

Ceremony of Taking Bodhicitta Vows

VISUALIZING THE OBJECT OF REFUGE

In preparation for taking refuge, first visualize the object of refuge as follows:

Seated in the space directly before me, atop a tall, wide, and jewel-studded throne held up by eight majestic lions and upon cushions of a variegated lotus, moon, and sun, is my kind Root Guru, appearing in the outer form of Buddha Shakyamuni. His body is the color of refined gold and a crown protrusion marks the top of his head. He has one face and two arms, the right in the earth-touching gesture and the left in the meditation gesture holding an alms bowl filled with divine nectar. His luminous body, adorned with the major and minor marks, is clothed in the reddish-yellow robes of a monk.

He sits with legs crossed in the adamantine position, Encircled in a halo of light radiating from his body. All around him is an assemblage of Direct and Lineage Gurus, tutelary deities, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, heroes, *ḍākinīs*, and Dharma protectors. In front of each of these beings, is an exquisite table on which there lies a radiant Dharma scripture containing teachings that being has given.

With this Merit Field looking upon me favorably, I recall the virtues and compassion of these beings and generate great faith in them. Then, I reflect on the following:

THE REFUGE MEDITATION

Throughout beginningless time, I and all mother sentient beings have continuously experienced the general sufferings of samsara and especially the numerous sufferings of the three lower states. Even so, it remains difficult to foresee any end or limit to this suffering.

But now I have acquired this extraordinary human life of leisure and fortune – so difficult to find and yet, when found, so meaningful. I have also met with the rare and precious teaching of the Buddha. If I do not immediately set out, then, to attain the goal of perfect Buddhahood – a state of supreme liberation in which all suffering has been abandoned – I will again have to undergo the general sufferings of samsara and especially the sufferings of the three lower states according to my karma. Because the power to save beings from these sufferings Rests in the Gurus and the Triple Gem seated before me, I

resolve to attain perfect Buddhahood for the sake of all mother sentient beings. To that end, I now go for refuge to the Gurus and the Triple Gem.

Recite the following as many times as the occasion permits, or at least three times:

I go for refuge to the Gurus.
I go for refuge to the Buddhas.
I go for refuge to the Dharma.
I go for refuge to the Sangha.

REFUGE AND ENLIGHTENMENT MIND

Recite the following verse three times to go for refuge and generate enlightenment mind:

I go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.
Until I achieve enlightenment
By the virtues that I collect by practicing giving and the other perfections,
May I become a Buddha for the benefit of all sentient beings.

THE FOUR IMMEASUREABLES

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 their happiness.
May all sentient beings dwell in equanimity, free from hatred and attachment.

BLESSING THE GROUND AND THE OFFERINGS

May the ground everywhere become pure,
Free of gravel and other imperfections,
As even as the palm of the hand,
Smooth, and made of lapis lazuli.

May the entire sphere of space be filled
By the unexcelled Samantabhadra offering cloud,
With offerings divine as well as human,
Both actually arranged and emanated by mind.

INVITING THE MERIT FIELD

O Bhagavan, savior of all beings without exception,
Divine conqueror of the terrible demon host,
Who knows all entities truly and completely,
Please approach together with your retinue.

Jah hung bam hoh. The wisdom beings merge inseparably
with the pledge beings.

THE SEVEN-LIMB PRACTICE TOGETHER WITH A MANDALA OFFERING

PROSTRATIONS

I make prostration to Buddha Shakyamuni
Whose body was produced by countless of excellent virtues,
Whose speech fulfills the hopes of limitless beings,
And whose mind sees all things exactly as they are.

However many there are in the world's ten directions –
Those lions of men that course through the three times –
I bow to them all, excluding none,
Pure in body, speech, and mind.

By the power of Samantabhadra's prayer for pure activities
I make prostration to all the Conquerors
With as many bodies as the atoms of the pure fields
And holding all the Conquerors before my mind.

I view the entire Dharma sphere everywhere
As being filled thus with Conquerors:
Atop each atom sit as many Buddhas as there are atoms,
Every one surrounded by a retinue of Buddha sons and daughters.

