

# Basic Tibetan Buddhism



by

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**Dedicated with great respect, love, and devotion  
to my teacher, Venerable Robina Courtin,  
who flies like an eagle on the two wings  
of wisdom and compassion**

**Blessings to all beings!!**



# 1. The Buddha

Whether it's classified as a religion, philosophy, or a psychology, Buddhism is the study and practice of the teachings of Buddha. It's important to keep the words "study" and "practice" together. Many people read books about Buddhism. Some even make an intense study of it, but reading and study are not enough. Reading about Buddhism does not make you a Buddhist any more than reading science books makes you a scientist or reading gardening books makes you a gardener. Scientists and gardeners certainly read and refer to books and do a lot of study, but it is in order to make them more effective and successful at their work. It is important to read and study the teaching of Buddha to understand the concepts, but the work of a Buddhist is to put the teachings into practice in daily life.

The logical place to start in studying Buddhism is with the Buddha. What do we know about this person called "Buddha"? What was his life like and how did he come to be the founder of one of the world's major religions? What do his teachings have to say to us in modern times and how can they help us change ourselves?

Buddha was born in 563 BC in Lumbini, which lies in modern-day Nepal on the border with northern India. His name was Siddhartha Gautama. He was born into an aristocratic family of the Shakya clan, which is why he is also sometimes referred to as Shakyamuni, "the sage of the Shakyas". His mother, Mahamaya, died soon after he was born, and a local holy man named Asita made a prediction that the child would grow up to be a great teacher and religious leader. Siddhartha's father, Shuddhodana, was not happy to hear this. He thought of the holy men wandering in the forest with matted hair and sleeping in caves. He did not consider this suitable for his son.

Shuddhodana was determined to keep his son isolated and distracted to prevent the prediction from coming true. Siddhartha lived entirely within the walls of the family estate. He led a princely life, showered with material goods and sensual pleasures. Anything unpleasant was kept from him. He had fine clothes, good food, and was surrounded by music, art, beautiful women, doting relatives and teachers, and every imaginable pleasure. It sounds like the recipe for producing a spoiled monster, but Siddhartha grew to be a talented, kind, and intelligent young man. At the age of sixteen, he married his beautiful cousin, Yasodhara. He had a seemingly ideal existence inside the artificial world within the estate walls.

Shuddhodana's strategy seems to have worked for a long time, but Siddhartha was naturally curious about the unknown world outside. He secretly made arrangements with a servant and made several trips outside to see the world he knew

nothing about. During these trips, he encountered an old man, a sick man, and a corpse. This was a traumatic shock to Siddhartha, who had been isolated from the unpleasant realities of life. He was shattered by the realization that all people must suffer illness, old age, and death. It made his life of pleasure seem pointless if there was no escape from the inevitable suffering all must face. The young Siddhartha, whose world had always been so beautiful and pleasant, was now faced with a world that seemed an ugly prison of pain.

During his last secret visit to the outside world, as he was still trying to absorb this new reality of suffering and sorrow, he encountered a holy man. This holy man, a wandering ascetic, seemed so calm and at peace that Siddhartha wondered why he seemed unaffected by suffering. Was there some secret he had discovered to the problem of suffering? Having seen that it was possible to be peaceful and calm in a world of pain made Siddhartha determined to discover for himself the solution to the problem of suffering. At the age of 29, shortly after the birth of his son, Rahula, he left the family estate to join the wandering holy men of the forest to take teachings, practice their ways, and find a solution to the problem of suffering.

He studied under a number of teachers and learned much. He learned all that each one had to offer, but none of the teachings and philosophies completely satisfied him as a final solution to the problem of suffering. He also learned many different practices, and eventually wound up with a group that practiced extreme asceticism. He endured exposure to heat and cold, holding his breath for long periods of time, and extreme fasting in order to try and conquer suffering by suffering. Finally, near starvation, weak, wobbly, and foggy-headed from hunger, he realized that if he continued he would simply die without the answer he sought. He took a small bit of food and felt better, but this drew the anger of the other ascetics who considered him a quitter.

Feeling like a thorough failure, he sat down under a tree and determined to stay there until he had an answer to the problem of suffering or he died, whichever came first. He sat in meditation through the night. At dawn the next morning, he looked up and saw the morning star. He saw the world in a completely different way. He was “awake” to the true nature of reality and had solved the problem of suffering once and for all. He was Buddha, “the awakened one”.

He stayed under the tree for a few days, continuing to meditate on and enjoy this newfound perception. He wished he could make it available to others, but it didn’t seem possible. It was not a product of reasoning or rational thought. It didn’t even seem possible to put it into words. Still, since all suffer, he felt he should at least attempt to give others a chance for this liberation from suffering.

He returned to the group of ascetics he had previously practiced with. They rejected him at first as no longer one of them. Still, there seemed to be something different about him, so they decided to let him speak. He taught them what is now known as The Four Noble Truths, and this was the beginning of a teaching career that lasted forty-five more years.

## 2. The Four Noble Truths

It's easy to see that there is a lot of suffering in the world. Pick up any newspaper, turn on the TV, go downtown, or look around your neighborhood. Or maybe look around your own house, or at yourself. There is no life that hasn't been touched by some kind of suffering and sorrow. Even given the best of circumstances, we all know (though we don't like to think about it) that we will grow old and die, as will everyone we know. From our own experience, we can understand that all living things want happiness and no living thing wants pain and suffering. The problem of avoiding pain and suffering and striving for happiness is a universal condition for all sentient beings. This is the problem that Buddha set out to solve, and he presented the solution in his first teaching.

The Four Noble Truths is a set of four statements or points that address the problem of suffering. Though they are apparently very short and simple, they are profound in their power to reshape our view of reality. They can be basically understood in a few minutes, but it can take a lifetime (or many lifetimes) to understand all the implications. The Four Noble Truths are the foundation of Buddhist thought and all subsequent teachings and practices flow from them. The Four Noble Truths are:

1. There is suffering
2. There is an identifiable cause of suffering
3. The cause of suffering can be eliminated
4. The method of eliminating the cause

They are often compacted even further into four points :

1. suffering
2. cause
3. cessation
4. method

Each of these points needs a bit of elaboration to unlock the profound dimensions of these statements. There is a strong tradition of reasoning, questioning, and debate in Buddhism. Buddha constantly warned his students to question all

teachings and statements, even his own. This was only partly as a safeguard against dishonest teachers. Questioning is also important because it is only through personally testing the validity of the ideas that they can become valuable tools for reshaping your life. Unquestioning faith is weak and may collapse at any time. That which has been tested will remain and weather changing circumstances. So, as we examine the Four Noble Truths, you should question what you are reading. Even if you agree with everything you read, you should still spend some time reflecting on the points and thinking of examples from your own experience.

