



Refuge and the Enlightened Attitude





THE FOUR FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICES

Taking Refuge and Developing the Enlightened Attitude

First Practice

This is “**The Vehicle for the Path of the Supreme**”, a series of daily practices. They are taken from the perfect words of the realisation lineage of the Karma Kamtsang, a garland of the precious practice lineage.

This is a translation of a Tibetan meditation text from the 9th Gyalwa Karmapa, Wangchuk Dorje (1555 – 1603).

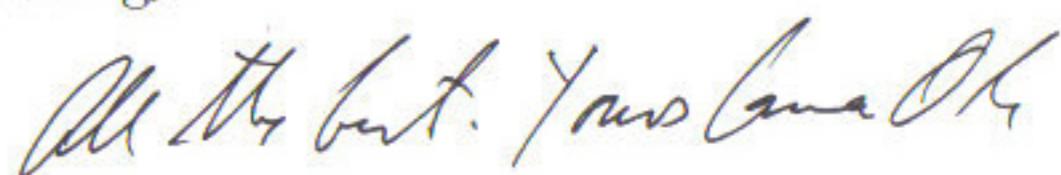
Forward

Dear Friends,

A wise man may avoid blood and tears on his way to enlightenment, but there is no way around the sweat. Only conscious and one-pointed meditation creates the cracks in the fortifications of our egos that make mind's timeless essence shine through. Hard work is unavoidable, especially with the prostrations. This practice creates the good impressions necessary for our growth and changes our body from a difficult master to a useful servant.

This practice used to have an exotic edge because the repetition was in Tibetan. It has now been brought into a Western context, enabling us to understand it on a much deeper level. Doing the prostrations in our own language gives expression to our view and consciously strengthens it. I would have loved to have been able to practice it this way in 1970. Whether you choose to do the repetitions in English or in Tibetan, I wish you the best results.

Please learn this practice properly and take part in a guided meditation (Tib. Gom-lung) at your local Diamond Way Centre. You should also receive the oral authorisation (Tib. Lung) from a Kagyu Lama when you can. The prostrations build up meaningful impressions (through the repetitions themselves) as well as wisdom (especially during the dissolving phase at the end). More explanations can be found in my book "Ngöndro – The Four Foundational Practices of Tibetan Buddhism" (Blue Dolphin Publishing).



PS Remember to protect your knees and wrists and don't do all 111,111 on the first weekend!

The four common preliminaries

The Difficulty of Obtaining a Precious Human Existence

We meditate on our precious human life with its freedoms and opportunities. Because it is very difficult to obtain and is easily lost we will use it in a meaningful way.

Death and Impermanence

Secondly, the universe and all its inhabitants are impermanent. In particular, the lives of beings are like bubbles of water. The moment of death is uncertain and our body will then become a corpse. At that time only the Buddha's teachings can help us, therefore we must make every effort to use them now.

Cause and Effect

Thirdly, at the time of death we have no control over what happens but will experience the results of our previous actions. Therefore we will give up negative actions, devote all our time to positive actions and watch our minds every day.

The Flaws of Conditioned Existence

Finally, everything we experience in conditioned existence, including our friends, pleasures and possessions, always contain the three kinds of suffering. They are just like the last meal prepared for somebody who is going to be executed. Therefore we should cut through attachment and joyfully strive for enlightenment.

These are the four common preliminaries. They are followed by Taking Refuge and the instructions for Developing the Enlightened Attitude, so that the mind becomes a proper vessel and whatever one does becomes a step on the path to liberation.

The first special preliminary

Taking Refuge and Developing the Enlightened Attitude

Building-up phase

In front of me, in the centre of a lake, stands the finest of trees. It has one trunk and four main branches. Where they part stands a lion throne, which in turn supports a lotus-flower. On top of the lotus rests a disc of the sun and one of the moon. Here sits the root lama as Diamond Holder (Dorje Chang) surrounded by the Kagyu lamas. On the branch in front of him are the Yidams, to his right are the Buddhas, behind him are their teachings and to his left is the Sangha. Below the lama are all the wisdom protectors surrounded by their helpers.

I am standing on the grassy shore of the lake. Around and in countless numbers are all beings, who have been our mothers in the past. We focus our mind to take refuge and resolve to reach enlightenment for the benefit of all.