I praise all these Sugatas and give voice
To the virtues of all the Conquerors,
Using all organs of speech to produce oceans of sound
And proclaim their endless oceans of merit.

OFFERINGS

With the finest flowers and the finest garlands,
The finest musical instruments, ointments, and parasols,
The finest lamps and the finest incense,
I make offerings to these Conquerors.

With the finest garments and the finest fragrances,
And with powder bundles as large as Mount Meru,
All in the finest of distinctive arrangements,
I make offerings to these Conquerors.

I also aspire to offer all the Conquerors
Those extensive offerings that are unexcelled
By the power of this prayer for pure activities
I prostrate and make offerings to all the Conquerors.

MANDALA OFFERING

Om vajra bhumi ah hung. This is the adamantine golden ground. *Om vajra rekhe ah hung.* It is encircled by an outer fence of iron mountains. In the center is Sumeru, the king of mountains. In the East is the continent Videha, in the South Jambudvipa, in the West Godaniya, and in the North Kuru.

These are the pairs of sub-continent sitting on either side of each continent: Deha and Videha; Chamara and Aparachamara; Shatha and Uttaramantrina; Kurava and Kaurava.

These are the unique assets, one for each of the continents: the jewel mountain, the wishing tree, the cow that fulfills all desires, and the crop that needs no cultivation.

These are the eight articles of royalty: the precious wheel, the precious gem, the precious queen, the precious minister, the precious elephant, the precious horse, the precious general, and the treasure-filled vessel.

These are the eight offering goddesses: the Actress, the Garland Bearer, the Songstress, the Dancer, the Flower Bearer, the Incense Bearer, the Lamp Bearer, and the Perfume Bearer.

These are the sun, the moon, a jewel parasol, and a victory banner.

Adding to this all the riches possessed by gods and men, in abundance and leaving no form excluded, I offer it to the glorious Root and Lineage Gurus, who are most kind and holy, and to the great Lobzang Tubwang Dorjechang's divine assemblage together with their retinue. In your compassion, please accept it for the sake of all beings. Once you have accepted it, please bestow your blessings upon me.

The ground sprinkled with perfume and spread with flowers,
The great mountain, four lands sun and moon seen as a

Buddha land and offered thus

May all beings enjoy such pure lands.

The body, speech, and mind of myself and others,
our wealth and virtue of the three times,

And an exquisite jewel mandala, together with the
mass of Samantabhadra offerings—
Holding these in my mind, I offer them to the Gurus,
tutelary deities, and Triple Gem.
In your compassion, please accept them and bestow
your blessings upon me.

Idam guru ratna mandalakam niryatayami.

CONFESSION

Whatever evils I have done
From desire attachment, hatred, or ignorance,
And through body, speech, or mind—
I confess them one and all.

REJOICING

I rejoice at whatever merit is possessed by all beings,
Including the Conquerors of the ten directions,
Buddha sons and daughters and Solitary Realizers,
As well as aryas still in training and those beyond.

REQUESTING THAT THE WHEEL OF DHARMA BE TURNED

I request all the Saviors,
Those lamps for the world of ten directions
Who have awakened to the unattached state of Enlightenment,
To turn the unexcelled wheel of Dharma.

A SUPPLICATION NOT TO ENTER NIRVANA

I beseech with joined palms those wishing
To give the appearance of entering nirvana:
May you remain for as many kalpas as the
atoms in the pure fields
To promote the benefit and happiness of all beings.

DEDICATION

Whatever slight virtue I have accumulated
From prostration, offerings, confession
Rejoicing requesting and supplication
I dedicate it all to enlightenment.

FOUNDATION OF ALL GOOD QUALITIES

1

The kind spiritual Guide is the foundation of all perfection.
Relying on a spiritual Guide in the proper way is the root of the path.
After clearly seeing this, bless me to rely on
My Spiritual Guide with great effort and devotion.

2

Understanding that this human life with its freedoms, found just once,
Has great meaning and is extremely difficult to obtain.
Bless me to generate the mind that takes its essence
Unceasingly, all day and night.

3

Remember my body and life are changing like
A water bubble decays and dies very quickly.
After death, just like a shadow follows the body,
So do the results of positive and negative karma.