The first Noble Truth is the existence of suffering. It may seem that there isn't much to say about the existence of suffering. We all know what pain is. We have all been sick at some time. We know that the world is full of hunger, poverty, and misery. There are many types of suffering, however, and not all of them are as obvious as what comes to mind when we think of suffering. Since we are saying that a thing called "suffering" exists, we need to define the term so we can be clear about its nature.

"Suffering" is the usual translation of the original Pali word *dukkha* (Sanskrit *dukha*). It denotes the usual things we think of as suffering – physical pain, hunger, illness, etc., but it also has much wider connotations. It includes dissatisfaction, emotional disturbance, and "thirst" or unending craving and desire. Suffering is not something that only happens from time to time and doesn't exist in between. Suffering doesn't only exist when you hurt yourself or get sick. Suffering is a pervasive condition. If we are looking for a solution to suffering, we must look for a solution to all suffering, not just one or two particular kinds of suffering.

Buddhism describes suffering in three categories. The first is the suffering of suffering. This type of suffering includes all of the obvious things we usually connect with the term. Sickness, hunger, disability, exposure to heat or cold, injury, and mental illness would fall into this category. All living beings are subject to the suffering of birth, sickness, aging, and death. We begin life in the trauma of birth, our lives end with the breakdown of the body in death, and in between we are subject to injury and illness. These are the natural consequences of having life, of having a physical body. We are guaranteed to have a certain amount of suffering by the fact of our existence, as is every other living creature. The worm drying out on the sidewalk in the hot sun is suffering as much as the man dying in a hospital room, and both only wish to keep living.

The second type of suffering is the suffering of change. This type of suffering is not as obvious and, in many ways, much more pernicious. We recognize logically that nothing is permanent, but emotionally we refuse to believe it. Things get broken, wear out, or malfunction, and how do we react? When the TV quits working, when the

computer freezes up, when the car breaks down, we react with anger, shock, and disbelief. Why did this happen? How could this happen? This can't be happening? The circumstances of our lives are also constantly subject to change, but we cling so desperately to the idea that they aren't. So when things do suddenly change in our lives, we are in shock. We are unable to deal with it because we refused to believe it could happen and we are outraged that it did.

Our feelings also change. We convince ourselves that if only I had a different job, or a new car, or a divorce, or my neighbor would move away – then I would be happy! When we get the things we want, we may be happy for a while, but it's usually not long before we're dissatisfied again and start playing the "if only" game with ourselves.

Another facet of the suffering of change is that even our moments of pleasure and happiness can be categorized as suffering. This doesn't mean that we don't have pleasure or happiness. We do. It just doesn't last, because we are trying to draw our happiness from external sources. If you are really enjoying a piece of chocolate cake, you think the cake is making you happy. When that piece of cake is gone, the source of your happiness is gone. You can try to solve this by having more cake, but the second piece isn't going to be nearly as good as the first. A third piece will probably make you sick, so we are stuck with our pleasure coming to an end or turning into something that causes more suffering. The same principle applies to everything because of our deluded perception.

The third type of suffering is the suffering of conditioning. Our past actions have created the conditions for our present existence, which is the basis for our present suffering. Our past has also conditioned us with certain tendencies and habits that cause us to act in ways that create the conditions for our future suffering. The cycle goes on and we continue to create our own suffering. We will look at karma and rebirth in more detail, but this is a cycle that we can see in our own lives if we look at ourselves over the years and see where we are now. We can also easily see how our present habits and tendencies could cause us problems in the future. If we want to break the cycle of suffering, we have to understand the cause of it

The second Noble Truth is that suffering has an identifiable cause. There are two causes of our suffering, karma and our misperception of the way things are. The two work together to perpetuate the cycle of suffering.

To look at the way we misperceive reality, think of what happens when you go to a movie. You watch people doing things, talking to each other, getting into a variety of situations, going places, and it all looks very real. In order to enjoy the story, you suspend your knowledge that the people are not really the characters they are



pretending to be in the movie, the situations are contrived, the buildings are not real, the romance is not real, the guns are not real, the deaths are not real, etc. At an even deeper level, though the action on the screen looks very natural, the true nature of what you see is thousands of tiny, individual pictures passing in front of a light and projecting fast moving and very enlarged shadows. You know that what you see is caused by still frames on film, but your eyes cannot see them that way. Though the content of the movie and the way we see the projection of the movie are all an illusion, we can still enjoy it. Perhaps we enjoy it because we know it is an illusion and really don't have to get upset about it.

Our lives, the realities we live in, are movies of our own making. We are very much like children in a theater who don't understand the illusory nature of a movie and are terrified that the lion might come down and eat them, or want to help the characters on the screen by yelling out "There's someone in the closet!" Because of the way our senses work, we are not able to see objects as collections of molecules and compounds moving around rapidly. We look and see a very solid, permanent, unmoving thing. We are not able to see this thing as the chain of events and conditions that has brought it together, nor are we able to see that it is being acted on by forces and slowly decomposing as we look at it.

In order to interact with the world, our mind has to categorize and label the information it receives from the senses. This labeling helps to compound the problem, however. We look at an object and immediately label it "chair". We do not understand that "chair" is something that we have created in our mind. There is no such thing as a chair in the external world; there is only a collection of materials and all the events that had to happen to bring them together. We further label it "a pretty chair" or "an ugly chair". These are values that do not exist in the thing we call "chair". They exist only in our minds.

We do the same thing with ourselves, and this is where the most confusion comes from. Our egos are very strong and love to make up stories about us. We label ourselves, we give ourselves attributes, we make up a character for ourselves so that we can star in our own movie.

We can easily shake up our normal view of the world a bit by simply thinking about the different sensory capabilities of other creatures. You look at a flower and see a particular pattern of yellow and red, and you immediately label it as pretty. A bee nearby, looking at the same flower might see the yellow but not the red. Bees can see in the ultraviolet range of light, though, so the bee would see a completely different pattern of blues and purples that we couldn't see. Based on that pattern, the bee would

immediately label it as “food source” or “not food source”. Which of you has the correct view of the flower?

