shook,
Making the demonic forces unhappy:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

When turning the wheel of Dharma,
His teachings on the noble truths
Were powerful and melodious:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

The stunner who defeated all heretics
 With Dharma teachings
 And conquered all crowds:
 He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

May the Buddha bring you happiness and benefit!
 May the happiness and well-being of Indra together with gods
 And the happiness and well-being of all classes of jungpo spirits
 Eternally be bestowed upon you!

By the merit and power of the buddhas,
 And because of the intents of gods,
 May whatever aspirations you have
 Be fulfilled today!

May you, the two-legged ones, have happiness and well-being!
 May you, the four-legged ones, have happiness and well-being!
 May those of you who are traveling have happiness and well-being!
 May those of you who are returning also have happiness
 and well-being!

May you enjoy happiness and well-being during the day and
 during the night!
 Many you enjoy happiness and well-being at noon!
 May you enjoy happiness and well-being at all times!
 May you not engage in negative actions!

The Buddha has come,
 Completely surrounded by thousands of gods.
 As such, may those with intent to harm depart!
 May those with compassion remain!

By the power of the truth of the words of the Buddha,
 Of pratyekabuddhas, arhats, and those on the path of learning,
 May those who destroy the well-being of this world
 Disappear in this very city!

May all beings and insects,
 All spirits and all of you
 Enjoy only happiness!

May everyone be pacified of all diseases!
May everyone see goodness
And may none engage in negativities!

Those spirits who have come here,
Dwelling on the land and in the space,
May you have loving compassion towards the humans!
May you also practice Dharma day and night!"

Thus the Buddha spoke. The venerable Ananda responded,
"I will do accordingly."

Thus, in accordance with the instructions of the Bhagavan, he went
to the city of Vaishali. Placing his feet on the doorsills of homes, he
uttered these mantras and these verses:

BISARATA / BISARATA / BISARATA / BISARATA

The Buddha who has loving kindness towards the world spoke
thus! It is the noble intent of all the buddhas, the intent of all the
pratyekabuddhas, the intent of all the arhats, and the intent of all those
on the path of training. It is the intent of all hearers, the intent of all
those who abide by truthful speech, the intent of Dharma teachings, the
intent of Brahma kings, the intent of individual Brahmas, the intent of
Shiva of the desire realm, the intent of Indra, the intent of the king of
demigods, the intent of individual demigods, the intent of messengers
of demigods, and the intent of host of spirits!

BISARATA / BISARATA / BISARATA / BISARATA

The Buddha who has loving kindness towards the world spoke thus!

MUNCHATA / MUNCHATA

Go away! May all epidemics be thoroughly pacified!

NIRGACCHATA / NIRGACCHATA / NIRGACCHATA / NIRGACCHATA

The Buddha, the Great God, the God of gods, the Guru of gods
has arrived! Therefore, gods together with Indra, gods together with
Brahma, gods together with Wangdak, and people together with their
kings will also come. The kings of the four quarters will also come.
Hundreds and thousands of gods, the kings of demigods and hundreds
and thousands of demigods will also come. Hundreds and thousands

**[32] RECITE THE SUTRA FOR ALLEVIATING PAIN, THE GREAT NOBLE SUTRA
ON ENTERING THE CITY OF VAISHALI**

of jungpo spirits who have great devotion to the Bhagavan Buddha will also come for the benefit of all sentient beings. These [gods and spirits] may bring about great harm to you. As such:

NIRGACCHATA / NIRGACCHATA / NIRGACCHATA / NIRGACCHATA

Leave immediately! Among you all, may those who harbor hatred be vanquished! May those who possess loving minds and who do not want to harm, but rather want to engage in protecting others stay and also assume physical forms!

The Buddha who has loving kindness towards the world spoke:

SUMU SUMU SUMU SUMU / SUMURU SUMURU SUMURU SUMURU
SUMURU SUMURU SUMURU SUMURU / MURU MURU MURU MURU
MURU MURU MURU MURU MURU / MIRI MIRI MIRI MIRI MIRI MIRI
MIRI MIRI MIRI / MURU MIRI MURU RIMI MURU RIMI MURU RIMI
MURU RIMI / MURU MIRI MURU RIMI MURU RIMI MURU RIMI /
MURU MIRI MURU / MIRI MURU MIRI MURU MIRI / MIRU RI TI /
RI RI RI RI RI RI / RII RII RII RII RII RII / TIMIRI / MIRI MIRI MIRI
MIRI MIRI MIRI / MIRITI HASIMIRITI MIIRITI MITI SISII SIMII /
KAMKARA KAMKARATA KAMKARA KAMKARATSA / KAMKARAA
KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA
KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA
KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA KAMKARAA
KAMKARAA / KAMKA ROTIITI KURI SHO KAM KARAA / KAMKARISHI /
RI RI RI RI RI RI / TIRI TEPHU SVAHA / RIPHU RIPHU RIPHU RIPHU
RIPHU RIPHU RIPHU RIPHU / NAA THAA NAA NAA THAA THA RIPHU
RIPHU / NIRGACHHATA RIPHU RIPHU NIRGACHHATA PAALAYATA
RIPHU RIPHU PAALAYATA

The Buddha who has compassionate mind towards the world, who possesses exceptional intent to benefit all beings, who abides in love, who possesses compassion, who abides in joy, and who abides in equanimity will be coming.

KSHIM THREN NIRGA CHHATA SVAHA

Taught by the Buddha through his supreme enlightened wisdom and through the power of truth, the foundations of these secret mantras have been established! These verses have been established!

He who has eliminated the miserliness of attachment,
Who thoroughly eliminated stains,
And whose mind is without any harmful intent:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

The guide who leads sentient beings
On the path of liberation
And who teaches all aspects of the Dharma:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

The teacher on whom all migratory beings rely,
And who, for the sake of all sentient beings,
Attained the state of bliss:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

The Protector who, with a loving mind,
Looks after all these sentient beings eternally
Like His only son:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

Who, for those sentient beings circling in samsara,
Has become an object that can be relied upon,
And who has become an island, savior, and a friend:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

For whom all phenomena have become the object of
direct perception,
Who is pure and does not mislead,
And maintains the purity of his stainless speech:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

The Great Hero whose birth
Brought auspiciousness and meaning,
Accomplishing many purposes:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

Who, when He was born,
The earth together with its forests mightily shook,
Bringing joy and happiness to all beings:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

[32] RECITE THE SUTRA FOR ALLEVIATING PAIN, *THE GREAT NOBLE SUTRA
ON ENTERING THE CITY OF VAISHALI*

When he attained the essence of Buddhahood,
Six times the earth mightily shook,
Making the demonic forces unhappy:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

When turning the wheel of Dharma,
His teachings on the noble truths
Were powerful and melodious:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

The stunner who defeated all heretics
With Dharma teachings
And conquered all crowds:
He will bring happiness and benefit to you!

May the Buddha bring you happiness and benefit!
May the happiness and well-being of Indra together with gods
And the happiness and well-being of all classes of jungpo spirits
Eternally be bestowed upon you!

By the merit and power of the buddhas,
And because of the intents of gods,
May whatever aspirations you have
Be fulfilled today!
May you, the two-legged ones, have happiness and well-being!
May you, the four-legged ones, have happiness and well-being!
May those of you who are traveling have happiness and well-being!
May those of you who are returning also have happiness
and well-being!

May you enjoy happiness and well-being during the day
and during the night!
Many you enjoy happiness and well-being at noon!
May you enjoy happiness and well-being at all times!
May you not engage in negative actions!

The Buddha has come,
Completely surrounded by thousands of gods.
As such, may those with intent to harm depart!
May those with compassion remain!

By the power of the truth of the words of the Buddha,
Of pratyekabuddhas, arhats, and those on the path of learning,
May those who destroy the well-being of this world
Disappear in this very city!

May all beings and insects,
All spirits and all of you
Enjoy only happiness!
May everyone be pacified of all diseases!
May everyone see goodness
And may none engage in negativities!

Those spirits who have come here,
Dwelling on the land and in the space,
May you have loving compassion towards the humans!
May you also practice Dharma day and night!"

Thus ends *Aryavipulepravesh Mahasutrana: The Great Noble Sutra on Entering the City of Vaishali.*

[33] RECITE *THE HEART SUTRA*

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 29.

See also practice 34.

It is mentioned in a sutra called *Roaring Sound of the Lion* that the merit of merely listening to teachings on emptiness, the perfection of wisdom – the topic of this sutra – is far greater than practicing the other five perfections for ten thousand eons. Even having faith in emptiness can purify the heaviest of negative karmas.

The minute you have even the mere idea of the understanding of dependent arising – that’s the reason things are empty – you are beginning to liberate yourself from all the sufferings of samsara.

HEART OF THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM SUTRA

In the language of India:

PRAJNAPARAMITA HRIDAYA SUTRA

In the language of Tibet:

SHES RAB KYI PHA ROL TU PHYIN PA’I SNYING PO’I MDO

I prostrate to the Arya Triple Gem.

Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavan was dwelling on Mass of Vultures Mountain in Rajagriha together with a great community of monks and a great community of bodhisattvas. At that time, the Bhagavan was absorbed in the concentration on the categories of phenomena called “Profound Perception.” Also, at that time, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara looked upon the very practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and beheld those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.

Then, through the power of Buddha, the venerable Shariputra said this to the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara: “How should any son of the lineage train who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom?”

He said that, and the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara said this to the venerable Sharadvatiputra. “Shariputra, any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom should look upon it like this, correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.

“Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is also not other than emptiness.

“In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness are empty.

“Shariputra, likewise, all phenomena are emptiness; without characteristic; unproduced, unceased; stainless, not without stain; not deficient, not fulfilled.

“Shariputra, therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness.

“No eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind.

“No visual form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no object of touch, and no phenomenon.

“There is no eye element and so on up to and including no mind element and no mental consciousness element.

“There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to and including no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death.

“Similarly, there is no suffering, origination, cessation, and path.

“There is no exalted wisdom, no attainment, and also no nonattainment.

“Shariputra, therefore, because there is no attainment, bodhisattvas rely on and dwell in the perfection of wisdom, the mind without obscuration and without fear. Having completely passed beyond error, they reach the endpoint of nirvana.

“All the buddhas who dwell in the three times also manifestly, completely awaken to unsurpassable, perfect, complete enlightenment in reliance on the perfection of wisdom.

“Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom, the mantra of great knowledge, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra equal to the unequalled, the mantra that thoroughly pacifies all suffering, should be known as truth since it is not false.

“The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is declared:

TADYATHA [OM] GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA

“Shariputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva should train in the profound perfection of wisdom like that.”

Then the Bhagavan arose from that concentration and commended the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara saying: “Well said, well said, son of the lineage, it is like that. It is like that; one should practice the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have indicated; even the tathagatas rejoice.”

The Bhagavan having thus spoken, the venerable Sharadvatiputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara, and those surrounding in their entirety along with the world of gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas were overjoyed and highly praised that spoken by the Bhagavan.

This completes the *Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra*.

RECITE THE VAJRA CUTTER SUTRA

[34]

SEE CHAPTERS 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 29.

See also practice 33.

It is mentioned in a sutra called *Roaring Sound of the Lion* that the merit of merely listening to teachings on emptiness, the perfection of wisdom – the topic of this sutra – is far greater than practicing the other five perfections for ten thousand eons. Even having faith in emptiness can purify the heaviest of negative karmas.

The minute you have even the mere idea of the understanding of dependent arising – that’s the reason things are empty – you are beginning to liberate yourself from all the sufferings of samsara.

THE EXALTED MAHAYANA SUTRA ON THE WISDOM GONE BEYOND CALLED *THE VAJRA*¹ CUTTER

In the language of India:

**ARYA VAJRACCHEDIKA NAMA PRAJANAPARAMITA
MAHAYANA SUTRA²**

In the language of Tibet:

**'PHAGS PA SHES RAB KYI PHA ROL TU PHYIN PA RDO
RJE GCOD PA ZHES BYA BA THEG PA CHEN PO'I MDO**

I prostrate to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavan was dwelling at Shravasti, in the grove of Prince Jeta, in the garden of Anathapiṇḍada,³ together with a great Sangha of bhikshus of 1,250 bhikshus and a great many bodhisattva mahasattvas.

Then, in the morning, having put on the lower and upper Dharma robes and carried the begging bowl, the Bhagavan entered the great city of Shravasti to request alms. Then, having gone to the great city of Shravasti to request alms, the Bhagavan afterwards enjoyed the alms food, and having performed the activity of food,⁴ since he had given

up alms of later food,⁵ put away the begging bowl and upper robe. He washed his feet, sat upon the prepared cushion, and having assumed the cross-legged posture, straightened the body upright and placed mindfulness in front. Then, many bhikshus approached to the place where the Bhagavan was and, having reached there, bowing their heads to the Bhagavan's feet, circumambulated three times and sat to one side.

Also at that time, the venerable Subhuti, joining that very assembly, sat down. Then, the venerable Subhuti rose from the seat, placed the upper robe over one shoulder, set his right knee on the ground, bowed, joining the palms, toward the Bhagavan, and said this to the "Bhagavan, the extent to which the Tathagata Arhat Perfectly Enlightened Buddha has benefited the bodhisattva mahasattvas with highest benefit, the extent to which the Tathagata has entrusted the bodhisattva mahasattvas with highest entrustment – Bhagavan, it is astonishing; Sugata,⁶ it is astonishing. Bhagavan, how should one who has correctly entered the bodhisattva's vehicle abide, how practice, how control the mind?"

That was said, and the Bhagavan said to the venerable Subhuti, "Subhuti, well said, well said. Subhuti, it is so; it is so. The Tathagata has benefited the bodhisattva mahasattvas with the highest benefit. The Tathagata has entrusted the bodhisattva mahasattvas with the highest entrustment. Subhuti, therefore, listen and properly retain it in mind, and I will explain to you how one who has correctly entered the bodhisattva's vehicle should abide, how practice, how control the mind."

Having replied, "Bhagavan, so be it," the venerable Subhuti listened in accordance with the Bhagavan, and the Bhagavan said this: "Subhuti, here, one who has correctly entered the bodhisattva's vehicle should generate the mind [of enlightenment] thinking this: 'As many as are included in the category of sentient being – born from egg, born from the womb, born from heat and moisture, born miraculously; with form, without form, with discrimination, without discrimination, without discrimination but not without [subtle] discrimination – the realm of sentient beings, as many as are designated by imputation as sentient beings, all those I shall cause to pass completely beyond sorrow into the realm of nirvana without remainder of the aggregates. Although limitless sentient beings have thus been caused to pass completely

beyond sorrow, no sentient being whatsoever has been caused to pass completely beyond sorrow.’

“Why is that? Subhuti, because if a bodhisattva engages in discriminating a sentient being, he is not to be called a ‘bodhisattva.’ Why is that? Subhuti, if anyone engages in discriminating a sentient being, or engages in discriminating a living being, or engages in discriminating a person, they are not to be called a ‘bodhisattva.’

“Further, Subhuti, a bodhisattva gives a gift without abiding in a thing; gives a gift without abiding in any phenomenon whatsoever. A gift should be given not abiding in visual form; a gift should be given not abiding in sound, smell, taste, tactility, or phenomenon either. Subhuti, without abiding in discriminating anything whatsoever as any sign, thus does a bodhisattva give a gift. Why is that? Subhuti, because the heap of merit of that bodhisattva who gives a gift without abiding, Subhuti, is not easy to take the measure of.

“Subhuti, what do you think about this? Do you think it is easy to take the measure of space in the east?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, it is not so.”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, similarly, do you think it is easy to take the measure of space in the south, west, north, above, below, the intermediate directions, and the ten directions?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, it is not so.”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, similarly, the heap of merit of that bodhisattva who gives a gift without abiding is also not easy to take the measure of.

“Subhuti, what do you think about this? Is one viewed as the Tathagata due to the perfect marks?”⁷

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, it is not so; one is not viewed as the Tathagata due to the perfect marks. Why is that? Because, that itself which the Tathagata called perfect marks are not perfect marks.”

He replied thus, and the Bhagavan said this to the venerable Subhuti: “Subhuti, to the degree there are perfect marks, to that degree there is deception. To the degree there are no perfect marks,⁸ to that degree there is no deception. Thus, view the Tathagata as marks and no marks.”⁹

He said that and the venerable Subhuti replied to the Bhagavan, “Bhagavan, in the future period, at the end of the five hundred,¹⁰ when the holy Dharma will totally perish, will any sentient beings produce

correct discrimination upon the words of sutras¹¹ such as this¹² being explained?”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, do not say what you have said, ‘...in the future period, at the end of the five hundred, when the holy Dharma will totally perish, will any sentient beings produce correct discrimination upon the words of sutras such as this being explained...’¹³ Moreover, Subhuti, in the future period, at the end of the five hundred, when the holy Dharma will totally perish, there will be bodhisattva mahasattvas, endowed with morality, endowed with qualities, endowed with wisdom. Subhuti, those bodhisattva mahasattvas moreover will not have made homage to just a single buddha; they will not have produced roots of virtue to just a single buddha. Subhuti, there will be bodhisattva mahasattvas who have made homage to many hundred thousands of buddhas and produced roots of virtue to many hundred thousands of buddhas.

“Subhuti, those who will acquire merely a single mind of faith upon the words of such sutras as this being explained, Subhuti, the Tathagata knows. Subhuti, they are seen by the Tathagata; Subhuti, all those sentient beings will produce and perfectly collect an unfathomable heap of merit. Why is that? Subhuti, because those bodhisattva mahasattvas will not engage in discriminating a self and will not discriminate a sentient being, will not discriminate a living being, will not engage in discriminating a person.

“Subhuti, those bodhisattva mahasattvas will not engage in discriminating phenomena nor discriminating non-phenomena; nor will they engage in discrimination or non-discrimination.¹⁴ Why is that? Subhuti, because if those bodhisattva mahasattvas engage in discriminating phenomena, that itself would be of them¹⁵ grasping a self and grasping a sentient being, grasping a living being, grasping a person. Because even if they engage in discriminating phenomena as non-existent,¹⁶ that would be of them grasping a self and grasping a sentient being, grasping a living being, grasping a person.

“Why is that? Further, Subhuti, because a bodhisattva should not wrongly grasp phenomena, nor grasp non-phenomena.”

Therefore, thinking of that, the Tathagata said, “If, by those who know this Dharma treatise as like a boat, even dharmas should be given up, what need is there to mention non-dharmas?”¹⁷

Further, the Bhagavan said to the venerable Subhuti, “Subhuti, what

do you think about this? Does that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathagata, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, exist whatsoever? Has any Dharma been taught by the Tathagata?"¹⁸

He said that, and the venerable Subhuti replied to the Bhagavan, "Bhagavan, as I understand this meaning that was taught by the Bhagavan, that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathagata, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, does not exist whatsoever. That dharma that was taught by the Tathagata does not exist whatsoever. Why is that? Because any dharma manifestly and completely realized or taught by the Tathagata is not to be grasped, not to be expressed; it is not dharma nor is it non-dharma. Why is that? Because *arya* beings are differentiated¹⁹ by the uncompounded."²⁰

The Bhagavan said to the venerable Subhuti, "Subhuti, what do you think about this? If some son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage, completely filling this billionfold world system²¹ with the seven types of precious things, were to give gifts,²² do you think that son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage would produce an immense heap of merit on that basis?"

Subhuti replied, "Bhagavan, immense. Sugata, immense. That son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage would produce an immense heap of merit on that basis. Why is that? Bhagavan, because that very heap of merit is not a heap; therefore, the Tathagata says, 'Heap of merit, heap of merit.'"

The Bhagavan said, "Subhuti, compared to any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who, completely filling this billionfold world system with the seven types of precious things, were to give gifts, if someone, having taken²³ even as little as one stanza of four lines from this discourse of Dharma, also were to explain and correctly and thoroughly teach it to others, on that basis, the heap of merit produced would be much greater, incalculable, unfathomable. Why is that? Subhuti, because the unsurpassed perfectly completed enlightenment of the Tathagata arhat perfectly completed buddhas arises from it; the buddha Bhagavan s also are produced from it. Why is that? Subhuti, because the buddha dharmas called 'buddha dharmas,' are those buddha dharmas taught by the Tathagata as non-existent; therefore, they are called 'buddha dharmas.'

"Subhuti, what do you think about this? Does the stream-enterer

think, 'I have attained the result of stream-enterer?')

Subhuti replied, "Bhagavan, it is not so. Why is that? Bhagavan, because one does not enter into anything whatsoever; therefore, one is called 'stream-enterer.' One has not entered into form, nor entered into sound, nor into smell, nor into taste, nor into tactility, nor entered into a phenomenon;²⁴ therefore, one is called 'stream-enterer.' Bhagavan, if that stream-enterer were to think 'I have attained the result of stream-enterer,' that itself would be a grasping of that as a self,²⁵ grasping as a sentient being, grasping as a living being, grasping as a person."

The Bhagavan said, "Subhuti, what do you think about this? Does the once-returned think, 'I have attained the result of once-returned?'"

Subhuti replied, "Bhagavan, it is not so. Why is that? Because the phenomenon of entry into the state of the once-returned does not exist whatsoever. Therefore, one says, 'once-returned.'"²⁶

The Bhagavan said, "Subhuti, what do you think about this? Does the non-returned think, 'I have attained the result of non-returned?'"

Subhuti replied, "Bhagavan, it is not so. Why is that? Because the phenomenon of entry into the state of the non-returned does not exist whatsoever. Therefore, one says, 'non-returned.'"²⁷

The Bhagavan said, "Subhuti, what do you think about this? Does the arhat think, 'I have attained the result of arhatship?'"

Subhuti replied, "Bhagavan, it is not so. Why is that? Because the phenomenon called 'arhat' does not exist whatsoever. Bhagavan, if the arhat were to think, 'I have attained the result of arhatship,' that itself would be a grasping of that as a self, grasping as a sentient being, grasping as a living being, grasping as a person.

"Bhagavan, I was declared by the Tathagata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha as the foremost of those who abide without afflictions.²⁸ Bhagavan, I am an arhat, free of attachment; but, Bhagavan, I do not think, 'I am an arhat.' Bhagavan, if I were to think, 'I have attained arhatship,' the Tathagata would not have made the prediction about me saying, 'The son of the lineage, Subhuti, is the foremost of those who abide without afflictions. Since not abiding in anything whatsoever, he abides without affliction, he abides without affliction.'"

The Bhagavan said, "Subhuti, what do you think about this? Does that dharma that was received by the Tathagata from the Tathagata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha Dipankara exist whatsoever?"

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, it is not so. That dharma that was received by the Tathagata from the Tathagata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha Dipankara does not exist whatsoever.”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, if some bodhisattva were to say, ‘I shall actualize arranged fields,’²⁹ they would speak untruly. Why is that? Subhuti, because arranged fields called ‘arranged fields,’ those arrangements are taught by the Tathagata as non-existent; therefore, they are called ‘arranged fields.’ Subhuti, therefore, the bodhisattva mahasattva thus should generate the mind without abiding, should generate the mind not abiding in anything. They should generate the mind not abiding in form, should generate the mind not abiding in sound, smell, taste, tactility, or phenomenon.

“Subhuti, it is like this: If, for example, the body of a being were to become thus, were to become like this, as big as Sumeru, the king of mountains, Subhuti, what do you think about this? Would that body³⁰ be big?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, that body would be big. Sugata, that body would be big. Why is that? Because it is taught by the Tathagata as not being a thing; therefore, it is called a ‘body.’ Since it is taught by the Tathagata as not being a thing; therefore, it is called a ‘big body.’”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, what do you think about this? If there were also just as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, would their grains of sand be many?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, if those very Ganges Rivers were many, there is no need to mention their grains of sand.”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, you should appreciate; you should understand.³¹ If some man or woman, completely filling with the seven kinds of precious things that many world systems as there are grains of sand of those rivers Ganges,³² were to offer that to the Tathagata arhat perfectly completed buddhas, Subhuti, what do you think about this? Would that man or woman produce much merit on that basis?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, much. Sugata, much. That man or woman would produce much merit on that basis.”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, compared to someone who, completely filling that many world systems with the seven types of precious things, were to give gifts to the Tathagata arhat perfectly completed buddhas, if someone, having taken even as little as a stanza of four lines from this discourse of Dharma, were to explain it

and correctly and thoroughly teach it also to others, on that basis the merit that itself would produce would be much greater, incalculable, unfathomable.

“Furthermore, Subhuti, if, at whatever place on earth even a stanza of four lines from this discourse on Dharma is recited or taught, that place on earth is a real shrine³³ of the world with devas, humans, and asuras, what need to mention that whoever takes up this discourse of Dharma, memorizes, reads, understands, and properly takes to mind³⁴ will be most astonishing. At that place on earth [where] the Teacher resides; other levels of gurus also abide.”³⁵

He said that and the venerable Subhuti replied to the Bhagavan, “Bhagavan, what is the name of this discourse of Dharma? How should it be remembered?”

He said that and the Bhagavan replied to the venerable Subhuti, “Subhuti, the name of this Dharma discourse is the ‘wisdom gone beyond’; it should be remembered like that. Why is that? Subhuti, because the very same wisdom gone beyond that is taught by the Tathagata is not gone beyond; therefore, it is called ‘wisdom gone beyond.’

“Subhuti, what do you think about this? Does the dharma that is taught by the Tathagata exist whatsoever?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, the dharma that is taught by the Tathagata does not exist whatsoever.”³⁶

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, what do think about this? Are the quantities of particles of earth that exist in a billionfold world system many?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, the particles of earth are many. Sugata, they are many. Why is that? Bhagavan, because that which is a particle of earth was taught by the Tathagata as not being a particle; therefore, it is called ‘particle of earth.’ That which is a world system was taught by the Tathagata as not being a world system; therefore, it is called a ‘world system.’”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, what do you think about this? Is one to be viewed as the Tathagata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha due to those thirty-two marks of a great being?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, it is not so. Why is that? Bhagavan, because those thirty-two marks of a great being that are taught by the Tathagata are taught by the Tathagata as no marks; therefore, they are

called ‘thirty-two marks of the Tathagata.’”³⁷

The Bhagavan said, “Further, Subhuti, compared with some man or woman completely giving up bodies numbering the grains of sand of the river Ganges, if someone, taking even as little as a stanza of four lines from this discourse of Dharma, also were to teach it to others,³⁸ they would produce on that basis many greater merits, incalculable, unfathomable.”

Thereupon, the venerable Subhuti, due to the impact of the Dharma, shed tears. Having wiped away the tears, he replied to the Bhagavan, “Bhagavan, this discourse on Dharma taught thus by the Tathagata,³⁹ Bhagavan, is astonishing. Sugata, it is astonishing. Bhagavan, since my production of exalted wisdom, I have never before heard this discourse on Dharma. Bhagavan, those sentient beings who will produce correct discrimination upon this sutra being explained will be most astonishing. Why is that? Bhagavan, because that which is correct discrimination is not discrimination; therefore, correct discrimination was taught by the Tathagata saying ‘correct discrimination.’ Bhagavan, upon this Dharma discourse being explained, that I imagine and appreciate is not astonishing⁴⁰ to me. Bhagavan, in the final time, in the final age, at the end of the five hundred, those sentient beings who take up this Dharma discourse, memorize, read, and understand it will be most astonishing. Furthermore, Bhagavan, they will not engage in discriminating a self; will not engage in discriminating a sentient being, discriminating a living being, discriminating a person. Why is that? Bhagavan, because that itself which is discrimination as a self, discrimination as a sentient being, discrimination as a living being, and discrimination as a person is not discrimination. Why is that? Because the buddha Bhagavans are free of all discrimination.”

He said that and the Bhagavan replied to the venerable Subhuti, “Subhuti, it is so; it is so. Upon this sutra being explained, those sentient beings who are unafraid, unterrified, and will not become terrified will be most astonishing. Why is that? Subhuti, because this highest wisdom gone beyond, taught by the Tathagata, the highest wisdom gone beyond that is taught by the Tathagata, was also taught by unfathomable buddha Bhagavans – therefore, it is called ‘highest wisdom gone beyond.’

“Further, Subhuti, that itself which is the patience gone beyond of

the Tathagata has not gone beyond. Why is that? Subhuti, because when the king of Kaliyuga⁴¹ cut off my limbs and appendages, at that time there did not arise in me discrimination as a self, discrimination as a sentient being, discrimination as a living being, nor discrimination as a person, and in me there was no discrimination whatsoever, yet there was also no non-discrimination. Why is that? Subhuti, because, if at that time there had arisen in me discrimination as a self, at that time there would also have arisen discrimination of malice; if there had arisen discrimination as a sentient being, discrimination as a living being, discrimination as a person, at that time there would also have arisen discrimination of malice.

“Subhuti, I know with clairvoyance that in the past period, during five hundred lifetimes, I was the rishi⁴² called ‘Preacher of Patience’; even then there did not arise in me the discrimination as a self; there did not arise the discrimination as a sentient being, discrimination as a living being, discrimination as a person. Subhuti, therefore, the bodhisattva mahasattva, completely abandoning all discrimination, should generate the mind for unsurpassed perfectly complete enlightenment. One should generate the mind not abiding in form. One should generate the mind not abiding in sound, smell, taste, tactility, or phenomena. One should generate the mind not abiding in non-phenomena either. One should generate the mind not abiding in anything whatsoever. Why is that? Because that itself which is abiding does not abide. Therefore, the Tathagata taught, ‘The bodhisattva should give gifts not abiding.’

“Further, Subhuti, the bodhisattva should thus totally give away gifts for the welfare of all sentient beings. However, that itself which is discrimination as a sentient being is non-discrimination. Those themselves who were taught by the Tathagata saying ‘all sentient beings’ also do not exist. Why is that? Subhuti, because the Tathagata teaches reality, teaches truth, teaches what is; the Tathagata teaches what is without error.

“Further, Subhuti, the dharma that is manifestly and completely realized or shown by the Tathagata has neither truth nor falsity. Subhuti, it is like this, for example: if a man with eyes has entered darkness, he does not see anything whatsoever; likewise should one view the bodhisattva who totally gives up a gift by falling into anything.

“Subhuti, it is like this, for example: upon dawn and the sun rising, a man with eyes sees various kinds of forms; likewise should one view the

bodhisattva who totally gives up a gift by not falling into anything.

“Further, Subhuti, those sons of the lineage or daughters of the lineage who take up this Dharma discourse, memorize, read, understand, and correctly and thoroughly teach it to others in detail are known by the Tathagata, they are seen by the Tathagata. All those sentient beings will produce an unfathomable heap of merit.

“Further, Subhuti, compared to some man or woman, at the time of dawn, totally giving up bodies numbering the grains of sand of the river Ganges – also totally giving up bodies numbering the grains of sand of the river Ganges at the time of midday and evening, in such number totally giving up bodies for many hundred thousands of ten million, hundred billion eons⁴³ – if someone, having heard this Dharma discourse, would not reject it, if they themselves would produce much greater merit on that basis, incalculable, unfathomable, what need to mention someone who, having written it in letters, takes it up, memorizes, reads, understands, and correctly and thoroughly teaches it to others in detail?

“Further, Subhuti, this Dharma discourse is unimaginable and incomparable.⁴⁴ This Dharma discourse was taught by the Tathagata for the benefit of sentient beings who have correctly entered into the supreme vehicle, the welfare of sentient beings who have correctly entered into the best vehicle. Those who take up this Dharma discourse, memorize, read, understand, and correctly and thoroughly teach it to others in detail are known by the Tathagata; they are seen by the Tathagata. All those sentient beings will be endowed with an unfathomable heap of merit. Being endowed with an unimaginable heap of merit, incomparable, immeasurable, and limitless, all those sentient beings will hold my enlightenment on the shoulder. Why is that? Subhuti, this Dharma discourse is unable to be heard by those who appreciate the inferior, by those viewing a self, by those viewing a sentient being, by those viewing a living being; those viewing a person are unable to hear, to take up, to memorize, to read, and to understand because that cannot be.

“Further, Subhuti, at whatever place on earth this sutra is taught, that place on earth will become worthy to be paid homage by the world with devas, humans, and asuras. That place on earth will become worthy as an object of prostration and worthy as an object of circumambulation. That place on earth will become like a shrine.⁴⁵

“Subhuti, whatever son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage takes up the words of a sutra like this, memorizes, reads, and understands, they will be tormented; will be intensely tormented.⁴⁶ Why is that? Subhuti, because whatever non-virtuous actions of former lifetimes that were committed by those sentient beings that would bring rebirth in the lower realms, due to torment in this very life, those non-virtuous actions of former lifetimes will be purified, and they will also attain the enlightenment of a buddha.

“Subhuti, I know with clairvoyance that in the past period, in even more countless of countless eons, much beyond even beyond⁴⁷ the Tathagata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha Dipankara, there were eighty-four hundred thousands of ten million, hundred billion buddhas whom I pleased, and having pleased, did not upset. Subhuti, from whatever I did, having pleased and not having upset those buddha Bhagavan s and in the future period, at the end of the five hundred, from someone taking up this sutra, memorizing, reading, and understanding, Subhuti, compared to this heap of merit, the former heap of merit does not approach⁴⁸ even a hundredth part, a thousandth part, a hundred-thousandth part; does not withstand enumeration, measure, calculation, similarity, equivalence, or comparison.

“Subhuti, at that time, the sons of the lineage or daughters of the lineage will receive a quantity of heap of merit that, if I were to express the heap of merit of those sons of the lineage or daughters of the lineage, sentient beings would go mad, would be disturbed.

“Further, Subhuti, this Dharma discourse being unimaginable, its maturation indeed should also be known as unimaginable.”

Then, the venerable Subhuti replied to the Bhagavan, “Bhagavan, how should one who has correctly entered the bodhisattva’s vehicle abide, how practice, how control the mind?”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, here, one who has correctly entered the bodhisattva’s vehicle should generate the mind thinking this: ‘I shall cause all sentient beings to pass completely beyond sorrow into the realm of nirvana without remainder of the aggregates. Although sentient beings were caused to pass completely beyond sorrow like that, no sentient being whatsoever was caused to pass beyond sorrow.’ Why is that? Subhuti, because if a bodhisattva engages in discriminating a sentient being, he is not to be called a ‘bodhisattva.’ Also, if he engages in discriminating a person, he is not to be called a ‘bodhisattva.’

Why is that? Subhuti, because the dharma called ‘one who has correctly entered the bodhisattva’s vehicle’ does not exist whatsoever.

“Subhuti, what do you think about this? Does that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathagata from the Tathagata Dipankara, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, exist whatsoever?”

He said that and the venerable Subhuti replied to the Bhagavan, “Bhagavan, that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathagata from the Tathagata Dipankara, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, does not exist whatsoever.”

