

# cloister prayers

## Six Practices Preparatory to Meditation Sessions

1. Cleaning and arranging space
2. Setting out offerings
3. Comfortable seat in seven point posture of Vairochana
4. Visualize field of merit then REFUGE AND BODHICITTA, as follows:

### Prayers of Refuge, Bodhicitta, and for Blessings on the Path

In the Buddha, his teaching and the fellowship most excellent  
I take my refuge until enlightenment.  
By the merit of generosity and other transcendent virtues,  
May I attain buddhahood for the sake of all that lives.

5. Purifying negativity and accumulating merit through SEVEN BRANCH PRAYER and MANDALA OFFERING, as follows:

### Seven Branch Prayer

To those in the worlds of the ten directions, however many there are,  
All the lions among humans who appear during the three times-  
To all of them without exception  
I pay homage with respectful body, speech, and mind.

The force of my Aspiration Prayer for Excellent Conduct,  
Brings all the victorious ones directly to mind;  
Bowing down with bodies as numerous as atoms in the realms,  
I prostrate to all the victorious ones.

In a single atom there are buddhas as numerous as atoms,  
Each residing in the midst of their sons and daughters;  
Like that, I imagine that the whole dharmadhatu  
Is completely filled with victorious ones.

To those with oceans of inexhaustible praise-worthy qualities-  
With sounds containing oceans of tones of melodic speech,  
I express the qualities of all the victorious ones,  
I praise all the sugatas.

With the finest flowers, the finest garlands,  
Music, ointments, supreme parasols,  
Supreme lamps, and the finest incense

I make offerings to the victorious ones.

With the finest cloths, supreme scents,  
And fine powders equal to Mount Meru,  
All displayed in supreme and magnificent ways,  
I make offerings to those victorious ones.

With vast unsurpassable offerings  
I venerate all the victorious ones.  
Through the power of faith in excellent conduct  
I prostrate and offer to the victorious ones.

Whatever negative actions I have performed  
With body, speech, and also mind  
Overpowered by desire, aggression, and stupidity  
I confess each and every one of them.

I rejoice everyone's merit-  
The victorious ones of the ten directions, the bodhisattvas,  
The pratyekabuddhas, those in training,  
Those beyond training, and all beings.

I request the protectors,  
The lamps of the worlds of the ten directions,  
Who, passing through the stages of awakening,  
    attained buddhahood beyond attachment,  
To turn the unsurpassable dharma wheel.

I supplicate with my palms joined together  
Those who intend to demonstrate nirvana  
To remain for kalpas as numerous as atoms in the realms  
For the welfare and happiness of all beings.

I dedicate whatever slight virtue is accumulated through  
Prostrating, offering, confessing,  
Rejoicing, requesting, and supplicating  
To enlightenment.

### **Short Mandala Offering**

The earth is sprinkled with scented water and strewn with flowers;  
Adorned by the supreme mountain, the four continents,  
    the sun and moon;  
I offer it, visualizing it as a buddhafiield,  
So all beings may enjoy the perfectly pure realms.

6. Requesting blessing and inspiration with LINEAGE AND GURU YOGA PRAYERS, as follows:

**Vajradhara Lineage Prayer**

Great Vajradhara, Tilo, Naropa,  
Marpa, Mila, Dharma Lord Gampopa,  
Knower of three times, omniscient Karmapa,  
Those who hold the four elder and eight younger lineages—  
The Drikung and Tak-lung and Tsal-pa, great Drukpa  
And others who've mastered Mahamudra's profound path,  
Unequaled protectors of beings, the Dakpo Kagyu,  
We supplicate you, the Kagyu gurus, we hold  
Your lineage, to follow your example, please bless us.

Detachment's the foot of meditation, as it's taught.  
As ones with no craving for food or for wealth,  
Who cut all the ties to this life: to have no  
Attachment to honor or gain, please bless us.

Devotion's the head of meditation, as it's taught.  
As ones who pray always to the lama who opens  
The gate to the treasury of oral instructions:  
That genuine devotion arise, please bless us.

Nondistracted's the body of meditation, as it's taught.  
As ones who, whatever arises, rest simply,  
Not altering, in just that fresh essence of thought:  
With practice that's free of conception, please bless us.

The essence of thought's the Dharmakaya, as it's taught.  
Not anything at all, yet arising as anything,  
In unceasing play we arise: to realize  
Samsara and nirvana inseparable, please bless us.

