

A Prayer for the Beginning, Middle, and End of Practice

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By Je Tsongkhapa

Translated by Gavín Kilty

An FPMT Prayer Book

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Set in Calibri 12/15, Lydian BT, and Monlam Uni Ouchan 2.

Practice Requirements:

Anyone can do the practices in this book.

A Prayer for the Beginning, Middle, and End of Practice

Thog tha ma

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 in 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 the 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.

Colophon:

Translated by Gavin Kilty from Je Tsongkhapa's *A Prayer for the Beginning, Middle, and End of Practice* (*thog ma dang bar dang tha mar dge ba'i smon lam; thog mtha' ma*) in *The Splendor of an Autumn Moon: The Devotional Verse of Tsongkhapa*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001, 193–207. Reprinted here with permission from the publisher.



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