

DAILY PUJA

*Contemplations
to*

*Orient the Mind
Towards Awakening*

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Orient the Mind Towards Awakening

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This booklet is a collection of reflections or mini-contemplations inspired or taken directly from the Buddhist tradition. They are presented in a way that will speak to the universal nature of everyone, regardless of their religious beliefs. *Pūja* means to honour or to venerate. With these contemplations we honour the mystery of life and refresh our intention to live in a sane, healthy and compassionate manner.

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*"Liberation is not the goal.
Liberation is the practice in the moment:
It's in everything that we do."*

Sensei Teruhiko Ota



TAKING REFUGE

(Universal form)

I take refuge in Wisdom

I take refuge in Compassion

I take refuge in Non-clinging Awareness

May I develop the six perfections

And awaken speedily for the sake of all living beings

(Traditional form)

In the Buddha, the Dharma,

And the excellent Sangha,

I take my refuge until enlightenment is reached.

By the merit of generosity and other good deeds,

May I realise Buddhahood for the sake of

All living beings.

Hail to the Triple Gem - which is my own nature

Namo Ratanā Triyaya

(The six perfections are: generosity, wholesome relationship,
patience, energy, concentration and wisdom.)

BODHISATTVA VOW

*However innumerable beings are,
I vow to meet them with kindness and interest.
However inexhaustible the states of suffering are,
I vow to touch them with patience and love.
However immeasurable the Dharmas are,
I vow to explore them deeply.
However incomparable the mystery of interbeing,
I vow to surrender to it freely.*

*From this day forth, with Wisdom and
Compassion as my Lamp and Staff,
I dedicate all my life energies to the welfare
of all beings.*

Tadyathā: Om
Gate Gate Pāragate Pārasaṃgate Bodhi Swāhā

(This is the mantra of the Perfection of Wisdom.
See commentary, and Heart Sutra in part three)

THE FIVE TRAINING PRECEPTS

1. *I undertake to train myself to abstain from taking the life of any living being.*

Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

2. *I undertake to train myself to abstain from taking that which is not given.*

Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

3. *I undertake to train myself to abstain from sensual misconduct.*

Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

4. *I undertake to train myself to abstain from unskillful speech.*

Musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

5. *I undertake to train myself to abstain from taking substances that cause intoxication to the point of heedlessness.*

Surā-meraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhāna veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

PRECEPTS IN POSITIVE EXPRESSION

- 1. I will train myself to support and appreciate the life of all living beings.
I will live with a sensitive and responsible awareness for the whole ecology of life.*
- 2. I will train myself to dwell more and more in the mind of spontaneous generosity.
Daily I will give material support, emotional support, and an example to others of awakening in action.*
- 3. I will train myself to use the senses to further awakening, explore Dharma, and to come to know the world more profoundly and more compassionately.*
- 4. I will train myself to communicate in a skilful and compassionate manner.*
- 5. I will train myself to be ever more directly aware of how nutriment affects the mind and body.
I will eat and drink and nurture myself and others, in a way that supports awakening.*

MEDITATION ON THE BODY

*This body of mine is composed of atoms born in stars,
molecules, cells, tissues and organs.*

*It is a union of uncountable viruses, bacteria,
fungi, plants and animals.*

*It is conditioned by families and societies,
by thoughts and dreams.*

*It is moulded by sun and gravity
and the whole of the ecosphere.*

*It is an interbeing of all these processes
from micro to macro.*

*Wondrous! Transient!
May it teach me wisdom!*

*Bones, flesh and skin - skin, flesh and bones.
Aṭṭhi, maṅsaṃ, taco - taco, maṅsaṃ aṭṭhi*

MEDITATION ON DEATH & IMPERMANENCE

Sabbe Saṅkhārā Aniccā'ti

All compounded things are impermanent. Everything that comes into being is certain to pass away. I too, will one day die and there is no way to know exactly when. It could be years from now. It could be today.

Marāṇa

(The word marāṇa means death. As you repeat this mantra, contemplate death and/or impermanence, in a way that touches you directly.)