In all our births may we never be separate  
From the perfect guru, enjoying dharma's splendor.  
Perfecting the qualities of the paths and levels,  
May quickly we reach the state of Vajradhara.

### **Guru Yoga Prayer and Visualization**

Authentic guru, the great spiritual friend of all,  
I supplicate you, please think of me. I supplicate you, please bless me.  
Grant me the blessing of love, compassion, and bodhicitta suffusing my mindstream.

*[Imagine that the guru enters through the crown of your head and descends into your heart to sit in a pavilion of light shaped like an oval sphere opening upwards.]*

Follow the instructions for the main practice of the session.

After the main practice for the session, rejoice in your practice and that of your sangha, then make aspiration and dedication prayers.

### **Prayers of Aspiration and Dedication**

Listening to scriptures and reasonings frees us from the obscurations of ignorance,  
Reflecting on the key instructions vanquishes the darkness of doubt,  
Meditation's light illuminates the true nature just as it is.  
May the brilliance of the three kinds of prajna increase!  
Having attained omniscience through this merit,  
May I defeat the enemy, wrongdoing,  
And liberate all beings from the ocean of existence  
With its surging waves of birth, aging, sickness, and death.

All you sentient beings I have a good or bad connection with  
As soon as you have left this confused dimension  
May you be born in the west in Sukhavati,  
And once you're born there, complete the bhūmis and the paths.

*At the end of each session sealing or opening cloister (Friday evenings and Monday mornings, respectively), as well as at the end of the third session within cloister (Saturdays and Sundays) and whenever else you feel moved to do so, recite the following:*

**ASPIRATION PRAYER FOR MAHAMUDRA, THE DEFINITIVE MEANING**  
**His Holiness the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje**

Namo Guru

Lamas, yidams, and deities of the mandala,  
Victorious Ones and your sons and daughters of the ten directions and three times,  
Please hold us in your great loving-kindness  
And bless our aspiration prayers that they may be perfectly fulfilled. [1]

May the rivers of my own and all limitless others' gathered virtue, undefiled by the three  
spheres,  
That spring from the snow mountain  
Of our completely pure intentions and actions  
Flow into the ocean of the Victorious Ones' four kayas. [2]

In this and in all our future lifetimes,  
For as long as it may be until we attain enlightenment,  
May not even the words "negative action" or "suffering" be heard  
And may we enjoy the glory of oceans of virtue and happiness. [3]

In all our lifetimes may we gain the supreme freedoms and resources, and have faith,  
joyous diligence, and prajna,  
May we rely on excellent spiritual teachers, and having received the nectar of their  
instructions,  
May we practice accordingly and encounter no obstacles in doing so —  
May we always practice the genuine Dharma. [4]

Listening to scriptures and reasonings frees us from the obscurations of ignorance,  
Reflecting on the key instructions vanquishes the darkness of doubt,  
Meditation's light illuminates the true nature just as it is —  
May the brilliance of the three kinds of wisdom increase. [5]

The two truths free from the extremes of realism and nihilism are the reality of the ground,  
And through the supreme path, the two accumulations free from the extremes of  
superimposition and denial,  
The fruition that accomplishes the two benefits free from the extremes of existence and  
peace is attained —  
May we meet with this Dharma that is flawless and sure. [6]

The base of purification is mind itself, the union of clarity and emptiness —  
May the great purifying vajra-yoga of Mahamudra  
Clear away what is to be purified, the fleeting stains of confusion,  
And may we manifest the result of this purification, stainless Dharmakaya. [7]

Eliminating superimpositions about the ground is confident view,  
Guarding non-distraction from that is meditation's essential point,

Becoming expert in all types of meditation is conduct supreme —  
May we gain such confident view, meditation, and conduct. [8]

All phenomena are mind's magical play  
As for mind, there is no mind! Mind is empty of essence.  
Empty and unimpeded, it can appear as absolutely anything —  
Analyzing excellently, may we cut through all superimpositions about the ground. [9]

Our own projections, never existent, we mistake to be objects,  
Out of ignorance we mistake self-awareness to be self,  
Clinging to this duality makes us wander in the vastness of existence —  
May we cut through ignorance and confusion at their root. [10]

It is not existent — even the Victorious Ones do not see it,  
It is not nonexistent — it is the basis of all samsara and nirvana,  
It is not the contradiction of being both — it is the Middle Way path of union —  
May we realize mind's essential reality, free from extremes. [11]