We act and think according to our projections and labels, and this causes us to produce negative karma that will bring suffering in the future. Karma is the law of cause and effect. Every action sets off a chain of subsequent events that produce a result. The effect produced may be immediate or it may not be realized till much later. Everything that exists is the effect of previous causes. Since we act on false assumptions out of ignorance, our actions do not bring the results we want and cause us to be hurt over and over. Though it may be a hard pill to swallow, we are the creators of our own suffering. The world does not hurt us, other people do not hurt us, our own minds hurt us and then project the blame elsewhere.

Because of its starting point that all life is suffering, people often get the idea that Buddhism is very gloomy and paints a very dismal picture of the world. Buddhism is actually very joyful and hopeful, because the third Noble Truth tells us that the cause of suffering can be eliminated. It is not easy and we may have a lot to overcome, but there is something we can do about it. Once we have examined the way our minds work and realize the ways we have cheated ourselves, we can begin to work on changing our minds to produce true happiness. Once we have examined how our past actions done under delusion have brought us our current sufferings, we can begin to act in ways that will bring positive karma in the future. We become like a prisoner who suddenly realizes the key to the cell has been in his pocket all along.

The fourth noble truth is the method for attaining liberation from suffering. This is accomplished by perfecting the Three Higher Trainings, training ourselves in wisdom, concentration, and morality. Wisdom which can see through the illusion and see the interdependence of all beings will bring our freedom from suffering. We can use our present abilities to understand and analyze to push our minds toward a higher understanding, toward wisdom. To be able to do this, we will need to develop concentration, single-pointed concentration, through meditation. Strong concentration is necessary to give us the focus to see through the illusion. Wisdom and concentration should be developed together. To provide a stable foundation and to prevent creating negative karma, the practice of morality is essential. A basic practice of morality means refraining from the ten unwholesome actions. These are:

1. killing, intentionally taking any life
2. stealing, taking any property regardless of value
3. sexual misconduct, any harmful or inappropriate sexual behavior
4. lying, deceiving others with your words

5. divisiveness, creating dissension and disharmony
6. harsh speech, speaking in anger and using words harmfully
7. gossip and idle talk, talk to boost your own position at the expense of others
8. envy, desire for someone else's possessions
9. harmful intent, wishing to harm others
10. holding wrong views, views not in accordance with the truth

This is how we begin to follow the path, by honestly acknowledging our condition, analyzing the causes and our part in them, and beginning to train our minds for a journey that will eventually lead us to freedom from suffering and a complete realization of our full potential.

### 3. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

When we use the term “Buddha”, we are usually referring to the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, whose life we looked at in the first chapter. He was a human being like you and me, but he was able to use his mind to become “awake” to the true nature of reality. He then taught others so that they could also become “awake” and liberate themselves from their own delusions and suffering. Buddha was not divine or unique. What made him “Buddha” was that he developed the full potential of his mind. We practice Buddhism in order to become a buddha, to develop ourselves in the same way. There are many, many buddhas, and we all have the possibility of becoming a buddha, an enlightened being.

It’s not entirely accurate, however, to speak of becoming a buddha in the sense of changing from what we are now. Becoming enlightened does not mean changing into something else. It means becoming what you already are. There are many levels of mind, but we are generally only aware of the surface, ego-controlled level of our minds. Generally we think that the noisy, chattering, rational, labeling, emotion-saturated mind is what mind is, and that’s all there is. There is more, though, and we all have occasional glimpses of a different level of mind when we have sudden insights, suddenly see things in a new way, or temporarily lose ourselves in concentration or contemplation. We all know that occasionally things come into our minds from somewhere other than our normal thinking process. This is not anything abnormal or superhuman. It is simply that at these times we are accessing deeper levels of our own minds that we are not normally aware of due to all the chatter and noise from our egos.

The true nature of our mind is a very subtle, pure consciousness, undeluded and undifferentiated. The other things that we think of as our mind; feelings, tendencies, personality, identity, etc., are the layers of delusion and projection we have built upon it. The true mind, or buddha-nature in Buddhist terms, is like pure water. Water can be polluted with other substances, and if you identify the pollution as part of the water, then you might think that water is brown, smelly stuff that tastes bad and makes you sick. If you are aware of the true nature of water, you can find ways to remove the pollution and regain the pure water that was always there. In the same way, we can purify our minds and regain our true nature.

Buddhism maintains that every sentient being, every living creature, has this pure consciousness or buddha-nature. That’s what mind is. That’s what existence is.

The other levels of mind are not evil. They are necessary tools for interacting with the world. The reason the other layers of mind contain our delusions that produce suffering is that we do not understand the nature of the tools, do not use them properly, and therefore never get the results we want. Since every living being has buddha-nature as a foundation for mind, every creature will eventually become a buddha, though perhaps not for a very, very long time.

A buddha, then, can be described as one who has achieved liberation from suffering by purifying the mind, regaining a pure level of consciousness, and having a complete realization of emptiness or seeing through the illusion of our normal perception. It would be proper to say that we are all potential buddhas or even that we already are buddhas but don't realize it. The work of being a buddhist is working with the mind to develop its full potential.

The term "bodhicitta" means "enlightened mind", but it is generally understood to mean "loving-kindness" or "compassion". Compassion is seen as naturally arising in the enlightened mind that sees the interdependence of all things. Generating bodhicitta is understood to be a pre-condition for full buddhahood. Bodhicitta is the altruistic aspiration, the aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings, self included. Compassion can be used as fuel to achieve enlightenment. Generating compassion to whatever degree we are able at the time helps to further our wisdom and propels us toward enlightenment. As Nagarjuna says in the "Precious Garland":

If you and the world wish to gain the highest enlightenment  
Its roots are an altruistic aspiration to enlightenment  
That is as firm as the king of mountains  
Compassion reaching in all directions  
And a wisdom consciousness not relying on duality

Those who aspire to enlightenment for the sake of self and others are bodhisattvas. The mark of a bodhisattva is the desire to attain enlightenment quickly not for personal liberation, but in order to rescue all sentient beings. Transcendent bodhisattvas have actualized the paramitas, the bodhisattva perfections, and attained buddhahood but delay entry into full nirvana in order to act as "unsolicited friends" to suffering beings. They appear in samsara in various forms to lead others on the path to liberation. These would include fully realized beings such as Avolokiteshvara, Manjushri, Vajrasattva, etc. However, anyone who generates bodhicitta is a bodhisattva of some degree, so there are also earthly bodhisattvas. These would be

people distinguished from others by their compassion and altruism as well as striving for enlightenment.