He said that and the Bhagavan replied to the venerable Subhuti, “Subhuti, it is so. It is so, that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathagata from the Tathagata Dipankara, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, does not exist whatsoever. Subhuti, if that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathagata were to exist at all, the Tathagata Dipankara would not have made the prediction to me, saying, ‘Young brahmin, in a future period you will become the Tathagata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha called Shakyamuni.’ Subhuti, thus, since that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathagata, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, does not exist whatsoever, therefore, the Tathagata Dipankara made the prediction to me, saying, ‘Young brahmin, in a future period you will become the Tathagata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha called Shakyamuni.’ Why is that? Because, Subhuti, ‘Tathagata’ is an epithet of the suchness of reality.⁴⁹

“Subhuti, if someone were to say, ‘The Tathagata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha manifestly and completely realized unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment,’ they would speak wrongly. Why is that? Subhuti, because that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathagata, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, does not exist whatsoever. Subhuti, that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized⁵⁰ by the Tathagata has neither truth nor falsity. Therefore, ‘all dharmas are buddha dharmas’ was taught by the Tathagata. Subhuti, ‘all dharmas,’ all those are non-dharmas. Therefore, it is said that ‘all dharmas are buddha dharmas.’ Subhuti, it is like this, for example: like a human endowed with a body⁵¹ and the body became large.”

The venerable Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, that taught by the

Tathagata, 'a human endowed with a body and a large body,' is taught by the Tathagata as not being a body. Therefore, 'endowed with a body and a large body' is said."

The Bhagavan said, "Subhuti, it is so; if some bodhisattva were to say, 'I shall cause sentient beings to completely pass beyond sorrow,' he should not be called 'bodhisattva.' Why is that? Subhuti, does the dharma that is called 'bodhisattva' exist whatsoever?"

Subhuti replied, "Bhagavan, it does not."

The Bhagavan said, "Subhuti, therefore, it was taught by the Tathagata that 'all dharmas are without a sentient being, without a living being, without a person.'

"Subhuti, if some bodhisattva were to say, 'I shall actualize arranged fields,' he too should be expressed similarly.⁵² Why is that? Subhuti, because the arranged fields called 'arranged fields' are those taught by the Tathagata as non-arranged. Therefore, they are called 'arranged fields.' Subhuti, whatever bodhisattva appreciates that dharmas are selfless, saying 'dharmas are selfless,' he is expressed by the Tathagata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha as a bodhisattva called a 'bodhisattva.'⁵³

"Subhuti, What do you think about this? Does the Tathagata possess the flesh eye?"

Subhuti replied, "Bhagavan, it is so; the Tathagata possesses the flesh eye."

The Bhagavan said, "Subhuti, what do you think about this? Does the Tathagata possess the divine eye?"

Subhuti replied, "Bhagavan, it is so; the Tathagata possesses the divine eye."

The Bhagavan said, "Subhuti, what do you think about this? Does the Tathagata possess the wisdom eye?"

Subhuti replied, "Bhagavan, it is so; the Tathagata possesses the wisdom eye."

The Bhagavan said, "Subhuti, what do you think about this? Does the Tathagata possess the dharma eye?"

Subhuti replied, "Bhagavan, it is so; the Tathagata possesses the dharma eye."

The Bhagavan said, "Subhuti, what do you think about this? Does the Tathagata possess the buddha eye?"

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, it is so; the Tathagata possesses the buddha eye.”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, what do you think about this? If, there being also just as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, there were just as many world systems as there are grains of sand of those, would those world systems be many?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, it is so; those world systems would be many.”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, as many sentient beings as exist in those world systems, I totally know their continua of consciousness of different thoughts.⁵⁴ Why is that? Subhuti, because a so-called ‘continuum of consciousness’ is that taught by the Tathagata as a non-continuum. Therefore, it is called a ‘continuum of consciousness.’ Why is that? Subhuti, because past consciousness does not exist as an observable, nor does future consciousness exist as an observable, nor does present consciousness exist as an observable.

“Subhuti, what do you think about this? If someone, completely filling this billionfold world system with the seven types of precious things, were to give gifts, do you think that son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage would produce an enormous heap of merit on that basis?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, enormous. Sugata, enormous.”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, it is so. It is so; that son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage would produce an enormous heap of merit on that basis. Subhuti, if a heap of merit were a heap of merit, the Tathagata would not have taught a heap of merit called a ‘heap of merit.’

“Subhuti, what do you think about this? Should one be viewed as the Tathagata due to total achievement of the form body?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, it is not so; one should not be viewed as the Tathagata due to total achievement of the form body. Why is that? Bhagavan, because ‘total achievement of the form body’ is that taught by the Tathagata as not being total achievement; therefore, it is called ‘total achievement of the form body.’”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, what do you think about this? Is one to be viewed as the Tathagata due to perfect marks?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, it is not so; one is not to be viewed as the Tathagata due to perfect marks. Why is that? Because that

which was taught by the Tathagata as perfect marks was taught by the Tathagata as not being perfect marks; therefore, they are called ‘perfect marks.’”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, what do you think about this? If it is thought that the Tathagata considers, ‘the dharma is demonstrated by me,’ Subhuti, do not view it like that, because the dharma that is demonstrated by the Tathagata does not exist whatsoever. Subhuti, if someone were to say ‘the dharma is demonstrated by the Tathagata,’ Subhuti, he would deprecate me since nonexistent and wrongly seized. Why is that? Subhuti, because that demonstrated dharma called ‘demonstrated dharma,’ which is referred to saying ‘demonstrated dharma,’ does not exist whatsoever.”

Then, the venerable Subhuti said to the Bhagavan, “Bhagavan, in the future period, will there be any sentient beings who, having heard this demonstration⁵⁵ of such a dharma as this, will clearly believe?”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, they are not sentient beings nor non-sentient beings. Why is that? Subhuti, so-called ‘sentient beings,’ because they were taught by the Tathagata as non-sentient beings, therefore are called ‘sentient beings.’

“Subhuti, what do you think about this? Does that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathagata, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, exist whatsoever?”

The venerable Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathagata, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, does not exist whatsoever.”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, it is so; it is so. For it,⁵⁶ even the least dharma does not exist and is not observed;⁵⁷ therefore, it is called ‘unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment.’

“Further, Subhuti, that dharma is equivalent since, for it, inequivalence⁵⁸ does not exist whatsoever; therefore, it is called ‘unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment.’ That unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment – equivalent as selfless, without sentient being, without living being, without person – is manifestly and completely realized through all virtuous dharmas. Subhuti, virtuous dharmas called ‘virtuous dharmas,’ they, taught by the Tathagata as just non-dharmas, are therefore called ‘virtuous dharmas.’

“Further, Subhuti, compared to any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage collecting a heap of the seven types of precious things about

equaling whatever Sumeru, king of mountains, exist in a billion world systems, and giving gifts, if someone, having taken up even as little as a stanza of four lines from this wisdom gone beyond, were to teach it to others, Subhuti, compared to this heap of merit, the former heap of merit having not approached even a hundredth part, does not withstand comparison.

“Subhuti, what do you think about this? If it is thought that the Tathagata considers, ‘Sentient beings are liberated by me,’ Subhuti, do not view it like that. Why is that? Subhuti, because those sentient beings who are liberated by the Tathagata do not exist whatsoever. Subhuti, if some sentient being were to be liberated by the Tathagata, that itself would be, of the Tathagata, grasping a self, grasping a sentient being, grasping a living being, grasping a person. Subhuti, so-called ‘grasping a self,’ that is taught by the Tathagata as non-grasping, yet that is grasped by childish ordinary beings. Subhuti, so-called ‘childish ordinary beings,’ they were taught by the Tathagata as just non-beings; therefore, they are called ‘childish ordinary beings.’

“Subhuti, what do you think about this? Is one to be viewed as the Tathagata due to perfect marks?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, it is not so; one is not viewed as the Tathagata due to perfect marks.”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, it is so; it is so. One is not viewed as the Tathagata due to perfect marks. Subhuti, if one were viewed as the Tathagata due to perfect marks, even a chakravartin king would be the Tathagata; therefore, one is not viewed as the Tathagata due to perfect marks.”

Then, the venerable Subhuti said to the Bhagavan, “Bhagavan, as I understand the meaning of what the Bhagavan has said, one is not viewed as the Tathagata due to perfect marks.”

Then, these verses were spoken by the Bhagavan at that time:

“Whoever sees me as form, whoever knows me as sound, has wrongly engaged by abandoning,⁵⁹ those beings do not see me.

The buddhas are dharmata⁶⁰ viewed; the guides are the dharmakaya.

Since dharmata is not to be known, it is unable to be known.”⁶¹

“Subhuti, what do you think about this? If one grasps that ‘the Tathagata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha is due to perfect marks,’ Subhuti, you should not view so for, Subhuti, the Tathagata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha does not manifestly and completely realize

unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment due to perfect marks.

“Subhuti, if one grasps that ‘some dharma has been designated as destroyed or annihilated⁶² by those who have correctly entered the bodhisattva’s vehicle,’ Subhuti, it should not be viewed so; those who have correctly entered the bodhisattva’s vehicle have not designated any dharma whatsoever as destroyed or annihilated.

“Further, Subhuti, compared to any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who, completely filling with the seven kinds of precious things as many world systems as there are grains of sand of the rivers Ganges, were to give gifts, if any bodhisattva attained forbearance that dharmas are selfless and unproduced,⁶³ on that basis the heap of merit they themselves would produce would be much greater. Further, Subhuti, a heap of merit should not be acquired by the bodhisattva.”

The venerable Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, should not a heap of merit be acquired by the bodhisattva?”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, acquire, not wrongly grasp;⁶⁴ therefore, it is called ‘acquire.’

“Subhuti, if someone says, ‘The Tathagata goes or comes or stands or sits or lies down,’ he does not understand the meaning explained by me. Why is that? Subhuti, because ‘the Tathagata’ (‘the One Gone Thus’) does not go anywhere nor has come from anywhere; therefore, one says, ‘the Tathagata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha.’

“Further, Subhuti, if some son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage were to render as many atoms of earth as exist in a billionfold world system, like this for example, into powder like a collection of subtlest atoms, Subhuti, what do you think about this? Would that collection of subtlest atoms be many?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, it is so. That collection of subtlest atoms would be many. Why is that? Bhagavan, because if there were a collection, the Bhagavan would not have said ‘collection of subtlest atoms.’ Why is that? Because that ‘collection of subtlest atoms’ that was taught by the Bhagavan was taught by the Tathagata as no collection; therefore, one says ‘collection of subtlest atoms.’ That ‘billionfold world system’ that was taught by the Tathagata was taught by the Tathagata as no system; therefore, one says ‘billionfold world system.’ Why is that? Bhagavan, because if there were to be a world system, that itself would be grasping a solid thing. That taught by the Tathagata as grasping a solid thing was taught by the Tathagata as no grasping; therefore, one

says ‘grasping a solid thing.’”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, grasping a solid thing is itself a convention; that dharma does not exist as expressed, yet it is grasped by ordinary childish beings. Subhuti, if someone were to say, ‘Viewing as a self was taught by the Tathagata and viewing as a sentient being, viewing as a living being, viewing as a person was taught by the Tathagata,’ Subhuti, would that be spoken by right speech?”

Subhuti replied, “Bhagavan, it would not. Sugata, it would not. Why is that? Bhagavan, because that which was taught by the Tathagata as viewing as a self, was taught by the Tathagata as no viewing; therefore, one says, ‘viewing as a self.’”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhuti, those who have correctly entered the bodhisattva’s vehicle should know, should view, should appreciate all dharmas like this; they should appreciate⁶⁵ like this, not abiding whatsoever in any discrimination as a dharma. Why is that? Subhuti, because discrimination as a dharma, called ‘discrimination as a dharma,’ is taught by the Tathagata as non-discrimination; therefore, one says ‘discrimination as a dharma.’

“Further, Subhuti, compared to any bodhisattva mahasattva who, completely filling unfathomable and incalculable world systems with the seven kinds of precious things, were to give gifts, if any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who, having taken⁶⁶ as little as a stanza of four lines from this perfection of wisdom, were to memorize or read or understand or correctly and thoroughly teach it to others in detail, on that basis the merit he himself would produce would be more, incalculable, unfathomable.

“How should one correctly and thoroughly teach? Just how one would not correctly and thoroughly teach; therefore, one says, ‘correctly and thoroughly teach.’

“As a star, a visual aberration, a lamp, an illusion, dew, a bubble, a dream, lightning, and a cloud – view all the compounded like that.”

That having been said by the Bhagavan, the elder⁶⁷ Subhuti, those bodhisattvas,⁶⁸ the fourfold disciples – bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas and upasikas⁶⁹ – and the world with devas, humans, asuras, and gandharvas, overjoyed, highly praised that taught by the Bhagavan.

**The Exalted Mahayana Sutra on the Wisdom Gone Beyond called
The Vajra Cutter is concluded.**

[35] PLAY RECORDINGS OR VIDEOS OF TEACHINGS

SEE CHAPTERS 15 AND 18.

See also other practices related to the guru: 1, 10, 18, 43, 47, 60, 72, and 85.

It is good for your loved one to receive the blessings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's holy speech, so play recordings or have them watch videos of his teachings. Of course, you can play recordings of the teachings of other lamas as well, especially the person's own lama.

Hearing the subject matter, especially bodhichitta, reminds them to practice, inspires their mind, arouses devotion and, of course, helps them avoid being born in the lower realms.

RECITE THE MEDICINE BUDDHA PRACTICE

[36]

SEE CHAPTERS 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, AND 29.

See also other practices related to the Medicine Buddha: 14, 22, 59, and 78.

The main practice to do before, during, and after death is Medicine Buddha. As I mentioned in practice 14 in chapter 15, there is an entire sutra – *The Medicine Buddha Sutra* – that describes the unbelievable benefits of this practice, and that the Medicine Buddha himself made a promise that whoever chants his name or mantra will have all their prayers and wishes fulfilled.

I translated this short version of the practice many years ago in which you visualize the seven Medicine Buddhas – the main Medicine Buddha and six others – above your head. It's very powerful, and unique, with the prayer of the seven limbs, a mandala offering, etc., then a strong requesting prayer to each buddha, recited seven times.

Alternatively, a simpler way to practice it – which is first, below – is to visualize just the main Medicine Buddha above your head and as you recite the mantra you imagine nectar flowing from the Medicine Buddha, purifying you.

When you are guiding your loved one in the meditation, you would recite the practices as written.

When you and your friends are doing the practices, either before or after the death of your loved one, you would visualize the Medicine Buddhas above their head, purifying them, etc., and change the words accordingly.

At the end dedicate for their future rebirth: either a pure land or that they meet the Dharma, meet the perfectly qualified Mahayana guru, practice, and become enlightened as quickly as possible.

THE ACTUAL PRACTICES

(1) SIMPLE VERSION, TRANSLATED BY THE AUTHOR

Visualize Guru Medicine Buddha above the crown of your head and make the following prayer of request seven times.

The fully realized destroyer of all defilements,
Fully completed buddha having fully realized the absolute truth
of all phenomena,
Guru Medicine Buddha, King of Lapis Light,
To you I prostrate, go for refuge, and make offerings.
May your vow to benefit all sentient beings now ripen
for myself and others.

Then recite the Medicine Buddha mantra:

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

Common pronunciation

TAYATA OM BHEKANDZE BHEKANDZE MAHA BHEKANDZE
[BHEKANDZE] RADZA SAMUDGATE SOHA

VISUALIZATION DURING MANTRA RECITATION

As you recite the mantra, visualize purifying rays of light pouring down from the Guru Medicine Buddha's heart and holy body, entering into you and eliminating all your negative karma and their causes, and your mental obscurations.

Imagine your body is completely filled with light and becomes clean-clear like crystal. Then the rays radiate out in all directions, purifying the sicknesses and delusions of all mother sentient beings.

VISUALIZATION AFTER MANTRA RECITATION

Guru Medicine Buddha melts into light and dissolves into your heart. Your mind becomes completely one with the dharmakaya, the essence of all buddhas.

DEDICATION

Due to these merits, may I complete the ocean-like actions of
the sons of the Victorious Ones.

May I become the holy savior, refuge, and helper for sentient beings,
Who have repeatedly been kind to me in past lives.

By the virtues received from attempting this practice,
May all living beings who see, hear, touch, or remember me –
Even those who merely say my name –
In that very moment be released from their miseries and
experience happiness forever.

As all sentient beings, infinite as space, are encompassed by
Guru Medicine Buddha's compassion,
May I too become the guide for sentient beings existing
throughout all ten directions of the universe.
Because of these virtues, may I quickly become
Guru Medicine Buddha
And lead each and every sentient being into his enlightened realm.

Here ends the simple version.

(2) THE LONGER VERSION, TRANSLATED BY THE AUTHOR

About four inches above the crown of your head is a lotus flower. In the center of the lotus is a white moon disk and seated on the moon disk is my root guru – the dharmakaya essence of all the buddhas – in the form of the Medicine Buddha.

He is blue in color and his body radiates blue light. His right hand, in the mudra of granting sublime realizations, rests on his right knee and holds the stem of the arura plant between thumb and first finger. His left hand is in the mudra of concentration and holds a lapis lazuli bowl filled with nectar.

He is seated in the full vajra position and is wearing the three red-colored robes of a monk. He has all the signs and qualities of a buddha.

TAKE REFUGE AND GENERATE BODHICHITTA

I go for refuge until I am enlightened.

To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the supreme assembly.

By my practice of giving and other perfections,

May I become a buddha in order to benefit all sentient beings. (3x)

THE FOUR IMMEASURABLE THOUGHTS

May all sentient beings have happiness and the causes of happiness.

May all sentient beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

May all sentient beings never be separated from the happiness that is without suffering.

May all sentient beings abide in equanimity, free from both attachment and hatred, holding some close and others distant.

CULTIVATE SPECIAL BODHICHITTA

Especially for the benefit of all sentient beings,

I will quickly, very quickly, attain the precious state of perfect and complete buddhahood.

For this reason I will practice the yoga method of Guru Medicine Buddha.

SEVEN-LIMB PRAYER

I prostrate to Guru Medicine Buddha.
 Each and every offering, including those actually performed
 and those mentally transformed, I present to you.
 I confess all non-virtuous actions accumulated since
 beginningless time.
 I rejoice in the virtues of both ordinary and noble beings.
 As our guide I request you, O Buddha, to please abide well and
 turn the wheel of Dharma until samsara ends.
 All virtues, both my own and those of others, I dedicate to the
 ripening of the two bodhichittas and the attainment of
 buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.

MANDALA OFFERING

Short Mandala

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

Inner Mandala

The objects of my attachment, aversion, and ignorance – friends,
 enemies and strangers –
 And my body, wealth, and enjoyments;
 Without any sense of loss, I offer this collection.
 Please accept it with pleasure and bless me with freedom from
 the three poisons.

IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAMI

PRAYERS OF REQUEST

I beseech you, Bhagavan Medicine Guru –
 Whose sky-colored holy body of lapis lazuli
 Signifies omniscient wisdom and compassion as vast as
 limitless space –
 Please grant me your blessings.

I beseech you, compassionate Medicine Guru –
Who hold in your right hand the king of medicines
Symbolizing your vow to help all pitiful sentient beings plagued
by the 424 diseases –
Please grant me your blessings.

I beseech you, compassionate Medicine Guru –
Who hold in your left hand a bowl of nectar
Symbolizing your vow to give the glorious undying nectar of
the Dharma that eliminates the degenerations of sickness,
old age, and death –
Please grant me your blessings.

VISUALIZATION OF THE MEDICINE BUDDHAS

- (1) Above the crown of Guru Medicine Buddha is a wish-granting jewel, which is in essence my guru.
- (2) Above that is the Buddha Delightful King of Clear Knowing, whose body is coral red in color, his right hand in the mudra of bestowing sublime realizations and his left hand in the mudra of concentration.
- (3) Above him is the Buddha Melodious Ocean of Proclaimed, with a dark pink-colored body, his right hand in the mudra of bestowing sublime realizations and his left hand in the mudra of concentration.
- (4) Above him is the Buddha Supreme Glory Free from Sorrow, light pink in color with both hands in the mudra of concentration.
- (5) Above him is the Buddha Stainless Excellent Gold, gold in color, his right hand in the mudra of expounding the Dharma and his left hand in the mudra of concentration.
- (6) Above him is the Buddha King of Melodious Sound, Brilliant Radiance of Skill, Adorned with Jewels, Moon, and Lotus, yellow in color with his right hand in the mudra of expounding the Dharma and his left hand in the mudra of concentration.
- (7) Above him is the Buddha Renowned Glorious King of Excellent Signs, gold in color with his right hand in the mudra of expounding the Dharma and his left hand in the mudra of concentration.

REQUESTS TO THE MEDICINE BUDDHAS

Repeat each verse seven times. After the seventh recitation as you repeat “May your vow to benefit...” the Medicine Buddha whom you request dissolves into the one below.

- (7) To you, Buddha Glorious Renowned of Excellent Signs,
Fully realized destroyer of all defilements, fully accomplished
buddha who has fully realized the absolute truth of
all phenomena,
I prostrate, go for refuge, and make offerings.
May your vow to benefit all sentient beings now ripen for
myself and for others.
- (6) To you, Buddha King of Melodious Sound, Brilliant Radiance of
Skill, Fully Adorned with Jewels, Moon, and Lotus,
Fully realized destroyer of all defilements, fully accomplished
buddha who has fully realized the absolute truth of
all phenomena,
I prostrate, go for refuge, and make offerings.
May your vow to benefit all sentient beings now ripen for
myself and others.
- (5) To you, Buddha Stainless Excellent Gold,
Fully realized destroyer of all defilements, fully accomplished
buddha who has fully realized the absolute truth of
all phenomena,
I prostrate, go for refuge, and make offerings.
May your vow to benefit all sentient beings now ripen for
myself and others.
- (4) To you, Buddha Supreme Glory Free from Sorrow,
Fully realized destroyer of all defilements, fully accomplished
buddha who has fully realized the absolute truth of
all phenomena,
I prostrate, go for refuge, and make offerings.
May your vow to benefit all sentient beings now ripen for
myself and others.
- (3) To you, Buddha Melodious Ocean of Dharma Proclaimed,
Fully realized destroyer of all defilements, fully accomplished

buddha who has fully realized the absolute truth of all phenomena,

I prostrate, go for refuge, and make offerings.

May your vow to benefit all sentient beings now ripen for myself and others.

- (2) To you, Buddha King of Clear Knowing, Fully realized destroyer of all defilements, fully accomplished buddha who has fully realized the absolute truth of all phenomena,

I prostrate, go for refuge, and make offerings.

May your vow to benefit all sentient beings now ripen for myself and others.

- (1) To you, Buddha Medicine Guru, Great King with the Radiance of a Lapis Jewel, Fully realized destroyer of all defilements, fully accomplished buddha who has fully realized the absolute truth of all phenomena,

I prostrate, go for refuge, and make offerings.

May your vow to benefit all sentient beings now ripen for myself and others.

GURU MEDICINE BUDDHA GRANTS OUR REQUEST

Granting your request, King of Medicine, Guru Medicine Buddha sends from his heart and holy body infinite rays of white light, which pour down and completely fill your body from head to toe. They purify all your diseases and afflictions due to spirits and their causes, all your negative karma and mental obscurations.

In the nature of light, your body becomes as clean and clear as crystal.

The light rays pour down twice more, each time filling your body with blissful clean clear light, which you absorb.

You are thereby transformed into the holy body of Guru Medicine Buddha.

At your heart appears a lotus and moon disk. Standing at the center of the moon disk, is the blue seed-syllable HUM surrounded by the syllables of the mantra.

As you recite the mantra, visualize rays of light radiating out in

all directions from the syllable at your heart. The light rays pervade the sentient beings of all six realms. Through your great love wishing them to have happiness, and through your great compassion wishing them to be free from all sufferings, they are purified of all diseases and afflictions due to spirits and their causes, all their negative karma and mental obscurations.

LONG MANTRA

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE BHAISHAJYE / GURU BAIDURYA / PRABHA
RADJAYA / TATHAGATAYA / ARHATE SAMYAKSAM BUDDHAYA /
TADYATHA / OM BHAISHAJYE BHAISHAJYE MAHA BHAISHAJYE
[BHAISHAJYE]/ RAJA SAMUDGATE SVAHA

SHORT MANTRA

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

Common pronunciation

TAYATA OM BHEKANDZE BHEKANDZE MAHA BHEKANDZE
[BHEKANDZE] RADZA SAMUDGATE SOHA

Feel great joy and think: All sentient beings are transformed into the aspect of the Medicine Buddha Guru. How wonderful that I am now able to lead all sentient beings into the Medicine Buddha's enlightenment.

DEDICATION

Due to these merits, may I complete the ocean-like actions of
the sons of the Victorious Ones.

May I become the holy savior, refuge, and helper for sentient beings,
Who have repeatedly been kind to me in past lives.

By the virtues received from attempting this practice,
May all living beings who see, hear, touch, or remember me –
Even those who merely say my name –

In that very moment be released from their miseries and
experience happiness forever.

[36] RECITE THE MEDICINE BUDDHA PRACTICE

As all sentient beings, infinite as space, are encompassed by
Guru Medicine Buddha's compassion,
May I too become the guide for sentient beings existing
throughout all ten directions of the universe.
Because of these virtues, may I quickly become
Guru Medicine Buddha
And lead each and every sentient being into his enlightened realm.

SEE CHAPTERS 16 AND 18.

See also practice 6.

Stupas and other holy objects can be used for purifying or healing meditation. Lead your loved one in the meditation.

As I mentioned in practice 6, what makes a stupa powerful is the presence in them of the four dharmakaya relic mantras, usually written in gold on the “life tree,” the central wooden pole within the stupa.

GUIDE YOUR LOVED ONE IN THE MEDITATION

First breathe in slowly, then breathe out. As you breathe out, visualize that all your disease, harm caused by spirits, negative actions and thoughts, and the imprints left by these on your consciousness are purified.

Imagine they all come out of your body as black smoke, or pollution, and disappear beyond this earth.

Now, as you breathe in, visualize that powerful light beams are emitted from the stupa, which symbolizes the perfect, pure mind of full enlightenment.

This white light illuminates your body, completely purifying you of all disease, harm caused by spirits, negative actions and thoughts, and the imprints of all these on your consciousness.

Feel that your whole body is in the nature of white light. You have no suffering or problems at all. Your mind and body are completely free. From the top of your head down to your toes, your entire body is filled with great joy, with great bliss.

After experiencing this great bliss, think that your positive energy, the cause of your happiness and success, has been increased. All your qualities of wisdom and compassion have also been developed. Everything is fully developed within you.

[38] MEDITATE ON TONGLEN, GIVING AND TAKING

SEE CHAPTERS 16 AND 29.

See also other practices related to the Compassion Buddha: 13, 21, 42, and 73.

If your loved one has a compassionate nature, a brave mind, they will be able to do tonglen: giving and taking. It is a profound and powerful practice in which they can use their own suffering, in particular their death, to develop compassion for others. Rather than rejecting death as something to fear, they can use it to develop the ultimate good heart of bodhichitta.

If they have faith in Jesus Christ you can remind them to think, as he did, that by dying they are taking upon themselves the suffering of others so that others can be free of it. Other saints think like this too. In this way, as they have to experience death anyway, they make it most meaningful.

GUIDE YOUR LOVED ONE IN THE MEDITATION

A PRACTICE OF TONGLEN, GIVING AND TAKING,
BY THE AUTHOR

(1) TAKING

GENERATE COMPASSION

Generate compassion by thinking of how living beings constantly experience suffering even though they have no wish to do so, because they are ignorant of its causes, or because, although they know the causes of suffering, they are too lazy to abandon them.

Think: “How wonderful it would be if all living beings could be free from all suffering and the causes of suffering, karma and delusions.”

Think: “I myself will free them from all their suffering and its causes.”

TAKE IN THE SUFFERING OF ALL HUMANS

As you breathe in, focus first on all the numberless other beings who are dying. Then think of all the other problems experienced by all living beings, as well as their causes.

As you slowly breathe in, imagine you take in all this suffering and its causes through your nostrils in the form of black smoke. Like plucking a thorn out of their flesh, you immediately free all the numberless living beings from all their suffering.

TAKE IN THE SUBTLE OBSCURATIONS OF THE HOLY BEINGS

Next, take all the subtle obscurations from the arhats and higher bodhisattvas. (There is nothing to take from the gurus and buddhas; all you can do is make offerings to them.)

The black smoke comes in through your nostrils and dissolves into the self-cherishing in your heart, completely destroying it. Your self-cherishing, the creator of all your problems, becomes nonexistent. Like aiming a missile right on target, aim right at your self-cherishing thought.

TAKE IN THE SUFFERING ENVIRONMENTS OF SENTIENT BEINGS

Take from others all the undesirable environments that they experience. Breathe in through your nostrils in the form of black smoke all the undesirable places that sentient beings experience. For example, imagine that you are breathing in the red-hot burning ground of the hot hells, the ice of the cold hells, the inhospitable environments of the hungry ghosts and animals, and the dirty places of human beings. The black smoke comes in through your nostrils and down to your heart, where it sinks into your self-cherishing and completely destroys it. Your self-cherishing is now nonexistent.

Self-cherishing is based on the ignorance that holds to the concept of a truly-existent I. Even though no truly-existent I exists, we cherish this false I and regard it as the most precious and most important among all beings. At the same time as your self-cherishing becomes completely nonexistent, the false I that ignorance holds to be truly existent also becomes completely empty, as it is empty in reality.

Meditate for as long as possible on this emptiness, the ultimate nature of the self. This purifies the actual causes of suffering, the ignorance itself.

(2) GIVING

GENERATE LOVING KINDNESS

Next, generate loving kindness by thinking that even though living beings want to be happy, they lack happiness because they are ignorant of its causes or lazy in creating them. And even if they achieve some temporary happiness, they still lack the ultimate happiness of full enlightenment.

Think: “How wonderful it would be if all living beings had happiness and the causes of happiness.”

Think: “I myself will bring them happiness and its causes.”

GIVE EVERYTHING YOU HAVE TO SENTIENT BEINGS

Visualize your body as a wish-granting jewel, which can grant all the wishes of living beings. Then give everything you have to every living being.

Give all your good karma of the three times and all the happiness that results from it up to enlightenment.

Give your possessions, your family and friends, and your body, visualized as a wish-granting jewel.

Also make offerings to all the enlightened beings.

HUMAN BEINGS RECEIVE EVERYTHING THEY NEED

Now imagine that all living beings receive everything that they want, including all the realizations of the path to enlightenment. Those who want a friend, find a friend; those who want a guru, find a perfect guru; those who want a job, find a job; those who want a doctor, find a qualified doctor; those who want medicine, find medicine. For those with incurable diseases, you become the medicine that cures them.

Since the main human problem is difficulty in finding the means of living, imagine that each human being is showered with millions of dollars from your body, which is a wish-granting jewel.

You can also think that the environment becomes a pure land – the pure land of Amitabha Buddha or of the Buddha of Compassion. You grant all human beings everything they want, including a pure land with perfect enjoyments. All these enjoyments cause them only

to generate the path to enlightenment within their mind, and they all become enlightened.

GIVE THE GODS EVERYTHING THEY NEED

In a similar way, give the worldly gods everything they need, such as protective armor. And they too become enlightened.

TRANSFORM THE ENVIRONMENTS OF HELL BEINGS AND HUNGRY GHOSTS INTO PURE LANDS

Now imagine completely transforming the environment of the hell beings into a blissful pure land, with perfect enjoyments and no suffering at all. Visualize the hells as pure realms, as beautiful as possible. All the iron houses of the hell beings, which are one with fire, become jewel palaces and mandalas. All the hell beings receive everything they want and then become enlightened.

Do the same for the hungry ghosts. Transform their environment into a pure realm and give them thousands of different foods that all taste like nectar. The hungry ghosts receive everything they need, but the ultimate point is that they all become enlightened.

GIVE THE ANIMALS PROTECTION

Since animals mainly need protection, manifest as Vajrapani or another wrathful deity to protect them from being attacked by other animals. They receive everything they want, and everything they receive becomes the cause for them to actualize the path and become enlightened.

GIVE REALIZATIONS TO THE HOLY BEINGS

Give also to the arhats and bodhisattvas: give them whatever realizations they need to complete the path to enlightenment.

FINALLY, REJOICE

After everyone has become enlightened in this way, rejoice by thinking, “How wonderful it is that I have enlightened every single living being.”

[39] MEDITATE ON THE DEATH PROCESS

SEE CHAPTER 16.

See also practice 41.

Help your loved one become familiar with the death process (which I discuss in chapter 9) by leading them through a meditation on the various stages: the dissolution of the elements, the senses, all the way to the extremely subtle consciousness. Help them learn to recognize the visions, and at each stage get them to think, with strong determination: “I must recognize the clear light and definitely meditate on bliss and voidness.”

They can also practice this as they go to sleep: see practice 41.

GUIDE YOUR LOVED ONE IN THE MEDITATION

(1) THE VISION OF A MIRAGE

Think: “Now the mirage appears. There is the appearance of the mirage happening and on that I label ‘vision of mirage.’ My thought merely labels on that. Therefore the true existence of this vision is completely empty, completely empty. The wisdom that is aware of this emptiness is in the nature of great bliss.” Concentrate on that for a little while.

Think: “I *must*, I must recognize the clear light. And definitely I’m going to meditate on bliss and emptiness.” Make strong determination.

A part of the mind is focusing on the vision of the mirage sealed with bliss and emptiness while another part of your mind is expecting the next vision.

(2) THE VISION OF SMOKE

Think: “The vision of smoke is about to happen.” Anticipate it. Then it happens. The vision of the mirage is gone and now the vision of smoke is there, because the earth element is dissolving into the water element. It’s like a room filled with smoke or incense.

Think: “This looks unlabeled, existing from its own side, but actually

it is not true. On this appearance my thought has merely labeled 'vision like smoke.' So, the true existence of this vision of smoke is completely empty. The wisdom that is aware of the emptiness of the vision of smoke is in the nature of great bliss." Meditate on that for a while.

Then think: "This time I *must* recognize the clear light and definitely meditate on bliss and emptiness." Make strong determination.

Concentrate more on the vision of smoke while a part of the mind anticipates the next appearance, the vision of sparks. As the water dissolves into the fire element a part of the mind is preparing for this.

(3) THE VISION OF FIRE SPARKS

Think: "Now the fire sparks appear. There is the appearance of fire sparks and on that I label 'vision of fire sparks.' My thought merely labels on that. Therefore the true existence of this vision is completely empty." The emptiness is stronger than before, the bliss is stronger. The wisdom that is aware of the emptiness of the vision of sparks is in the nature of great bliss. Meditate on that for a while.