No name can show, "It is this."  
No refutation can demonstrate, "It is not that."  
May we gain certainty in the essential nature, transcending intellect,  
In the uncreated, and in genuine reality's ultimate limit. [12]

Not realizing simply this, one circles in the ocean of samsara,  
When one realizes simply this, there is no other enlightenment.  
Everything is this and there is nothing that is not —  
May we realize essential reality, the underlying nature of the ground of all. [13]

Appearance is mind and emptiness is mind,  
Realization is mind and confusion is also one's mind,  
Arising is mind and cessation too is mind —  
May we determine that all superimpositions are mind. [14]

Unspoiled by meditation where thoughts are deliberate and striving,  
Unmoved by the winds of ordinary commotion,  
Knowing how to settle naturally in the uncontrived native state,  
May we be skilled at and sustain the practices revealing mind's true reality. [15]

With the waves of coarse and subtle thoughts dissolving in their own place,  
The placid river of mind gently comes to rest.  
Free of the silt and mire of dullness and torpor,  
May the ocean of calm abiding be steady and undisturbed. [16]

Looking again and again at mind that cannot be looked at,  
Unseeable reality is seen vividly, just as it is.  
Cutting through all doubts about whether "it is" or "it is not,"  
May we unmistakably recognize our own face. [17]

Looking at objects — there are no objects, they are seen to be mind.

Looking at mind — there is no mind, it is empty of essence.  
Looking at both, clinging to duality is self-liberated —  
May we realize mind's abiding nature, luminous clarity. [18]

Free from mental contrivance, it is Mahamudra,  
Free from extremes, it is the great Middle Way,  
Since it encompasses everything, it is Dzogchen —  
May we gain the confidence of realizing all through knowing one. [19]

Free of attachment, great bliss is unceasing,  
Free of clinging to characteristics, luminous clarity is unobscured,  
Transcending the intellect, nonconceptuality is spontaneously present —  
Without effort, may these experiences be unceasing. [20]

Clinging to excellent experience is free right where it is,  
Negative thoughts' confusion is naturally pure in the expanse,  
When ordinary mind manifests, there is nothing to adopt or reject, no freedom or fruition  
—  
May we realize the truth of essential reality, free of fabrications. [21]

Beings by nature have always been Buddhas,  
Yet not realizing this, they wander endlessly in samsara.  
May we have unbearable compassion  
For sentient beings whose suffering knows no bounds. [22]

This unbearable compassion radiates unceasing love,  
And as it does, its emptiness of essence nakedly shines.  
May we never leave this supreme and unerring path of union,  
May we meditate upon it all day and all night. [23]

From the power of meditation come superior eyes and clairvoyance,  
Sentient beings are matured, experiences of Buddha realms are cultivated perfectly,  
And prayers to attain the Buddha's qualities are fulfilled.  
May we attain the enlightenment that brings maturation, cultivation, and fulfillment to  
perfection. [24]

By the power of the great compassion of the Victorious Ones and their sons and daughters  
of the ten directions,  
And the power of all the immaculate virtue there is  
May my own and all sentient beings'  
Completely pure aspiration prayers be perfectly fulfilled! [25]

*Translation by Ari Goldfield.*

### **A Gatha for Contemplation**

This is not me  
This I am not  
This is not myself

### **A Selection of Meal Offering Prayers**

To the unsurpassable teacher, the precious Buddha,  
To the unsurpassable protection, the precious Dharma,  
To the unsurpassable guide, the precious Sangha,  
To the sources of Refuge, the Three Jewels, I make this offering.

A multitude of tastes so pleasing as to steal one's mind,  
All beautifully arranged; with faith I offer this to all the Heirs of the Victor,  
So that all beings may be endowed  
With wealth and the food of Samadhi.

By the force of this vast generosity  
Offered to benefit wanderers, may they naturally awaken.  
May the hosts of beings not liberated by previous buddhas  
Attain liberation through this generous deed.

This food is a gift of the earth, the sky, numerous living beings, and much hard and loving work.

May we eat with mindfulness and gratitude so as to be worthy to receive it.

May we recognize and transform unwholesome mental formations, especially our greed, and learn to eat with moderation.

May we keep our compassion alive by eating in such a way that we reduce the suffering of living beings, preserve our planet, and reverse the process of global warming.

We accept this food so that we may nurture our sisterhood and brotherhood, build our Sangha and nourish our ideal of serving living beings.