There are many stages of progress along the bodhisattva path, but the basic practice is always a matter of perfecting the six paramitas, the six perfections. These are:

generosity  
morality  
patience  
joyful effort  
meditation  
wisdom

The bodhisattva practices are powerful tools for spiritual development. In his “Supplement to the Middle Way”, Chandrakirti says “Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas” and also goes on to state:

The mind of compassion, non-dual awareness,  
And the altruistic mind of enlightenment  
Are the causes of bodhisattvas

Both Chandrakirti and Lama Tsongkhapa state that “the seed of all buddha qualities is great compassion.” We may not be able to generate the great compassion of a fully developed bodhisattva, but practicing compassion as much as we are able plants seeds that will ripen into enlightenment. We can judge our progress along the bodhisattva path by how well we are able to practice compassion toward strangers and enemies as well as our friends. While we work with our minds to develop compassion for all living things, we should integrate the practice of compassion into our daily lives, truly trying to be kind and helpful to those around us. While we work to benefit others, our own minds benefit as well. Focusing on the needs of others is a way of counteracting self-cherishing ego and results in a less deluded, more stable, and more peaceful state of mind.

## 4. Karma

Karma is the law of cause and effect. It is the core of Buddhist philosophy. It is the basis for the concept of emptiness, existence as interrelated causes and conditions. Since it has gained popular usage, however, there is a lot of misunderstanding about what karma is. In Buddhism it is a technical term describing the relationship between an existing object and the conditions that produced it. It explains how things come to be and why they are the way they are. All things are the result of the conditions that caused them. It is the creative principle of Buddhism.

Applying this principle to our own lives, our actions in the present produce the conditions we will experience in the future. This also means that the conditions we are currently experiencing are the result of our actions in the past. This is not the same, however, as “we get what we deserve.” There is no sin or punishment. There is positive and negative in the sense of harmful or not harmful, but there is nothing inherently good or bad.

In Buddhism, there is no permanent self or soul that continues from lifetime to lifetime or even from one moment to the next. There is a continuum of consciousness and a continuum of physical existence that give the illusion of stability and permanence, much the same as a picture on a computer screen is recreated over and over while it appears unchanging and static when we look at it. We can think of a river as being millions of years old, yet it is constantly changing as a continuous stream of water from moment to moment. The illusion of a permanent thing known as a river is caused by the continuity, the way the thing called mind is caused by a continuous but always changing stream of thoughts. The seemingly solid thing we call our body is a constantly changing continuum at the cellular level. Our mindstream develops tendencies and habits over time the way a river follows a course it digs as it goes. These tendencies and habits direct our thoughts in certain ways and help determine how we experience our current conditions. The way we react to our current experience sets up conditions we will experience in the future. Without an understanding of this process, we tend to think we just “are” certain ways or that certain things “just happen” to us. The idea of constant change and impermanence can be very uncomfortable at first, but it is liberating in that understanding the process gives us the opportunity to change who we are. Though it may not be easy, we do have the power to recreate ourselves. It only makes sense that we should become involved in the process since we are being recreated all the time anyway. We are just exercising some choice over who we will become.

How do we begin this process of exercising choice, of changing who we are and what we want to be? We have to begin with a basic understanding of how we are the product of our past actions and a lot of honest self-examination. We have to be totally honest with ourselves about what we feel and think, about what we have done, the values and assumptions we impose upon the world, and the assumptions we have about who we are. This requires honest objectivity. It is not an exercise in self-criticism. Making a list of your faults and past negative actions so that you prove to yourself what a horrible and hopeless person you are is not what this is about. We do that with ourselves all the time anyway and it is part of the problem. It reinforces our feeling of hopelessness and inability to change. We want to increase hope and produce change. Remember that you, like everyone else, has buddha-nature. You have the potential to remove your own pollution, become wiser and more compassionate, and eventually become a buddha yourself. It's a process, but you have to do the work.. Nobody can transform you but you. Starting with the idea that we are a constantly changing complex of conditions that has certain tendencies and inertia instead of a permanent and unchanging self, our self-examination is a deconstruction process, an inventory of the components that make up "me". What are the parts that are useful and what are the parts that are harmful? Where does my anger come from? What situations or people trigger my anger? What are my assumptions and beliefs about these situations or people that make me feel my anger is justified? Is my anger justified? What are the causes of my jealousy, annoyance, frustration, sadness, and depression? What about the flip side, what are the good parts of me? Who am I nice to? What are the situations that make me want to help someone? Who do I care about? What can I do to foster and expand the positive parts of me?

Look at a garden. It didn't just happen. It took planning to make something beautiful out of something ordinary. It involved choices about what to plant and what to pull up and get rid of. It took constant work and attention. It took mindfulness of the environment and conditions, working with them instead of against them. You get the idea. Make your life a garden.

We can start right now to create better conditions for ourselves in the future by living a moral, ethical life and becoming more compassionate in our actions, but this is only one aspect of karma. This is the karma of our future. What about the things we carry with us from the past that can spring to life whenever the conditions are right? A match is not fire, but it has as its nature the potential of fire. It brings together two conditions necessary for fire, sulphur which produces a quick, intense flame and the matchstick which provides fuel to sustain the flame. A third condition, oxygen, is always available in the surrounding air. What we carry around with us and call a



match is really fire minus one condition. Whenever we want, we can apply friction that produces enough heat to activate the sulphur and produce fire. Our experiences in the past have shaped our ideas, values, emotions, and perceptions into bundles of conditions that we carry around with us. The negative emotions we are working on, anger, jealousy, pride, despair, arise from karmic potentials we carry with us from our past experiences. To make our present experience better and avoid negativity, we must begin neutralizing the negative potentials in us before they can become activated by conditions we may encounter at any time. In Buddhist terms, we must purify them.

Purification of past karma is accomplished through applying the Four Opponent Powers; regret, reliance, antidote, and promise. It is important to practice purification to deactivate karmic potentials we already have. It is pulling the weeds out of the garden before they can grow, bloom, and spread.

The first step, regret, is important for honestly assessing the harm we know we have caused others. We all have negative karma from the past that we know will cause us suffering at any time it activates in our current conditions. Karma, like death, has unpredictable timing. We don't know when an action from the past will create its results. Besides the recent things we can remember doing that were harmful to others in some way, there are things further back that we have forgotten and things from past lives that we don't even know about. We should generate a sincere regret for any harm we have caused others in the past, not only for the suffering we may have caused ourselves, but also out of compassion for others. If we understand what it feels like to suffer, then we understand the pain we have caused others to experience. The regret needs to be sincere and honest, but it should not be maudlin. We are acknowledging our past actions, not trying to prove how bad we are. We bring these things up to work on them and change them, not to punish ourselves with them.