We understand that the kind root and lineage lamas are the union of the body, speech, mind, qualities

and activity of the Buddhas of the three times and the ten directions. They are the source of the 84,000 buddhist teachings and the masters of the realised Sangha. All beings, as limitless as the sky, and I take refuge:

English repetition:

We take refuge in the Lamas

We take refuge in the Yidams and their powerfields

We take refuge in the Buddhas

We take refuge in their teachings

We take refuge in the realised Sangha

We take refuge in the givers of activity
and the wisdom protectors

Tibetan repetition¹:

pal den lama dam pa nam la chab sun chio
yidam chil khor gyi lha t'hsog nam la chab sun chio
sang gye chom den de nam la chab sun chio
dam pai cheu nam la chab sun chio
p'hag pae gen dun nam la chab sun chio
pa wo khan dro cheu chong sung may t'hsog ye she
chi chen dang den pa nam la chab sun chio

Repeat 7, 21 or as many times as possible

Bodhisattva promise

Until I attain full enlightenment, I take refuge in the Buddhas, their teachings and the Bodhisattvas. Following the example of the Buddhas, I will develop the enlightened attitude, follow the Bodhisattva path and attain the progressive stages of realisation until full enlightenment is reached for the good of all beings.

Repeat 3 times.

Expression of joy

Today my life is fruitful and has become meaningful. I am now a Bodhisattva, a member of Buddha's family. Whatever I do I will always act in accordance with this noble and pure family so it is never discredited.

Expression of joy for others

In front of the whole Refuge, I invite all beings to be happy until they reach Buddhahood, the ultimate happiness. Therefore, all beings from the six realms be glad!

Make wishes

May the enlightened attitude develop where it has not arisen. Where it has arisen, may it never weaken but only grow. Having the enlightened attitude, may all beings fully dedicate their lives to Bodhisattva practice.

May I be guided by the Buddhas and may all beings abandon harmful actions.

May the Bodhisattvas' wishes to benefit all beings be accomplished.

May the wishes of the Buddhas bring happiness and prosperity.

May all beings be happy and the lower states of existence be empty forever.

May all the aspirations of the realised Bodhisattvas be fulfilled.

The four immeasurables

May all beings have happiness and the cause of happiness.

May they be free from suffering and the cause of suffering.

May they always experience happiness, which is totally free from suffering.

May they remain in the great equanimity, which is without attachment and aversion.

Repeat 3 times.

Completion phase

Finally, the Refuge dissolves into light and melts into myself and all beings.

Stay in this experience of unity.²

Dedication

Through uniting method and wisdom, all beings are able to obtain the unchanging experience that their mind is indestructible, timeless and joyful. Therefore, I dedicate all the good impressions so that all beings attain the state of a Buddha by realising the diamond-like nature of their minds through the Great Seal.

Through the good that has just appeared may I quickly realise the Great Seal and establish all beings without exception in that state.

May these dedication wishes be fulfilled through the power of the Buddha, who has accomplished the three states, through the power of the unchanging true teachings and through the power of the undivided community (Sangha).

This should be recited too.

Appendices

Appendix of the old print

This meditation text was taken from the “Great Treatise of the Instructions of the Great Seal – The Innate Union” which was composed by the Venerable Wangchuk Dorje (9th Karmapa). Through the good impressions of its composition, may all beings who see, hear or touch this text be reborn in the pure land of highest joy.

May the teachings of the Karma Kagyü, which radiate happiness and splendour, spread into the ten directions and be the ornament of the world.

Concluding Wishes

Karmapa, great treasure of the victors of the three times, you always experience the ritual feast of great joy. May you remain, together with the transmission lineage of teacher and student, in the ocean of conditioned existence for many world ages.

May the study and meditation spread like a river in the rainy season through listening, reflection and mainly meditation of the secret instructions.

May the Lamas have a long life and may all beings be happy and comfortable. May we quickly attain the state of a Buddha after having perfected the accumulations and removed the veils.

Appendix of the Rumtek Edition

This gift of Dharma is a great sun of the authentic teaching, a door for those who seek liberation, the sole friend who lets blossom the lotus garden of Buddha’s teaching.

It originated from part of the activity of Rigpe Dorje, the embodiment of all buddhas, in Rumtek. Through the good impressions of this gift of Dharma may all beings, who are submerged in the ocean of cyclic existence, quickly reach the mainland of the truth state, enlightenment, in relying on “The Vehicle for the Path of the Supreme”.

¹Direct translation of the Tibetan repetition:

We take refuge in these genuine accomplished teachers.
We take refuge in the Yidams, the buddha aspects and their power-fields.
We take refuge in the perfect victorious Buddhas.
We take refuge in their noble teachings.
We take refuge in the realised Sangha.
We take refuge in the dakas, dakinis and wisdom protectors.

² These instructions were included by Lama Ole Nydahl to aid our understanding of the text.

Some of the section headings have been included to increase understanding, even though they are not included in the original Tibetan text.