"Suffering arises from trying to make permanent that which is impermanent." - Buddha

Recognising this, may I cease grasping after permanence and live each moment fully with bright, non-clinging awareness.

THE FOUR DIVINE ABIDINGS

(The Brahmā Vihāras)

May I be friendly, calm and free from ill-will and may I live in happiness. As I am, so, may all beings be friendly, calm and free from ill-will and may they live in happiness.

Ahaṃ avero homi, abyāpajjho homi,
anīgho homi, sukhī attānaṃ pariharāmi.
Ahaṃ viya sabbe sattā averā hontu, abyāpajjhā
hontu, anīghā hontu, sukhī attānaṃ pariharantu.

*Now I become aware of my breathing.
As I breathe, I imagine in my heart, a jewelled flower
or a soft globe of light, radiating loving-kindness,
compassion, sympathetic-joy and equanimity to every
part of my body. (Breathe with this for a few minutes.)*

*As feelings of easefulness, spaciousness and clarity
flower in my experience, I send the light of these four
divine abidings in all directions, touching beings
throughout the universe, supporting their health
and unfolding.*

(If it helps to deepen the focus, use the mantra of Chenrezi.)

Om Mani Padme Hum

THE HEART OF AWAKENING

Recognising that the experience of awakening is not something read about in books or learned from others but something realised and manifested in each moment of my life; for the rest of this day, I will cultivate the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

(awareness of body, awareness of feelings, awareness of states of mind, and awareness of all other phenomena)

Frequently I will pause to breathe mindfully and recontact a mode of being which embodies simplicity, openness, clarity, connectedness and caring. I will endeavour to bring a continuum of compassionate awareness into all my life's activities.

*Frequently I pause
Mindfully I breathe
Simplicity, Openness, Clarity,
Connection and Caring
Flowering forth.*

Sit quietly with awareness of breathing
for at least five minutes.

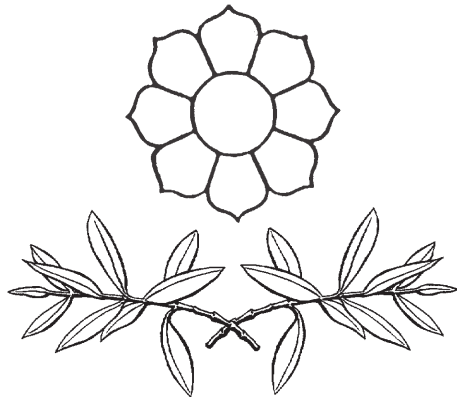
SHARING THE MERIT

*Through the power of these wholesome activities,
May my life be rich with awakening.
Living thus,
May I abandon all unwholesomeness.
Through the endless storm of birth, illness,
old age and death,
May I help all beings to cross the ocean of the
suffering of the worlds.*

*By these wholesome actions,
May the emotional confusions of myself
and others be removed.
Idam te puñña kamma
Āsavakkhayavaham hotu*

*May these wholesome activities produce happiness
and illumination for the uplifting of the world.*

Sarva Mangalam
All is blessing.



A BRIEF COMMENTARY

The contemplations in this booklet are to awaken question and to reconnect us with some of the more meaningful facets of life. They call us to examine our aspiration, the way we live, the nature of our body, our relationship with death, our potential for love and the quality of our ongoing daily awareness. They are not a collection of religious dogmas one must take on or believe, in order to awaken. Instead, think of them as a set of themes to be explored and contemplated again and again as one's insight and experience deepens through the years. There are many ways to work with them. Perhaps more important though, is to allow these themes to work on us.

The Sanskrit Dictionary defines *Pūja* as; "*honour, worship, respect, reverence, veneration, homage to superiors or adoration of the gods.*" Consider the Catholic Mass or Buddhist Chanting. They can both be very beautiful and inspiring but they can also turn into empty rituals which are done without touching anything meaningful in us. Doing *pūja* in this way may be comforting and help bond us to a tradition. Unfortunately, it loses much of the original spirit, which was to awaken us to a vibrant appreciation and sense of question, into the preciousness, the grace, the beauty and the mystery of life. These qualities are not to be found only in God or Buddha or Guru or some lofty place outside ourselves. They are all here within us. In fact, they are the true heart of each and everyone of us.