Again think: "I *must* recognize the clear light and definitely meditate on bliss and emptiness."

Concentrate more on the vision of fire sparks while a part of the mind anticipates the next appearance, the vision of the flame. As the fire dissolves into the air element a part of the mind is preparing for this.

(4) THE VISION OF A FLAME

Think: "Now there is the vision of the flame." Imagine the dim red-blue light around the flame as the breath is about to stop. Again, the emptiness is much greater and because of that the bliss is much greater.

"I *must* recognize the clear light. And definitely I am going to meditate on bliss and emptiness."

Think: "This looks unlabeled, existing from its own side, but actually it is not true. On this appearance my thought has merely labeled 'vision of the flame.' So, the true existence of this vision of the flame is completely empty. The wisdom that is aware of the emptiness of the vision of the flame is in the nature of great bliss."

A part of the mind is focusing on the vision of the flame sealed with bliss and emptiness while another part of the mind is expecting the white vision.

(5) THE WHITE VISION

Then comes the white vision as the white bodhichitta flows down the central channel. The wisdom that is aware of the emptiness of the white vision is in the nature of great bliss. Experience even greater emptiness and bliss.

Think: "The true existence of the white vision is completely empty." Meditate on this.

Concentrate on the white vision as part of the mind anticipates the red vision.

Think: "I *must* recognize the clear light and definitely meditate on bliss and emptiness."

(6) THE RED VISION

Think: "The red vision is about to happen." Anticipate it. Then it happens. The white vision has finished and now the red vision appears as the red bodhichitta goes up the central channel.

Think: "This red vision is completely empty of existing from its own side. It appears unlabeled, but it's not: on this appearance my thought is merely labeling 'red vision.'"

Experience even greater emptiness, even greater bliss.

Think: "I *must* recognize the clear light and meditate on bliss and emptiness."

(7) THE DARK VISION

The red vision ceases and now there is the dark vision.

Think: "It looks unlabeled, existing from its own side, but it's not true." Now there is even more bliss, even greater experience of emptiness.

Think: "I *must* recognize the clear light."

Concentrate part of the mind of the dark vision and you anticipate the clear light.

(8) THE CLEAR LIGHT VISION

Finally there is the clear light, like dawn in autumn. This is appearing, but there is also the wisdom understanding emptiness.

Think: "I, everything, is empty. This emptiness is the great emptiness."

And now there is even more bliss; the bliss is so great it almost doesn't fit in the sky. And it is unified with emptiness: emptiness is bliss and bliss is emptiness: oneness, same taste, like water mixed with water. Bliss is subject and emptiness is object, but non-dual. Now, the emptiness is greatest, the bliss is greatest. The vision of clear light is totally empty of existing from its own side.

Now you can also check on this I. You're not seeing your body, not seeing anything else, just the clear light vision. While you are holding the mind in this, have another tiny part of your mind look at how your I appears, like you're spying on yourself. Try to identify the feeling that this I brings.

Think, "How do I view the I? How does it feel? How does it appear to me?" There's a way that we usually believe in the I, the self; there's a certain feeling, a way that we view it.

If you just bring up the word "I," if you're too intellectual about it, you will not help. Or if you try to grab it too strongly, you won't catch it: it'll be like one of those tiny goldfish that moves so quickly.

You have to be very skillful, very careful. So, slowly, within the state of the clear light vision, try to check up on this I, this self.

Concentrate on that.

[40] SLEEP IN THE LION POSITION

SEE CHAPTER 16.

See also practice 55.

Have your loved one lie in the lion position, which our compassionate Buddha lay in when he passed away and is recommended at the time of death (see practice 55).

Practicing sleeping in this position makes it easier to adopt it at the time of death.

THE LION POSITION

The right hand should be under the right cheek with the ring finger blocking the right nostril, and the left arm should be stretched out along their left side.

The breath coming through the right nostril is the breath of attachment, so stopping it helps the mind not be controlled by attachment, to not die with attachment. It might not be so easy to block the right nostril in this way, so you could use cotton instead. And you could put pillows behind your loved one's back to support the body.

As discussed in chapter 12, ideally they should be lying with their head pointing towards the north, which means they are facing the west, which is where Amitabha Buddha's pure land is.

MEDITATE ON THE PROCESS OF GOING TO SLEEP [41]

SEE CHAPTER 16.

See also practice 39.

As I mention in chapter 9, the stages of dissolution that occur at death also occur when we go to sleep, but because it all happens very quickly and because of our lack of control we don't recognize them.

If your loved can go through the stages when they go to sleep they will find it much easier to recognize the stages at the time of death.

They can also familiarize themselves with this process as a meditation when they're awake: practice 39.

GUIDE YOUR LOVED ONE IN THE MEDITATION

(1) THE VISION OF A MIRAGE

Think: "Now the mirage appears. There is the appearance of the mirage happening and on that I label 'vision of mirage.' My thought merely labels on that. Therefore the true existence of this vision is completely empty, completely empty. The wisdom that is aware of this emptiness is in the nature of great bliss." Concentrate on that for a little while.

Think: "I *must*, I must recognize the clear light. And definitely I'm going to meditate on bliss and emptiness." Make strong determination.

A part of the mind is focusing on the vision of the mirage sealed with bliss and emptiness while another part of your mind is expecting the next vision.

(2) THE VISION OF SMOKE

Think: "The vision of smoke is about to happen." Anticipate it. Then it happens. The vision of the mirage is gone and now the vision of smoke is there, because the earth element is dissolving into the water element. It's like a room filled with smoke or incense.

Think: "This looks unlabeled, existing from its own side, but actually it is not true. On this appearance my thought has merely labeled 'vision

of smoke.’ So, the true existence of this vision of smoke is completely empty. The wisdom that is aware of the emptiness of the vision of smoke is in the nature of great bliss.” Meditate on that for a while.

Then think: “This time I *must* recognize the clear light and definitely meditate on bliss and emptiness.” Make strong determination.

Concentrate more on the vision of smoke while a part of the mind anticipates the next appearance, the vision of sparks. As the water dissolves into the fire element a part of the mind is preparing for this.

(3) THE VISION OF FIRE SPARKS

Think: “Now the fire sparks appear. There is the appearance of fire sparks and on that I label ‘vision of fire sparks.’ My thought merely labels on that. Therefore the true existence of this vision is completely empty.” The emptiness is stronger than before, the bliss is stronger. The wisdom that is aware of the emptiness of the vision of sparks is in the nature of great bliss. Meditate on that for a while.

Again think: “I *must* recognize the clear light and definitely meditate on bliss and emptiness.”

Concentrate more on the vision of fire sparks while a part of the mind anticipates the next appearance, the vision of the flame. As the fire dissolves into the air element a part of the mind is preparing for this.

(4) THE VISION OF A FLAME

Think: “Now there is the vision of the flame.” Imagine the dim red-blue light around the flame as the breath is about to stop. Again, the emptiness is much greater and because of that the bliss is much greater.

“I *must* recognize the clear light. And definitely I am going to meditate on bliss and emptiness.”

Think: “This looks unlabeled, existing from its own side, but actually it is not true. On this appearance my thought has merely labeled ‘vision of the flame.’ So, the true existence of this vision of the flame is completely empty. The wisdom that is aware of the emptiness of the vision of the flame is in the nature of great bliss.”

A part of the mind is focusing on the vision of the flame sealed with bliss and emptiness while another part of the mind is expecting the white vision.

(5) THE WHITE VISION

Then comes the white vision as the white bodhichitta flows down the central channel. The wisdom that is aware of the emptiness of the white vision is in the nature of great bliss. Experience even greater emptiness and bliss.

Think: "The true existence of the white vision is completely empty." Meditate on this.

Concentrate on the white vision as part of the mind anticipates the red vision.

Think: "I *must* recognize the clear light and definitely meditate on bliss and emptiness."

(6) THE RED VISION

Think: "The red vision is about to happen." Anticipate it. Then it happens. The white vision has finished and now the red vision appears as the red bodhichitta goes up the central channel.

Think: "This red vision is completely empty of existing from its own side. It appears unlabeled, but it's not: on this appearance my thought is merely labeling 'red vision.'"

Experience even greater emptiness, even greater bliss.

Think: "I *must* recognize the clear light and meditate on bliss and emptiness."

(7) THE DARK VISION

The red vision ceases and now there is the dark vision.

Think: "It looks unlabeled, existing from its own side, but it's not true." Now there is even more bliss, even greater experience of emptiness.

Think: "I *must* recognize the clear light."

Concentrate part of the mind of the dark vision and you anticipate the clear light.

(8) THE CLEAR LIGHT VISION

Finally there is the clear light, like dawn in autumn. This is appearing, but there is the wisdom understanding emptiness.

Think: "I, everything, is empty. This emptiness is the great emptiness."

[41] MEDITATE ON THE PROCESS OF GOING TO SLEEP

And now there is even more bliss; the bliss is so great it almost doesn't fit in the sky. And it is unified with emptiness: emptiness is bliss and bliss is emptiness: oneness, same taste, like water mixed with water. Bliss is subject and emptiness is object, but non-dual. Now, the emptiness is greatest, the bliss is greatest. The vision of clear light is totally empty of existing from its own side.

Think, "How do I see the I?" While you are holding the mind on the vision of clear light, have another tiny part of your mind look at how your I appears. Try to identify the feeling that this I brings.

Concentrate on that as you fall asleep.

Holding for even a few seconds the feeling of the oneness of the clear light vision and the emptiness of the self is a profound mind and a wonderful one to fall asleep with.

Your loved one can learn to extend the awareness to the whole duration of sleep, including dreaming.

Remember, passing from sleep into a dream is similar to passing from this life to the intermediate state. Now while we are dreaming we rarely recognize dreams as dreams, but it is possible to train our mind to do this.

SLEEP WITH BODHICHITTA

[42]

SEE CHAPTER 16.

See also practices 13, 21, and 38.

Encourage your loved one to go to sleep with the thought of bodhichitta.

Think: “The purpose of my life is to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment: the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless suras and asuras, the numberless intermediate state beings. Therefore I must achieve enlightenment. Therefore I am going to go to sleep.”

[43] SLEEP IN THE GURU'S LAP

SEE CHAPTER 16.

See also other practices related to the guru: 1, 10, 18, 35, 47, 60, 72, and 85.

Your loved one could go to sleep with guru devotion. With the virtuous thought of compassion, they imagine that their head is in the lap of their guru, visualized as the buddha they feel closest to. They should strongly take refuge. Visualize radiant white light coming from the Guru Buddha's holy body and pouring into theirs. All their negativities are purified and they become oneness with the guru's holy qualities.

This protects them, and it makes it easier to remember the guru at the time of death.

SEE CHAPTER 16.

See also practice 41.

If your loved one has studied emptiness you can talk to them about how all the fears and problems that everybody faces come from the wrong view of seeing everything, even life, as inherent.

They could go to sleep while thinking about emptiness and dependent arising. Or they could sleep with the thought that everything is a dream, is a mirage, is an illusion – actually, not *is* an illusion but *like* an illusion. Seeing everything as *if* it is an illusion cuts the grasping at appearances of inherent existence. In their heart they can understand that the I is empty, everything is empty.

SLEEPING YOGA

If they have received a highest tantra initiation, they could practice sleeping yoga, either with creativity or without creativity. “Without creativity” refers to basically meditating on emptiness while falling asleep – see practice 41.

As discussed in chapters 10 and 24, the great tantric practitioners who can recognize the clear light at sleep are able to recognize the clear light of death, no question.

“With creativity” refers to going to sleep while meditating on the deity’s mandala. When they wake up they would arise from the clear light according to whichever deity they practice.

If your loved one practices a deity within the lower tantras, such as the Compassion Buddha as explained in the nyungnä fasting practice, they would visualize themselves as Chenrezig dissolving into the syllable HRIH, and then the HRIH gradually dissolving into emptiness, or into the mandala.

[45] MEDITATE ON THE EMPTINESS OF DEATH

SEE CHAPTER 16.

Remind your loved one that death is natural, that the mind that clings is what makes death terrifying. Death is merely the mind separating from the body, and this is labeled “death.”

You can tell them that in emptiness there is no such thing as birth and death. They can think: “Death appears to be real and existing from its own side and I believe it to exist in this way, but actually this is a hallucination. There is no such thing. It is totally empty.” Encourage them to keep their mind in that state.

You can remind them that they are striving to attain enlightenment for all sentient beings, and that even before then, when they reach the state of the arya-bodhisattva and perceive emptiness directly, they will have transcended disease, old age and death. This is what awaits them, so there is no reason to fear death.

SEE CHAPTER 16.

You can help your loved one think about how their mind is empty because it is a dependent-arising; to meditate on the emptiness of the mind that appears to be not merely labeled by thought.

Tell them that the base of the label “mind” is that which is formless, that which is not obstructed, not obscured by substantial phenomena, and therefore is clear, which means that phenomena can appear to it, that it can perceive phenomena – just like a mirror, which, because it is not obscured by the substantial phenomenon of dust, is clear, which means that objects can be reflected in it, it can reflect objects.

That is the base. And “mind” is the label that is simply imputed by their own thought on the base. Mind is merely imputed by thought *because* there is this phenomenon that is formless, not obstructed by phenomena, clear, and that perceives objects.

So, what is their mind? It is nothing *except* what is merely imputed by a thought. They can see now that there is no such thing as mind existing from its own side. There *is* a mind that exists in mere name, merely imputed by thought, but it is empty of existing from its own side. And while the mind is empty, it is existing. How is it existing? It exists in mere name, merely imputed by thought. It is unified with emptiness and dependent arising.

This is how all phenomena exist.

[47] RECITE YOUR LOVED ONE'S DAILY PRACTICES

SEE CHAPTERS 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also other practices related to the guru: 1, 10, 18, 35, 43, 60, 72, and 85.

It is very good to recite your loved one's daily practices for them, especially their main sadhana if they have received initiations – the visualizations, prayers, and mantras. They can meditate as you recite. Helping them strengthen the connection with their particular deity, and with the guru, is a precious gift.

They should meditate on and strongly wish to be reborn into the pure land of that buddha.

SEE CHAPTER 16.

See also practices 62 and 81.

As I mentioned in chapter 6 and elsewhere, it is possible to be reborn in a pure land by practicing phowa, transference of consciousness. This practice is one of the six yogas of Naropa. In fact, it is said that even someone who has led a very negative life, if they're careful at death and with the help of this practice, they can be born in a pure land.

The practice can be done either by the dying person – they forcefully push their own consciousness from their body just before death and send it to a pure land – or by their guru or another lama, or even a close friend.

IF YOUR LOVED ONE HAS THEIR OWN PRACTICE OF PHOWA

The right time to practice it is now, the months and weeks before death. Lama Tsongkhapa said that you can practice phowa up to six months before you die.

Why so long in advance? Why not wait until death is close? Because when the actual death comes the person may be very sick and in much pain and their mind not clear, or other problems could occur. So to be safe, rather than waiting until the time of death, phowa should be practiced in advance, when the mind is clear.

IF IT IS TO BE PERFORMED BY A LAMA

It should happen as soon as the breath stops (practice 62), not before.

It can also be done by a lama during the forty-nine days after the mind has left the body (practice 81).

IF IT IS TO BE PERFORMED BY YOU AND YOUR DHARMA FRIENDS

You can recite the Amitabha phowa practice written by Lama Yeshe (practice 81) during the forty-nine days after the mind has left the body.

[49] PURIFY WITH THE PRACTICE OF PROSTRATIONS TO THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS OF CONFESSION

SEE CHAPTERS 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also practice 15.

GUIDE YOUR LOVED ONE IN THE PRACTICE

PROSTRATIONS TO THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS OF CONFESSION, BY THE AUTHOR

HOW TO MEDITATE BEFORE THE PRACTICE

The purpose of my life is to free the numberless sentient beings who are the source of all my past, present, and future happiness, temporary as well as ultimate happiness – including all the realizations of the path, liberation from samsara, and enlightenment – from all the oceans of samsaric suffering, including the causes: delusion and karma.

In order to do this, I must achieve full enlightenment. Therefore, I need to actualize the path. Therefore, I need to purify negative karma and delusions.

Samsara has no end. Not only that, but karma increases, so from even a small negative action can come huge suffering results. And karma is definite to be experienced, so every negative action I have created will definitely bring its result, no matter how long it takes, until it is purified. So from one negative karma, I have to experience the result over and over again for so many hundreds of lifetimes. Understanding this, how can I stand to live life without purifying myself and getting rid of all these negative karmas, just as I would try to get rid of a deadly poison in my body?

Not only that, but I'm going to die, and death can come even today, any moment. Therefore, I must purify all my negative actions right this second. In order to do that, I am going to do these prostrations with the practice of confessing downfalls, and I'm going to do this so that I can develop myself in order to work for the happiness of all sentient beings.

VISUALIZATION

Visualize in the space in front of you your guru in the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha, with Thousand-arm Compassion Buddha at his heart. At the heart of Thousand-arm Chenrezig is the syllable *HRIH*, and from this beams of light emanate, forming six rows in the space below. At the end of each beam is a throne supported by elephants and adorned with pearls. On each throne is seated a buddha.

In the **first row** are six buddhas, blue in color and in the aspect of Akshobhya, with the exception of the third buddha, King Lord of the Nagas, who has a blue-colored body, but a white head.

In the **second row**, there are seven buddhas, white in color and in the aspect of Vairochana.

In the **third row** are seven buddhas, yellow in color and in the aspect of Ratnasambhava.

In the **fourth row** are seven buddhas, red in color and in the aspect of Amitabha.

In the **fifth row** there are seven buddhas, green in color and in the aspect of Amoghasiddhi.

These are the Thirty-Five Buddhas of Confession. Each one is in the posture of his own particular *dhyanī* buddha.

In the **sixth row** are the Seven Medicine Buddhas.

HOW TO MEDITATE DURING THE PRACTICE

Think that each one of these buddhas is the embodiment of all three-times' ten-directions' Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and all statues, stupas, and scriptures. Think they embody all holy objects, whose essence is the guru. Have complete faith that each one has the power to purify all your negative karmas and imprints, accumulated since beginningless time.

Now imagine that you emanate numberless bodies, and that as you prostrate, all these bodies prostrate along with you from all directions, covering every atom of the earth.

Now recite the Increasing Mantras, refuge verse, and the Confession of Downfalls to the Thirty-Five Buddhas, repeating each buddha's name over and over as many times as you can with each prostration.

It is the recitation of the name of each buddha that brings the purification, so there is a big difference when you recite just a few times or many. Even if you do the recitation by listening to a recording, still

**[49] PURIFY WITH THE PRACTICE OF PROSTRATIONS TO THE THIRTY-FIVE
BUDDHAS OF CONFESSION**

recite the name yourself as much as you can. Either recite the prayer three times straight through making one prostration to each buddha each time, or do three prostrations to each buddha as you go through the prayer once.

At the end, recite the names of the Medicine Buddhas.

Finally, recite the Confession Prayer followed by the General Confession.

INCREASING MANTRAS

Recite the following mantras, which increase the merit of making prostrations one million times.

CHOM DAN DA DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG
PAR DZOG PAI SANG GYA RINCHHEN GYALTSHAN LA CHHAG
TSHAL LO (7x)

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE RATNA KETU RAJAYA / TATHAGATAYA /
ARHATE SAMYAK SAMBUDDHAYA / TADYATHA / OM RATNE RATNE
MAHA RATNE RATNA BIJA YE SVAHA (7x)

OM NAMO MANJUSHRIYE / NAMAH SUSHRIYE / NAMA UTTAMA
SHRIYE SVAHA (3x)

NOW RECITE THE PRACTICE

Homage to the Confession of the Bodhisattva's Downfalls!

REFUGE

I, [say your name] throughout all times, take refuge in the Guru;
I take refuge in the Buddha;
I take refuge in the Dharma;
I take refuge in the Sangha. (3x)

SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA

To the Founder, Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Completed
Buddha, Glorious Conqueror Shakyamuni Buddha, I prostrate.

FIRST ROW, BLUE, IN THE ASPECT OF AKSHOBHYA

To Tathagata Thoroughly Destroying with Vajra Essence, I prostrate.

- To Tathagata Radiant Jewel, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata King, Lord of the Nagas, I prostrate. [with a white face]
- To Tathagata Army of Heroes, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Delighted Hero, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Jewel Fire, I prostrate.

SECOND ROW, WHITE, IN THE ASPECT OF VAIROCHANA

- To Tathagata Jewel Moonlight, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Meaningful to See, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Jewel Moon, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Stainless One, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Bestowed with Courage, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Pure One, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Bestowed with Purity, I prostrate.

THIRD ROW, YELLOW, IN THE ASPECT OF RATNASAMBHAVA

- To Tathagata Water God, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Deity of the Water God, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Goodness, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Sandalwood, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Infinite Splendor, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Light, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Sorrowless Glory, I prostrate.

FOURTH ROW, RED, IN THE ASPECT OF AMITABHA

- To Tathagata Son of Non-craving, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Flower, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Pure Light Rays Clearly Knowing by Play, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Lotus Light Rays Clearly Knowing by Play, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Wealth, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Mindfulness, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious Name Widely Renowned, I prostrate.

FIFTH ROW, GREEN, IN THE ASPECT OF AMOGASIDDHI

- To Tathagata King Holding the Victory Banner of Foremost Power, I prostrate.
- To Tathagata Glorious One Totally Subduing, I prostrate.

**[49] PURIFY WITH THE PRACTICE OF PROSTRATIONS TO THE THIRTY-FIVE
BUDDHAS OF CONFESSION**

To Tathagata Utterly Victorious in Battle, I prostrate.

To Tathagata Glorious Transcendence Through Subduing, I prostrate.

To Tathagata Glorious Manifestations Illuminating All, I prostrate.

To Tathagata All-Subduing Jewel Lotus, I prostrate.

To Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Completed Buddha, King, Lord of the Mountains Firmly Seated on Jewel and Lotus, I prostrate. (3x)

CONFESSION PRAYER

All those [you thirty-five buddhas] and others, as many tathagatas, arhats, perfectly completed buddhas as there are existing, sustaining, and residing in all the world systems of the ten directions; all you buddha-bhagavans, please pay attention to me.

In this life and in all the states of rebirth in which I have circled in samsara throughout beginningless lives, whatever negative actions I have created, made others create, or rejoiced in the creation of;

whatever possessions of stupas, possessions of the Sangha, or possessions of the Sangha of the ten directions that I have appropriated, made others appropriate, or rejoiced in the appropriation of;

whichever among the five actions of immediate [retribution] I have done, caused to be done, or rejoiced in the doing of;

whichever paths of the ten non-virtuous actions I have engaged in, caused others to engage in, or rejoiced in the engaging in: whatever I have created, being obscured by these karmas causes me and sentient beings to be born in the hell realms, in the animal realm, and in the preta realm; in irreligious countries, as barbarians, or as long-life gods; with imperfect faculties, holding wrong views, or not being pleased with Buddha's descent.

In the presence of the buddha-bhagavans, who are transcendental wisdom, who are eyes, who are witnesses, who are valid, and who see with omniscient consciousness, I am admitting and confessing all these negativities. I will not conceal them nor hide them, and from now on in the future I will abstain and refrain from committing them again.

All buddha-bhagavans, please pay attention to me. In this life and in all other states of rebirth in which I have circled in samsara throughout beginningless lives, whatever roots of virtue I have created by generosity, even as little as giving just one mouthful of food to a being born in the animal realm;

whatever roots of virtue I have created by guarding morality;
whatever roots of virtue I have created by following pure conduct;
whatever roots of virtue I have created by fully ripening sentient beings;
whatever roots of virtue I have created by generating bodhichitta;
and whatever roots of virtue I have created by my unsurpassed
transcendental wisdom: all these assembled and gathered, combined
together, I fully dedicate to the unsurpassed, the unexcelled, that higher
than the high, that superior to the superior.

Thus, I completely dedicate to the highest, perfectly complete
enlightenment. Just as the previous buddha-bhagavans have fully
dedicated, just as the future buddha-bhagavans will fully dedicate, and
just as the presently abiding buddha-bhagavans are fully dedicating, like
that I too dedicate fully.

I confess all negativities individually. I rejoice in all the merits. I urge
and implore all buddhas to grant my request: may I receive the highest,
most sublime transcendental wisdom.

To the conquerors, the best of humans – those who are living in
the present time, those who have lived in the past, and those who will
likewise come – to all those who have qualities as vast as an infinite
ocean, with hands folded, I approach for refuge.

GENERAL CONFESSION

How to Meditate on the General Confession

As you confess each of the negative actions contained in this prayer,
think to yourself that you have created this negative action not just
once but countless times in this and beginningless lives, whether you
remember it or not. Generate very strong regret. The stronger the regret,
the greater the purification.

Then reflect on the emptiness of each of these negative actions,
remembering that even negative actions do not truly exist from their
own side. They arise in dependence on causes and conditions and are
merely labeled by the mind. You can either think they are completely
non-existent from their own side, or that they are merely labeled by
mind, or that they are hallucination. Whichever method you use to
understand emptiness, the conclusion that should come in your heart
is that each of these negative actions is completely empty, not existing
from its own side, even the slightest atom.

**[49] PURIFY WITH THE PRACTICE OF PROSTRATIONS TO THE THIRTY-FIVE
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At the end of the confession prayer, pause to make the determination not to commit these negative actions again in the future. This is the power of restraint. Make this promise realistic, even if you are promising simply not to do the negative action even for just the next five minutes or seconds. This is to make sure you that you do not tell a lie to the merit field.

THE ACTUAL GENERAL CONFESSION

U hu lag! (Woe is me!)

O great Guru Vajradhara, all other buddhas and bodhisattvas who abide in the ten directions, and all the venerable Sangha, please pay attention to me.

I, who am named [say your name], circling in cyclic existence since beginningless time until the present, overpowered by mental afflictions such as attachment, aversion, and ignorance by means of body, speech, and mind have created the ten non-virtuous actions.

I have engaged in the five uninterrupted negative karmas and the five nearing uninterrupted negative karmas.¹

I have transgressed the vows of individual liberation, transgressed the vows of bodhisattvas, and transgressed the samaya of secret mantra.²

I have been disrespectful to my parents, have been disrespectful to my vajra masters, and to my abbot, and have been disrespectful to my spiritual friends living in ordination.³ have committed actions harmful to the Three Jewels, avoided the holy Dharma,⁴ criticized the arya Sangha,⁵ harmed sentient beings, and so on.

These and many other non-virtuous negative actions I have done, have caused others to do, have rejoiced in others' doing, and so forth.

In the presence of the great Guru Vajradhara, all the buddhas and bodhisattvas who abide in the ten directions, and the venerable Sangha, I admit this entire collection of faults and transgressions that are obstacles to my own higher rebirth and liberation and are causes of cyclic existence and miserable lower rebirths.

I will not conceal them, and I accept them as negative.

I promise to refrain from doing these actions again in the future.⁶

By confessing and acknowledging them, I will attain and abide in happiness, while by not confessing and acknowledging them, true happiness will not come.

VISUALIZATION AT THE END OF THE PRACTICE

Think that through the force of reciting these names of the Thirty-Five Buddhas of Confession and Medicine Buddhas, through the power of their pure prayers and vows, through the power of generating regret and the other opponent forces, and through the power of having made these prostrations, nectars and light rays descend from the holy bodies of the buddhas, completely purifying all negative karmas, defilements and imprints collected on your mental continuum since beginningless time.

Generate strong faith that your mind has become completely pure.

REFLECT ON EMPTINESS

Then reflect on emptiness. In emptiness there is no I, the creator of negative actions. In emptiness there is no creating of negative actions. In emptiness there are no negative actions created.

Even though there are infinite phenomena, in emptiness nothing exists at all. There is no this and that, no me and you, nothing. In emptiness everything is one taste. From this emptiness, everything comes into existence. Whatever exists is the manifestation of emptiness.

[50] PURIFY WITH THE PRACTICE OF VAJRASATTVA AND THE FOUR OPPONENT POWERS

SEE CHAPTERS 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

The Vajrasattva recitation-meditation, which also includes the four opponent powers, is an incredibly powerful method. Practicing it at the end of every day prevents negative karma from multiplying. It also helps purify that day's negative karma, as well as the negative karma created since the time we were born and in all our previous lives.

GUIDE YOUR LOVED ONE IN THE PRACTICE

VAJRASATTVA AND THE FOUR OPPONENT POWERS, BY THE AUTHOR

VISUALIZATION

On your right side is your father; on your left side is your mother. Your enemies and those sentient beings who make you agitated are in front of you, and your friends and those to whom you are attached are seated behind you. All other universal living beings, in human form, are surrounding you, as far as you can imagine. Visualize your object of refuge, the merit field, in the space in front of you, either the elaborate visualization of “the one into many,” as in Jor Chö; or the simple visualization of “the many into one”: all Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha in the one aspect of Buddha Shakyamuni. As you recite the verse below, think that you and all sentient beings are together taking refuge in the Three Jewels.

(1) THE POWER OF DEPENDENCE: TAKING REFUGE

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

(2A) THE POWER OF REGRET

First recall the definition of negative karma – any action that results in suffering, usually an action motivated by ignorance, attachment or aversion.

Almost every action I do, twenty-four hours a day, is motivated by worldly concern, attachment to the comfort of this life. It is like this from birth to death in this life and has been like that from beginningless rebirths. Nearly every action I have ever created has been non-virtuous, the cause of suffering.

Not only that, but continuously I have also been breaking my individual liberation, bodhisattva, and tantric vows. Worst of all, I have created the heaviest of negative karmas in relation to my virtuous friends – getting angry at them, generating wrong views, having non-devotional thoughts towards them, harming their holy body, and disobeying their advice.

Having these negative imprints on my mental continuum is unbearable. It's as if I've swallowed a lethal poison. I must practice the antidote right away and purify all this negative karma immediately, without a second's delay.

In this way, generate strong feelings of urgency and regret.

REMEMBERING IMPERMANENCE AND DEATH

Many people my age or younger have died. It's a miracle that I'm still alive and have this incredible opportunity to purify my negative karma. Death is certain but its time is most uncertain.

If I were to die right now, I would definitely be born in the lower realms. Because I could not practice Dharma there I would remain in the lower realms for countless eons.

Therefore, how unbelievably fortunate I am to be able to purify my negative karma right now, without even a second's delay, by practicing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation.

(2B) THE POWER OF DEPENDENCE: GENERATING BODHICHITTA

But I am not practicing this Vajrasattva purification for myself alone. The purpose of my life is to release all hell beings, pretas, animals, humans, asuras, suras, and intermediate state beings from all their suffering and its causes and lead them to unsurpassed enlightenment.

In order to do this I must first reach enlightenment myself. Therefore, I must purify all my negative karma immediately by practicing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation.

VISUALIZATION

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

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

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

(3) THE POWER OF THE REMEDY: MANTRA RECITATION

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

OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA / VAJRASATTVA
TVENOPATISHTHA / DRIDHO ME BHAVA / SUTOSHYO ME BHAVA /
SUPOSHYO ME BHAVA / ANURAKTO ME BHAVA / SARVA SIDDHIM
ME PRAYACCHA / SARVA KARMA SUCHAME / CHITTAM SHRIYAM
KURU HUM / HA HA HA HA HO / BHAGAVAN SARVA TATHAGATA /
VAJRA MAME MUNCHA / VAJRA BHAVA MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA
AH HUM PHAT

Recite the mantra seven or twenty-one times or as many times as possible, practicing the three techniques of downward cleansing, upward cleansing and instantaneous cleansing.

GENERATING FAITH IN HAVING BEEN PURIFIED

From the crown of my head, Guru Vajrasattva says, "Child of the race,

your negativities, obscurations and broken and damaged pledges have been completely purified.”

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

(4) THE POWER OF RESTRAINT: REFRAINING FROM CREATING NEGATIVITIES AGAIN

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

ABSORPTION

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

MEDITATION ON EMPTINESS

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

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

DEDICATION

Due to all these merits of the three times collected by all the buddhas, bodhisattvas, myself, and all other sentient beings (which appear to be real, from their own side, but which are empty),

May I (who appears to be real but is empty) achieve
Guru Vajrasattva’s enlightenment (which appears to be real but is empty)

And lead all sentient beings (who appear to be real but are totally empty) to that enlightenment (which appears to be real but is empty)

By myself alone (who appears to be real but is also totally empty,
non-existent from my own side).

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

Without even a second's delay;
And may that which has been generated be increased.

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

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

Whatever dedication the three time Victorious Ones gone to
bliss have admired as best,
In the same way, I also perfectly dedicate all these roots of virtue
So that I may perform good works.

THE MEANING OF THE MANTRA

You, Vajrasattva, have generated the holy mind (bodhichitta) according to your pledge (samaya). Your holy mind is enriched with the simultaneous holy actions of releasing transmigratory beings from samsara (the circling, suffering aggregates). Whatever happens in my life – happiness or suffering, good or bad – with a pleased, holy mind, never give up but please guide me. Please stabilize all happiness, including the happiness of the upper realms, actualize all actions and sublime and common realizations, and please make the glory of the five wisdoms abide in my heart.

SEE CHAPTERS 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

The practice of Samayavajra (Damtsig Dorje, in Tibetan) is a powerful practice that purifies in particular the negative karmas accumulated in the relationship with the guru. Since first meeting the Dharma and taking all three levels of vows, we have continually broken and degenerated our commitments – our pledges to our gurus – especially the tantric commitments. Because of their compassion all our gurus have manifested as Samayavajra so that we can purify all these negative karmas.

GUIDE YOUR LOVED ONE IN THE PRACTICE

A SHORT PRACTICE OF SAMAYAVAJRA, BY THE AUTHOR

VISUALIZATION

At the heart of myself clarified as my guru yidam is a variegated lotus and moon mandala. Above it is a green HA which transforms into a sword adorned with a HA inside the handle.

This then transforms into Samayavajra, who has a green holy body with three faces (central face green, right one black, left one white) and six arms, which embrace the mother who is in similar aspect. Both father and mother are marked with the three syllables. The first two hands of both are embracing. The second right hand holds a vajra; the third right hand, a sword. The second left hand holds a bell; the third left hand carries a flower. The mother's right and left hands hold the same implements.

At the heart of Samayavajra is a flat variegated vajra with HA in the center surrounded by the mantra.

RECITATION OF MANTRA

As you recite the mantra, visualize nectar flowing down, filling and blessing your whole body and purifying all samayas degenerated due to carelessness, and all obscurations and negative karmas accumulated with your three doors:

OM AH PRAJÑA DHRIK HA HUM

At the end of your recitation, imagine Guru Samayavajra says: “All your negative karmas, obscurations, and degenerated samayas are completely purified.” Generate strong faith that exactly what Samayavajra says has happened in reality: your mental continuum has become completely pure. Not the slightest obscuration is left. Even the heaviest negative karmas accumulated in the relationship with the guru have been purified.