When we have acknowledged our past actions, we must remind ourselves that we are relying on the Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Buddhist teachings, and our teachers to guide us in dealing with our own karma. Our negative emotions and actions are symptoms of an illness, and we must rely on others to help us make ourselves well again. When we have generated a sincere wish to do something about cleaning up our negativity, we should turn for help to Vajrasattva, the bodhisattva of purification.

This brings us to the antidote, the actual practice of purifying our negative karma. This usually involves a visualization of Vajrasattva cleansing your body, speech, and mind with blissful nectar emanating from his heart. In circumstances where the full visualization isn't possible, recitation of the vajrasattva mantra is also helpful. The short form of the Vajrasattva mantra is "Om Vajrasattva Hum" and should be recited at least 27 times.

Once we have purified, we naturally need to make a strong determination to avoid negative actions in the future. A promise or vow helps to strengthen our determination, but we should be realistic with ourselves. If we can vow to never do something again, that's great, but we should make vows we know we are able to keep. The power of vows is very strong, so even a vow to refrain from something for 24 hours or even an hour is very powerful. Over time, even small vows have a tremendous transformative effect.

By practicing purification, we not only defuse our negative potentials, we also make it easier to live an ethical life, which is our practice for avoiding negative future karma. They really supplement each other, so purification should be a component of daily practice. There are some short but complete purification practices that can be done in about 20 minutes a day. Longer practices are good when you have the time, but the idea is to be consistent in purifying past karma. A short but daily purification practice is more important than elaborate but infrequent practices.

Karma is a very simple concept that can be understood by anybody, but tracing the implications through all facets of our lives and experience becomes very complicated. With a basic understanding of karma, we should begin practicing ethics and purification right away. Greater understanding and clarity will arise as delusions disappear as a result of consistent practice.

## 5. Rebirth

It's obvious that even if we do not accept the concept of rebirth, of lifetimes in the past and lifetimes after this one, living our lives by Buddhist principles and training our minds will improve our lives and make us better people. There is nothing wrong with improving ourselves, and if Buddhist philosophy helps us become better people, it is beneficial for us and for others. To focus on this life only is a mistake in the Buddhist view, however, for Buddhists look far beyond this life. Buddhists believe that we have had countless lives in the past. Our attachment and ignorance keep us cycling through physical existence without any control over the process. Even when work toward breaking the cycle and achieving our full potential has begun, most of us will have many lifetimes of gradual improvement yet to go. So where does this belief of many lifetimes come from? Is it just a form of wishful thinking to circumvent the finality of death?

Most religions posit a supreme being as the creator of everything. Generally, if we follow the basic rules of the creator, we go to a life that never ends in a pleasant place or a place of punishment for not following the rules. If that is true, our lives are meaningless. Whether we are an artistic expression or part of an elaborate game, our lives have no inherent meaning if we exist solely at the whim of another. Ultimately, we have to ask who created the creator. As a whole, it just doesn't hold together.

On the other hand, science would put forth our existence as the product of a random chain of events probably started in a "big bang", a brief and very finite flash in a huge chain of accidents. Again, there is no inherent meaning and nothing under our control. And what existed before the big bang?

If we look at our lives, they don't seem to exist out of whimsy or accident. There seems to be an order to things, but where does the energy for the process come from? The matter really hinges on what we are to make of the thing we call consciousness. What is it and, maybe more important, where is it?

The general religious view is that consciousness, or mind, is the working of the soul, a permanent and unchanging non-physical part of us that continues eternally after the body dies. Since Buddhists start with the observation that nothing is permanent and unchanging, the explanation of soul is unacceptable. Science would explain thought as entirely a function of brain chemistry and electrical activity. While science can clearly show a connection between brain chemistry as a process connected to and able to influence conscious thought, it cannot explain what thought is or prove

that it is entirely contained within the physical brain. Chemistry alone cannot explain sentience. Neither can really explain where thought comes from.

Buddhists believe that what we experience as our conscious mind is the gross level of a non-physical consciousness that continues after death, but it is not eternal or unchanging. "Stream of consciousness" is a very good phrase and a good model for the Buddhist view of mind. We can observe the thoughts flowing through our minds, arising and disappearing, and see that every thought is the result of the previous moment of thought. We can trace the continuum back to the moment of conception, but since nothing can spontaneously arise without a cause, there must have been a previous moment of consciousness before conception. That moment of consciousness must have been in another form. We can look at cases of young children with unusual talents, memories of places they've never been but can accurately describe, and who speak languages they had no opportunity to learn. Science has a difficult time explaining human thought and behavior solely in terms of chemistry, but a continuation of imprints and tendencies from another life would explain a lot of things. This "mindstream", however, is changing moment to moment. The actions of mind in this moment that produce the next moment of mind are our karma, the causes that produce results. We are constantly creating ourselves, which allows us the possibility to change our own future. It is difficult to fight habits and tendencies that have accumulated over countless lifetimes, but the possibility is there.

## 6. Anger and Ego

Of all the emotions, anger deserves special attention. From violent rage to cynical dissatisfaction, it plagues us in its various levels and manifestations and creates destructive forces in our lives. There are very few instances in which anger is useful or even justified, and it's a dangerous tool even then. We can pretty easily look at episodes of our own anger and see that the energy and actions of our anger only prolonged the bad effects of an unpleasant situation or created new problems. If we think about it, it's not until we are able to let go of the anger that we are able to deal with things and we feel better. Anger is not useful. It hurts us and doesn't help.

It's also obvious that our anger has to come from somewhere, and the source is in our minds. If we continue to experience anger, it is because we are continuing to generate angry energy. In this way, we are responsible for our own anger. We create it and feed it, therefore, we can also learn how to put the brakes on it, redirect it, or shut it down.

Anger is a reaction to the world not being the way we would like it. It is the active result of our dissatisfaction with reality. Our anger is very real and we feel it is perfectly justified, but anger does not change the world. It only worsens how we feel about the world. Whether or not our feelings are justified has nothing to do with whether they help us deal with a situation. Anger is also dangerous because it is such a physical emotion. It affects our whole body with adrenaline, energy to lash out, and clouded thinking. It's seductive because it is such a strong emotion and easy to give in to if we convince ourselves we have a right to be angry, but the effect on ourselves and others will be negative. That doesn't mean that we have to accept everything or that we cannot speak out, but we must be careful that our reactions are not coming from our ego.