4

Having found this firm understanding,
Bless me to always be alert
To abandon even the most subtle negative actions,
And accomplish the collection of all virtues.

5

Samsara's pleasures are insatiable,
The door to all suffering and deception.
After understanding the shortcomings of samsara,
Bless me to strive sincerely to gain the bliss of liberation.

6

From this pure thought
Comes great mindfulness, alertness, and carefulness.
Bless me to keep, as my essential practice,
The doctrine's root, the Prātimokṣa.

7

Realizing that just as I myself have fallen
Into samsara's ocean, so too have all mother sentient beings,
Bless me to train in the supreme Bodhicitta,
That carries the responsibility of freeing them.

8

Realizing, that just by generating Bodhicitta
I cannot become a Buddha
Without practicing the three moralities.
Bless me to train in the Bodhisattva vows with great strength.

9

By pacifying the distractions to wrong objects
And correctly analyzing the perfect meaning.
Bless me to quickly gain the union path of
Calm abiding and superior seeing.

10

When I become a pure vessel
By training in the common paths,
Bless me to enter easily, the supreme vehicle, Vajrayana,
The holy gateway for the fortunate.

11

At that time, the basis for achieving both attainments,
Is keeping vows and commitments pure,
Bless me to understand this clearly
And keep them, even at the cost of my life.

12

After realizing the critical points of the two stages,
The very essence of the Vajrayana.
Bless me to practice, the way explained by holy Teachers,
With great effort, through undistracted practice in four sessions.

13

May the Spiritual Guides, who show me the good path,
And the practitioners who are my friends, all have long lives.
Bless me to pacify completely
All outer and inner obstacles.

14

In all my future lives, may I never be separated
From perfect Lamas and enjoy the pure Dharma,
And having accomplished all the grounds and paths,
May I quickly attain the state of Vajradhara.

Focusing your attention on Guru Munindra, who is seated on the crown of your head, recite the following:

I make prostration to my Guru, you who are one with the
Conqueror Shakyamuni. I make offerings to you and go to
you for refuge.

Recite the following mantra as often as the occasion permits:

Om muni muni mahamunaye svaha.

*Then, recite the following verses of prayer with a strong aspiration to
dedicate the virtue derived from the above practice to those aims
appropriate to yourself and others:*

By this virtue, may I quickly attain
The status of Guru Buddha,
And then place in that state
All beings without exception.

ACTUAL CEREMONY OF GIVING BODHICITTA VOWS BEGINS

Requesting bodhicitta vows by offering mandala.

The ground sprinkled with perfume and spread with flowers,
The great mountain, four lands sun and moon seen as a
Buddha land and offered thus
May all beings enjoy such pure lands.

Idam guru ratna mandalakam niryatayami

TAKING ASPIRING BODHICITTA VOW

In order to free all beings from the terrors of both samsara and Nirvana's peace,
I wish to achieve complete enlightenment
From now, until I reach Buddhahood
I will hold this wish and never forsake it, even to save my life. **(3x)**

TAKING ENGAGING BODHICITTA VOW

O Lamas, Buddhas, and Spiritual child
I beseech you to listen to me.
Just as previous Sugatas, the Buddhas,
Generated bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment
And practiced all the stages of the
Bodhisattva trainings,

For the benefit of all beings,
I too vow to generate bodhicitta,
the mind of enlightenment
And practice all the stages of the
Bodhisattva trainings. (3x)

REJOICING AND REMEMBERING

Now my life has been given great meaning,
And this human life has been made worthwhile.
Today I am born into the family of Buddha
And, now I have become a Buddha's child

From now on and in every way possible,
I shall act in accord with this noble lineage.
And upon this lineage, pure and faultless,
I shall never bring disgrace.

DEDICATION

By these virtues, may I quickly
Achieve the level of a Buddha
And lead every sentient being
Without exception to that enlightened state.

May all sentient beings, who are like my fathers
and mothers, enjoy happiness;
May the lower realms always be empty,
And bodhisattvas dwell everywhere;
May every one of their prayers be accomplished

May the precious, supreme bodhi-mind,
Grow where it has not grown,
Where it has grown, may it no decrease
But flourish forever more.