ABSORPTION

Guru Samayavajra is very pleased and dissolves into the indestructible seed at your heart, your own subtle mind-wind. Your own body, speech, and mind become oneness with Samayavajra’s holy body, holy speech, and holy mind.

MEDITATE ON EMPTINESS

Meditate on the emptiness of the three circles: yourself, the creator, the action of creating negative karma, and the negative karma accumulated are all empty of existing by their own nature.

DEDICATE IN EMPTINESS

With this same awareness of emptiness and dependent arising, dedicate the merits: yourself, the dedicator, the action the action of dedicating, and the merits that are dedicated are all merely imputed by thought.

PURIFY WITH AN ABBREVIATED OFFERING OF TSOG

[52]

SEE CHAPTERS 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, AND 23.

See also practice 53.

One very powerful way to purify broken vows of individual liberation, bodhisattva vows, and tantric vows and commitments, as well as to collect merits, is to offer tsog. It is one of the main causes to achieve the Heruka and Vajrayogini pure lands, to be born there.

GUIDE YOUR LOVED ONE IN THE PRACTICE

AN ABBREVIATED OFFERING OF TSOG, BY THE AUTHOR

This abbreviated tsog offering practice should be preceded by self-generation into any highest tantra deity on the basis of refuge and bodhichitta, or *Six-session Guru Yoga*, sadhana of the deity, *Guru Puja*, etc.

Then, the requisite substances of *bala* and *mandana*, as well as an offering of food, should be blessed as you would bless the inner offering. For convenience, an abbreviated blessing has been included here, which should be performed on the basis of having generated oneself as the deity.

After this, the tsog may be offered as indicated.

BLESSING THE TSOG

E MA HO!

Food, drink, five meats, five nectars – that which is in the skull –
Is in the nature of bliss and voidness.

Purified, actualized, and increased by the three vajras,
It becomes an ocean of uncontaminated nectar.

OM AH HUM (3x)

OFFERING THE TSOG

HO! In order to please this assembly of the root and lineage gurus,
The *vidams*, Vajrayogini and so forth,
The Three Jewels, and the ocean of dakinis and oath-
bound protectors,
Together with the beings of the six realms who have been
my mothers,
I present this blessed offering of inseparable bliss and void.

OM AH HUM

Having joyfully received this,
May all degenerated vows be renewed.
Please lead us quickly to the pure land of the dakinis,
And having quickly caused a great rain of supreme and common
accomplishments to fall,
May all the obscuring false appearances of all motherly beings
Be effortlessly purified this very moment.

Recite once, three times, or any number of times.

PURIFY WITH AN OFFERING OF TSOG TO VAJRASATTVA BY LAMA YESHE

[53]

SEE CHAPTERS 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 29.

See also practice 52.

When Lama Yeshe wrote the Vajrasattva tsog offering in 1982 he said he composed it “in case students were getting bored with the older pujas. It’s shorter, too, and therefore suits our busy lifestyles!”

This tsog offering can be made to other highest tantra deities by substituting that deity’s name for Vajrasattva’s and by blessing the offerings in accordance with the yoga method of that deity and reciting that deity’s mantra.

GUIDE YOUR LOVED ONE IN THE PRACTICE

A BANQUET OF THE GREATLY BLISSFUL CIRCLE OF PURE OFFERINGS: AN ANTIDOTE TO THE VAJRA HELLS, BY LAMA THUBTEN YESHE

PRELIMINARIES

After completing either the abbreviated or elaborate meditation on the generation of oneself in the form of Vajrasattva, visualize as follows.

MEDITATION ON THE MANDALA OF GURU VAJRASATTVA: FIELD FOR THE COLLECTION OF MERIT

HUM

In the space before me,
From the enjoyment of indivisible great bliss and emptiness,
Appear the complete supporting and supported mandalas
of Vajrasattva.

Clouds of Samantabhadra’s offerings fill all of space.
In the sphere of great non-dualistic bliss
All beings miraculously appear as gods and goddesses

Embodying thoroughly developed method and wisdom
As skillful dancers manifesting peace, expansion, power, and wrath.

BLESSING THE OFFERINGS

OM KHANDAROHI HUM HUM PHAT

All those who create obstacles are dispelled, and by reciting they
are purified of ordinary appearances.

OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HAM

All becomes empty.
And from the sphere of emptiness
Appears the letter ah, which transforms
Into a very large and spacious skull cup
Containing the five meats and five nectars.
Melting, they all transform
Into a great ocean of wisdom nectar.

OM AH HUM HA HO HRIH (3X)

PRESENTING THE OFFERINGS AND RECITING THE MANTRA

This pure offering is the yogi's commitment (samaya)
And, as the pure vision of their great bliss,
Transcends being an object of ordinary senses.
It is the basis of all attainments and the most supreme nectar.
Therefore, O guru, with your non-superstitious
Simultaneously born great bliss, please enjoy it.

- (1) HUM O miraculous rainbow cloud
Appearing in the space of dharmakaya,
Holy body of Vajrasattva –
Having purified the hallucinated vision
And dualistic conception that fails to recognize
That the guru, in essence, is the deity,
The dakini, and the Dharma protector –
In order to please you, Guru Vajrasattva,
I am presenting these sacred ingredients
As pure offerings to be enjoyed by your five senses.
Please bless me to generate simultaneously born great bliss.

OM VAJRA HERUKA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA / HERUKA TVENO
 PATISHTHA / DRIDHO ME BHAVA / SUTOSHYO ME BHAVA /
 SUPOSHYO ME BHAVA / ANURAKTO ME BHAVA / SARVA SIDDHIM
 ME PRAYACCHA / SARVA KARMA SUCHAME CHITTAM SHRIYAM KURU
 HUM / HA HA HA HA HO / BHAGAVAN / VAJRA HERUKA MAME
 MUNCHA / HERUKA BHAVA / MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA AH HUM PHAT

- (2) HUM O miraculous rainbow cloud
 Appearing in the space of dharmakaya,
 Holy body of Vajrasattva –
 Having purified the hallucinated vision
 Of the five sense consciousnesses' clinging
 To the pleasure of desirable objects,
 Thereby depriving this perfect human birth of all meaning –
 In order to please you, Guru Vajrasattva,
 I am presenting these sacred ingredients
 As pure offerings to be enjoyed by your five senses.
 Please bless me to abandon clinging
 To the ordinary concepts and appearances of this life.

OM VAJRA HERUKA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA / HERUKA TVENO
 PATISHTHA / DRIDHO ME BHAVA / SUTOSHYO ME BHAVA /
 SUPOSHYO ME BHAVA / ANURAKTO ME BHAVA / SARVA SIDDHIM
 ME PRAYACCHA / SARVA KARMA SUCHAME CHITTAM SHRIYAM KURU
 HUM / HA HA HA HA HO / BHAGAVAN / VAJRA HERUKA MAME
 MUNCHA / HERUKA BHAVA / MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA AH HUM PHAT

- (3) HUM O miraculous rainbow cloud
 Appearing in the space of dharmakaya,
 Holy body of Vajrasattva –
 Having purified the hallucinated vision:
 The demon dualistic conception and veiling obscurations
 Of improper attention, superstition, karma, and delusions –
 In order to please you, Guru Vajrasattva,
 I am presenting these sacred ingredients
 As pure offerings to be enjoyed by your five senses.
 Please bless me to generate immaculate renunciation.

OM VAJRA HERUKA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA / HERUKA TVENO

PATISHTHA / DRIDHO ME BHAVA / SUTOSHYO ME BHAVA /
SUPOSHYO ME BHAVA / ANURAKTO ME BHAVA / SARVA SIDDHIM
ME PRAYACCHA / SARVA KARMA SUCHAME CHITTAM SHRIYAM KURU
HUM / HA HA HA HA HO / BHAGAVAN / VAJRA HERUKA MAME
MUNCHA / HERUKA BHAVA / MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA AH HUM PHAT

- (4) HUM O miraculous rainbow cloud
Appearing in the space of dharmakaya,
Holy body of Vajrasattva –
Having purified the hallucinated vision
Of holding oneself more dear than others:
The door to all suffering and the dualistic conception
That is the chief of all evils –
In order to please you, Guru Vajrasattva,
I am presenting these sacred ingredients
As pure offerings to be enjoyed by your five senses.
Please bless me to generate immaculate bodhichitta.

OM VAJRA HERUKA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA / HERUKA TVENO
PATISHTHA / DRIDHO ME BHAVA / SUTOSHYO ME BHAVA /
SUPOSHYO ME BHAVA / ANURAKTO ME BHAVA / SARVA SIDDHIM
ME PRAYACCHA / SARVA KARMA SUCHAME CHITTAM SHRIYAM KURU
HUM / HA HA HA HA HO / BHAGAVAN / VAJRA HERUKA MAME
MUNCHA / HERUKA BHAVA / MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA AH HUM PHAT

- (5) HUM O miraculous rainbow cloud
Appearing in the space of dharmakaya,
Holy body of Vajrasattva –
Having purified the hallucinated vision:
The stain of dualistic conception holding
What is merely imputed by superstition as true –
In order to please you, Guru Vajrasattva,
I am presenting these sacred ingredients
As pure offerings to be enjoyed by your five senses.
Please bless me to realize the great seal of emptiness.

OM VAJRA HERUKA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA / HERUKA TVENO
PATISHTHA / DRIDHO ME BHAVA / SUTOSHYO ME BHAVA /
SUPOSHYO ME BHAVA / ANURAKTO ME BHAVA / SARVA SIDDHIM

ME PRAYACCHA / SARVA KARMA SUCHAME CHITTAM SHRIYAM KURU
 HUM / HA HA HA HA HO / BHAGAVAN / VAJRA HERUKA MAME
 MUNCHA / HERUKA BHAVA / MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA AH HUM PHAT

- (6) HUM O miraculous rainbow cloud
 Appearing in the space of dharmakaya,
 Holy body of Vajrasattva –
 Having purified the hallucinated vision
 Of ordinary appearance and conception:
 The eighty superstitions both gross and subtle,
 The violent, uncontrollable wind of the dualistic mind –
 In order to please you, Guru Vajrasattva,
 I am presenting these sacred ingredients
 As pure offerings to be enjoyed by your five senses.
 Please bless me to receive the four actual empowerments.

OM VAJRA HERUKA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA / HERUKA TVENO
 PATISHTHA / DRIDHO ME BHAVA / SUTOSHYO ME BHAVA /
 SUPOSHYO ME BHAVA / ANURAKTO ME BHAVA / SARVA SIDDHIM
 ME PRAYACCHA / SARVA KARMA SUCHAME CHITTAM SHRIYAM KURU
 HUM / HA HA HA HA HO / BHAGAVAN / VAJRA HERUKA MAME
 MUNCHA / HERUKA BHAVA / MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA AH HUM PHAT

- (7) HUM O miraculous rainbow cloud
 Appearing in the space of dharmakaya,
 Holy body of Vajrasattva –
 Having purified the hallucinated vision
 Of experiencing the vajra hells
 Resulting from the uncontrollable downpour
 Of negative actions and broken samaya –
 In order to please you, Guru Vajrasattva,
 I am presenting these sacred ingredients
 As pure offerings to be enjoyed by your five senses.
 May infinite purity alone arise.

OM VAJRA HERUKA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA / HERUKA TVENO
 PATISHTHA / DRIDHO ME BHAVA / SUTOSHYO ME BHAVA /
 SUPOSHYO ME BHAVA / ANURAKTO ME BHAVA / SARVA SIDDHIM
 ME PRAYACCHA / SARVA KARMA SUCHAME CHITTAM SHRIYAM KURU

[53] PURIFY WITH AN OFFERING OF TSOG TO VAJRASATTVA BY LAMA YESHE

HUM / HA HA HA HA HO / BHAGAVAN / VAJRA HERUKA MAME
MUNCHA / HERUKA BHAVA / MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA AH HUM PHAT

OFFERING TO THE VAJRA MASTER

The offering of tsog to the vajra master should now be made while reciting

O holder of the vajra, please pay attention to me.
This pure offering presented by the assembled circle of dakas
and dakinis,
This nectar free of all divisions of subject and object,
Transcendentally blissful, please enjoy it eternally.

AH LA LA HOH

The vajra master then replies

O hail, great blissful wisdom!
The great collected offering,
The seed that causes the tum-mo heat to explode,
This joyful, blissful experience beyond concepts, beyond words –
Welcome, great eternal bliss!

AH HO MAHA SUKHA HO

Distribute the tsog offerings to the assembly.

VERSES OF PRAISE

Praise is offered by reciting the following:
Merely thinking of just your name
Eradicates all obstacles / and immediately purifies all
negative karma.
Thus, to you unsurpassed Vajrasattva,
I pay homage and make prostration.

EIGHT-LIMB PRAISE

OM To you whose brilliance equals the fire that ends a great eon
HUM HUM PHAT

OM To you who have an inexhaustible crowning top knot
HUM HUM PHAT

OM To you with bared fangs and a wrathful face HUM HUM PHAT

- OM To you whose thousand arms blaze with light HUM HUM PHAT
 OM To you who hold an ax, an uplifted noose, a spear, and a skull
 staff HUM HUM PHAT
 OM To you who wear a tiger-skin cloth HUM HUM PHAT
 OM I bow to you whose great smoke-colored body ends all
 obstructions HUM HUM PHAT
 OM I prostrate to Bhagavativajra Varahi HUM HUM PHAT
 OM To the queen of the female arya practitioners, invincible in
 the three realms HUM HUM PHAT
 OM To you who destroy all fears of evil spirits with your great
 diamond-like means HUM HUM PHAT
 OM To you whose eyes empower those who sit on the diamond
 throne not to be conquered by anyone HUM HUM PHAT
 OM To you whose wrathful body of psychic heat can desiccate
 Brahma HUM HUM PHAT
 OM To you who terrify and dry up the demons and thus can
 vanquish all other forces HUM HUM PHAT
 OM To you who triumph over all that can make you ill-tempered,
 excited, or stupefied HUM HUM PHAT
 OM I bow to Vajra Varahi, the consort who overpowers lust
 HUM HUM PHAT

OFFERING THE REMAINING TSOG

OM AH HUM (3x)

To the assembly of the eight classes of wrathful governing protectors
 I present all the remaining pure offerings –
 The nectar of the five wisdoms contained in this skull cup –
 An illusory appearance of indivisible bliss and emptiness.
 Do your duty, the four rites for Dharma practitioners.

CONCLUDING PRAYER OF AUSPICIOUSNESS

May all be auspicious for me to see my mind as the lama:
 Who understands perfectly all beings' thoughts,
 Whose speech fulfills countless beings' wishes,
 And whose pure body arises from an infinite collection of merit.

May all be auspicious for realizing the unity of dharmakaya
and rupakaya
By discovering my own subtle, continually residing consciousness
Through the power of taking the three bodies as the path:
The antidote to imminent death, bardo, and rebirth.
May all be auspicious for everything within samsara and nirvana
To be synthesized with great emptiness and great bliss
Through the unusual embrace of the mother: the sphere of
space beyond all puzzling divisions,
And the father: the great blissful wisdom, the appearance of
all existent phenomena.

POSTSCRIPT

The following poem in jest came uncontrollably and without premeditation to the mind of the author while he was composing this work:

All of samsara appears
As a foe to one who fears
He might be gored and torn
By the proverbial rabbit's horn
Of tantric ordinations:
The golden ground foundation,
In the common path untrained,
In tantra unordained,
He has no initiation;
What a situation!
How strange! What a joke!
He's a sky-flower yogi!

Through the blessings of all the root and lineage lamas,
The great accomplishments of the mind-bound deity Vajrasattva,
And the divine actions of the dakinis and protectors of
the three places,
May auspiciousness allow all beings to be satisfied by
ultimate peace.

PURIFY WITH THE SELF-INITIATION OF YOUR LOVED ONE'S MAIN DEITY

[54]

SEE CHAPTERS 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 29.

Chöden Rinpoche says that if the person who is passing away is qualified to take the self-initiation – that is, they have received a highest tantra initiation and have completed the retreat and fire puja – and cannot themselves do it, they can invite someone else to recite the prayers for them while they meditate on the meaning.

Of course, if there is a lama nearby, according to Rinpoche, it is good to take the initiation again.

Taking a self-initiation purifies not only degenerations of tantric vows, such as root downfalls, but also broken bodhisattva and individual liberation root and secondary vows. With this practice you plant the seeds of the bodies of the buddha (as discussed in chapter 10), thus leaving such strong imprints of the tantric path on your mind, which causes you to quickly gain realizations of the path to enlightenment.

[55] HAVE YOUR LOVED ONE LIE IN THE LION POSITION

SEE CHAPTER 18.

See also practice 40.

As discussed in the fifth of the five powers in chapter 5, it's good to have your loved one follow the example of our kind, compassionate Buddha when he passed away into the sorrowless state and have them lie in the lion position. (Of course, if they are a practitioner they can sit in the meditation posture. It's not necessary; it's up to the individual.)

If they've practiced sleeping in this position (practice 40) it will be easier now.

Lying in this position helps virtuous thoughts arise in the person's mind at the time of death; it makes it easy for this to happen. And it reminds them of the Buddha, that they're following in his footsteps. At the time of death there will be no worries, they'll be saved by this last thought of reflecting on the Buddha.

And lying in this position naturally helps the consciousness leave through the crown, which means your loved one will go to a pure land.

THE LION POSITION

The right hand should be under the right cheek with the ring finger blocking the right nostril, and the left arm should be stretched out along their left side.

The breath coming through the right nostril is the breath of attachment, so stopping it helps the mind not be controlled by attachment, to not die with attachment. It might not be so easy to block the right nostril in this way, so you could use cotton instead. And you could put pillows behind your loved one's back to support the body.

As discussed in chapter 12, ideally they should be lying with their head pointing towards the north, which means they are facing the west, which is where Amitabha Buddha's pure land is.

OFFER A MANI PILL FROM HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

[56]

SEE CHAPTER 18.

As advised in *Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead*, it is good to give the person who is dying a mani pill. This blesses and purifies your loved one's mind, helping them generate virtuous thoughts.

You should crush the pill, mix it with water, and put a little into the person's mouth, making sure they swallow it. Chöden Rinpoche says it's important to do this done before the outer breath has stopped, because after that you should not touch the body, as discussed on page 114 in chapter 19.

These pills contain many blessed substances and relics of enlightened beings, bodhisattvas, and great yogis. They have been blessed with the prayers of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the actual Compassion Buddha, for the benefit of sentient beings; and many great lamas, meditators, and sangha have also prayed day and night, for many days, continuously blessing them.

You can give the pills to children and people who don't have the ability to understand, as well as to animals.

[57] OFFER A RELIC OF THE BUDDHA

SEE CHAPTER 18.

Another method to help the dying person avoid being reborn in the lower realms is to give them a relic of a buddha; you put it into their mouth.

Again, the relic must be put in the mouth before the breath has stopped, otherwise, as it says here in *Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead*, it will just sit there and not go down the throat. Also, offering the relic after the breath has stopped could delay the death.

As with the blessed pills, the relic can be given to children and animals.

SEE CHAPTERS 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 26.

See also practices 21–30 and 31.

BEFORE DEATH (CHAPTER 18)

Place a sheet of paper or card with mantras written on it face down on the person's body so that the words touch the skin; any part of the body would do.

I have written out eleven mantras, a small version of which is in the Liberation Box; included are some of the five great mantras (practice 31) and ten powerful mantras (practices 21–30), as well as the mantra of Vajra Armor.

Or you could use any of the five great mantras or the ten powerful mantras. Namgyälma (practice 25), which is included in both groups (and is also in the Liberation Box), is one of the best for the dying; or Kunrig (practice 27), Mitrugpa (practice 24), Stainless Pinnacle (practice 31) – any mantras you like can be used.

It is good to leave the mantras on the body until it is buried or cremated.

AFTER THE BREATH HAS STOPPED BUT BEFORE THE MIND HAS LEFT (CHAPTERS 20–23)

If you haven't done so already, it's beneficial to place a sheet of paper or card with mantras written on it face down on the person's body so that the words touch the skin; as above.

Be careful not to disturb the body.

It is good to leave the mantras on the body until it is buried or cremated.

AFTER THE MIND HAS LEFT (CHAPTER 26)

If you have not already put written mantras on the body of your loved one, it is especially good to do so now, as above.

[58] BLESS THE BODY WITH WRITTEN MANTRAS

You can put the sheets of mantras on any part of the body so that the words are touching the skin, or rub the body with them.

Or you can put rolls of the mantras on the body – on the head, for example.

Or you could wrap mantras around the body, the chest, for example, as Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche explained that they do in Amdo in Tibet; they use Mitrugpa mantras.

You should leave the mantras there when the body is buried or cremated. This helps purify negative karma and cause a good rebirth.

You can do this for animals as well.

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SPONSOR MONASTERIES, DHARMA CENTERS, OR FRIENDS TO PERFORM PRACTICES SUCH AS MEDICINE BUDDHA

SEE CHAPTER 18.

See also other practices related to the Medicine Buddha: 14, 22, 36, and 78.

You can make offerings to other people who are not there – monks and nuns in monasteries or Dharma centers, or friends – and request them to perform Medicine Buddha or other practices for your loved one.

TO SPONSOR PUJAS

Contact Kopan Monastery, the author's monastery near Kathmandu, Nepal.

kopanmonastery.com/index.php/prayers-pujas/order-a-puja

[60] SHOUT IN YOUR LOVED ONE'S EAR THE NAME OF THEIR GURU, OR THE BUDDHA

SEE CHAPTER 19.

See also other practices related to the guru: 1, 10, 18, 35, 43, 47, 72, and 85.

The very first thing you should do as soon as your loved one's breath stops is shout loudly into their ear the name of their lama, or of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, or the name of the buddha they usually pray to, or any buddha, and remind them to take refuge.

As I mentioned in practice 10, hearing the name of their guru is considered a very effective kind of transference of consciousness. Chöden Rinpoche refers to a quotation from *The Kalachakra Tantra*: "To recall the name of your guru for even one second is the best phowa."

This is even true for someone who has created the five heavy negative actions: if they have devotion in their guru, merely hearing the name of their lama can help their consciousness take to a good rebirth.

PUT BLESSED SUBSTANCES ON YOUR LOVED ONE'S CROWN

[61]

SEE CHAPTER 19.

Next you can put blessed substances on the crown: at the chakra, which is towards the back of the head.

- a phowa pill
- an inner-offering pill
- a mani pill
- sand from a Kalachakra mandala

You can use butter and honey to help them stick. (Be sure not to touch any other part of the body, as discussed on page 114 in chapter 19.) Doing this helps your loved one's consciousness go to the crown chakra so that it leaves from there, causing it to go to a pure land.

When the body is taken out, you can keep the pill or sand and use it for others who die.

PHOWA PILLS

The phowa pills consist of the ashes of the great yogis and bodhisattvas, also relics of buddhas – I made some using Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo's ashes. Some lamas also use these while they're doing phowa. If hearing, taking a blessing from, touching, seeing, or even remembering great Heruka practitioners like Pabongka Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe can liberate us from all our negative karmas, then there's no question that it's the same when we have contact with their ashes.

There is a phowa pill in the Liberation Box.

INNER OFFERING PILLS

If you don't have phowa pills, you can use an inner-offering pill made by high lamas.

[61] PUT BLESSED SUBSTANCES ON YOUR LOVED ONE'S CROWN

MANI PILLS

The mani pills are from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

KALACHAKRA SAND

The sand is from a Kalachakra mandala, also blessed by His Holiness.

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REQUEST A LAMA TO PERFORM PHOWA

[62]

SEE CHAPTER 19.

See also practices 48 and 81.

Assuming that your loved one has requested this, now is the time to invite a lama to perform phowa. You should request this immediately after the breath has stopped and, except for putting the blessed substances on the crown, before you touch the body.

The lama can either come to where the body is or, as advised in *Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead*, “Do the practice from a distance.” If the latter, it’s important you tell him in what direction your loved one’s head is pointing; this helps the phowa be more precise.

It is said that phowa can be done only after the breath has stopped, not before (except if the dying person is doing it themselves, as discussed in practice 48). Because phowa has the power to transfer the consciousness from the body, if it’s done before death there is a risk the mind could leave before it’s ready.

However, if your loved one is an accomplished meditator actually in meditation there is no need to do phowa; they can take care of themselves.

See practice 48 if your loved one has their own practice of phowa.

See practice 81 if phowa is to be practiced during the forty-nine days after death.

[63] OFFER LIGHTS IN FRONT OF THE BODY

SEE CHAPTER 20.

Chöden Rinpoche said that as long as the body is in the house, you must always offer a light nearby. In Tibet, of course, they would offer a butter lamp; you could use any kind of lights: electric, candles, etc.

This is not an offering to the body but to the Three Rare Sublime Ones. It is mentioned in the Heruka root tantra that one will achieve realizations if one offers lights – hundreds, thousands of lights. There are many statements like this in the teachings.

Another reason to have lights on – you could keep the room lights on – is that it helps prevent a spirit from entering the body, which is a danger. You should have the lights lit all the time, day and night.

By the way, Rinpoche explained that the wick of a butter lamp in front of the body is heavy and dark, which means the light is unclear. The pollution from the body affects the light, Rinpoche said, and it's always like this.

RECITE “THE KING OF PRAYERS”

[64]

SEE CHAPTERS 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, AND 29.

See also chapter 6; and other practices related to Amitabha: 11, 20, 66, and 81.

THE FIRST OF THE EIGHT PRAYERS TO BENEFIT THE DEAD

THE EXTRAORDINARY ASPIRATION OF THE PRACTICE OF SAMANTABHADRA

I bow down to the youthful Arya Manjushri!

You lions among humans,
Gone to freedom in the present, past and future
In the worlds of ten directions,
To all of you, with body, speech, and sincere mind, I bow down.

With the energy of aspiration for the bodhisattva way,
With a sense of deep respect,
And with as many bodies as atoms of the world,
To all you buddhas visualized as real, I bow down.

On every atom are buddhas numberless as atoms,
Each amidst a host of bodhisattvas,
And I am confident the sphere of all phenomena
Is entirely filled with buddhas in this way.

With infinite oceans of praise for you,
And oceans of sound from the aspects of my voice,
I sing the breathtaking excellence of buddhas,
And celebrate all of you gone to bliss.

Beautiful flowers and regal garlands,
Sweet music, scented oils, and parasols,
Sparkling lights and sublime incense,
I offer to you Victorious Ones.

Fine dress and fragrant perfumes,
Sandalwood powder heaped high as Mount Meru,
All wondrous offerings in spectacular array,
I offer to you Victorious Ones.

With transcendent offerings peerless and vast,
With profound admiration for all the buddhas,
With strength of conviction in the bodhisattva way,
I offer and bow down to all Victorious Ones.

Every harmful action I have done
With my body, speech, and mind
Overwhelmed by attachment, anger, and confusion,
All these I openly lay bare before you.

I lift up my heart and rejoice in all the merit
Of the buddhas and bodhisattvas in ten directions,
Of solitary realizers, hearers still training, and those beyond,
And of all ordinary beings.

You who are the bright lights of worlds in ten directions,
Who have attained a buddha's omniscience through the stages
of awakening,
All you who are my guides,
Please turn the supreme wheel of Dharma.

With palms together I earnestly request:
You who may actualize parinirvana,
Please stay with us for eons numberless as atoms of the world,
For the happiness and well-being of all wanderers in samsara.

Whatever slight merit I may have created,
By paying homage, offering, and acknowledging my faults,
Rejoicing, and requesting that the buddhas stay and teach,
I now dedicate all this for full awakening.

May you buddhas now living in the worlds of ten directions,
 And all you gone to freedom in the past, accept my offerings.
 May those not yet arisen quickly perfect their minds,
 Awakening as fully enlightened ones.

May all worlds in ten directions,
 Be entirely pure and vast.
 May they be filled with bodhisattvas
 Surrounding buddhas gathered beneath a bodhi tree.

May as many beings as exist in ten directions
 Be always well and happy.
 May all samsaric beings live in accord with the Dharma,
 And may their every Dharma wish be fulfilled.

Remembering my past lives in all varieties of existence,
 May I practice the bodhisattva way,
 And thus, in each cycle of death, migration, and birth,
 May I always abandon the householder's life.

Then, following in the footsteps of all the buddhas,
 And perfecting the practice of a bodhisattva,
 May I always act without error or compromise,
 With ethical discipline faultless and pure.

May I teach the Dharma in the language of gods,
 In every language of spirits and nagas,
 Of humans and of demons,
 And in the voice of every form of being.

May I be gentle-minded, cultivating the six paramitas,
 And never forget bodhichitta.
 May I completely cleanse without omission
 Every negativity and all that obscures this awakening mind.

May I traverse all my lives in the world,
 Free of karma, afflictions, and interfering forces,
 Just as the lotus blossom is undisturbed by the water's wave,
 Just as the sun and moon move unhindered through the sky.

May I ease the suffering in the lower realms
And in the many directions and dimensions of the universe.
May I guide all wanderers in samsara to the pure bliss of awakening
And be of worldly benefit to them as well.

May I practice constantly for eons to come,
Perfecting the activities of awakening,
Acting in harmony with the various dispositions of beings,
Showing the ways of a bodhisattva.

May I always have the friendship
Of those whose path is like mine,
And with body, words, and also mind,
May we practice together the same aspirations and activities.

May I always meet a spiritual mentor
And never displease that excellent friend,
Who deeply wishes to help me
And expertly teaches the bodhisattva way.

May I always directly see the buddhas,
Masters encircled by bodhisattvas,
And without pause or discouragement for eons to come,
May I make extensive offerings to them.

May I hold within me the Buddha's genuine Dharma,
Illuminate everywhere the teachings that awaken,
Embody the realizations of a bodhisattva,
And practice ardently in all future eons.

While circling through all states of existence,
May I become an endless treasure of good qualities –
Skillful means, wisdom, samadhi, and liberating stabilizations –
Gathering limitless pristine wisdom and merit.

On one atom I shall see
Buddha fields numberless as atoms,
Inconceivable buddhas among bodhisattvas in every field,
Practicing the activities of awakening.

Perceiving this in all directions,
 I dive into an ocean of buddha-fields,
 Each an ocean of three times' buddhas in the space of a wisp of hair,
 So I, too, will practice for an ocean of eons.

Thus, I am continually immersed in the speech of the buddhas,
 Expression that reveals an ocean of qualities in one word,
 The completely pure eloquence of all the buddhas,
 Communication suited to the varied tendencies of beings.

With strength of understanding I plunge
 Into the infinite enlightened speech of the Dharma
 Of all buddhas in three times gone to freedom,
 Who continually turn the wheel of Dharma methods.

I shall experience in one moment
 Such vast activity of all future eons,
 And I will enter into all eons of the three times,
 In but a fraction of a second.

In one instant I shall see all those awakened beings,
 Past, present, and future lions among humans,
 And with the power of the illusion-like stabilization
 I will constantly engage in their inconceivable activity.

I shall manifest upon one single atom
 The array of pure lands present, past, and future.
 Likewise, I shall enter the array of pure buddha-fields
 In every direction without exception.

I shall enter the very presence of all my guides,
 Those lights of this world who are yet to appear,
 Those sequentially turning the wheels of complete awakening,
 Those who reveal nirvana – final, perfect peace.

May I achieve the power of swift , magical emanation,
 The power to lead to the great vehicle through every approach,
 The power of always beneficial activity,
 The power of love pervading all realms,

The power of all surpassing merit,
The power of supreme knowledge unobstructed by discrimination,
And through the powers of wisdom, skillful means, and samadhi,
May I achieve the perfect power of awakening.

Purifying the power of all contaminated actions,
Crushing the power of disturbing emotions at their root,
Defusing the power of interfering forces,
I shall perfect the power of the bodhisattva practice.

May I purify an ocean of worlds,
May I free an ocean of beings,
May I clearly see an ocean of Dharma,
May I realize an ocean of pristine wisdom.
May I purify an ocean of activities,
May I fulfill an ocean of aspirations,
May I make offerings to an ocean of buddhas,
May I practice without discouragement for an ocean of eons.

To awaken fully through this bodhisattva way,
I shall fulfill without exception
All the diverse aspirations of the awakening practice
Of all buddhas gone to freedom in the three times everywhere.

In order to practice exactly as the wise one
Called Samantabhadra, All Embracing Good,
The elder brother of the sons and daughters of the buddhas,
I completely dedicate all this goodness.

Likewise may I dedicate
Just as the skillful Samantabhadra,
With pure body, speech, and mind,
Pure actions and pure buddha-fields.

I shall give rise to the aspirations of Manjushri
For this bodhisattva practice of all-embracing good,
To perfect these practices
Without discouragement or pause in all future eons.

May my pure activities be endless,
 My good qualities boundless,
 And through abiding in immeasurable activity,
 May I actualize infinite emanations.

Limitless is the end of space,
 Likewise, limitless are living beings,
 Thus, limitless are karma and afflictions.
 May my aspiration's reach be limitless as well.

One may offer to the buddhas
 All wealth and adornments of infinite worlds in ten directions,
 And one may offer during eons numberless as atoms of the world
 Even the greatest happiness of gods and humans;

But whoever hears this extraordinary aspiration
 And, longing for highest awakening
 Gives rise to faith just once,
 Creates far more precious merit.

Those who make this heartfelt aspiration for the bodhisattva way
 Will be free of all lower rebirths,
 Free of harmful companions,
 And will quickly see Amitabha, Infinite Light.
 And even in this very human life,
 They will be nourished by happiness and have all
 conducive circumstances.

Without waiting long,
 They will become like Samantabhadra himself.

Those who give voice to this extraordinary aspiration
 Will quickly and completely purify
 The five boundless harmful actions
 Created under the power of ignorance.

Blessed with supreme knowledge,
 Excellent body, family, attributes, and appearance,
 They will be invincible to vast interfering forces and
 misleading teachers,
 And all the three worlds will make offerings.

Going quickly to the noble bodhi tree,
And sitting there to benefit sentient beings,
Subduing all interfering forces,
They will fully awaken and turn the great wheel of Dharma.

Have no doubt that complete awakening
Is the fully ripened result – comprehended only by a buddha –
Of holding in mind by teaching, reading, or reciting
This aspiration of the bodhisattva practice.

In order to train just like
The hero Manjushri who knows reality as it is
And just like Samantabhadra as well,
I completely dedicate all this goodness, just as they did.

With that dedication, which is praised as greatest
By all the buddhas gone to freedom in the three times,
I, too, dedicate all my roots of goodness
For the attainments of the bodhisattva practice.

When the moment of my death arrives,
By eliminating all obscurations
And directly perceiving Amitabha,
May I go immediately to Sukhavati, Pure Land of Great Joy.