Ego is the source of anger, for without a strong ego-identification that insists on MY feelings and the way I want MY world to be, anger is simply not possible. A view of interdependence and loosening the grasp on ego-identification naturally decreases our anger. No matter how well you theoretically understand the concept of the emptiness of self, it is easy to demonstrate what a strong and subtle force it is by simply imagining someone doing or saying something harmful to you and feeling what your reaction would be. We can console and reassure our friends when harm has been done to them, but how well do we apply the same messages to ourselves? Can we tell ourselves to forget about it, it doesn't mean anything? The hurt and anger we feel

definitely comes from a very real sense that WE have been hurt and what was done to ME was wrong?

The first step in actively dealing with our own anger is to be watchful. As we go through our daily lives, we should watch for anger to arise. When it does, we should control our actions. Anger will continue to arise in us because letting go of our highly cherished egos is a long process, but we should try to break the connection between angry thoughts and angry actions. Do not let the anger in your mind control your actions. Do not inflict your anger on others. Anger is something you need to work on in your mind, so keep it there. Don't let it spill out into a world that already has too much anger. Keep it in yourself out of compassion and respect for the feelings of others.

While holding your anger inside keeps you from harming others, it is still a strong, destructive force that will harm you if you don't do something about it. Try to use the opportunity of anger occurring to observe and test it. What exactly does it feel like? Where does it come from? What are the thoughts that arise from it and why are the feelings so strong? Use this kind of observation of your own anger to learn what the factors are that trigger your anger, what past experiences the thoughts arise from, and what the hidden messages behind the feelings are. Not only will you learn about yourself, but the process of analysis will help you to be more subjective and dissolve your anger more quickly.

Once you have some success at being watchful for anger to arise, to observe, analyze, and contain it, you should begin trying to transform it into something beneficial. Containing our anger helps keep us from doing harm to others, which in turn also helps to clean up our future karma, but anger will harm us if we don't do something about it. Anger is a very strong energy, and if that energy could be redirected into something positive...

There are three ways we can use to transform the energy of anger into positive energy. The first is to look on difficulties and problems as opportunities to learn and practice. We should try to be grateful for problems and difficult people. They present us with opportunities to learn and grow. They are our teachers. The second is to view problems as opportunities to purify past karma. By experiencing the results of our negative past karma in an unpleasant situation now and not reacting negatively to it, we burn off negative karma so that we don't have to experience it again. The third is to practice tong-len, or "taking and giving". This is a practice of taking on the suffering of others and purifying it. If you are sick, imagine that you don't want anyone to feel the way you do and imagine you are taking on the suffering of all sick people through your sickness so that they won't have to suffer. It gives your own suffering a purpose

and helps you generate positive energy, which will help your own illness also.

Another simple tong-len practice is to imagine the suffering of another as black, ugly smoke that surrounds them. Imagine breathing in that foul smoke of suffering, letting it go to your heart where it smashes your self-cherishing ego, and breathing it back as out as purified white vapor. This lets us do something for another person and helps us purify ourselves at the same time.

There are many practices and tools that let us do something about our negativity and the resultant suffering we experience. They all depend on the motivation to work on ourselves to become better people and the perseverance to continue practicing in our everyday lives.

## 7. Meditation

It may seem strange to wait so long to talk about meditation in a discussion about Buddhism. Meditation is often the first thing people think about when they think of Buddhism. Someone sitting quietly, legs folded, hands in lap, doing what? What is the thing we call meditation? What does it do? What is it for? How do I do it? Like karma, meditation has entered the common language of the west, but there are a lot of misconceptions about what it is.

The common image of meditation is sitting quietly, cross-legged, focusing on the breath, clearing out thoughts of the day, and perhaps chanting a mantra. These are valid types of meditation, but they are not the only kind. These are generally used as preliminary meditations to calm and focus the mind so that other types of more advanced meditation may be practiced. Meditation is not a way of “blanking-out” or escaping the world. Well, it can be but it shouldn’t be. That’s not the point. The purpose of meditation is to work with the mind, to analyze it and change it. There are literally hundreds of types of meditation practices that are structured to achieve certain effects and changes in perception. They are designed to help us analyze our own minds and allow us access to levels of mind beside our noisy, everyday mind. These practices require a great deal of focus and concentration, so there is an initial stage of clearing the mind and focusing concentration. It would be a shame to stop there, though, since the meditation practices can help us change our minds instead of just offering temporary relief from the world.

The two basic types of meditation are concentration meditation and analytical meditation. Concentration is an important skill to develop and necessary for advanced work. Remember that one of our basic problems is that we don’t see things as they really are. This is largely due to the fragmented, scattered way our everyday mind works. The more we are able to concentrate on objects, the more we are able to see them as they are and not how we wish them to be. Also, trying to change the inertia of mind is difficult work. Practices that we do to work on our minds require concentration to be effective. The better concentration we have, the more advanced our practices will be. Concentration is essential for doing the work of analyzing and changing our minds.

Learning to focus the mind by breathing exercises and calming meditations allows us to increasingly work on single-point concentration, itself a transforming experience that spills over into our daily perceptions. Working on increasingly complex visualizations or prayers builds concentration while allowing us to do other



practices at the same time. Just sharpening our normally fuzzy view of the world we live in will change our lives on many levels.

Analytical meditations require concentration so that we can stay on subject and explore various topics and practices. There are numberless forms of analytical meditation, including reflection on points of the teachings, logical analysis of the nature of reality, and visualizations that focus on changing our views and perceptions. Analytical meditations may be combined with concentration practices, prayers and mantras, or practices such as deity visualization, making for a comprehensive combination of mental practice that effect the way we view our world and interact with others. It only makes sense to work on the mind in a deep way to find happiness, for we can logically prove to ourselves that happiness is a product of our own mind and does not exist anywhere outside it.

Meditation is essential for changing the way our minds work, but it should also be something integral to it. We meditate to take the insights and experience we gain to take back to our lives, not as a way of escaping from ourselves. Eventually we should be able to incorporate meditation into our lives so that our lives become a meditation and we can carry the meditative state with us as we go through the day. That goal is a long way off for me, as it probably is for you, but it is still only practical and sensible to keep working on it.

## 8. Daily Practice

The basic purpose of any religion is to change our lives for the better. At the core of any kind of true spiritual practice is a recognition of the need for compassion in the human experience. We would not exist at all today if someone hadn't shown us the compassion and love to care for us when we were infants. Even the most cynical of us feels the occasional urge to be kind. We naturally understand the strong power of empathy and how it can affect our mind and actions. The purpose of religion should be to transform us into more loving, compassionate, tolerant people so that we can incorporate those qualities into our actions in daily life. Religious practice must change your life if it is really religious practice.

As the Dalai Lama has pointed out, we have reached a high degree of technical and scientific advancement, but we still face many problems. Most of these problems we create for ourselves. The source of many personal, national, and global problems is that we spend too much time stressing the differences in details of our religious, political, and philosophical ideologies rather than emphasizing the basic similarities and goals we share. This is something we can change in our own lives by developing what the Dalai Lama calls "the good heart."

I like the term "practice." It not only denotes the particular things we do in a religious context, but it can also mean we do those things as practice for interaction in our daily lives on an entirely different level. Through prayers, visualizations, and meditation, we are practicing to become better people. With that in mind, we should always strive to act in accordance with our spiritual progress in all our daily interactions.

Developing a daily practice takes commitment. In the West, we suffer from a great deal of impatience, and we should not have unrealistic expectations about what we can do to change ourselves. We have spent a lot of time, much more time than we know, creating who we are now. It will take time to change. We will need practice, in both senses of the word.

We have already spent a lot of time jumping from one thing to another to find peace of mind and happiness. It is important not to make the same mistake with Buddhism. We cannot give up in a couple of months because we're not enlightened yet no matter how many hours we meditate or how many complicated prayers we memorize. To integrate the teachings into our lives and work with them in an experiential way, it is more beneficial to have a simple but consistent set of practices we do daily than occasional bouts of extensive practice. All the elements of a complete

practice session can be incorporated into a short morning and evening session. In between, we try to stay mindful of our actions throughout the day and try to act in accordance with the things we aspire to in our prayers. Gradually, changes will come in the way we view the world and interact with others. Though the changes may seem small, over time they become more noticeable and powerful. Once we have begun the process of changing ourselves for the better, it is simply a matter of keeping the process going and not giving up.

A good way to fit practice into your day every day is to take refuge in the morning and do purification at night. This helps to remind us of what we are trying to do and sets our motivation as we begin the day. At night, we should reflect on our day, think about the causes of any negativity that came up during the day, and purify any anger, depression, and unwise actions before going to sleep. The next day, we start over. The next chapter contains a set of morning prayers and a purification practice that can be done in a short amount of time every day.

Above all, we should never forget that the point of practicing Buddhism is to become who we already have the potential to be. We can only achieve that by working at it every day and going through the process of becoming.

## **9. Prayers and Purification**

### **Morning Prayers**

#### **Taking Refuge and Generating Bodhicitta (repeat three times)**

I go for refuge until I am enlightened  
To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly  
Through the Virtuous merit I create  
By practicing giving and the other perfections  
May I attain enlightenment  
In order to benefit all sentient beings

#### **The Four Immeasurable Thoughts**

May all sentient beings have happiness and its causes  
May all sentient beings be free from suffering and its causes  
May all sentient beings never be separated from sorrowless bliss  
May all sentient beings abide in equanimity,  
Free from bias, attachment, and anger

#### **Refuge in the Guru (repeat three times)**

The Guru is Buddha  
The Guru is Dharma  
The Guru is Sangha also  
The Guru is the originator of all happiness  
To all Gurus I go for refuge

## **The Seven Limbs**

Reverently, I prostrate with my body, speech, and mind  
And present clouds of every type of offering, actual and imagined  
I declare all my negative actions accumulated since beginningless time  
And rejoice in the merit of all holy and ordinary beings  
Please remain until the end of cyclic existence  
And turn the wheel of Dharma for living beings  
I dedicate my own merits and those of others  
To the great enlightenment

## **Short Mandala Offering**

This ground, annointed with perfume, strewn with flowers  
Adorned with Mount Meru, the Four Continents, the sun and the moon  
I imagine as a buddha-field and offer it  
May all living beings enjoy this pure land

## **Inner Mandala Offering**

The objects of my attachment, aversion, and ignorance  
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 MANDALA KAM NIRYA TAYAMI**

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## Vajrasattva Purification Meditation



There is no negativity that cannot be purified. The purification process is basically a psychological one. As Lama Yeshe says, it is our mind (and on the basis of that our actions) that create the negativity and it is our mind that transforms it by creating positive energy. Although, in Buddhism, we rely on Buddha's methods for the purification, it is not as if it is Buddha purifying us or forgiving us; we ourselves, as Lama says, do the work. We purify by applying, the Four Opponent Powers.

### The practice

Prostrate three times then sit on your cushion. Bring your mind to a quiet state. Start the purification with the first of the Four Opponent Powers.

1. The Power of Regret: Sincerely regret, from the depths of your heart, anything you have done to harm any living being, on this day, in this life, in all past lives. It is good to contemplate the various actions that you remember having done, and then to regret all the things as well that you don't remember. The reason to regret is based on the understanding of karma: we cannot bear the thought of the future suffering that we ourselves will experience due to the harm we have done to others. We experience everything due to our past karma, our past actions; so having harmed others we ourselves will necessarily experience suffering in the future. And who wants that? We know from the present suffering that we do not want it, so the logic is, therefore, to clean up our act before the present seeds ripen as future suffering.

2. The Power of Reliance: There are two parts to this step: one, we rely upon the doctor whose medicine we will take to purify our deluded actions, in this case the Buddha. It's not that we need Buddha to forgive us; rather, we rely upon him by using his methods to purify ourselves. Two, we also rely upon others beings, the very beings we have harmed, by developing compassion for them. We make the wish to purify for their sakes: all those we have harmed in this life and in the past. Make a strong aspiration to do this practice of purification so that from now on we can only benefit others, not harm them.

Visualize Vajrasattva above the crown of your head. He is your guru manifesting in this aspect for your benefit: this is important. He is made of radiant, blissful white light. He's sitting cross-legged on a white lotus, which although born out of mud is untainted by mud, just like our enlightened potential, which is born out of our delusions but is untainted by them. His face is radiant and beautiful. His eyes are long (horizontally) and peaceful and full of love and compassion for us. His mouth is red and very sweet. His hair is black and held up in a top knot. His arms are crossed at his heart, left underneath the right; the left is holding a bell, which represents wisdom, the right is holding a vajra, which represents the indestructibility of compassion; their being crossed represents the union of these two, which symbolizes enlightenment itself: the development of infinite wisdom and infinite compassion. The main thing is to really feel the presence of this enlightened energy above your head, and to imagine that it is a mirror image of your own potential. Now, say a prayer of refuge in Guru Vajrasattva:

To the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha  
I go for refuge until I am enlightened.  
By this practice of meditating on Guru Vajrasattva  
May I reach Buddhahood so as to benefit all sentient beings!