Having gone to Sukhavati,
May I actualize the meaning of these aspirations,
Fulfilling them all without exception,
For the benefit of beings for as long as this world endures.

Born from an extremely beautiful, superlative lotus
In this joyful land, the Buddha's magnificent mandala,
May I receive a prediction of my awakening
Directly from the Buddha Amitabha.

Having received a prediction there,
May I create vast benefit
For beings throughout the ten directions,
With a billion emanations by the power of wisdom.

Through even the small virtue I have accumulated
By offering this prayer of the bodhisattva practice,
May all the positive aspirations of beings
Be fulfilled in an instant.

Through creating limitless merit
By dedicating this prayer of Samantabhadra's deeds,
May all beings drowning in this torrent of suffering,
Enter the presence of Amitabha.

Through this king of aspirations, which is the greatest of
the sublime,
Helping infinite wanderers in samsara,
Through the accomplishment of this scripture dazzling
with Samantabhadra's practice,
May suffering realms be utterly emptied of all beings.

[65] RECITE “THE DEDICATION CHAPTER FROM SHANTIDEVA’S BODHICHARYAVATARA”

SEE CHAPTERS 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 29.

THE SECOND OF THE EIGHT PRAYERS TO BENEFIT THE DEAD

May all sentient beings be graced with the bodhisattva way of life
By the virtue I have obtained while reflecting on *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*.

Through my merit, may all those in all directions who are afflicted
by bodily and mental sufferings
Obtain oceans of joy and contentment.

As long as the cycle of existence lasts,
May their happiness never decline.
May the world attain the constant joy of the bodhisattvas.

As many hells as there are in the worlds,
May beings in them delight in the joys of contentment in Sukhavati.

May those afflicted with cold find warmth.
May those oppressed with heat be cooled by oceans of water
Springing from the great clouds of the bodhisattvas.

May the forest of sword-leaves become for them the splendor of
a pleasure grove;
And may the swordlike Salmali trees grow as wish-fulfilling trees.

May the regions of hell become vast ponds of delight,
Fragrant with lotuses, beautiful and pleasing
With the cries of white geese, wild ducks, ruddy geese, and swans.

May the heap of burning coal become a mound of jewels.
May the burning ground become a crystal marble floor;

And may the mountains of The Crushing Hell become temples
of worship filled with Sugatas.

May the rain of burning coal, lava, and daggers from now on become
a rain of flowers;

And may mutual battling with weapons now become a playful
flower fight.

By the power of my virtue, may those whose flesh has completely
fallen off,

Whose skeletons are of the color of a white jasmine flower,
And who are immersed in the river Vaitarani.

Whose water is like fire, attain celestial bodies and dwell with
goddesses by the river Mandakini.

May the horrifying agents of Yama, crows, and vultures suddenly
watch here in fear.

Those looking upward behold blazing Vajrapani in the sky
and wonder:

"Whose is this brilliant light that dispels darkness all around and
generates the joy of contentment?"

May they depart together with him, freed of vice through the power
of their joy.

A rain of lotuses falls mixed with fragrant waters.

It is seen to extinguish the unceasing fires of the hells.

May the beings of the hells, suddenly refreshed with joy, wonder,
"What is this?"

And may they see Padmapani.

Friends, come, come quickly!

Cast away fear! We are alive!

A fragrant radiant vanquisher of fear,

A certain prince in a monastic robe, has come to us.

By his power every adversity is removed, streams of delight flow,
The spirit of awakening is born, as is compassion, the mother of
protection of all beings."

Behold him whose lotus feet are worshipped with tiaras of hundreds
of gods,

Whose eyes are moist with compassion,

On whose head a stream of diverse flowers rains down,
With his delightful summer palaces celebrated by thousands of
goddesses singing hymns of praise.
Upon seeing Manjughosha before them, may the beings of the hells
immediately cheer.

Through my virtues, may the beings of the hells rejoice upon seeing
the unobscured clouds of bodhisattvas,
Headed by Samantabhadra and bearing pleasant, cool, and fragrant
rains and breezes.

May the intense pains and fears of the beings of the hells be pacified.
May the inhabitants of all miserable states of existence be liberated
from their woeful states.

May the animals' risk of being eaten by each other disappear.
May the pretas be as happy as the people in Uttarakuru.

May the pretas always be satiated, bathed, and refreshed
By the streams of milk pouring from the hand of noble
Avalokiteshvara.

May the blind always see forms, and may the deaf hear.
May pregnant women give birth without pains, as did Mayadevi.

May they acquire everything that is beneficial and desired by the mind:
Clothing, food, drink, flower garlands, sandal-paste, and ornaments.

May the fearful become fearless and those struck by grief find joy.
May the despondent become resolute and free of trepidation.

May the ill have good health. May they be freed from every bondage.
May the weak become strong and have affectionate hearts for
one another.

May all regions be advantageous to all those who travel on roads.
May the purpose for which they set out be expediently accomplished.

May those who journey by boat succeed as they desire.
May they safely reach the shore and rejoice with their relatives.

May those who find themselves on wrong paths in dreary forests
come upon the company of fellow travelers;

And without fatigue, may they journey without fear of bandits, tigers,
and the like.

May deities protect the dull, the insane, the deranged, the helpless,
the young, and the elderly,

And those in danger from sickness, the wilderness, and so on.

May they be free from all lack of leisure; may they be endowed with
faith, wisdom, and compassion;

May they be possessed of stature and good conduct;

And may they always remember their former lives.

May they be inexhaustible treasuries just like Sky-treasure.

Free of conflict or irritation, may they have an independent way of life.

May beings who have little splendor be endowed with great
magnificence.

May unattractive wretches be endowed with beauty.

May the women in the world become men.

May the lowly obtain grandeur and yet be free of arrogance.

Through this merit of mine, may all beings without exception abstain
from every vice

And always engage in virtue.

Not lacking the spirit of awakening, devoted to the bodhisattva way
of life,

Embraced by the buddhas, and free of the deeds of maras,

May all beings have immeasurable life spans.

May they always live happily, and may even the word "death"
disappear.

May all quarters of the world be delightful with gardens of
wish-fulfilling trees,

Filled with the buddhas and the children of the buddhas,

And be enchanting with the sounds of Dharma.

May the ground everywhere be free from stones and rocks,

Smooth like the palm of the hand, soft and made of lapis lazuli.

May the great assemblies of bodhisattvas sit on all sides.

May they beautify the earth with their own resplendence.

May all beings unceasingly hear the sound of Dharma
From the birds, from every tree, from the rays of light,
and from the sky.

May they always encounter the buddhas and the children of
the buddhas.

May they worship the spiritual mentor of the world with endless
clouds of offerings.

May a god send rain in time, and may there be an abundance
of crops.

May the populace be prosperous, and may the king be righteous.

May medicines be effective,

And may the mantras of those who recite them be successful.

May dakinis, rakshasas, and other ghouls be filled with compassion.

May no sentient being be unhappy, sinful, ill, neglected, or despised;

And may no one be despondent.

May monasteries be well established, full of chanting and study.

May there always be harmony among the Sangha, and may
the purpose of the Sangha be accomplished.

May monks who wish to practice find solitude.

May they meditate with their minds agile and free of all distractions.

May nuns receive provisions and be free of quarrels and troubles.

May all renunciates be of untarnished ethical discipline.

May those who are of poor ethical discipline be disgusted

and become constantly intent on the extinction of their vices.

May they reach a fortunate state of existence,

And may their vows remain unbroken there.

May they be learned and cultured, receive alms, and have provisions.

May their mindstreams be pure and their fame be proclaimed in
every direction.

Without experiencing the suffering of the miserable states of
existence and without arduous practice,

May the world attain buddhahood in a single divine body.

May all sentient beings worship all the buddhas in many ways.
 May they be exceedingly joyful with the inconceivable bliss of
 the buddhas.

May the bodhisattvas' wishes for the welfare of the world be fulfilled;
 And whatever the protectors intend for sentient beings,
 May that be accomplished.

May the pratyekabuddhas and shravakas be happy,
 Always worshipped by the lofty gods, asuras, and humans.
 Through the grace of Manjughosha,
 May I always achieve ordination and the recollection of past lives
 until I reach the Joyous Ground.

May I live endowed with strength in whatever posture I am.
 In all my lives, may I find plentiful places of solitude.

When I wish to see or ask something, may I see the Protector
 Manjunatha himself, without any impediment.

May my way of life be like that of Manjushri, who lives to accomplish
 the benefit of all sentient beings throughout the ten directions.

For as long as space endures and for as long as the world lasts,
 May I live dispelling the miseries of the world.

Whatever suffering there is for the world, may it all ripen upon me.
 May the world find happiness through all the virtues of
 the bodhisattvas.

May the teaching that is the sole medicine for the suffering of
 the world and the source of all prosperity and joy
 Remain for a long time, accompanied by riches and honor.

I bow to Manjughosha, through whose grace my mind turns
 to virtue.

I salute my spiritual friend through whose kindness it
 becomes stronger.

**[66] RECITE “THE PRAYER TO BE REBORN IN THE
BLISSFUL REALM OF AMITABHA BUDDHA,”
BY LAMA TSONGHAPA**

SEE CHAPTERS 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 29

See also chapter 6; and other practices related to Amitabha: 11, 20, 64, and 81.

**THE THIRD OF THE EIGHT PRAYERS TO BENEFIT
THE DEAD**

I pray to Buddha Amitayus, teacher of gods and humans.
Your excellent activities give endless benefit to beings.
Remembering you just once pushes away fear of the lord of death.
Your mind always generates compassion towards beings like
a mother towards her only child.

Many times the good qualities of the supreme paradise, Sukhavati,
were praised by Lord Buddha.
By compassion’s power and prayers to be born there, I will explain
whatever I can.

Blocked by thick ignorance of the points to be abandoned
and obtained,
The chances for beings to reach a higher life are killed by the weapon
of anger.

We are locked in samsara’s prison, bound by the rope of desire, and
carried away by the great river of karma into samsara’s ocean.

Adrift in sufferings’ waves of sickness and old age,
Swallowed by the sea monster’s mouth of the ruthless lord of death,
And buried under a load of unwanted sufferings,
I am unprotected and moaning with depression.
My mind aspires to witness a destitute person’s only friend,
the Savior Amitabha.

You are accompanied by the great bodhisattva, Lord Avalokiteshvara,
And surrounded by a supreme entourage.

Please don't forget your unwavering promise to benefit us,
Made for immeasurable eons by generating the bodhisattva mind.
By the power of that, I supplicate you respectfully to come here
through the force of your miraculous powers and compassion,
Just like the king of birds flies through the deities' path of the sky.

By depending on the power of amassing the ocean-like two
collections of virtue accumulated by myself and others
throughout the three times,

I pray, Amitabha, that you, together with your two chief sons and
your entourage, will stay close to me at the time of my death and
protect me.

Please, Buddha, may I see you directly along with your entourage.
At that time may very strong faith in you arise in me.

May there be no extreme pain at the time of death.

Without forgetting, may I remember the object of my faith.

At the moment of death,

May the eight bodhisattvas come to me with their miraculous power
And show me the exact path to travel to Sukhavati.

Because of that may I be born from a lotus into the precious pure
land of Sukhavati

With sharp faculties and among the Mahayana race of beings.

As soon as I am born, may I retain everything previously learned
about concentration, selfless bodhichitta, endless ability,
confidence, and so forth.

May I achieve immeasurable collections of good qualities.

May Amitabha, his entourage, and the buddhas and bodhisattvas of
the ten directions have confidence in me,

And may I receive the complete Mahayana teachings, understanding
them exactly as intended.

Through miraculous power, may I go unobstructed to the many
buddha-fields,

Completing all the great bodhisattva activities.

Even though I take birth in the pure realms,

May I be drawn by the great power of compassion to go,

Without obstacles and through miraculous ability,
Mainly into impure lands.

May I teach the Dharma to all beings exactly as fits each one's ability.
Because of that, may I be able to establish them in the perfect, pure
path praised by the buddhas.

May I quickly complete all excellent activities and easily achieve
buddhahood for the sake of the vast numbers of beings.

One day, when this life's activities are finished,
May my mind become full of faith and compassion from being able
to see you clearly, Amitabha,
Surrounded by your ocean of disciples.

As soon as the appearances of the intermediate state come to me,
May the eight bodhisattvas show me the unmistakable path.
Because of that, may I be born into Sukhavati and then emanate into
impure lands in order to save beings.

Even though I may not always be able to achieve such a supreme
state through all my lives,
May I always achieve the basis of a perfect human form.
May I strive at hearing, contemplating, and meditating upon the
explanations and realizations of Buddha's teachings.

May I never be separated from the basis of a human form,
Ornamented by the seven qualities of the higher realms.
In those lifetimes may I always achieve the ability to remember all my
previous existences with exact clarity.

Throughout all my future lives may I see samsaric existence as
without essence.

May I be attracted to nirvana's qualities.
Because of that, through Buddha's excellent teachings on vinaya,
May I renounce the world and enter the monastic life.

When I become a monk or a nun, may I not commit any of the
natural bad deeds nor break even the slightest of
Buddha's precepts.

May I be just like Bhikshu Mitrugpa (Undisturbed),

Achieving great enlightenment by completely developing the heap
of ethics.

Also, throughout all my future lives
May I exactly understand the way for purely cleaning away the
mental afflictions.

Then may I achieve the excellent collections of recollecting everything
without exception that I previously learned,
Including the branches of perfection and holding in mind the words
and meanings of the Dharma.
May I achieve the pure confidence to teach without obstacle to
others I behold.

Also, throughout all my lives may I enter the samadhis called "going
courageously" and so forth,
May I gain the "flesh eye" and so forth,
And may I achieve the five clairvoyances, such as the miraculous
ability to know faraway objects and so forth.
May I never be separated from these abilities.

Throughout all my future lives may I achieve great wisdom,
Which makes me able, through my own power, to discriminate
between the points of what should be developed
And what should be abandoned.

May I achieve clear wisdom,
Which is able to discriminate even the subtle details of the mental
afflictions and of the pure virtues
Exactly as they are, not mixing them but keeping them separate.

May I achieve quick wisdom,
Which is able to terminate without exception all lack of
understanding, wrong views,
And mental doubts as soon as they arise.

May I achieve profound wisdom,
Which gives me access to the scriptures of Buddha's excellent
speech,

So that without becoming stuck, I may understand the unfathomable depths of meaning.

In summary, with the wisdom free from the faults of
perverted wisdom,
May I become just like venerable Manjushri
With a skillful teacher's wisdom that keeps a clear understanding of
the meanings of the Buddha's teachings
And enables me to perfect all the bodhisattvas' transcendental
activities.

Like that, with wisdom that is great, clear, quick, and profound,
May I take care of other fortunate ones with kindness,
Destroy wrong views, and please the knowledgeable through
teaching, debating, and composing scriptures on the various
branches of Buddha's teachings,
Becoming a completely perfected scholar.

Throughout all my future lives may I be free of holding thoughts that
mainly cling to my own purposes,
And may I stop all laziness and cowardliness toward the great
activities of the bodhisattvas.

Then may I become skillful in the bodhisattva mind, which willingly
takes on the purposes of others with a brave mind perfectly
complete.

By that, may I perfect all bodhisattvas' activities and become just like
venerable Avalokiteshvara.

Also, throughout all my future lives, when working for the benefit of
myself and others,

May I subdue all demons, extremists, and opponents with wrong
views

Through the skillful power that enables me to complete all the
perfect bodhisattva activities,

Becoming just like the venerable Vajrapani.

Throughout all my future lives, with effort that abandons all laziness,
May I complete the bodhisattvas' activities by first generating the
bodhisattva mind instantly and then not wavering from it.

Through that great effort may I find incomparable buddhahood,
Becoming just like Buddha Shakyamuni.

Throughout all my future lives may I be able to overcome
all sicknesses of body and mind that are obstacles to achieving
enlightenment.

May I become just like the thus-gone Medicine Buddha, just by
mentioning whose name one is able to pacify all sufferings of
body, speech, and mind.

Also, throughout all my future lives may I attain whatever length of
life I wish for,

Becoming just like Buddha Amitayus.

Even by saying his name one is able to subdue all untimely death.

When obstacles to life come near, please appear to me,
Savior Amitayus, and through your four activities, tame your
disciples,

Appearing to them clearly in whatever form is fitting.

As soon as your form is seen, may all obstacles to life be
extinguished, without exception.

When you appear in whatever form is fitting for your disciples,
Savior Amitayus,

May we be able to recognize those forms as you, and may a faith that
is not artificial and that is unshakably strong arise.

Through the power of that faith,

May we meet directly with you in the form of virtuous friends
throughout all our lives, Buddha Amitayus,

Receiving direct teachings and never becoming separate.

Throughout all my future lives may I be held in the kindness of a fully
qualified Mahayana virtuous teacher,

The root of all ordinary and transcendent good qualities,

And may that teacher become very happy with me.

At that time also, through the power of a strong, unshakable faith
toward my virtuous guide,

May I only perform activities that please my teacher with all three
doors of my body, speech, and mind.

May I not do anything that would cause my guide to become
displeased for even an instant.

Having pleased my virtuous friend, may every holy instruction be
bestowed without leaving anything out,
And may I diligently practice.

Understanding whatever meanings are taught,
May I strive to be able to accomplish them completely.

May I not become influenced for even an instant by misleading
friends or non-virtuous teachers.

Throughout all my lives may I have reasoned faith in cause and
effect, renunciation, the altruistic wish for enlightenment,
Pure view, and all knowledges entered into effortlessly, experienced
without break.

Throughout all my future lives may the roots of all virtues I perform
through my body, speech, and mind
Serve to benefit others, becoming a cause for their
pure enlightenment.

**RECITE “THE PRAYER FOR THE BEGINNING,
MIDDLE, AND END OF PRACTICE,”
BY LAMA TSONGHAPA**

[67]

SEE CHAPTERS 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 29.

**THE FOURTH OF THE EIGHT PRAYERS TO BENEFIT
THE DEAD**

I bow before the conquering buddhas, bodhisattvas,
and arhats of all directions and of all times.

I offer this boundless prayer with the purest of minds to free
countless beings from cycles of existence.

By the power of the unfailing Three Jewels and of great rishis
possessed of the force of truth,

May these sincere words bear fruit.

Life after life, may I never be born into realms of great suffering or
unfavorable circumstance

But gain always a precious human form blessed with every
conducive provision.

From the moment of birth may I never be lured by the pleasures
of existence,

But, guided by renunciation intent on freedom, be resolute in
seeking the pure life.

May there be no hindrance to becoming a monk,

From friends, family, or possessions,
and for every conducive circumstance,

By mere thought may it appear.

Once a monk, may I be untainted as long as I live,

By breach of vow or natural fault, as promised in the presence of
my preceptor.

I pray that on such pure foundation, and for every mother
sentient being,

I devote myself with hardship for countless eons to every aspect,
profound and vast, of the Mahayana.

May I be cared for by true spiritual friends, filled with knowledge
and insight,
Senses stilled, minds controlled, loving, compassionate,
and with courage untiring in working for others.

As Sada Prarudita devoted himself to Dharma Arya,
May I sincerely please my spiritual master with body, life, and wealth,
Never disappointing him for an instant.

I pray that the Perfection of Wisdom, forever profound,
a bringer of peace, unbound by identification,
Be taught to me as taught to Sada Prarudita,
Unsullied by the muddy waters of false views.

May I never fall under the sway of false teachers and
misleading friends,
Their flawed views of existence and nonexistence well outside
the Buddha's intention.

With sail hoisted of the sincerest of minds, driven by winds
of unflagging effort,
On this well-built ship of study, thought, and meditation,
May I bring living beings from samsara's ocean.

As much as I excel in learning,
As much as I give to others,
As pure as my morality grows,
As much as I become wise,
By as much may I be empty of pride.

I pray that I listen insatiably to countless teachings at the feet
of a master,
Single-handedly with logic unflawed,
Prizing open scriptures' meanings.
Having examined day and night with fourfold logic all that I
have heard,
May I banish every doubt with the discerning understanding
that arises from such contemplation.

With conviction on dharmas profound gained from understanding
born of contemplation,
I pray that I retreat to solitude with a perseverance severing
life's attachments
To devote myself to proper practice.

When the Buddha's thoughts dawn upon me through study,
thought, and meditation,
I pray that things of this life forever bonded to samsara
And thoughts of my happiness alone never arise in my mind.

Unattached to my possessions I pray that I destroy parsimony,
Gathering disciples around me by giving first of material wealth
to satisfy them with Dharma.

With a mind renounced may I never transgress even the
smallest precept,
Though it may cost my life,
Flying forever, therefore, the flag of freedom.

When I see, hear, or think of those who struck, beat, or maligned me,
May I be without anger, speak of their virtues, and meditate
upon patience.

I pray I will apply myself to enthusiasm,
Achieving virtues unachieved,
Improving those attained,
Banishing utterly threefold debilitating laziness.

I pray to abandon the meditative absorption that lacks the power
of insight to quell samsara,
That is divorced from the moist compassion to quash
nirvana's passivity,
And that mostly throws one back to cycles of existence,
But develop instead the meditative absorption that unites
compassion and insight.

I pray that I banish false views of emptiness,
Mentally fabricated and partially known,
Born from fear of the most profound truth, cherished as supreme,
And that I realize all phenomena to be forever empty.

May I bring to faultless morality those so-called practitioners
with their wayward ethics,
Shamelessly empty of pure practice,
Rashly pursuing paths shunned by the wise.

May I bring to the path praised by buddhas those lost and fallen
onto wrong paths,
Swayed by deluded teachers and misleading friends.

I pray that my lion-like roar of teaching, argument, and composition
flattens the pride of fox-like false orators,
And, gathering well-trained disciples about me,
I fly the banner of the teachings forever.
In whatever life I may drink the nectar of Buddha's teachings,
I pray to be born into a good family and be of handsome build,
wealthy, powerful, and wise,
Blessed with long life and sound health.

May I develop the unique love of a mother for those who malign me
and harbor ill designs upon my life, my body, or my possessions.
By growing within myself the pure and extraordinary Bodhi-mind
Whose nature is to cherish others more than self,
May I soon give them unsurpassable enlightenment.

Whoever hears, sees, or calls these verses to mind,
May they be undaunted in fulfilling the powerful prayers of
the bodhisattvas.

By the power of these vast prayers made with the purest intention,
May I attain the perfection of prayer
And fulfill the hopes of every living being.

SEE CHAPTERS 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 29.

**THE FIFTH OF THE EIGHT PRAYERS TO BENEFIT
THE DEAD**

Until I manifest
The holy state of a supreme subduer,
May I obtain a basis for accomplishing the pure noble path,
Take ordination, and remember all my lives.

May I uphold the treasury of many infinite qualities –
dharani, confidence,
Meditative stabilization, clairvoyance, magical emanation, and more.

Having attained peerless knowledge, mercy, and ability,
May I swiftly perfect the conduct of enlightenment.

When I see signs of untimely death,
In that very moment may I clearly see the body
Of Protector Amitayus and destroy the Lord of Death;
May I quickly become an immortal knowledge-holder.

In all my lives by the force of Amitayus
Directly acting as a virtuous friend of the Supreme Vehicle,
May I never turn away, even for an instant,
From this noble path admired by the conquerors.

May I never generate a mind that,
Neglecting sentient beings, hopes for my welfare alone.
May I strive for the welfare of others with skill in means,
Unobscured regarding the way to accomplish their welfare.

Also by merely expressing and remembering my name,
May all those tormented by the result of their negative actions

[68] RECITE "UNTIL BUDDHAHOOD"

Become rich with the glory of sublime happiness, and
May they climb the stairway leading to the Supreme Vehicle.

By illustrating a mere fragment of the biographies of
The conquerors' children, may all the interferences
To the conduct of the conquerors' children be pacified
without exception,
And may helpful necessities be achieved by just calling them
to mind.

By the truth of the ruler of the Shakyas,
The guides Amitabha, Maitreya, Manjushri, the Lord of the Secret,
Avalokiteshvara, and the sugatas and their retinues,
May all these prayers be quickly fulfilled.

**RECITE “A DAILY PRAYER TO MAITREYA
BODHISATTVA TAUGHT
BY BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI”**

[69]

SEE CHAPTERS 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 29.

**THE SIXTH OF THE EIGHT PRAYERS TO BENEFIT
THE DEAD**

To the awakened ones I prostrate,
And to the yogis
With the power of god’s eye
As well as to all the bodhisattvas, hearers, and so forth.

Bodhichitta bars the way to unfortunate destinies;
It is the great teaching that leads to the highest realms
And even to the state beyond old age and death.

To the mind of enlightenment, bodhichitta, I prostrate.
Controlled by negative habits,
In the sight of the Buddha
I have often given harm to others.
I shall confess those actions.

Yet from the beneficial actions of my body, speech, and mind
I pray that the merit generating the seeds of omniscience
 may never be exhausted.
May I further accomplish this accumulation of merit
By performance of the three actions (of body, speech, and mind).

I offer all that I have to the buddhas
In their pure lands of the ten directions.
In the wisdom of all the buddhas
And in my own virtues I rejoice.

In short, I confess all harmful actions,
I make prostration to all the buddhas.
I rejoice in all acts of virtue

And I myself wish to obtain supreme wisdom.

Bodhisattvas of the tenth level
In all the ten directions
Need no reminder
To work for enlightenment.
Obtaining buddhahood, supreme enlightenment,
Joining those who have subdued the demon of self-cherishing,
He (Maitreya) will turn the Dharma wheel
In order to benefit all sentient beings.

I pray that sentient beings without exception
May be liberated by the sound of the great Dharma drum.
Please stay to teach the path to enlightenment
For inconceivable millions of eons.

I who am stuck hard in the mud of the desire realm,
Tightly bound by the rope of samsara,
Please watch over me, supreme beings
Who stand on the two feet of method and wisdom.

The love of the Buddha is not obscured
In the same way as love between sentient beings.
The goal of his loving kindness—compassion
Is to lead them across the ocean of samsara.

I will follow with care
The path of the buddhas
Of the past, present, and future.
It is enlightenment that I will practice.

When I have accomplished the six perfections
May I be able to liberate all beings in the six migratory realms.
May I manifest the six supramundane cognitions;
May I touch great enlightenment.

Not born and not coming, self-nature non-existent,
Abiding non-existent, awareness of appearance non-existent.
The non-true existence of things themselves.

I wish to realize the emptiness of phenomena.
Buddha is like a great lord;
Yet sentient beings do not exist, life does not exist.
No being at all is there that exists; even healing does not exist.
I wish to understand the phenomena of the non-self-existent ego.
Since ego's grasping of
All phenomena is non-existent,
I wish to develop charity without limit
In order to benefit all sentient beings.

Phenomena? Phenomena do not exist.
May the lack of material resources not hinder me.
All things are impermanent;
Therefore, I wish to accomplish the perfection of charity.

May I never transgress the discipline of morality and free myself
from pride,
Since by having pride in the appearance of morality and purity,
One is without morality.
I wish to accomplish the perfection of morality.

Patience must be as steady as earth or water,
Not changeable like the wind.
Knowing that both patience and anger do not exist,
I wish to accomplish the perfection of patience.

It is by effort that I must practice the perfection of effort
Without enjoying laziness.
By the power of mind and body
I wish to accomplish the perfection of effort.

Like the concentration called Magic
And the concentration of Going Heroically
And the concentration Like a Thunderbolt,
May I accomplish the perfection of concentration.

May I gain the great wisdom
That has realized the practices of all three vehicles,
The three doors to liberation,
And the three exact concentrations.

[69]

RECITE "A DAILY PRAYER TO MAITREYA BODHISATTVA TAUGHT
BY BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI"

Thus, there was one who followed a completed practice like this.
He was named Maitreya,
Accomplishing well the six perfections,
He quickly reached the tenth level.

MANTRA OF MAITREYA BUDDHA'S PROMISE

NAMO RATNA TRAYAYA / NAMO BHAGAVATE SHAKYAMUNIYE /
TATHAGATAYA / ARHATE SAMYAKSAMBUDHAYA / TADYATHA
OM AJITE AJITE APARAJITE / AJITAÑCHAYA HA RA HA RA MAITRI
AVALOKITE KARA KARA MAHA SAMAYA SIDDHI BHARA BHARA MAHA
BODHI MANDA BIJA SMARA SMARA AHSMA KAM SAMAYA BODHI
BODHI MAHA BODHI SVAHA

HEART MANTRA OF MAITREYA

OM MOHI MOHI MAHA MOHI SVAHA

NEAR HEART MANTRA OF MAITREYA

OM MUNI MUNI SMARA SVAHA

When my death comes to me in this place,
May I pass with ease to the pure land of Ganden.
May I quickly please the bodhisattva Maitreya
And learn from him the time and place of my awakening.

RECITE “THE PRAYER FOR A STATUE OF MAITREYA”

[70]

SEE CHAPTERS 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 29.

THE SEVENTH OF THE EIGHT PRAYERS TO BENEFIT THE DEAD

May the embodied beings who have fulfilled all requirements
For building an excellent statue of Maitreya
Be in the presence of the savior, perfect, pure Maitreya,
And enjoy the splendor of the Mahayana Dharma.

When the mighty sun, the savior Maitreya,
Shines atop the elevated place of Bodhgaya
And the lotus bloom of my wisdom has opened,
May a swarm of bees of fortunate ones be satisfied.

At that time Buddha Maitreya is extremely pleased, and
As he lays his right hand upon my head and
My supreme incomparable enlightenment is prophesied,
May I then quickly attain buddhahood for the sake of all
sentient beings.

Even in all future lifetimes while I am completing enlightenment,
After gathering as one all the great waves of deeds,
whatever there are,
Of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times,
May I properly give teachings.

Draped in delicate drawing-like scriptures of good explanation,
Supported on a golden center pole of discernment, and
Decorated with a jeweled tip of the three trainings,
May the victory banner of Buddha’s teachings be planted everywhere.

[70] RECITE "THE PRAYER FOR A STATUE OF MAITREYA"

May the teachings, the source of all well-being, spread and flourish,
And may all holy beings, the repository of the teachings,
 enjoy good health.

May the source of happiness for all embodied beings,
The teachings of the Buddha, always spread.

By the continual force of cultivating the three aspects of love,*
May there be the auspiciousness of the savior, Buddha Maitreya,
Who destroys the hosts of maras with the power of his love
And nurtures all sentient beings with the strength of his love.

**In the last verse the three aspects of love are: immeasurable love (from among the four immeasurables), affectionate love (from the "Seven-limb Prayer"), and superior thought love (also from the "Seven-limb Prayer").*

**RECITE “THE PRAYER FOR SPONTANEOUS BLISS,” [71]
BY THE SECOND DALAI LAMA GENDUN GYATSO**

SEE CHAPTERS 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 29.

THE LAST OF THE EIGHT PRAYERS TO BENEFIT THE DEAD

Respectfully I prostrate to the mighty protector, Maitreya,
Who pervades the world with clouds of love and compassion
From the space of dharmakaya, which spontaneously completes
great bliss,
And who rains down deeds in a continuous shower.

From your wisdom manifestation that sees, just as they are,
The minds and natural elements of countless disciples,
By the power of faith, please come down here in all
places unimpeded,
Like the reflected image of the moon in water.

Like jeweled inlay work of many kinds of precious gemstones
Set into a Mt. Sumeru of piled exquisite refined gold,
Your supreme form, which by seeing one remains unsatisfied,
I request to remain firmly for as long as cyclic existence lasts.

You, savior, hold closely with your compassionate hands
All sentient beings who have provided the requirements
For constructing a statue of affectionate love [Maitreya],
And please lead them definitely to the land of Tushita.

Inseparable from your face, amrita for their eyes,
Nurtured by your speech, the Mahayana scriptures,
And having perfected all the bodhisattva’s practices,
Please bestow your blessings for them to quickly attain buddhahood.
In the meantime, may all wishes be fulfilled;
May all sentient beings have a loving attitude;

[71] RECITE "THE PRAYER FOR SPONTANEOUS BLISS,"
BY THE SECOND DALAI LAMA GENDUN GYATSO

May the teachings of the Buddha spread and extend in all directions;
And may all sentient beings enjoy wonderful well-being.

May this place be filled by an assembly of ordained monks and nuns
Clad in saffron robes and upholding the three trainings,
And may deeds of explanation and practice bring good fortune
of extending

The Buddha's teachings everywhere for as long as cyclic
existence lasts.

By the truth of the infallible Three Precious Jewels,
The blessings of the power of Buddha Maitreya,
And the enlightened deeds of the mighty Dharma protectors,
May the complete essence of this pure prayer be fulfilled.

RECITE GURU PUJA

[72]

SEE CHAPTERS 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 29.

See also other practices related to the guru: 1, 10, 18, 35, 43, 47, 60, and 85.

Guru Puja is an incredible practice to do. It's got everything in it, including phowa.

You could recite just the refuge section. Whatever practices you do – jangwa, phowa, self-initiation – the foundation is refuge, relying on Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. So take strong refuge in the Guru Buddha, whom you visualize above the head of the your loved one – or you could visualize the entire merit field or just Shakyamuni Buddha. Then, as you recite a few malas of each of the refuge mantras, you pray that they purify all their negative karma immediately and be born in the pure lands of the buddhas or receive a perfect human rebirth.

REFUGE MANTRAS FROM GURU PUJA

NAMO GURUBHYA *To the Guru I go for refuge*

NAMO BUDDHAYA *To the Buddha I go for refuge*

NAMO DHARMAYA *To the Dharma I go for refuge*

NAMO SANGAYA *To the Sangha I go for refuge*

LA MA YI DAM KON CHOG SUM LA KYAB SU CHI WO

To the Guru, the Deity, and the Three Rare Sublime Ones I go for refuge.

GURU PUJA IS AVAILABLE FROM

THE FOUNDATION STORE

shop.fpmt.org

shopfpmt@fpmt.org

[73] DO A NYUNGNÄ FASTING RETREAT

SEE CHAPTERS 20 AND 29.

**See also other practices related to the Compassion Buddha:
21 and 38.**

It is excellent to do a three-day nyungnä fasting retreat. You could visualize yourself as the Compassion Buddha or see him in front of you, and as you recite the mantra, the long one or short one (practice 21), you imagine nectar going out from the heart, purifying your loved one.

**NYUNGNÄ FASTING RETREAT PRACTICE IS AVAILABLE FROM
THE FOUNDATION STORE**

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CHECK THAT THE MIND HAS LEFT THE BODY

[74]

SEE CHAPTERS 20, 21, 22, 23, AND 25.

Before you move the body of your loved one, it is important to check that the consciousness has already left. There are various signs that indicate that the mind is no longer there.

These signs are visible in both ordinary people and meditators.

NO LONGER WARM AT THE HEART

The easiest, most common way to check if the mind has left the body is to put your hand just above the heart chakra, without touching the body: if you feel warmth there, even if every other part of the body is cold, the consciousness is still there.

THE WHITE AND RED DROPS HAVE LEFT THE BODY

As we discussed in the death process on page 63 in chapter 9, the consciousness has left the body when, in the male, the white drop (a whitish liquid) leaves through the lower chakra and the red drop (a pinkish liquid) leaves through the nose; for the female it's the opposite.

Not necessarily both will come out of the body, sometimes just one; and sometimes because of chronic disease or longtime illness nothing comes out.

THE BODY SMELLS

The body starting to smell like rotten meat indicates that the consciousness has left. One lama, who has experience helping dying people, says that there is a very particular smell that bodies have once the consciousness leaves. Already sick bodies smell, but when the mind goes, he said, the smell is different: a very terrible smell, very deep somehow – sometimes people call it the smell of death.

[74] CHECK THAT THE MIND HAS LEFT THE BODY

THE FLESH DOES NOT RESPOND

Another indication that the mind has left the body is if when you press with your fingers on part of the body the flesh doesn't respond – the impression of your fingers remains.

THE HEAD MOVES

For a meditator, another sign that the mind has left the body, as I mention in chapter 24, whether they're sitting up or lying down, is that the head moves when the consciousness leaves.

TUG AT THE HAIR AT THE CROWN CHAKRA

[75]

As discussed in practice 74, if the indication is that the mind has not yet left the body, tug the hair at the crown chakra a few times – towards the back of the head – or firmly tap on the crown there. Anyway, the first time you touch the body it is auspicious to do this.

If the consciousness is still there, this can encourage it to go to the crown chakra and leave from there, which means your loved one would go to a pure land, as I discuss on page 62 in chapter 9.

[76] CONSULT AN ASTROLOGER

SEE CHAPTER 20.

Typically, a Tibetan would consult an astrologer immediately after the mind has left the body. Astrology can indicate what practices should be done to prevent your loved one from being born in the lower realms or to help them to take a good rebirth, such as which statue or thangka should be made on their behalf; that if you do this or that practice they will have a good rebirth, or be reborn as a monk or a nun, or even a great lama. It can even predict where the good rebirth will be taken.

However, it is said that this usually only works for ordinary people; astrology cannot predict the future of the great holy beings and nor very evil people.

You need to tell the Tibetan astrologer which of the twelve animal signs your loved one was born under, as well as the date and time they passed away, even perhaps the hour or whether it was in the morning, the afternoon, etc. It's important to be accurate.

There is astrology in the West, of course, but I'm not sure if it predicts future lives and so forth.

TO CONSULT AN ASTROLOGER

DHARAMSALA, INDIA:

Men-Tsee-Khang, the Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute

men-tsee-khang.org

SPRINKLE BLESSED SEEDS, WATER, ETC., ON YOUR LOVED ONE'S BODY

[77]

SEE CHAPTER 26.

Get some sesame seeds, mustard seeds, water, perfume, talcum powder, or something similar. Now recite the Namgyälma mantra twenty-one times (practice 25) – the long mantra is better, but the short mantra is okay – or any other mantras that you know, such as the Compassion Buddha mantra (practice 21).

Having blessed your breath with the recitation, now blow on the seeds or water, etc., blessing them. Now sprinkle it over the body.

Usually I keep a big packet of mustard seeds or baby powder close by. Every day, after I have chanted thousands of various mantras, I blow on the powder or seeds to bless them. I use them whenever I see dead insects or animals, or for people who have died. You could also do this. And you could send the blessed seeds to other people, for them to use when people die.

The Namgyälma mantra is especially powerful for purification of negative karma. For example, if it is written on cloth or paper and placed on a mountain top or roof where the wind can blow it, whoever is touched by the wind receives blessings and their negative karma is purified. Circumambulating a stupa that contains the mantra purifies all the karma to be reborn in the hot hells.

[78] BLESS THE ASHES, HAIR, NAILS, ETC., OF YOUR LOVED ONE WITH JANGWA

SEE CHAPTER 28.

See also other practices related to the Medicine Buddha: 14, 22, 36, 59, and 78.

As soon after the funeral service as possible you should organize a jangwa practice, during which the buddhas' wisdom is invoked into the remains – you need only a small amount of the ashes or bones, hair, nails, etc. – thus purifying and blessing them.

Even if the person died with non-virtuous thoughts, which usually means it's definite to be born in the lower realms, and they are in the intermediate state, relying on methods such as jangwa can help them change direction and receive a human body instead, or even go to the pure lands. They're on their way to the lower realms but because of the power of the Vajrayana, the power of the Buddha's words, and the power of the concentration of the lama or the person who does the practice, suddenly the person changes their journey.

Keeping the ashes of your loved one that haven't been blessed has no benefit for the dead or the living. Whereas, as Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche said, now that the ashes are purified and blessed with jangwa they are actual relics or holy objects.

Then you can dedicate all the merits created by doing the blessing to your loved one, praying that their negative karma is purified and that they receive a perfect human rebirth or rebirth in a pure land, meet the perfectly qualified virtuous friend, hear the holy Dharma, and quickly achieve full enlightenment.

But you can do even more. Having blessed the ashes with jangwa you can include them in holy objects such as tsa-tsas, stupas, or statues, which brings so much benefit, to your loved one and to you (see practice 79 below).

WHO CAN DO THE PRACTICE?

The practice is usually performed by qualified lamas. You can ask the

lama at your nearest Tibetan Buddhist center to perform the ceremony, or you can ask monks or nuns to do it. If you cannot get lamas or sangha to do the practice, you and your Dharma friends can do the practice.

Originally jangwa was done in conjunction with Buddha Kunrig, who, as mentioned in practice 26, is known as the king of deities for purifying the lower realms. Eventually jangwa was done with other buddhas as well: Medicine Buddha, Vajrayogini, Maitreya, etc. The practice included here is in association with the Medicine Buddha.

Within jangwa, at the end, there is phowa, shooting the consciousness into a pure land.

**JANGWA PRACTICE IS AVAILABLE FROM
THE FOUNDATION STORE**

shop.fpmt.org

shopfpmt@fpmt.org

[79] MAKE TSA-TSAS, STATUES, OR STUPAS USING THE BLESSED ASHES

SEE CHAPTER 28.

See also practice 87.

You can make or sponsor the making of tsa-tsas or statues of the buddhas, using your loved one's ashes as one of the ingredients.

Some people say that you shouldn't put ordinary people's ashes in holy objects, but as discussed in practice 78, by doing the practice of jangwa the wisdom of the buddhas has been invoked into them, thus purifying and blessing them. This is also stated here in *Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead*.

Including the blessed ashes in tsa-tsas or other holy objects creates inconceivable merit for your loved one, but also for you. Normally you would offer flowers or lights to your loved one at the cemetery, but this doesn't accumulate any merit; it's not even a virtuous action. But now because you are offering to a holy object you will create huge amounts of merit.

You can decide which Buddha to use – Medicine Buddha, Amitabha, or the Compassion Buddha, for example – or you could ask a lama or an astrologer which buddha would have the strongest effect in liberating your loved one. Or you could make a stupa.

IF YOU MAKE THE HOLY OBJECTS

TSA-TSAS

If you're making tsa-tsas you would mix some blessed ashes or remains with the clay or plaster or whatever material you're using.

STATUES OR STUPAS

If you prefer to make a statue or a stupa you would put some blessed ashes or remains inside. Any of the eight types of stupa are suitable, as well as the Kadampa stupa.

You can keep the holy object in your house – or, for a stupa, in your garden as well – and make offerings to the holy beings and to the state of enlightenment represented by them.

IF A DHARMA CENTER MAKES THE HOLY OBJECTS

Alternatively, you could request Dharma centers to make the holy objects for you. There are FPMT Dharma centers set up for this purpose in Australia, India, New Zealand, and the United States, where the holy objects can be made and kept in memorial shrines, where you can visit and make offerings.

AUSTRALIA

Chenrezig Institute: *chenrezig.com.au*

The Great Stupa: *stupa.org.au*

INDIA

Root Institute: *rootinstitute.com*

NEW ZEALAND

Dorje Chang Institute: *dci.org.nz*

UNITED STATES

Land of Medicine Buddha: *landofmedicinebuddha.org*

[80] THROW BLESSED ASHES INTO THE WIND OR WATER

SEE CHAPTER 28.

If you like, you could also throw the blessed ashes into the wind from a high mountain or into the sea, a lake, a river, etc. All the sentient beings touched by the ashes in the air or by the water are purified of their obscurations and negative karma.

REQUEST A LAMA TO PRACTICE PHOWA, OR YOU AND YOUR DHARMA FRIENDS PRACTICE AMITABHA PHOWA BY LAMA YESHE

SEE CHAPTER 29.

See also chapter 6; practices 48 and 62; and other practices related to Amitabha: 11, 20, 64, and 66.

IF A LAMA DOES THE PRACTICE

If phowa has not been performed already – either by your loved one (practice 48) or by a lama as soon as the breath stopped (practice 62) – it can be performed by a lama now.

As I mentioned in practice 62, when there is a very strong connection between the dying person and their guru it is possible in some circumstances that the guru can help their mind move away from nonvirtue and towards virtue – even if the person’s mind is in the intermediate state – so that they take a good rebirth, even a pure land.

When a high lama transfers somebody’s consciousness to a pure realm, many special signs happen, such as rainbows in the sky or white light emitting from the person’s body.

IF YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS DO THE PRACTICE

If you cannot request a lama, you and your Dharma friends can do the Amitabha phowa composed by Lama Yeshe.

I once asked Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche how to make a phowa practice effective. Rinpoche said that during our daily Vajrasattva practice we should visualize sentient beings at our heart on a moon disc and then, when we do the purifying meditation we can imagine the nectar beams emitting from Vajrasattva and entering the hearts of the sentient beings, purifying them. By doing this we are better able to transfer someone’s consciousness to a pure land, Rinpoche said.

These days there are many people interested in the hospice movement, especially in the West. Practicing phowa is an extraordinary service they can offer others.

Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche said that the practice becomes more effective, more powerful, when you do Medicine Buddha meditation

**[81] REQUEST A LAMA TO PRACTICE PHOWA, OR YOU AND YOUR DHARMA FRIENDS
PRACTICE AMITABHA PHOWA BY LAMA YESHE**

beforehand. You recite the names of the seven Medicine Buddhas and the mantra – both included below. Rinpoche himself does it that way. I remember years ago when one of the Tushita Dharamsala dogs died – we had many dogs – Rinpoche first did the Medicine Buddha practice. During it I recited each of the seven names seven times.

Normally it is necessary to have received an empowerment into this Amitabha Buddha phowa practice before practicing it, but if you have faith in the Dharma you can practice it, especially with the motivation of helping your loved one.

**THE TECHNICAL METHOD FOR TRANSFERRING
THE CONSCIOUSNESS TO GURU BUDDHA AMITABHA'S
PRISTINE REALM, BY LAMA THUBTEN YESHE**

FIRST RECITE THE NAMES OF THE SEVEN MEDICINE BUDDHAS

- (1) Buddha Glorious Renowned of Excellent Signs.
 - (2) Buddha King of Melodious Sound, Brilliant Radiance of Skill,
Fully Adorned with Jewels, Moon, and Lotus.
 - (3) Buddha Stainless Excellent Gold.
 - (4) Buddha Supreme Glory Free from Sorrow.
 - (5) Buddha Melodious Ocean of Dharma Proclaimed.
 - (6) Buddha King of Clear Knowing.
 - (7) Buddha Medicine Guru, Great King with the Radiance
of a Lapis Jewel.
- (7x)

THEN RECITE THE MEDICINE BUDDHA MANTRA

SHORT MANTRA

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

Common pronunciation

TAYATA OM BHEKANDZE BHEKANDZE MAHA BHEKANDZE
[BHEKANDZE] RADZA SAMUDGATE SVAHA.

PRELIMINARY PRACTICES

Clean the place of meditation, set up an image of Amitabha, make many offerings, and face west (or visualize that you are doing so).

REFUGE AND BODHICHITTA MOTIVATION

Take refuge in the Triple Gem and generate a bodhichitta motivation while reciting the following prayer with single-pointed concentration and devotion.

I go for refuge until I am enlightened
To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the supreme assembly.
By my merit of giving and other perfections,
May I become a buddha to benefit all sentient beings. (3x)

THE FOUR IMMEASURABLE THOUGHTS

May all sentient beings have happiness and its cause.
May all sentient beings be free of suffering and its cause.
May all sentient beings attain that happiness without limits.
May all sentient beings be free of attachment and aversion,
holding some close and others distant.

VISUALIZING GURU BUDDHA AMITABHA

Visualize the following with single-pointed clarity.

Above my crown on a lotus and a moon and sun throne sits
Guru Buddha Amitabha in the vajra pose.
His holy body is radiant and ruby red.
He has one face and two hands that rest in the gesture of
single-pointed contemplation.
He holds a nectar bowl filled with the elixir of immortality and
wears the saffron robes of moral purity.
His crown is marked by a shining white om, his throat by a radiant
red AH, and his heart by a deep blue HUM.
From the HUM in his heart boundless light shines forth filling all
of space.
This light penetrates especially Amitabha's Western Pristine Realm,
Invoking Buddha Amitabha, the eight great lion-like bodhisattvas,
and the vast assembly of male and female bodhisattvas

[81] REQUEST A LAMA TO PRACTICE PHOWA, OR YOU AND YOUR DHARMA FRIENDS
PRACTICE AMITABHA PHOWA BY LAMA YESHE

Who reside in the Pristine Realm of the West.
These all enter into Guru Amitabha's crown chakra,
descend his central channel, and mingle with his heart.
He and they are unified and of one essence.

Hold this thought with single-pointed concentration.

SEVEN-LIMB PRAYER

Optional when short of time.

This practice purifies the mind of poisonous imprints and their suffering results and empowers the mind with wholesome energy by cultivating extensive virtuous imprints and the dedication of their good results to the ultimate aim, the supreme happiness of enlightenment for all sentient beings.

I prostrate with body, speech and mind in heartfelt faith
and admiration.

I make material offerings and fill the boundless sky with billions
of exquisite offerings mentally transformed.

Every evil or deluded action done by me since beginningless time is
declared and offered for purification.

I rejoice in all the countless virtuous actions done by ordinary beings
and the inconceivable virtuous actions done by superior ones.

Please, Guru Buddha, remain within your present vajra form until
samsara is utterly emptied. *Visualize a jeweled throne marked
by a crossed vajra.*

And turn the wheel of the perfect Dharma for the sake of
sentient beings. *Visualize a golden thousand-spoked wheel.*

I dedicate all past, present, and future merits to the full
enlightenment of all sentient beings.

OFFERING THE UNIVERSAL MANDALA

Optional when short of time.

This ground, anointed with perfume, strewn with flowers
Adorned with Mount Meru, four continents, the sun, and the moon.

I imagine this as a buddha-field and offer it.

May all living beings enjoy this pure land!

Include the following requests:

May I be able to practice phowa at the time of death and to be able to do this for others;

May all sentient beings will be liberated from the suffering of the lower realms and be lifted up to higher realms;

And with your hook, please bring me to your blissful realm.

IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAMI

PROSTRATIONS

Optional when short of time.

Guru, invincible one beyond all evil, endowed with all virtues,
Tathagata, foe destroyer, fully complete and perfect buddha
magnificent king, Guru Amitabha of boundless light,
I prostrate, make offerings, and take refuge in you.
Please bestow upon me your countless blessings. (21x)

Then in heartfelt devotion I concentrate single-pointedly on
Guru Amitabha.

From his holy body five-colored nectar light streams down
through my central channel.

From here it flows through all the other channels of my body
completely filling it with blissful nectar-light.

All hindrances, such as illness and an untimely death,
are completely purified.

All negative forces utterly disappear, especially the grasping
at mundane existence.

The power to be successful in transferring consciousness and taking
rebirth in the Pristine Realm of the West is granted.

My body becomes crystal clear and translucent like a rainbow.

PRAYER OF BODHICHTTA MOTIVATION AND DEDICATION

All past, present, and future gurus, buddhas, and bodhisattvas
dwelling in the ten directions of space,

Especially Buddha Amitabha and the eight great lion-like
bodhisattvas, please pay attention to me.

[81] REQUEST A LAMA TO PRACTICE PHOWA, OR YOU AND YOUR DHARMA FRIENDS
PRACTICE AMITABHA PHOWA BY LAMA YESHE

Wishing to liberate all mother sentient beings from the vast ocean
of samsaric suffering

And to lead them all to the supreme joy of full enlightenment,
I realize that I myself must become a buddha.

Thus, I determine to take rebirth in the Pristine Realm of the West
and to hear teachings directly from Buddha Amitabha himself.

Therefore, by the force of all my past, present, and future merits
collected together and the immutable promise of all
the tathagatas,

And by the power of wisdom and absolute truth,

May I, at the very moment of death,

Take immediate and spontaneous rebirth upon a fully opened lotus
flower face to face with Buddha Amitabha's shining form.

May I obtain without difficulty the ability to hear teachings directly
from the mouth of Buddha Amitabha.

May I develop the six transcending perfections to their
ultimate completion,

And may I accomplish the ten stages of the bodhisattva's path.

May I attain all the wisdom, love, and power

Of myriads of buddhas in countless buddhafiels

More numerous than all the atoms of the boundless universe.

With clarity, visualize the following:

The consciousness principle (the very subtle mind of clear light)
Is seen as a brilliantly bright white-red energy drop in the center
of my heart channel-wheel inside the central channel.

From here I can look upward into Guru Amitabha's heart,
the wisdom of non-duality,

Which is vividly clear like the surface of a mirror, yet having
a five-colored radiance.

Guru Amitabha, looking down and seeing the radiant energy-drop
in my heart says, "Please, my son (or daughter), arise."

With joyful expectation, I look forward to going.

Then recite the following:

Since time without beginning I have been in constant confusion
and have been circling in samsaric existence.
Bound by grasping and longing attachment,
I have experienced continuing misery.
Unless I give up this deluded and grasping mind, no buddhas
or bodhisattvas can be of ultimate benefit to me.
Nothing in samsara is certain except that all mundane pleasures
die away.
This grasping and ignorant mind is the noose that binds me to the
relentless turning of the wheel of conditioned existence.
I yearn to go to Amitabha's Pristine Realm where even the word
"suffering" does not exist
And from where I can never fall again into samsara's misery.
With the power of perfect conviction, I prepare to go and dwell in
Amitabha's enlightened realm.

THE PRAYER OF PRAISE

You are like the sun dispelling all darkness,
And the panacea curing all illness and disease.
You are the perfect guide that leads all beings to blissful freedom
By the radiant red hook emanating from your heart.

THE PRAYER FOR THE TIME OF DEATH

Optional when short of time.

At the moment the messenger of death arrives
Please come instantaneously from your pristine realm
And advise me to give up grasping at mundane existence
And invite me to come to your pristine realm.

When earth sinks into water
And the mirage-like appearance is perceived,
And my mouth becomes dry and foul tasting,
Please come and tell me not to be afraid and inspire me
with true courage.

[81] REQUEST A LAMA TO PRACTICE PHOWA, OR YOU AND YOUR DHARMA FRIENDS
PRACTICE AMITABHA PHOWA BY LAMA YESHE

When water sinks into fire
And the smoke-like appearance is perceived,
And my tongue gets thick and my speech is lost
Please show me your shining face and give me solace and
peaceful joy.

When fire sinks into air
And the firefly-like appearance is perceived,
And my body heat and the light of my eyes rapidly fade away,
Please come and fill my mind with the sound of Dharma wisdom.

When air sinks into consciousness
And the burning like a butter lamp appearance is perceived
And my body becomes like the earth and my breathing
altogether ceases
Please draw me to your pristine realm with the radiant light
of your shining face.

And then may the radiant red hook
Emanating from your pristine heart
Enter my crown then descend my central channel and hook
My very subtle clear light mind and bring it to your pristine realm.

Yet if I must go into the intermediate state by the force of
my negative karma
May all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas rescue me with the power
of Dharma
And inspire me with the pure view that sees all beings as
utterly pure,
Hears all sounds as Dharma teaching, and sees all places as
your Pristine Realm.

Then with clarity visualize the following:

From Guru Amitabha's heart a reed of radiant white light descends
to my crown and forms there an indestructible and
cohesive bond.

There is now an unobstructed passageway between
my very subtle mind,

The white-red clear light energy-drop in the center of my heart,
And the clear mirror-like heart of Guru Amitabha.

Then suddenly a radiant hook of red light emanates from
Guru Amitabha's heart,
Descends through the passageway,
And securely hooks the delicate and pure clear light energy drop
in my heart.

***Or you can visualize that Guru Amitabha's heart draws the energy-drop
upward just as a magnet attracts iron filings.***

Contemplate this with single-pointed concentration.

THE PRAYER FOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

Guru Buddha Amitabha, essence of the perfect truth of
the Triple Gem,
Courageous one who liberates all sentient beings from the
bondage of mundane existence
And delivers them to the supremely blissful realm of buddhahood,
Please release me and all others from the difficulties and fears of
the death process and the intermediate state of
the after-death plane.
Easily guide me to your wisdom heart by inspiring me to thoroughly
renounce the grasping at mundane existence and to achieve
success in transferring my consciousness.
You are my only liberator.
Please with great compassion take me to your Pristine Realm.

Now with crystal clarity and vivid concentration, visualize your very
subtle mind of clear light in the form of the very blissful and radiant
white-red energy-drop in your heart, the reed of radiant white light,
and Guru Amitabha's clear and radiant heart. See the energy-drop as
the traveller, the white light reed as the path, and Guru Amitabha's
heart as the destination.

Then reverse the flow of the downward-moving energy-winds and
bring the other energy-winds into and up through the central channel
by means of holding the vase breath.

As you hold the breath, focus your concentration single-pointedly upon the very blissful white-red energy-drop in your heart.

When you feel that it is time to go, the very subtle mind, which is lighter than a feather, determines to go to Guru Amitabha's heart.

As you exhale, recite the mantra HIC.

Your consciousness as the blissful energy-drop, by the force of concentration and the upward flowing energy-winds, flies like an arrow to meet and mingle with the clear, non-dual, and radiant wisdom of Guru Amitabha's heart. Remain there in single-pointed concentration for as long as you like.

When you feel that it is time to return the consciousness principle to the body, visualize the white-red energy-drop in the center of the clear and radiant space of Guru Amitabha's heart.

As you bring the energy-drop back to your heart, recite the mantra KAAH.

For the first three repetitions, visualize the drop going to Amitabha's heart, then twenty-one times to your crown only, then three more times to Amitabha's heart.

Amitabha then transforms into Amitayus.

As you recite the mantra of Amitayus

OM AMARANI JIVAN TIYE SVAHA

Visualize the following:

From Guru Amitayus' nectar bowl an inexhaustible flow of the clear and blissful elixir of immortality streams down my central channel and completely fills my vajra body. It renews the life force and bestows the power of longevity.

Then the reed, lotus, moon, sun, and Guru Amitayus all melt into light and dissolve into my central channel. Guru Amitayus and my heart-essence become indestructibly one. My crown is sealed by a vajra seal.

Think: I have received the undying life realization.

Then, if there is time, repeat The Prayer of Bodhichitta Movitation and Dedication on page 163.

DEDICATION

Through the merits of these virtuous actions
May I quickly attain the enlightened state of Amitabha
And lead all living beings, without exception,
Into that enlightened state.

May I and all the sentient beings,
Due to our merits of the three times,
Be born from a beautiful lotus in the joyful pure mandala of
the conqueror,
And may we receive the prediction directly from the Conqueror
of Infinite Light.

[82] MAKE THE OFFERING OF SUR

SEE CHAPTER 29.

After they die, all beings except those of the formless realm have to go through the intermediate state. Because their body is subtle, as discussed in chapter 9, their only food is smells – this is all they can have. They are called smell-eaters.

It is excellent to make the offering of the smell of food to them with the practice called sur. The Tibetan word “sur” refers to the smell of roasted barley flour. Chöden Rinpoche advised that the practice can be done three times: in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening.

This practice has many benefits. It pacifies obstacles. It’s an offering to the Guru, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. It’s a practice of charity to all six-realm beings, in particular the intermediate state beings, those who have passed away from the human and other realms and have not yet been reborn. You finish your karmic debts. It’s a method for helping be reborn in the pure lands. It’s a cause of success of whatever wishes you have.

By doing this practice you collect so much merit, purify obstacles, and all your wishes will be achieved according to the holy Dharma; you will complete the two types of merits and, ultimately, achieve enlightenment.

THE PRACTICE OF SUR IS AVAILABLE FROM

THE FOUNDATION STORE

shop.fpmt.org

shopfpmt@fpmt.org

SEE CHAPTER 29.

The practice of Dorje Khadro has many benefits. It is very powerful for purifying defilements and negative karma, it restores degenerated samaya and vows, and it dispels obstacles.

I received the lineage of this practice from Lama Yeshe at Kopan. It is highly admired and has great blessings as an instruction taught by Vajradhara for success.

BURNING OFFERING TO DORJE KHADRO

Translated by the author together with Ven. Jampa Zangpo and Ven. Thubten Donyo

TAKING REFUGE AND GENERATING BODHICHITTA

I go for refuge until I am enlightened
To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly.
By my merit from giving and the other perfections,
May I become a buddha to benefit all sentient beings. (3x)

SPECIAL BODHICHITTA PRAYER

Especially to benefit all mother sentient beings,
I shall attain the fully accomplished stage of buddhahood,
quickly and more quickly.
For this reason, I shall make the Dorje Khadro burning offering. (3x)

MEDITATION ON EMPTINESS

Now say the mantra that purifies hindrances

OM VAJRA AMRITA KUNDALI HANA HANA HUM PHAT

Now say the mantra that purifies the wrong conception and its view of the fire as self-existent

OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HAM

VISUALIZATION

The fire becomes void: that is, the wrong, ordinary view of fire as self-existent becomes empty.

While you maintain this view of voidness, a blazing wisdom-fire appears, and at its center are the seed syllable HUM and a vajra. These transform into the wrathful deity, Dorje Khadro. He is deep blue in color, has one face and two arms, and holds a vajra and a bell. He exhibits the mudra of divine wisdom, HUM.

Wearing a crown of five skulls, he snarls into space, showing four great fangs.

He is also adorned by a necklace of fifty bleeding heads and a scanty, tiger skin loin cloth.

He is seated with his legs forming a circle, and his whole aspect is that of a powerful, magnificent destroyer of all negativities and obstructions.

He has a white OM at his crown chakra, a red AH at his throat chakra, and a blue HUM at his heart chakra.

From the HUM at his heart, rays of light are emitted, inviting Dorje Khadro's transcendental wisdom and the initiating deities from their abode in absolute nature.

JAH HUM BAM HOH

They merge and never part, becoming non-dual. Thus initiated by these deities, he is crowned by Akshobhya.

OFFERINGS

OM VAJRA DAKA SAPARIVARA ARGHAM [PADYAM, PUSHPE, DHUPE, ALOKE, GANDHE, NAIVIDYA, SHAPTA] PRATICCHA HUM SVAHA

PRAISE

To you, Vajra Akshobhya:
Great wisdom, the vajra sphere so very wise;
Your three vajras of body, speech, and mind are the three mandalas;
To you who has this knowledge, I prostrate.

VISUALIZATION

While seeing yourself in ordinary human form, a black PAM, seed syllable of all your negativities, appears at your heart. At your navel, from a red RAM, a red fire mandala appears, and beneath your feet appears a blue yam, which transforms into a blue air mandala.

Light rays emanate from the PAM, bringing forth all negativities and obscurations of your three doors, which appear as black rays and dissolve into the PAM.

From below, a blue wind blows and blue air rises up your legs, fanning the fire that blazes at your navel.

Flaming rays pursue the PAM, chasing it out through the door of your nose. The PAM takes the form of a large black scorpion and dissolves into the sesame seeds.

These seeds are then offered to the mouth of Dorje Khadro.

OFFERING MANTRA

OM VAJRA DAKA KHA KHA KHAHI KHAHI SARVA PAPAM DAHANA
BAKMI KURU SVAHA

As this mantra is said, the following prayer should be made

All negativities and obscurations that I have created, and all pledges that I have broken since beginningless samsaric lifetimes,

SHIN-TING KURU SVAHA (all are completely purified).

Each time you say the mantra and make the prayer, also visualize clearly and strongly that you are continuously making offering.

OFFERINGS

OM VAJRA DAKA SAPARIVARA ARGHAM [PADYAM, PUSHPE, DHUPE,
ALOE, GANDHE, NAIVIDYA, SHAPTA] PRATICCHA HUM SVAHA

PRAISE

In the center of the blazing wisdom-fire stands the dark blue, wrathful cannibal, Dorje Khadro. Just by remembering him, all demons and delusions are destroyed completely.

To you, Dorje Khadro, I prostrate!

ASKING FORGIVENESS

Please forgive all my wrong actions, done while powerless through not understanding, and through not having found the materials to offer.

The transcendental wisdom returns to the absolute nature, from where it came, and the commitment deity (damtsigpa), Dorje Khadro, is transformed into a blazing fire.

DEDICATION

Because of these merits,
May I be taken care of by and not be separated from
the Mahayana guru,
Who shows the infallible path,
And drink the nectar of his speech,
Not being satisfied with just a few words.

Through the power received by completing the practices of
renunciation, bodhichitta, the right view shunyata,
the six perfections, and the two tantric stages,
May I quickly attain the stage of buddhahood, possessed
of the ten faculties.

May this benefit me so that I quickly reach buddhahood,
omniscient mind,
My prayers being fulfilled through the power of the blessings
of the guru,
Who never betrays the three supreme jewels, of the unchangeable,
absolute sphere, and of unbetraying interdependence.

OFFER LIGHTS, FLOWERS, ETC., ON BEHALF OF YOUR LOVED ONE

[84]

SEE CHAPTERS 27 AND 29.

It's good to make light offerings to the Three Rare Sublime Ones on behalf of the person who has passed away, especially at the end of each of the seven weeks; you could use candles, butter lamps, or electric lights. And you could make other offerings, such as water bowls or flowers.

It is very common for the Tibetans to offer hundreds, even thousands, of light offerings; for them this is a very important practice. They make offerings at home, where the person is, but they also go to the monasteries, where there are many precious holy objects.

They do this not only when a family member passes away but generally to collect merit. Sometimes if they cannot make individual butter lamps they bring a pot of liquefied butter and carry it around to all the butter lamps and add a little to each. In this way the lights are offered continuously, in every temple, in every shrine room. This collects so much merit.

In Tibet they go to the most precious historical statue of Shakyamuni Buddha in Lhasa, which was made during the Buddha's time. Every day there are people lined up there to make offerings or prayers. In India they go to the Great Stupa in Bodhgaya and make hundreds of thousands of butter lamp offerings. They go to wherever there are holy objects.

[85] OFFER MONEY ON BEHALF OF YOUR LOVED ONE

SEE CHAPTER 29.

See also other practices related to the guru: 1, 10, 18, 35, 43, 47, 60, and 72.

Offering money collects an inconceivable amount of merit that you can dedicate for your loved one. You could make these offerings on the holy days in the Tibetan lunar calendar, such as the Buddha days when the merit is multiplied by one hundred million.

If, let's say, you offered one dollar, you would collect the merit of having offered one hundred million dollars. If you offer one cup of tea to a monk or nun in a monastery, it's as if you have offered one hundred million cups of tea.

Years ago I started putting aside money to fund pujas and the making of stupas and prayer wheels. We started with the pujas and now have the FPMT Puja Fund, the main purpose of which is to collect merit by making offerings to the monasteries, such as Sera, Ganden, Drepung, which altogether have six colleges, in particular offering tea and breakfast, as well as some rupees, to each of the hundreds of monks during pujas.

You, then, could make offerings to:

THE FPMT PUJA FUND

fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/puja/

YOUR LOVED ONE'S GURU OR YOUR OWN GURU

For example, the author's Bodhichitta Fund

fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/lzrbf/

THE ORDAINED SANGHA

The FPMT's International Mahayana Institute

imisangha.org

LAY STUDENTS WHO HAVE THE SAME GURU AS YOUR LOVED ONE

A DHARMA CENTER

A place, in other words, where people can meditate on the path, learn Dharma, and purify their minds and collect merit.

THE SICK, THE POOR, OR THE HOMELESS

Tibet Health Services Project

fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/tibet-health-services-project/

VARIOUS CHARITIES

PLACES THAT TAKE CARE OF ANIMALS

Animal Liberation Fund

fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/alf/

[86] SPONSOR DHARMA ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR LOVED ONE'S MONEY

SEE CHAPTER 29.

There are many ways you can use your loved one's money in order to help them. For example:

SPONSOR SOMEONE TO DO RETREAT

You could sponsor someone to do a retreat – a monk or nun or a lay person – who can't afford it themselves. You would request them to dedicate all the merits to the person who passed away, the sponsor.

MAKE AN OFFERING TO A DHARMA CENTER

Use your loved one's money to make a contribution to a Dharma center, to buy whatever is needed to help the center spread the Dharma, which benefits sentient beings who come there to learn the Dharma, to meditate, to achieve enlightenment.

PUBLISH OR SPONSOR THE PUBLISHING OF DHARMA BOOKS

FPMT EDUCATION FUND

fpmt.org/projects/office/education/

FPMT EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT FUND

fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/edufund/

THE FPMT TRANSLATION FUND

fpmt.org/projects/fpmt/translations/

LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

lamayeshe.com

WISDOM PUBLICATIONS

donatenow.networkforgood.org/wisdompublications

MAKE HOLY OBJECTS ON BEHALF OF YOUR LOVED ONES

[87]

SEE CHAPTER 29.

See also practice 79.

You could have made, or make yourself, holy objects and dedicate for your loved one.

TSA-TSAS

If you decide to make tsa-tsas, unless you have particular advice from an astrologer or a lama you can decide yourself which deity to make. It's common to make Mitrugpa tsa-tsas, which is very powerful for purifying negative karma. Or you could choose Medicine Buddha, the Compassion Buddha, the Thirty-five Buddhas – whichever buddha you like.

STUPAS

If you choose to make a stupa, as you insert the four dharmakaya relic mantras – Ornament of Enlightenment, Secret Relic, Zung of the Exalted Completely Pure Stainless Light, and Stainless Pinnacle – you should say the name of your loved one and dedicate for their future rebirth. It is said that if a person is destined to be reborn in the lower realms, doing this can change the situation and help them receive a good rebirth.

You could also have **STATUES** made or **THANGKAS** painted.