Now visualize that light goes out of Guru Vajrasattva's heart to all the ten directions and hooks the energy of the body, speech and mind of all the enlightened beings of the universe. This light comes back and dissolves into the heart of Guru Vajrasattva, who now embodies all their energy. He is even more brilliant and blissful than before.

3. The Power of the Antidote, which is the actual medicine, the doing of the actual practice of purification. There are three stages to the meditation, and it consists of visualization and recitation of mantra.

Purification of body: Guru Vajrasattva very compassionately sends powerful white nectar, like coming out of a hose very forcefully, from his heart. It enters your crown chakra and pours into your entire body, filling you completely. It keeps coming and it forces out of your lower orifices all the harm you have ever done to any living being with your body in the form of inky liquid, which pours out of you and disappears into space, not one atom left. Feel completely purified. Recite the mantra the whole time. (Until you learn it, just say it 3 times; when you know it easily, recite at least 7)

OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANU PALAYA /  
VAJRASATTVA DENO PATITA / DIDO MAY BHAWA / SUTO KAYO MAY  
BHAWA / SUPO KAYO MAY BHAWA / ANU RAKTO MAY BHAWA / SARWA  
SIDDHI MEMPAR YATSA / SARWA KARMA SU TSA MAY / TSITAM  
SHRIYAM KURU HUM / HA HA HA HA HO / BHAGAWAN / SARVA  
TATHAGATA / VAJRA MA MAY MU TSA / VAJRA BHAWA MAHA SAMAYA  
SATTVA / AH HUM PHAT!

Then feel so happy that your negativity of body is purified. Really imagine now that it is not possible that your body could do anything but benefit others; no way can it harm. Really want that.

Purification of speech: During the second stage of the visualization, Guru Vajrasattva very happily sends powerful nectar from his heart chakra again. It pours forcefully into your crown, filling your entire body, this time forcing up to the top of your body – like when water filling a dirty glass forces the junk to come to the top and to overflow – all the negativity of your speech: all the gossip and malicious speech and useless speech and lying and whatever. All is purified by this powerful nectar, leaving your body through the top orifices in the form of inky liquid, disappearing into space, not one atom left. Recite the mantra as you visualize this.

Again, feel so happy that your speech is now completely purified and that no way could you do anything but say something beneficial or useful or appropriate or kind to others. Really want that.



Purification of mind: Third, Guru Vajrasattva very compassionately sends this time light from his heart chakra. This powerful white light enters your crown chakra and fills your entire being, and just like when you turn on a light in a room the darkness is instantly dispelled, so too, just as the light hits your heart chakra, the darkness of the negativity of your mind, all the anger and violence and depression and resentment and jealousy and bitterness, etc., are all instantly dispelled, not one atom left. Recite the mantra as you visualize this.

Again, feel happy that all your delusions, which are the cause of the harm we do with our body and speech, are totally purified, gone, finished, and that no way is there any space in your heart now for anything but love and kindness and forgiveness and wisdom and bliss and compassion.

Purification of even the imprints of negativity of body, speech and mind: This time imagine that Guru Vajrasattva sends light again and it fills you completely and eradicates even the subtlest imprint of negative energy from your mind. (It's like once you removed the garlic from a jar, you still need to remove the smell.) Again recite the mantra.

Now feel you are completely purified, and feel very happy. Guru Vajrasattva is happy too.

4. The Power of the Promise: The fourth step in the purification process, and such an important one, is the determination not to harm with our body, speech and mind again. Without this, we keep doing the same old things; determination to not harm again is like a beacon that guides our body, speech and mind in new directions. If you can actually vow to not do certain actions again for the rest of your life, fantastic. But be realistic. If you can vow not to do them again for a year, a month, a day, even a minute – whatever is realistic. Then in general vow to make the effort to avoid the others. This determination not to do again is what gives us the strength to turn ourselves around.

Then, very happy, Guru Vajrasattva – your own guru manifesting as the Buddha Vajrasattva solely for your benefit – melts into white light and absorbs into you through your crown chakra. This energy of white light comes to your heart chakra and merges with your own very subtle consciousness, becoming oneness with you. Meditate on this union.

At the end of the meditation session dedicate all the merit, the positive energy, you have created by doing this purification to all living beings (say whichever prayers below you would like to say):

Through the merits of these virtuous actions  
May I quickly attain the state of a guru-buddha  
And lead all living beings, without exception,  
Into that enlightened state.

May the supreme jewel bodhichitta  
That has not arisen, arise and grow;  
And may that which has arisen not diminish  
But increase more and more.

Just as the brave Manjushri and Samantabhadra, too,  
Realized things as they are,  
I, too, dedicate all these merits in the best way,  
That I may follow their perfect example.  
I dedicate all these roots of virtue  
With the dedication praised as the best  
By the victorious ones thus gone of the three times,  
So I might perform good works.

I dedicate whatever virtues I have ever collected  
For the benefit of the teachings and of all  
sentient beings, and in particular, for the essential teachings  
Of venerable Losang Dragpa to shine forever.

In the land encircled by snow mountains  
You are the source of all happiness and good;  
All-powerful Chenrezig, Tenzin Gyatso,  
Please remain until samsara ends.

You are Avalokiteshvara, great treasure of  
Compassion not aimed at true existence,  
And Manjushri, master of flawless wisdom,  
As well as Vajrapani, destroyer of hordes of demons  
Without exception, Tsong Khapa, crown jewel  
Of the sages of the land of snows, Losang Dragpa,  
At your feet I make requests.  
May we not arise heresy even for a second  
In the actions of the glorious guru.  
May we regard whatever actions are done as pure.  
[With this devotion] may we receive the blessings  
Of the guru in our hearts.

In all my lives, through the victorious one, Lama Tsong Khapa,  
Acting in person as the Mahayana guru,  
May I never turn aside for even an instant  
From the excellent path praised by the victorious ones.

In whatever way you appear, glorious guru,  
With whatever retinue, lifespan, and pure land,  
Whatever noble and holy name you take,  
May I and others attain only these.

The four types of karmic results that the Four Opponent Powers purify:

1. The power of regret purifies the experience similar to the cause, which, let's say for killing, is to get killed, to die young or to get sick.
2. The power of reliance, Refuge and bodhicitta purify the environment result, which for killing is living in a place where the food and medicine are not conducive to good health.
3. The power of the antidote, in this case the visualization and recitation of mantras – or whatever action one does as the actual antidote – purifies the throwing karma that causes birth in the lower realms.
4. The power of the promise or determination not to do again purifies the action similar to the cause, which in a sense is the worst result: it's the habit to keep killing, which propels one back into the lower realms.

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