TO COMMISSION HOLY OBJECTS OR ORDER TSA-TSA MOLDS

FRANCE:

Nalanda Monastery

nalanda-monastery.eu/index.php/en/art-workshop/order

TO ORDER TSA-TSA MOLDS OR STUPAS

AUSTRALIA:

Chenrezig Institute, Garden of Enlightenment

info@chenrezig.com.au

**NOTES AND COLOPHONS RELATED
TO THE PRACTICES**

PRACTICE [11]**TALK ABOUT AMITABHA'S PURE LAND:
"THE BENEFITS OF THE BLISSFUL REALM"****NOTES**

1. An epithet of a buddha.
2. An epithet of a buddha.
3. Compilation of mantras from the *Kangyur*, the part of the Tibetan Buddhist canon attributed to the Buddha
4. The five degenerations are the degenerations of: life, view, afflictions, sentient beings and time.
5. A translation of parts of the *Display of the Pure Land Sutra* (*zhing bkod kyi mdo*) in this text is done by the translator. The complete translation of this sutra can be found on: <http://read.84000.co/#!ReadingRoom/UT22084-051-003/4>, (as translated by 84000: *Translating the Words of the Buddha*).
6. The buddha mentioned here is referring to Amithaba.
7. Kantsalitha is a soft Kashmiri silk.
8. One yojana is around 4.5 miles/7.4 km according to the Abhidharma literature.
9. Xanthochymus, mangosteen tree, pictorius tree.
10. Dalbergia sisson, the Indian Rosewood Tree, also called Agarwood tree, Aquilaria agallocha. Agarwood is known for being resinous tree used for incense and perfumes.
11. Thirty-two major marks of a buddha.
12. "The four (remaining) pleasures of humans" are: (1) Not having wrong views, (2) Not being born in a place without the teachings of the Buddha, (3) Not being born in a barbaric country, and (4) Not being mentally impaired.
13. "Not indefinite" or "definite" in the Mahayana lineage means that one will enter the Mahayana vehicle without having entered the Sravaka or Pratyeka vehicles first.
14. "Nor be able to lose" is referring to never falling back from the Mahayana lineage into the lesser vehicles.
15. "Having patience with the virtue and non-virtue of sentient beings" means, that they don't generate jealousy toward those who accumulate virtue nor get angry with those who accumulate non-virtue.
16. *Ficus racemosa*, the flowers of the udumbara plant are enclosed within its fruit. Because the flower is hidden inside the fruit, a legend developed to explain the absence (and supposed rarity) of the visual flower; it was said to bloom only once every three thousand years, and thus came to symbolize events of rare occurrence.
17. *Ficus religiosa*, Peepul tree (*shing gi dbang po*).
18. Indra is the king of the gods in Hindu mythology.
19. The swastika is an auspicious symbol of good fortune. The word itself comes from the Sanskrit "sutvas" which means "go well."
20. The Buddha's voice is like a lion's roar because when a lioness roars, her cubs

become alert and wild animals instinctively feel fear, thus giving protection.

21. *Display of the Pure Land Sutra (zhing bkod kyi mdo)*

ORIGINAL COLOPHON

Opening the Door to the Supreme Pure Land with the Prayer to be Reborn in Sukhavati was composed by the Glorious Losang Drakpa in the temple of Dzing Jhi and written down by Sang Gyong.

COLOPHON FOR THIS TRANSLATION

Translated by Gelong Tenzin Namdak, Sera Jey Monastery, Sakadawa, June, 2014. The most compassionate and kind lama, Kyabje Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, asked me to translate this text.

By any merit created through this translation, may His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and all of our other precious gurus have long and healthy lives. May their holy wishes be spontaneously fulfilled, may they, at the time of our deaths, lead us to the pure land of Sukhavati and may we quickly obtain the state of full enlightenment for the benefit of all mother sentient beings.

With many thanks to Ven. Gyalten Lekden for proofreading this text.

Being unrealized, low in acquired knowledge and learning,
Saturated with wrong views and defilements,
Taking the lamas and deities as my witness,
I confess my mistakes to the wise.

PRACTICE [32]

RECITE THE SUTRA FOR ALLEVIATING PAIN:

THE GREAT NOBLE SUTRA ON ENTERING THE CITY OF VAISHALI

ORIGINAL COLOPHON

This was translated, edited, and finalized by the Indian abbot Surendra Bodhi and Bandhe Yeshe De, the Tibetan translator from Zhuchen [the great translation and editorial team].

COLOPHON

Translated into English from the Tibetan original by Tenzin Bhuchung Shastri, June 2008, Guhyasamaja Center, Virginia, USA. Lightly edited, with mantras checked and corrected according to the original Tibetan text, by Ven. Gyalten Mindrol, FPMT Education Services, July 2008. All mistakes are the fault of the editor.

PRACTICE [33]

RECITE THE HEART SUTRA

COLOPHON

Translated from the Tibetan by Gelong Thubten Tsultrim (the American monk George Churinoff), the first day of Saka Dawa, 1999, at Tushita Meditation Centre, Dharamsala, India. Amended March 7, 2001, in the New Mexico desert.

PRACTICE [34]**RECITE THE VAJRA CUTTER SUTRA****NOTES**

1. Often translated as Diamond Sutra or Diamond Cutter Sutra. However, the word “vajra” used in the title is not explained as meaning “diamond” in either the sutra itself or the Indian commentaries we have access to (those of Asanga, Vasubandhu, and Kamalashila). In fact, the Buddha does not even mention the word “vajra” in the discourse itself (at least not in the Tibetan or Sanskrit editions), naming it merely “Prajñāparamita”: “Subhuti, the name of this Dharma discourse is ‘the wisdom gone beyond’; it should be remembered like that.” In his introduction to his edition and translation, the Buddhist scholar Edward Conze said (p. 7): “It is usual, following Max Mueller, to render Vajracchedika Sutra as ‘Diamond Sutra’. There is no reason to discontinue this popular usage, but strictly speaking, it is more than unlikely that the Buddhists here understand vajra as the material substance which we call ‘diamond.’” Kamalashila’s commentary (p. 204a) takes “vajra” to mean the adamant implement: “Like this, it is the ‘vajra cutter’ in two ways. Because it cuts off the afflicted obstructions and the subtle obstructions to omniscience, which are as difficult to destroy as the vajra – this indicates the necessity to abandon the two obstructions. Alternatively, the cutting is ‘vajra-like’ since it is similar to the shape of the vajra: the vajra is made bulbous on the ends and thin in the center. Similarly, this wisdom gone beyond is also taught as extensive in the beginning and the end – the ground of aspirational activity and the buddha ground. The thin middle indicates the pure grounds of superior intention. Hence, it is like the aspect of a vajra, and this indicates three grounds as its subject matter.”
2. The words of the title of the sutra have a slightly different order in the various editions.
3. The name of one of Buddha’s principal lay sponsors often appears in Pali as Anathapindika.
4. Kamalashila’s commentary (pp. 6b–7) explains that “the activity of food” includes many aspects of the activity, all done to benefit sentient beings in some way.
5. Kamalashila’s commentary (p. 7b) explains this as referring to the special ascetic virtues prescribed by Buddha (Sanskrit: *duta-gungae*; Tibetan: *sbyangs pa’i yon tan*), which include eating only once during the day.
6. Literally, “One who has Gone to Bliss” (Skt: *sugata*; Tib: *bde bar gsheg pa*), which is a common epithet of the Buddha.
7. “Due to perfect marks” (Skt: *laksana-sampadaa*; Tib: *mtsan phun sum tsogs pas*) can be translated from Sanskrit as “due to possessing marks”; the word *sampad* meaning “achievement,” “possession,” etc. Hence, Conze’s choice of “possession of his marks.” However, *sampad* also means “perfection,” “excellence,” etc. (Apte, p. 1,644), and it is this meaning used in Kamalashila’s commentary (p. 220b): “Since situated in position, clear and complete, they are also perfect...” (Tib: *dag kyang yul na gnas pa dang, gsal ba dang, rdzogs pas phun sum tsogs pa’o*).

8. Read “di ji snyam du sems, mtsam phun sum tsogs pa” as “ji tsam du mtsan phun sum tsogs pa,” in accordance with the Tog Palace, small and Lanchou editions.
9. Conze and others take “laksana-alaksanatas tathagato draṣaavyae” as “the Tathagata is to be seen from no-marks as marks.” (The Sacred Books of the East edition has on p. 115: “laksanalaksanatvatae.”) However, the Tibetan translations have: “de bzhin gshegs pa la mtsan dang mtsan ma med par blta’o” (reading our text’s “mtsam dang mtsam med” as the other texts read “mtsam dang mtsam ma med”), which takes the compound “laksana-alaksana” as “marks and no marks” instead of “no-marks as marks.” The Tibetan translation accords with Kamalashila’s commentary (p. 221A): “...To the degree there are perfect marks’ means ‘ultimately, to the degree there is adherence to the perfect marks, to that degree there is wrong adherence.’ ‘To the degree there are no perfect marks’ is to be understood as explained oppositely. This indicates here how one should practice – by equipoise in yoga. Here is indicated how to guard the mind – through abandoning the two extremes. ‘Thus’ one should view the Tathagata due to marks, like the magically created Buddha. This dispels the extreme of deprecation, because of not deprecating the nirmanakaya of the Bhagavan conventionally. No marks are to be viewed ultimately, because marks are not established at all. This dispels the extreme of superimposition.”
10. Kamalashila’s commentary explains this (on p. 220A): “Since the doctrine of the Bhagavan is famed ‘to remain until five sets of five hundred...,’ therefore, ‘the end’ is treated in particular because of the preponderance of the five dregs at that time.”
11. The Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace editions have “bshad pa ’di la,” which I find hard to understand, whereas our other two editions have “bshad pa dag la,” or “upon explanations,” which accords with Kamalashila (p. 221B) and the Sanskrit.
12. Kamalashila (p. 221B) “...‘such as this’ means profound and extensive meaning...”
13. All four Tibetan editions have the Bhagavan telling Subhuti not to make the statement that is quoted, whereas the Sanskrit can be read, as Conze does, to have the Bhagavan say, “Do not speak thus Subhuti!” and then to say, “Yes, there will be in the future period...” This seems to be more in accord with the following word “moreover” in the Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace editions.
14. Since the Tog Palace and Lanchou editions accord with the Sanskrit as well as with Kamalashila’s commentary (p. 223A), we have translated that here. The Lhasa Zhol edition has: “...nor will they engage in discriminating as discrimination or non-discrimination”; the small text has: “...nor will they engage in non-discrimination.”
15. The small text has “by them”; the other three have “of them.” Conze translates the Sanskrit “tesam” as “with them” – thus, “...that would be with them a seizing on a self...”
16. This entire sentence is lacking in the Sanskrit. However, it occurs in one of three variations in the Tibetan editions. The Lhasa Zhol edition has “...even if they engage phenomena as non-existent...”; the Tog Palace edition has “...even if they

- engage in discriminating phenomena as non-existent...”; the Lanchou and small texts have “...even if they engage in discriminating phenomena as selfless...” Kamalashila’s commentary does not mention it, leaving one to assume it may not have appeared in the version he was using.
17. As the next sentence begins by again introducing the Bhagavan as the speaker, it is unclear whether the Bhagavan made this statement on this occasion. Kamalashila’s commentary (p. 224b) quotes the Arya Ratna Karandaka Sutra (‘Phags pa dkon mchog za ma tog gi mdo): “Reverend Subhuti, if, by those who know the Dharma treatise as like a boat, even dharmata should be given up, what need is there to mention non-dharmas? Nor is the abandoning of any dharma even non-dharma.”
 18. The Lanchou and small texts both have “...realized by the Tathagata as unsurpassed...” and “Has that Dharma been taught at all...”
 19. Kamalashila’s commentary (p. 225b) quotes a text (which he calls Compendium of Buddha, (Tib: Sangs rgyas yang dag par sdud pa), Buddha-saegiti: “Ananda, that which is the non-production, the non-disintegration, the non-abiding, and the non-alteration of phenomena is ‘the arya truth.’ Ananda, the Tathagata having considered this, said, ‘The arya hearers (Shravaka) are distinguished by the uncompounded.’ This (means) whether the Tathagata arise or do not arise, because of permanently existing like that and unchangeable, (they are) uncompounded. Because of realizing that, the arya beings are distinguished by that because the aryas are distinguished by realizing the uniqueness of phenomena (chos kyi de kho na). Because another unique entity is unsuitable.”
 20. Read “dus ma byas” for “dus ma bgyis.” Perhaps the intention of the editor of the Lhasa Zhol text here is to make “uncompounded” more honorific, as it refers to that which distinguishes the arya beings.
 21. Literally, “the great thousand of three thousand world systems” (Skt: trisahasramahasahasram lokadhātu; Tib: stong gsum gyi stong chen po’i ’jig rten gyi khams), which is well known in Buddhist literature. Here, the basic world referred to includes four continents, the sun and moon, Sumeru (king of mountains), the desire realm gods, and the first of the form realms of Brahma. The “world systems of three thousand” refers to the three categories of such worlds – a thousand basic world systems (with the four continents, etc.) called “the small thousand,” a thousand of those (or a million such world systems) called “the middling thousand,” and a thousand of those (or a billion world systems) called “the great thousand.” The last of the three categories, “the great thousand of three thousand world systems,” thus includes a billion world systems.
 22. No recipient is specified in any of the four Tibetan editions nor in Kamalashila’s commentary at this point, whereas Conze’s Sanskrit edition specifies the recipients as the Tathagata arhat perfectly completed buddhas.
 23. Kamalashila’s commentary (p. 227a) explains “having taken” as “done in recitation” (bzung nas ni zhes bya ba kha ton du byas ba’o). The Tibetan

- commentary says (p. 93–4), “To take is to take the words to mind – suitable to apply even to having the text in hand – and to recite.”
24. The Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace editions both have singular. The Lanchou and small texts both have plural.
 25. Conze translates the Sanskrit (section 9a) “sa eva tasya-atma-graho bhavet sattva-graho jiva-graho pudgala-graho bhaved iti” as “...then that would be in him a seizing of self, seizing of a being, seizing of a soul, seizing of a person.” However, the Tibetan commentary explains the genitive “of that” (“de’i” or “de yi”) as follows (p. 95): “Saying, ‘that itself would be grasping of that as a self’ (de nyid de yi bdag tu ’dzin par ’gyur ro) teaches (grasping to) the person and the result as self-grasping and true grasping. The first is grasping to a self of the person and the second is grasping to a self of phenomena.” One might argue that it is better to translate the phrase “de nyid de’i bdag tu ’dzin par ’gyur lags so” as, “that itself would be a grasping to a self of that,” rather than, “that itself would be a grasping of that as a self.” But, according to the Prasangika Madhyamaka school, the mental action called “self-grasping” or “grasping as a self” (bdag tu ’dzin pa) takes as its referent object the conventional self (of a person or other phenomena) and conceives of it as a truly existent self. The “self” of “self-grasping” is not what is being grasped.
 26. The Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace editions, as well as the Sanskrit edition used by Conze, leave out the following sentence found in the other two Tibetan editions: “Bhagavan, if the once-returner were to think ‘I have attained the result of once-returner,’ that itself would be a grasping of that as a self, grasping as a sentient being, grasping as a living being, grasping as a person.”
 27. Again, the following sentence is left as before: “Bhagavan, if a non-returner were to think, ‘I have attained the result of non-returner,’ that itself would be a grasping of that as a self, grasping as sentient being, grasping as a living being, grasping as a person.”
 28. Conze translates this as “the foremost of those who dwell in peace” (Skt: arana-viharinam agryo; Tib: nyon mongs pa med par gnas pa rnams kyi mchog). In the translation of *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (Majjhima Nikaya) (p. 1,345, n. 1,263), it is mentioned that Subhuti was recognized as foremost in two categories, “those who live without conflict and those who are worthy of gifts.” Although the Sanskrit word “arana” can mean “not fighting” (Apte, p. 213) and hence, “without conflict” or “peace,” the Tibetan translation of “nyon mongs pa med pa” as “without afflictions” might reflect the intention of this epithet, in that Subhuti was said to be very angry as a youth and had to overcome this faulty behavior in particular to achieve higher realizations.
 29. Arranged fields (Skt: kshetra-vyuhā; Tib: zhing bkod pa rnams) [translated by Conze as “harmonies of Buddha-fields” and by Schopen as “wonderful arrangements’ in my sphere of activity”] refers to the bodhisattva activity of creating the causes of their future buddha-field.
 30. Conze’s Sanskrit edition has “personal existence” (Skt: atmabhava) at this point

and in the following paragraph for the word “body” (Skt: kaya; Tib: lus). However the Sanskrit word kaya is used at the beginning of this paragraph (...if, for example, the body of a being were to become thus, were to become like this, as big as Sumeru...)

31. Conze’s Sanskrit edition has “arocayami te Subhuti pratedayami te,” which he translates as “This is what I announce to you, Subhuti; this is what I make known to you” – both sentences in the first person. However, all four Tibetan editions used for this translation have “rab ’byor, khyod mos par bya, khyod kyis khong du chud par bya’o,” the second phrase of which translates as “you should understand.” The first phrase could be translated as “I shall announce to you” if we assume the Tibetan word “mos” (“appreciate” or “believe”) is actually “smos” (“mention” or “announce”), one Sanskrit equivalent of “smos” being “arocayati” (see Lokesh Chandra, p. 1,882). To complicate things further, Kamalashila’s commentary (p. 233a) has “mos par bya zhes bya ba ni ’dod pa ste, mos pa bskyed par bya’o khong du chud par bya’o zhes bya ba ni rtogs par bya ba ste shes rab bskyed do zhes bya ba’i tha tsig go / ’di la snga ma ni phyi ma’i ’bras bu’o / yang na phyi ma ni snga ma’i bshed pa’o / bshed ces bya ba ni sgra’o / wang dag par bstan zhes bya ba ni ’dod pa ste mos par bskyed pa’i don to.”
32. The Lhasa Zhol edition differs from the other three Tibetan editions and Conze’s Sanskrit edition by saying, “...world systems equal to the grains of sand of the river Ganges.” As this would seem to ignore the immediately previous elaborate example, the version of the other texts is used here on the assumption of scribal error.
33. “Real shrine” (Tib: mchod rten du gyur; Skt: caityabhuta).
34. The Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace editions as well as Kamalashila’s commentary (p. 233b) agree on this list. The Lanchou and small editions have “whoever takes up this discourse of Dharma, writes, memorizes, holds, reads, understands, and properly takes to mind...”
35. The wording of the Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace editions differs from that of the Lanchou and small editions. The former is as translated above (sa phyogs de na ston pa yang bzugs te, bla ma’i gnas gzhan dag kyang gnas so); the later could be translated as “At that place on earth either the Teacher or some such guru abides (sa phyogs de na ston pa’ m, bla ma lta bu gang yang rung bar gnas so).
36. The Gilgit fragment begins from this point.
37. The Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace editions both have “thirty-two marks of the Tathagata” whereas the Lanchou, small, and Sanskrit editions have “thirty-two marks of a great being.”
38. The Lanchou and small editions have “If someone, taking even as little as a stanza of four lines from this discourse of Dharma, were to correctly teach it to others...” The text of the Gilgit fragment for this paragraph accords with the Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace editions. Conze’s translation, “The Lord: And again Subhuti, suppose a woman or man would day by day renounce all they have and all they are, as many times as there grains of sand in the river Ganges, and if

- they should renounce all they have and all they are for as many aeons as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges – but if someone else would, after taking from this discourse on Dharma but one stanza of four lines, demonstrate and illuminate it to others...,” mixes elements from other texts.
39. The wording of the Lanchou and small editions differs: “This discourse on Dharma taught however much by the Tathagata ...” Kamalashila’s commentary (p. 236b) accords with that reading and explains “however much” as meaning “explain to the bodhisattvas with however many ways as are worthy to be explained.”
 40. Although the Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace editions have “appreciate” (Tib: mos pa), the other two Tibetan editions, Kamalashila’s commentary (p. 237b), as well as the Gilgit Sanskrit fragment all have “astonishing” (Tib: ngo mtshar; Skt: acharyae), and Conze’s Sanskrit edition chooses “difficult” (Skt: duskarae).
 41. Although Schopen notes the Gilgit fragment has “evil king” (Skt: kaliraja), all four Tibetan editions as well as Conze’s Sanskrit have “kalyuga.”
 42. Skt: osi.
 43. Ten million (Skt: koai; Tib: bye ba) and hundred billion (Skt: niyuta; Tib: khrag khrig) are commonly used in denoting large numbers.
 44. Although missing in the Lhasa Zhol edition and Conze’s Sanskrit edition, the Tog Palace, Lanchou, and small editions each have an additional phrase here, “One should understand as just unimaginable also the maturation of this.”
 45. Tib: mchod rten; Skt: caitya (caityabhuta). The Sanskrit word stupa is also translated as the same Tibetan word mchod rten but the Sanskrit text has caitya. Earlier in the text the phrase “mchod rten du gyur” was translated “real shrine.” Here the Tibetan phrase “mchod rten lta bur ’gyur ro” is translated as “will become like a shrine.”
 46. “Tormented” (Tib: mnar ba; Skt: paribhuta). The Sanskrit paribhuta is translated by Conze as “humbled” and by Schopen as “ridiculed.” However, Apte (p. 982) defines paribhuta as “1. Overpowered, conquered. 2. Disregarded, slighted.” The Tibetan mnar ba also refers to torture or excruciating pain in general. The Tibetan commentary by Cone Gagspa (pp. 119–20) lists “various illnesses and quarrels, disputes, unearthing of faults and bondage, beating, and so forth.” Schopen notes (note 11, p. 137) “that unmeritorious karma could be eliminated as a result of being abused by others for having adopted a particular practice or position,” but the general position seems to be that non-meritorious karma is purified by undergoing many types of suffering.
 47. The Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace editions have “beyond,” which agrees with the Sanskrit. The small and Lanchou editions have “before.”
 48. Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace editions have “mi pod”; the small and Lanchou editions have “nye bar mi ’gro.” Both phrases can be translations of the Sanskrit nopaiti, “to approach.”
 49. Tib: yang dag pa de zhin nyid; Skt: bhuta-tathataya.
 50. The Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace editions as well as the Gilgit fragment have as

- here translated. The small and Lanchou editions as well as one of the several Sanskrit editions Conze consulted (that of Pargiter) have the additional phrase “or taught.”
51. The small and Lanchou editions have “a being endowed with a human body.”
 52. “Similarly” here means “he should not be called a ‘bodhisattva.’” See Schopen (n. 15, p. 138).
 53. The Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace editions and the Gilgit fragment have “bodhisattva” repeated twice. The small and Lanchou editions and Conze’s Sanskrit edition have “bodhisattva” followed by “mahasattva.”
 54. “Different thoughts” (Skt: nanabhavae; Tib: bsam pa tha dad pa) is translated by Conze as “manifold” and by Schopen as “various,” but the Tibetan translation takes the Sanskrit bhavae as “thoughts” or “inclinations” (Tib: bsam pa).
 55. The other three Tibetan texts have “explanation” (Tib: bshad pa). In Schopen’s “Textual Note about Folio 9b” (p. 117, note 6), he seems to reconstruct the Sanskrit of “explanation” [Skt: (bhasyama)nae] and cites several editions that have a Sanskrit equivalent of “explanation.” Conze leaves the verb out.
 56. The Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace texts have simply “it” (Tib: de) whereas the small and Lanchou texts have “for it” (or “there”) (Tib: de la). Conze’s edition and the Gilgit fragment have the Sanskrit tatra (“for it” or “there.”)
 57. The small and Lanchou texts have the opposite order, i.e., “is not observed and does not exist.”
 58. The small and Lanchou texts have “inequivalence and equivalence do not exist there,” but Conze’s Sanskrit edition and the Gilgit fragment have only “for it, inequivalence does not exist whatsoever” (Skt: na tatra kiecid visamas).
 59. The small and Lanchou texts have “have engaged in the wrong path” (Tib: log pa’i lam du zhugs pa ste) but the Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace texts read “have wrongly engaged by abandoning” (Tib: log par spong bas zhugs pa ste), which agrees with the Sanskrit in Conze’s edition and in the Gilgit fragment, “mithya-prahana-prasota).
 60. The Sanskrit word dharmata (Tib: chos nyid) refers to the nature of dharmas, the nature of phenomena. Here, it refers to the ultimate nature of phenomena, not just the conventional nature nor the doctrine (as is translated by Conze and Schopen).
 61. Cone Gragspa’s Tibetan commentary (p. 141) says, “The reason of not seeing (in the first stanza) is that it is necessary to view the dharmakaya of the buddhas, the nature body, as the body of ultimate nature (dharmata) – and the body of the guides, the buddhas, dharmata, ultimate truth, is not an object to be known by an awareness bound by true grasping, because the dharmakaya is unable to be known by that awareness.” See also the discussion in Kamalashila’s commentary (pp. 259a–b).
 62. Skt: kasyacid dharmasya vinasae prajñapta ucchedo va (veti); Tib: chos la la zhig rnam par bshig gam, chad par btags pa.
 63. The Lhasa Zhol text has “selfless and unproduced” as does Conze’s Sanskrit

- edition (niratmakesv anutpattikesu). The Gilgit fragment has just “selfless” (niratmakesu), leaving out “unproduced.” The small and Lanchou texts agree with the Lhasa Zhol edition as to “selfless and unproduced” but have (parenthetical material from the commentary of Cone Gragspa, p. 143) “...if any bodhisattva (directly realized the meaning of) selfless (in dependence on this) Dharma discourse (the wisdom gone beyond text) and attained (the great) forbearance about (the phenomena of) non-production...”
64. “Subhuti, acquire, not wrongly grasp” (Tib: rab ’byor, yongs su gzung mod kyī, log par mi gzung ste; Skt: parigrahitavyae subhute nograhitavyae). The Sanskrit reads, “should be acquired, Subhuti, not should be grasped.”
65. The small and Lanchou texts have “know” (Tib: shes).
66. Although the small and Lanchou texts have the word written (Tib: bris), the Lhasa Zhol and Tog Palace texts have taken (Tib: blang), which agrees with the Conze’s Sanskrit edition and the Gilgit fragment (Skt: udgohya). Furthermore, Kamalashila’s commentary (p. 265b) explains taken (Tib: blang) as “reading in recitation” (Tib: blangs nas zhes bya ba ni kha ton du bklags pa’o).
67. “Elder” (Skt: sthavira; Tib: gnas brtan)
68. The three other Tibetan texts have “those bhikshus, those bodhisattvas...”
69. Upasakas and upasikas are lay men and women who have taken the life-long vows of a lay practitioner. Novice monks and novice nuns can be included in the categories of bhikshus and bhikshunis, the fully ordained monks and fully ordained nuns.
70. The colophon is found in the catalogue of the Lhasa Zhol edition of the collection of Tibetan translations of Buddha’s Words (bka’ ’gyur). The index of the ACIP says the Lhasa Zhol edition was composed in 1934 at the request of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. The actual individual texts in the Lhasa Zhol edition, however, were translated at various times before that. The colophon says, in full, “From p. 215 front (till p. 235 back), the “Three Hundred Wisdom Gone Beyond” or “Vajra Cutter.” One Section (bam bo). Compiled, revising the translation of the Indian abbot Silendra Bodhi and Yeshe sDe with the new language standard.”

COLOPHON TO THE LHASA ZHOL TEXT⁷⁰

Compiled, revising the translation of the Indian abbot Śilendra Bodhi and Yeshe sDe with the new language standard.

COLOPHON TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

This translation of *The Vajra Cutter Sutra* is based on the Tibetan Lhasa Zhol text, having compared it with various other Tibetan printings as well as with Sanskrit versions, and having viewed several excellent earlier English translations. It was completed on 22 March 2002 at the Chandrakirti Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Centre, near Nelson, New Zealand, by Gelong Thubten Tsultrim (the American Buddhist monk George Churinoff).

First revised edition including minor revisions by the translator, June 2007.

**PRACTICE [36]
RECITE THE MEDICINE BUDDHA PRACTICE**

COLOPHON

“The Medicine Buddha Sadhana” was translated by Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche and edited and prepared for publication by Ven. Thubten Gyatso (Adrian Feldmann) in 1982. It was first published in 1982 by Wisdom Publications. It was lightly edited and prepared for publication by the FPMT Education Services in 2001 by Ven. Constance Miller. Revised March 2002, January 2004, July 2005, January 2007.

**PRACTICE [38]
MEDITATE ON TONGLÉN: GIVING AND TAKING**

COLOPHON

Extracted from *Ultimate Healing, The Power of Compassion*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Wisdom Publications. Edited by Kendall Magnussen, FPMT Education Services, June 2003.

**PRACTICE [49]
PURIFY WITH THE PRACTICE OF PROSTRATIONS TO
THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS OF CONFESSION**

NOTES

1. These five negative karmas – killing one’s father, killing one’s mother, killing an arhat, causing disunity amongst the Sangha, harming the Buddha – are called uninterrupted because if this negative karma is accumulated, then immediately after death, without “interruption” of another life, one is reborn in the lowest hot hell, number eight, the most unbearable one, which has the heaviest suffering. The five nearing uninterrupted karmas are committing incest with one’s mother who is an arhat, killing a bodhisattva who is destined to become a buddha in that very life, killing a Hinayana arya other than one abiding in the result of arhatship, stealing the possessions of the Sangha, and destroying a stupa or monastery out of hatred.
2. At the time of taking a highest tantra initiation within secret mantra, the disciple is put under pledge or samaya. There are many codes of conduct to be upheld. It is not just a question of remembering to recite the sadhana or mantra commitment of the particular deity into which one has been initiated.
3. According to the author, this refers to the ordained Sangha, those living in celibacy. Literally it says: those who are engaged in similar behavior to perfectness, which means that by living in ordination one’s conduct is harmonized to achieve buddhahood. This phrase can also refer to vajra kin, those with whom we have taken initiations.
4. Avoiding the holy Dharma is very heavy negative karma, worse than having destroyed every single holy object – statue, stupa, and scripture – that exists in the world.

5. This is the very heavy negative karma of having criticized holy beings, arya beings – those who have the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness and have achieved the right seeing path, the path of meditation, and the path of no more learning, whether Hinayana or Mahayana. It can also include other members of the Sangha.
6. Think, “The ones from which I can abstain, I will. The ones from which it is extremely difficult, I will abstain for one day, or one hour, or one minute, even one second.” Make this promise, but let it be something you can actually keep so that it doesn’t become lying to the merit field. Restraint is the last of the four opponent powers. All four should be complete: refuge, regret, remedy, and restraint.

COLOPHON

Prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession is based on an original translation by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, extracted from the booklet entitled *The Bodhisattva’s Confession of Moral Downfalls*, Kopan Monastery, Nepal. Originally revised and edited by Vens. Thubten Dondrub, George Churinoff, and Constance Miller, FPMT Education Services, 2000. Additional revisions made according to instructions by Lama Zopa Rinpoche given at the Mitrugpa retreat, Milarepa Center, Vermont, USA, August 2002.

Motivation, visualizations, and meditations compiled by Ven. Sarah Thresher according to instructions of Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Additional editing and corrections made by Ven. Gyalten Mindrol, FPMT Education Services, November 2005. Updates to layout and other copy edits by FPMT Education Services, March 2010.

The title *Bodhisattva’s Confession of Moral Downfalls* was first changed to *Confession of Downfalls to the Thirty-Five Buddhas* at the request of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, April 2003, and eventually to the current title. Translation of first line of “Refuge Prayer” by Ven. Steve Carlier, November 2005.

“General Confession” is based on a translation by Glenn H. Mullin, with adjustments by Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Lightly edited by Ven. Sarah Thresher and Kendall Magnussen, FPMT Education Services, January 2003. The line “have been disrespectful to my spiritual friends living in ordination” was changed according to the verbal instruction of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, October 2005.

PRACTICE [50] PURIFY WITH THE PRACTICE OF VAJRASATTVA AND THE FOUR OPPONENT POWERS

COLOPHON

This teaching was given by Lama Zopa Rinpoche during a Vajrasattva retreat, Land of Medicine Buddha, Soquel, California, USA, 1999, and revised in New York, November 1999. Edited by Nicholas Ribush, 2001. Lightly revised for inclusion in *Essential Buddhist Prayers*, Vol. 2 by Ven. Constance Miller, FPMT Education Department, 2001.

**PRACTICE [52]
PURIFY WITH AN ABBREVIATED OFFERING OF TSOG**

COLOPHON

In these degenerate times (there are those who are) like Mt. Meru (when it comes to taking commitments (upon themselves) but like the smallest atoms (when it comes to) practicing. So, in order to heal degenerated commitments of all sorts and in order to please the glorious, holy guru, I Thubten Zopa, a so-called incarnation, with great delight have written this at the time of the New Year of the Wood Tiger.

Also, by this, may the teachings of the victorious Losang (Dragpa) remain for a long time.

The additional practice for blessing the tsog was extracted from “A Tantric Food Offering,” by Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche.

**PRACTICE [53]
PURIFY WITH AN OFFERING OF TSOG TO GURU VAJRASATTVA
BY LAMA YESHE**

TRANSLATOR'S COLOPHON

The text was translated with the kind assistance of Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche and Ven. Könchog Yeshe, and edited by Jonathan Landaw.

ORIGINAL COLOPHON AND DEDICATIONS

On the special day of the dakas and dakinis – the twenty-fifth day of the eleventh month of the Iron-Bird year (19 January 1982) – Ven. Lama Thubten Yeshe wrote this tsog offering of Heruka Vajrasattva for a puja performed at Bodhgaya, India under the bodhi tree by an international gathering of Sangha and lay students who together made hundreds and thousands of offerings. This puja was offered by the Italian gelong Thubten Dönyö, a disciple having unsurpassed understanding of the sutra and tantra path to enlightenment and indestructible devotion to Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings, and who was adorned outwardly with saffron robes and inwardly with the three sets of vows.

This tsog offering was written with the prayer that all the Sangha of the ten directions enjoy harmonious relationships with one another, guard the precepts of pure moral conduct, and accomplish the practice of the three higher trainings, thereby becoming skillful guides providing great help to all beings.

It is dedicated to the speedy return of our great guru of unmatched and inexpressible kindness, Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang. For the benefit of all sentient beings, our mothers, may we remain inseparable from this great guru during our entire path to enlightenment.

Furthermore, it has been noted that in many countries today – Tibet, for example – those whose lives are not opposed to the three ordinations of the pratimoksha, bodhichitta, and tantric vows are not considered to be human beings! Yet even in such extremely degenerate times there are still many fortunate practitioners, and it is very important that these yogis and yoginis have a method, such as this Vajrasattva

practice, powerful enough for achieving the exalted realization of simultaneously born great bliss and emptiness. This profound method is easy and simple to practice, accumulates a great store of meritorious potential, and is capable of destroying all the negativities resulting from breaking one's pledged commitments.

In fact, it is such a powerful method that many lamas of the Geluk tradition have stated that even transgressions of root tantric vows can be purified by reciting the Vajrasattva mantra. Therefore, one should understand that there is no negativity so strong that it cannot be purified through the practice of Vajrasattva.

For all these reasons, then, this tsog offering has been composed by Vajrasattva yogi and follower of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings, the bhikshu Muni Jñana.

**PRACTICE [64]
RECITE "THE KING OF PRAYERS"**

COLOPHON

Thus, "The Extraordinary Aspiration of the Practice of Samantabhadra, also known as 'The King of Prayers,' from the Gandavyuha chapter of *The Avatamsaka Sutra* (translated by Jinamitra, Surendrabodhi, and Yeshe-de, circa 900 C.E.), is complete. The Tibetan was compared with the Sanskrit and revised by Lotsawa Vairochana. Translated by Jesse Fenton in Seattle, Washington in 2002 by request of her teacher, Ven. Thubten Chodron, relying on the commentary *Ornament Clarifying the Exalted Intention of Samantabhadra* (*'phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rnam par bshad pa kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa gsal bar byed pa'i rgyan*) by Jangkya Rolpāi Dorje, and on clarification of many difficult points by the very kind Khensur Rinpoche Konchog Tsering of Ganden Monastery.

**PRACTICE [65]
RECITE "THE DEDICATION CHAPTER FROM
SHANTIDEVA'S BODHICHRIVATARA"**

COLOPHON

Reprinted, with permission, from *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, translated by Vesna A. Wallace and B. Alan Wallace, Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1997, pp. 137-144.

**PRACTICE [66]
RECITE THE "PRAYER TO BE REBORN IN THE BLISSFUL REALM
OF AMITABHA BUDDHA"**

COLOPHON

Source unknown. Lightly edited by Ven. Constance Miller, FPMT Education Services, April 1999. Revised June 1999.

**PRACTICE [67]
RECITE “THE PRAYER FOR THE BEGINNING, MIDDLE,
AND END OF PRACTICE”**

COLOPHON

Reprinted, with permission, from *The Splendor of an Autumn Moon: The Devotional Verse of Tsongkhapa*, translated and introduced by Gavin Kilty, Wisdom Publications, 2001.

**PRACTICE [68]
RECITE “UNTIL BUDDHAHOOD”**

COLOPHON

Translated by Geshe Thubten Sherab, Taos, New Mexico, USA. Scribed and lightly edited by Kendall Magnussen, FPMT Education Services, June 2003. Final editing by Ven. Joan Nicell.

**PRACTICE [69]
RECITE “A DAILY PRAYER TO BODHISATTVA MAITREYA TAUGHT
BY BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI”**

COLOPHON

Translator unknown. Lightly edited by Ven. Constance Miller, FPMT Education Services, April 2003.

**PRACTICE [70]
RECITE “A PRAYER FOR THE STATUE OF MAITREYA”**

COLOPHON

Composed by the omniscient master, Gendun Drub. Translator unknown. Revised edition, FPMT Education Services, June 1999, June 2004.

**PRACTICE [71]
RECITE “THE PRAYER FOR SPONTANEOUS BLISS”
BY THE SECOND DALAI LAMA GENDUN GYATSO**

COLOPHON

This aspirational prayer of truthful words for achieving excellence was composed at Chokhor Gyäl monastery by Gendun Gyatso [the Second Dalai Lama], a monk who expounds the Dharma, at the request of the great woman leader, Nyima Päl, an incarnation of Bishwakarma [the legendary King of Artistry who designed the main temple in central Lhasa]. Translated by Geshe Lhundub Sopa for members of the Maitreya Project, Singapore, February 1998. Updated June 2004.

PRACTICE [81]

PRACTICE AMITABHA PHOWA BY LAMA YESHE

COLOPHON

This technical method for accomplishment was composed on February 3, 1981 at Tushita Retreat Centre, McLeod Ganj, Dharamsala, India, by Lama Yeshe in accordance with the scriptures and oral transmission. It arises in response to a request by Gelong Stefano Piovella, and was edited by Ngawang Chotok.

PRACTICE [83]

PRACTICE DORJE KHADRO FIRE PUJA

COLOPHON

Translated by Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, Ven. Jampa Zangpo, and Ven. Thubten Donyo (Nick Ribush) in 1975 under the guidance of Lama Thubten Yeshe. Originally published in Kathmandu, Nepal by the International Mahayana Institute. Lightly edited by Murray Wright, August 1993. Further editing by Ven. Constance Miller, FPMT International Office Education Services, December 1998. Revised edition, July 2001.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

aggregates. See five aggregates.

airs. See winds.

Amitabha's Pure Land.

See Blissful Realm, The.

anger. Aversion. A *delusion* that exaggerates the unpleasant qualities of a person, object, event, etc., which arises when *attachment* doesn't get what it wants. See motivation; nonvirtuous thoughts.

arhat (Sanskrit; enemy destroyer).

Here referring to a practitioner of the *Lower Vehicle* who, having ended their *suffering* and its causes, has achieved *liberation* from *samsara*. See emptiness.

arya bodhisattva (Sanskrit; superior awakening person). Someone on the Mahayana path who has directly realized *emptiness*. See meditation; realization.

attachment. Desire, craving, clinging, grasping. On the basis of grasping at the self as *existing from its own side*, the main cause of *samsara*, a *delusion* that exaggerates the pleasant qualities of a person, event, action, object, etc., including the self and one's own body, based on the assumption that the having or doing of it causes happiness, thus giving rise to expectation, possessiveness, and fear of losing it; one of the main causes of *suffering* at the time of death. See nonvirtuous thought; nonvirtuous karma.

aversion. See anger.

beginningless. All minds as well as the four elements that constitute the physical world, being governed by the law of cause and effect – this moment of *mind* or matter being the product of a previous moment of that mind or matter – necessarily cannot have a causeless first moment, a beginning. See karma.

Blissful Realm, The. In Tibetan, Dewachen; in Sanskrit, Sukhavati. Amitabha's *Pure Land*.

Bodhgaya. The town in the state of Bihar in north India that is built around the site where *Shakyamuni Buddha* became enlightened; a focal point for Buddhists worldwide.

bodhichitta (Sanskrit; awakening mind). The effortless and continuously present wish in the *minds of bodhisattvas* to (1) only benefit others, and (2) never give up perfecting their minds and becoming a *buddha* solely for the sake of others. In *tantra*, also refers to drops. See compassion; Mahayana.

bodhisattva (Sanskrit; awakening person). One who has accomplished *bodhichitta*. See Mahayana.

bodhisattva vows. See three sets of vows.

buddha (Sanskrit). Enlightened being. A person who has achieved *enlightenment*; when capitalized, refers to *Shakyamuni Buddha*. See bodhichitta; deity; Mahayana.

buddhahood. *See* enlightenment.

chakras (Sanskrit; wheels). According to *Vajrayana*, formed by the branching of *channels* at various points along the central channel – crown, brow, throat, heart, navel, and secret – that constrict the central channel and prevent the *winds* and the *minds* that ride on them from entering into and abiding there. *See* death process.

channels. According to *Vajrayana*, the 72,000 channels of the body, the main one of which is the central channel, which, with the *winds* and the red and white *drops*, constitute the *subtle body*. *See* clear light; death process; chakras.

clear light. Extremely subtle mind, very subtle mind. According to *Vajrayana*, the subtlest level of *mind*, linked inextricably with the extremely subtle wind, which occurs naturally at the eighth stage of the *death process*, then leaves the body and goes to another life. Accomplished *yogis* can meditate on *emptiness* with this mind at the time of death, even becoming enlightened then. *See* extremely subtle body and extremely subtle mind; gross body and gross mind; subtle body; subtle mind; yogi and yogini.

compassion. Empathy with the *suffering* of others, and the wish that they be free from it and its causes, which gives rise to the wish, “I myself will free

them from suffering,” known as great compassion, the unique characteristic of the compassion of the *bodhisattva*; this, in turn, gives rise to *bodhichitta*.

completion stage. The more advanced of the two stages of practice of *highest tantra*, the first being the *generation stage*. *See* tantra; Vajrayana.

concentration. When accomplished in *meditation*, a deep state of focus at a level of *mind* far subtler than the level of consciousness of the day-to-day mind, a state not posited in contemporary psychology. *See* form and formless realms.

consciousness. *See* mind.

damaru. A small, hand-held drum used by *Vajrayana* practitioners.

death process. As explained in *Vajrayana*, the gradual breakdown of the physical and mental components of a person, described in eight stages, from the gross to the subtle to the extremely subtle, that culminates in the *extremely subtle mind and wind* leaving the body, going to an *intermediate state* and then another life. *See* clear light; gross body and gross mind; subtle body; subtle mind; yogi and yogini.

defilements. *See* delusions.

deity. Buddha. A term used in *Vajrayana* for an enlightened being such as Vajrasattva,

the Compassion Buddha, and Amitabha.

delusions. Disturbing thoughts, negative thoughts. Within the categories of positive, negative, and neutral states of *mind*, negative states that necessarily distort or exaggerate or embellish whatever they cognize, which are adventitious and therefore can be removed. With *karma*, the cause of *samsara*. See anger; attachment; ignorance; liberation; nonvirtuous thoughts.

dependent arising. Every phenomenon exists – “arises” – in dependence upon (1) causes and conditions (impermanent phenomena only), (2) its parts, and, most subtly, (3) the *mind* imputing or labeling it in dependence upon its parts, and therefore is empty of *existing from its own side*; the way things exist conventionally. See emptiness; karma.

desire. See attachment.

desire realm. A realm of *rebirth* within *samsara*, which, in turn, includes six realms: those of *gods and demi-gods*, humans, animals, spirits (often referred to as hungry ghosts, one category of spirit), and *hell* beings. See form and formless realms; lower realms; *samsara*.

deva. See gods and demi-gods.

Dewachen. See Blissful Realm, The.

Dharma (Sanskrit). Refers here to Buddha’s teachings; the second

component of the *Three Rare Sublime Ones*.

disturbing thoughts. See delusions.

drops. According to *Vajrayana*, red and white subtle liquid energy that exists throughout the channels of the body, the red predominating at the navel *chakra* and the white at the crown *chakra*, and which, with the channels and the *winds*, constitute the *subtle body*; also referred to as red and white *bodhichitta*. See indestructible drop; subtle mind.

eight bodhisattvas. The close entourage of Shakyamuni Buddha: Manjushri, Vajrapani, Avalokiteshvara, Ksitigarbha, Nivarana Viskambini, Akashagarbha, Maitreya, and Samantabhadra.

eighty superstitions. A list of various conceptual states of *mind* that dissolve during the last four of the eight stages of the *death process*.

emptiness. Because everything that exists – a self, a thing, an event, an action – is a *dependent arising*, it is therefore empty of *existing from its own side*; the absence in everything that exists of this impossible way of existing. See *arya bodhisattva*; ignorance; illusion; liberation; meditation.

enlightened being. See *buddha*.

enlightenment. Full enlightenment, *buddhahood*. In the *Mahayana*, the enlightenment of a *buddha*,

the state of having removed all *delusions* and their *imprints* from the *mind* and having accomplished all virtues, forever; characterized by three essential qualities:

(1) omniscience, (2) *compassion* for all *sentient beings*, and (3) the power to do whatever needs to be done to benefit them; according to the *Mahayana*, the potential of every sentient beings.

existing from its own side. Existing inherently, truly-existent. The way every phenomenon appears to exist, that is, without depending upon (1) causes and conditions (impermanent phenomena only), (2) parts, and, most subtly, (3) *mind* labeling it; an impossible way of being that the root *delusion*, *ignorance*, grasps at as real, which gives rise to *attachment* and the other delusions and causes the *sufferings* of *samsara*. See dependent arising; emptiness; liberation; meditation.

extremely subtle body and extremely subtle mind. Very subtle body and very subtle mind. The extremely subtle *wind* inextricably conjoined with the subtlest level of *mind*, which at conception in the mother's womb mixes with the white *drop* from the father and the red drop from the mother in the *indestructible drop* at the heart *chakra*, where it resides throughout life until it leaves the body at the time of death and continues to another life, propelled by past

karma. See clear light; death process; gross body and gross mind; subtle body; subtle mind.

five aggregates. All impermanent phenomena can be divided into these; here used to refer to the impermanent phenomena that make up a *sentient being*: (1) form: the body; (2) feeling: either pleasant, unpleasant, or indifferent: one of the fifty-one *mental factors*; (3) recognition or discrimination: another of the mental factors, which distinguishes one thing from another; (4) compounding aggregates: all impermanent phenomena other than the above four, including the remaining forty-nine mental factors; often referred to as karmic formation, compounded action, as well as volition or intention, another of the fifty-one mental factors, because of its central role in sentient beings' experiences; and (5) consciousness: known as primary or main consciousness: *mental consciousness* and the *five sense consciousnesses*.

five degenerations, time of.

A period in history – which is measured in terms of eons – said to be now, during which there is a radical degeneration of (1) delusions, (2) lifespan (3) the quality of things (or time), and (4) view, and (5) experiences (or sentient beings).

five heavy negative actions. Five negative karmas. (1) Killing one's

mother, (2) killing one's father, (3) killing an *arhat*, (4) maliciously drawing blood from a *buddha*, and (5) creating a schism in the *Sangha*.

five sense bases. *See* five sense consciousnesses.

five sense consciousnesses.

The *gross consciousness*, or *mind*, that functions through the medium of the five sense bases of the (1) eyes, (2) ears, (3) nose, (4) tongue, and (5) touch. *See* mental consciousness.

form and formless realms. Two of the three realms of existence within *samsara*, the third being the *desire realm*, that are achieved as a result of deep meditative absorption. *See* concentration; meditation.

four opponent powers. *See* purification.

FPMT. Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition. The name given by *Lama Yeshe* in 1975, at *Kopan Monastery*, to his growing network of Tibetan Buddhist centers worldwide. FPMT Inc. is now established as a non-profit corporation in Portland, Oregon, with which some 160 centers and projects worldwide are affiliated, and of which the author is the spiritual director.

full enlightenment. *See* enlightenment.

Ganden Throne Holder. The title of the head of the *Gelug* tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.

Gelug (Tibetan). One of the four main traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, founded by *Lama Tsongkhapa* in the early fifteenth century; the others are *Nyingma*, *Kargyu*, and *Sakya*.

Gen Jampa Wangdu. One of the author's *gurus*, who remained in meditation after passing away in Dharamsala, India, in 1984.

generation stage. The first of the two stages of practice within *highest tantra* – the second being the *completion stage* – during which the meditator visualizes themselves as a deity, a cause for becoming that *buddha*. *See* tantra; Vajrayana.

geshe (Tibetan; spiritual friend). The title conferred on graduates of the ten-to-twenty-year program of philosophical and psychological studies at *Gelug* Tibetan monastic universities. *See* Lama Tsongkhapa.

Geshe Lhundup Sopa (1923–2014). One of the author's *gurus*, who in 1967 joined the faculty of the Buddhist Studies program at the University of Wisconsin, at Madison in the USA, and in 1975 founded Deer Park Buddhist Center in Oregon, Wisconsin.

Giving Breath to The Wretched. A short text by Kusali Dharma Vajra that contains advice about how to help at the time of death, all of which is explained by the author in this book.

gods and demi-gods. Occupants of

the two highest of the six realms of the *desire realm*, whose experiences are blissful and whose bodies are made of light; the result of *virtuous karma*. Occupants of the *form and formless realms* can also be “gods.”
See *samsara*.

grasping. Here referring to the ninth of the twelve links of *dependent arising*, a powerful form of *attachment* that arises at the time of death; sometimes used as a synonym for attachment.

great compassion. See *compassion*.

gross body and gross mind. The blood, bones, sense organs, and so forth that make up the body of a human being (or animal), which serve as the basis of the *gross mind*: the *five sense consciousnesses* and the grosser level of conceptual thoughts. See *extremely subtle body and extremely subtle mind*; *subtle body*; *subtle mind*.

guru (Sanskrit). A person’s spiritual teacher. In Tibetan, *lama*.
See *guru devotion*.

Guru Buddha. One’s *guru* seen in the aspect of a *buddha*.
See *guru devotion*.

guru devotion. Confidence that the *guru* is the *buddha*, the *deity*, expressed in thought and action, formalized in such practices as *Guru Puja* and other deity practices.

Guru Three Rare Sublime Ones. *Buddha*, *Dharma*, and *Sangha* personified in the *guru*.

Guyhasamaja. A male *deity*, the personification of purified anger. See *Vajrayana*.

gyeling. A Tibetan wind instrument, mainly played during religious ceremonies.

happiness. The result of *virtuous karma*. See *karma*; *motivation*; *suffering*.

hell. See *lower realms*.

Heruka. Heruka Chakrasamvara. A male *deity*, the personification of purified attachment.
See *Vajrayana*; *Vajrayogini*.

highest tantra. The fourth and supreme class of *tantra*, consisting of *generation* and *completion stages*.
See *initiation*; *lower tantras*; *tantra*; *Vajrayana*.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The current Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, born in 1935, is the fourteenth in this line of reincarnated *lamas*, revered as the manifestation of the Compassion Buddha; the spiritual and, until 2011 when he resigned, political head of Tibet.

hungry ghost. See *lower realms*.

ignorance. Basic ignorance, root ignorance. The *delusion* that grasps at everything, including the self, as *existing from its own side*, that gives rise to *attachment* and all the other delusions, is the root cause of the sufferings of *samsara*, and that is eradicated by realizing *emptiness*.

See dependent arising; illusion; liberation; meditation.

illusion. Everything is said to be like an illusion – not an illusion but like an illusion: it does not exist from its own side but nevertheless does function. See dependent arising; emptiness; ignorance.

illusory body. A *subtle body* made of *wind* that resembles a deity; cause of the deity's body. See highest tantra; yogi and yogini.

imprints. See seeds.

indestructible drop. The essence of the conjoined white and red *drop* received from the parents at conception, the size of a tiny bean with its red and white halves, that mixes with the extremely subtle *mind* and abides in the very center of the heart *chakra*. See extremely subtle body and extremely subtle mind.

inherent existence. See existing from its own side.

initiation. Empowerment. The transmission from a *guru* to a disciple of the practice of a particular *deity*, which empowers the disciple to engage in that *sadhana*. See samaya; Vajrayana.

intermediate state (Tibetan: *bardo*). A state of existence that a person takes the moment their extremely subtle consciousness leaves the heart *chakra* at death until taking another life in *samsara*, lasting anywhere from a moment to

forty-nine days; said to be similar in experience to a dream. The intermediate state body is subtle and has no resistance to matter and is similar in appearance to the body of the next life. See death process.

karma (Sanskrit). Compounded action, action, intention. The *intention*, underpinned by a *motivation*, to do or say something that impels an action of body or speech, which leaves *seeds* or imprints in the *mind* that, unless eliminated, will result in the future as (1) a type of rebirth in *samsara*; (2) the habit to keep doing or saying or thinking it; (3) an experience similar to it; (4) an environmental result. Used loosely to refer to the natural law of cause and effect – that negative karma produces *suffering* and virtuous karma produces *happiness* – that plays out in the minds and lives of all *sentient beings*. See negative karma; reincarnation; virtuous karma.

karmic appearances. The way things, people, events, etc., appear to sentient beings – pleasant, unpleasant, etc. – according to their past actions; here in particular referring to the appearances at the time of death.

Khunu Lama Rinpoche (1894–1977). A lay lama renowned for his *bodhichitta*.

Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche (1926–2006). A scholar and yogi who lived in Dharamsala, India; one of the author's *gurus*.

Kopan Monastery. The monastery established in 1970 by the author's *guru*, *Lama Yeshe*, in Nepal, five miles northeast of Kathmandu, where now some 350 monks study the full range of topics of the main *Gelug* monastic universities, such as Sera Je, one of the colleges of *Sera Monastery*, with which it is affiliated. Its sister monastery of 350 nuns nearby, Kachoe Ghakyil, follow the same course of study, with a newly established branch of 20 nuns in Sarnath, India. It also holds courses throughout the year for visitors from other countries, including the annual November Course, the first of which was in 1970, taught by the author.

lama. *See* *guru*.

Lama Tsongkhapa (1357–1419).

Scholar, *yogi*, and teacher, founder of the *Gelug* tradition of Tibetan Buddhism; author of many texts, including *Lamrim Chenmo*.

Lama Yeshe (1935–1984).

Lama Thubten Yeshe; the author's *guru* since the age of 14. Born in Tibet and educated since childhood at the Je college of *Sera Monastery* in Lhasa; escaped into exile in 1959 and settled in Kathmandu, Nepal, in 1967; founded the *FPMT* in 1975 after he and the author started teaching *Dharma* to people from the West at *Kopan Monastery* in 1970.

lamrim (Tibetan; graded path).

Path to enlightenment. Coined

by *Lama Tsongkhapa*. Buddha's sutra teachings, based on *Lamp for the Path* by Atisha (982–1054), presented as a course of study and practice according to three levels of capability: (1) lower-capable beings, motivated by the wish to not be reborn in the *lower realms*; (2) middle-capable beings, motivated by the wish to not be reborn in *samsara*; and (3) higher-capable beings, motivated by the wish to become a *buddha*. Practitioners of the *Lesser Vehicle* practice the first two levels; those of the *Mahayana* practice all three. *See* *Lamrim Chenmo*.

Lamrim Chenmo (Tibetan; Great Graded Path). The most extensive of *Lama Tsongkhapa's* commentaries on the lamrim.

Land of Medicine Buddha. An *FPMT* retreat center in Soquel, California.

Lawudo Lama. The author is the recognized reincarnation of the first Lawudo Lama (1864–1946), Kunsang Yeshe, a meditator in the Solo Khumbu region of Nepal.

Lesser Vehicle. (Sanskrit: Hinayana.) The path that leads to *liberation* from *suffering* and its causes, often referred to as the path of individual liberation. *See* lamrim; Mahayana; Paramitayana; Vajrayana.

liberation. (Sanskrit: nirvana.) liberation from *samsara*; liberation from *suffering* and its causes. Achieved when the *delusions* and

their imprints, the obstacles to liberation, have been removed from the *mind*, thus eliminating the causes of *samsara*; the goal of the *Lesser Vehicle* practitioner. *See* arhat, emptiness.

Ling Rinpoche (1903–1983).

The senior tutor of *His Holiness the Dalai Lama* and one of the author's *gurus*.

long-life vase. A vase containing blessed substances used in rituals for extending life.

lower realms. Three realms of rebirth among the six of the *desire realm*: those of (1) the animals, (2) the spirits (often referred to as hungry ghosts (Sanskrit, *preta*), one type of spirit), and (3) the *hell* beings; the result of *negative karma* and each characterized by their own levels of *suffering*. The vast majority of all sentient beings are said to exist in the lower realms. *See* reincarnation; *samsara*.

lower tantras. The first three of the four classes of *tantra*, *Kriya*, *Charya*, and *Yoga*. *See* highest *tantra*; *Vajrayana*.

omniscience. *See* buddha.

Mahayana (Sanskrit; Great Vehicle). The path of the *bodhisattva*, the goal of which is the *enlightenment* of a *buddha*; includes *Paramitayana* and *Vajrayana*.

mantra. Sanskrit syllables recited in conjunction with the practice

of a particular *deity* that are the verbal expression of the qualities of that deity.

meditation. In Tibetan, *gom*, to familiarize. A process of familiarizing the mind with (1) that which is virtuous and (2) that which is true. There are two types of formal meditation techniques (taught in the *Mahayana* as the fifth and sixth of the *six perfections*): the goal of the first, calm abiding, is to gain single-pointed *concentration*; and the goal of the second, special insight (or wisdom), is to gain a *realization* of *emptiness*, which is induced by this concentrated mind precisely and logically analyzing, for example, *dependent arising*. In *Vajrayana*, concentration by the *yogi* on themselves as the *deity* is combined with the insight of emptiness. Realizations of any of the points of the path to *enlightenment* can be gained by combining these two kinds of meditation.

mental continuum. Mindstream. The *beginningless* and endless continuity of *mind* of individual beings.

mental consciousness. Includes thoughts and emotions and other *mental factors*, *subtle consciousness*, *very subtle consciousness*. *See* five sense consciousnesses; mental continuum.

mental factors. States of *mind* such as *attachment*, *anger*, *love*,

intention, etc., that are divided into the three categories of positive, negative, and neutral. A person has thousands of such states of mind, although traditionally fifty-one are mentioned. *See* five aggregates.

mind. Consciousness. Defined as that which is formless, or clear, and which can cognize or know; includes both *five sense consciousnesses* and *mental consciousness*. *See* beginningless; subtle body and extremely subtle mind; gross body and gross mind; mental continuum; sentient being; subtle mind.

motivation. Usually used to refer to the attitude that underpins an *intention* to do or say something: a negative motivation causes the *karma* to be negative and the result *suffering*, a positive motivation causes the karma to be positive and the result happiness. *See* negative karma; virtuous karma.

Nagarjuna (83 BCE–517 CE). The Indian scholar and tantric adept, born approximately four hundred years after *Shakyamuni Buddha*, who elucidated the actual meaning of Buddha's teachings on *emptiness*.

negative action. *See* negative karma.

negative karma. Negative action, negative karmas, nonvirtuous action, nonvirtuous *karma*. With *delusions*, the main cause of *suffering*. *See* purification.

nirvana (Sanskrit). *See* liberation.

nonvirtuous thought. A negative state of *mind*, such as *anger*, jealousy, arrogance, etc. *See* karma; mental factors; motivation.

Nyingma (Tibetan). Nyingmapa. The oldest of the four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, which traces its teachings back to Guru Rinpoche *Padmasambhava*. *See* Gelug.

omniscience. *See* enlightenment.

Padmasambhava. Guru Rinpoche. Invited to Tibet from India by the Tibetan king Trison Detsen in the mid-eighth century; revered among Tibetans as the founder of Buddhism in Tibet.

Pabongka Rinpoche (1871–1941). An influential Gelug lama of *Sera Monastery* in Lhasa, Tibet; the main *guru* of the Senior and Junior Tutors of *His Holiness the Dalai Lama*.

Panchen Lama Chökyi Gyaltsen (1570–1662). The fourth Panchen Lama, author of many texts, including *Guru Puja*.

paramita. *See* Paramitayana.

Paramitayana (Sanskrit; Perfection Vehicle). The *Mahayana* sutra teachings. *See* Lesser Vehicle; Vajrayana.

preta. *See* hungry ghost.

protectors. Beings – worldly or enlightened – who protect Buddhism and its practitioners.

puja (Sanskrit). A religious ceremony.

pure land. Pure realm. Subtle, blissful states of existence associated with different *buddhas*, such as Amitabha, where there is no *suffering* and often where one can achieve *enlightenment*. See Blissful Realm, The.

pure realm. See pure land.

purification. The weakening of negative karmic *imprints* in the *mind*, often accomplished by doing practices such as the four opponent powers: regret, dependence, the remedy, and restraint. See negative karma.

realization. An understanding of any of the points of the path to *enlightenment* gained through the union of the two kinds of *meditation*.

realms. See *samsara*.

rebirth. See reincarnation.

refuge. Heartfelt reliance upon the *Three Rare Sublime Ones* for guidance on the path to *enlightenment*.

reincarnation. Rebirth. The natural process of continuous birth and death within the various realms of *samsara* that all *sentient beings*, propelled by the force of their past *karma*, have been going through since *beginningless* time and will go through until they achieve *liberation*. *Arya bodhisattvas* and

buddhas choose to reincarnate in the various *realms* for the benefit of others, for as long as *suffering* exists.

relics. Things, often pearl-like, that emanate from holy objects such as statues and stupas or the cremated bodies of *yogis* and *yoginis*.

renunciation. The wish to be liberated from *samsara*, based on the understanding that the happiness that comes from *attachment* is in the nature of *suffering*, and that suffering is caused by *karma* and *delusions*.

Rinpoche (Tibetan; Precious One). An honorific when addressing or referring to reincarnated lamas and one's own *guru* or other lamas.

root ignorance. See ignorance.

sadhana (Sanskrit; method of accomplishment). The step-by-step set of *meditations* and prayers related to a particular *deity*.

samaya (Sanskrit). A pledge made to one's *guru* to keep vows and commitments, typically made when receiving an *initiation*. See Vajrayana. See three sets of vows.

samsara (Sanskrit; cyclic existence). Repeated circling between death, the *intermediate state*, and rebirth in the desire, form, and formless realms, propelled by past *karma*. Also used to refer to the *aggregates* of a person going from one life to the next in the various *realms*.

See ignorance; liberation; lower realms; reincarnation.

Sangha (Sanskrit; spiritual community). The third component of the *Three Rare Sublime Ones*, specifically a group of at least four fully ordained monks or nuns; often refers to monks and nuns in general.

seeds. Imprints or tendencies or potentials left in the *mind* when actions of body, speech, and mind are done or whenever anything is experienced through the senses, which ripen as future experiences. See karma.

Sera Monastery. One of the “Three Greats”: *Gelug* monastic universities near Lhasa, Tibet, founded in the early fifteenth century by Jamchen Chöje, a disciple of *Lama Tsongkhapa*; now also established in exile, in south India; the author’s monastery.

sentient being. In Tibetan, *sem-chen*, *mind*-possessor. Refers to all beings other than buddhas.

Shakyamuni Buddha (563–483BC). The fourth of the one thousand founding *buddhas* of this present world age, Lord Buddha was born a prince of the Shakya clan in North India, renounced his kingdom, achieved *enlightenment* at the age of thirty-five, and then taught the paths to *liberation* and enlightenment until he passed away at the age of eighty.

sense bases. See Five sense consciousnesses.

six perfections. Final stages of the *bodhisattva* path: generosity, morality, patience, perseverance, *concentration*, and wisdom or realization of *emptiness*.

six yogas of Naropa. A completion stage series of *highest tantra* practices, which include transference of consciousness.

Song Rinpoche (1905–1984). A renowned Tibetan master, one of the author’s *gurus*, first invited to teach in the West by *Lama Yeshe* and who advised the author at the time of the Lama Yeshe’s passing away.

sorrowless state. See liberation.

spirit. See lower realms.

stupa. A reliquary of *relics* of the *buddhas* and other holy beings; representative of the enlightened *mind*.

subtle body. The system of *channels*, *winds*, and red and white *drops* inextricably linked with the *subtle mind*. See death process; extremely subtle body and extremely subtle mind; gross body and gross mind.

subtle mind. The *eighty superstitions* and the *minds* of white appearance, red appearance or red increase, and dark, or black, appearance that occur during the final four stages of death. See death process; extremely subtle body and

extremely subtle mind; gross body and gross mind.

suffering. The various levels of experience of *sentient beings* in the three realms of *samsara*, caused by *karma* and *delusions*: the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and pervasive compounded suffering. *See* ignorance.

Sukhavati. *See* Blissful Realm, The.

sutra (Sanskrit). The *Lesser Vehicle* and *Paramitayana* discourses of Buddha; a scriptural text and the teachings and practices it contains.

tantra (Sanskrit). The teachings and practices of the *Vajrayana*, or a text containing those teachings, depending on context.

tantric vows. *See* three sets of vows.

ten virtuous actions. The actions of refraining from (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) lying, (5) harsh speech, (6) divisive talk, (7) idle talk, (8) craving, (9) ill-will, (10) wrong views.

thangka (Tibetan). A painting, usually on canvas, of deities, etc. *See* deity.

transcendental non-dual great bliss voidness. Within *Vajrayana* practice, the mind of great bliss realizing emptiness.

three principal aspects of the path. *Renunciation*, *bodhichitta*, and *emptiness*.

three bodies of a buddha.

Dharmakaya, or wisdom body; sambogakaya, or enjoyment body; nirmanakaya, or emanation body.

three sets of vows. The vows of individual liberation, bodhisattva vows, and tantric vows; formally-taken decisions to refrain from various types of behavior, which are crucial for the development of realizations. Said to be a subtle type of form that is visible to clairvoyants. *See* Lesser Vehicle; Mahayana; Vajrayana.

Three Rare Sublime Ones.

Buddha, *Dharma*, and *Sangha*, the three objects of refuge of a Buddhist. *See* Guru Three Rare Sublime Ones.

true existence. *See* existing from its own side.

Trulshig Rinpoche (1924–2011).

A Tibetan lama, who lived in Nepal, and who in 2010 was appointed head of the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism; one of the author's *gurus*.

tsa-tsa (Tibetan). A bas-relief image of buddhas, usually small, traditionally made of clay but these days often made of plaster.

Tushita Retreat Centre. An FPMT center near Dharamsala, north India, where *His Holiness the Dalai Lama* is based and where many Tibetan meditators practice.

twelve deeds of the buddha. There are different versions of the twelve deeds that all buddhas are said to accomplish. Here the version is from *Praise of the Lord, Our Teacher, By Way of His Twelve Deeds*, found in the Tibetan collection of commentaries called *Tengyur*. (1) entered into his mother's womb; (2) took birth in Lumbini; (3) became skilled in the arts and played the sports of youth; (4) took charge of the kingdom and possessed a female retinue; (5) became discouraged with cyclic existence and left the householder's life; (6) practiced austerities for six years; (7) went to the Bodhi tree and became fully enlightened; (8) turned the wheel of Dharma; (9) subdued the maras, Devadatta, and the six Tirthikas; (10) showed miracle powers at Sravasti; (11) passed from sorrow in Kushinagar; (12) manifested relics in eight portions.

Vajrayana (Sanskrit). Tantra. The more advanced of the two stages of the *Mahayana* path to enlightenment. See Lesser Vehicle; Paramitayana.

Vajrayogini. A female deity, the personification of purified attachment. See Heruka; Vajrayana.

virtuous karma. Positive karma. An action of body, speech, or *mind* driven by a positive motivation, which causes happiness. See karma.

virtuous thought. Positive thought. A virtuous state of *mind* such as love, compassion, etc. See motivation.

vows of individual liberation (Sanskrit: pratimoksha). Vows to refrain from harming others, related to the *Lower Vehicle* levels of practice. See bodhisattva vows; tantric vows; three levels of vows.

winds. According to *Vajrayana*, winds, or air energy, that flow in the *channels* of the body, which enable the body to function and which are associated with the different levels of *mind* – they are said to “ride on the winds” – and which, with the channels and the *drops*, constitute the *subtle body*. See extremely subtle body and extremely subtle mind; gross body and gross mind.

wisdom, base-time and result-time. The five base-time wisdoms are the natural states of mind that dissolve during the stages of death; the result-time wisdoms are actual realizations in the minds of yogis and yoginis.

yogi and yogini (Sanskrit). An accomplished *Vajrayana* male and female meditator respectively. See meditation.

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