A traditional time for *pūja* is first thing in the day, before embarking on any activity. Sitting quietly with these themes, in the early morning stillness, will often inspire a whole range of meaningful investigations that stay with us through the rest of the day. These contemplations remind us of our aspiration to be compassionate and loving beings and to carry a gentle and pervasive awareness into everything we do. Even when we are

in retreat or practising mindfulness in solitude it helps greatly to do a pūja at least once a day. It draws our attention to the larger questions of life, reminding us both of the essence of practice and that we are doing it for the sake of others.

It is important to keep the process alive and not fall into a habitual routine. If you do pūja every day, then skip the odd day. Feel free to experiment with it and not get into a rut. You may wish to change some wording or add some other reflections or prayers that are meaningful to you. Some days a particular section may leap out and you could dwell on that and spend less time on the others. This is very natural. After all, there is a rhythm and flow to our lives. Together, these contemplations form a balanced whole, so that over a period of time, each one is bound to feel quite relevant.

In preparing this pūja, I have borrowed from the traditional contemplations of both Theravadin and Mahayana Buddhism. They are presented in a Universal manner in order to be meaningful to any searching being, regardless of his or her religious beliefs. In this light I have omitted many specifically Buddhist terms but kept, I hope, the spirit that is behind them.

This commentary is not an attempt to explain things in depth. Many of the contemplations are profound meditations in their own right and would require much greater space than is available here to detail their practice. I will simply introduce you to the main themes and hint at some of the more obscure terms and concepts. The contemplations will tell you much about themselves, if you give them the chance. As you get to know and appreciate each other you will mutually shape each other; you shaping the pūja, the pūja shaping you. Together, you become a vehicle of awakening. Who knows what discoveries will unfold on the way!

Where: If you have a shrine room or meditation niche or any place of inspiration and beauty then that is a good place to do pūja. If not, through doing the contemplations perhaps you will begin to see the beauty of wherever you happen to be.

How: As you read the text, go slowly and pause frequently to ponder and reflect on the themes. Feel them working in your body, your energies and your mind.

Sometimes a *mantra* is given or a suggestion to sit quietly with awareness of breathing. (A mantra is a word or phrase that is repeated again and again to help support the deepening of calm and focus.) Here you can spend as much time as you wish. If, for any reason, meditating with mantra feels awkward or inappropriate, just sit in the stillness and contemplate the preceding section.

When practising in a group, take turns being the 'pūja leader'. This person reads aloud, clearly and not too quickly. The leader's main function is to supply the rhythm and timing for the group. Everyone else can read aloud or silently as they wish. The point is to be actively involved.

If you have a bell or a gong, it could be rung three times before the pūja begins and then once between each section. When we hear the bell we can take it as an invitation to mindfulness. We pause in the moment, aware of our breathing. Then we continue.

Pūja is something you may practise at various periods throughout your life. However, the more you contemplate these themes, the more they will become a part of your ongoing experience. At some point, your life itself becomes the pūja, an expression of aspiration, an honouring and respecting of the wisdom, compassion and awareness that is each and every one of us.

TAKING REFUGE

A refuge is a place of safety. Where do we go for refuge when things are tough? Too often it is to money, power, prestige, brute force and so forth. Sometimes it's in eating, shopping or talking to someone on the phone. Occasionally it's just to pull the blanket over our heads. But do these really provide a place of refuge? Where is our refuge in the face of the great inescapables: old age, decay and death?

Contemplation of refuge is to reaffirm one's aspiration in life. What do I aspire to and how truly meaningful is it?

In this pūja, both a Universal form (taking refuge in Wisdom, Compassion and Awareness) and a traditional Buddhist form (taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) are given. Use the form that is most meaningful to you. You may even wish to alternate them each day.

Wisdom is the domain or domicile or dwelling place of the wise. It is a state that embraces and includes. It displays qualities of patience and appreciative understanding that can allow us to be with the wholeness of any situation, even the painful contradictions of life. Sometimes it is described as the state that is present when greed, hatred and confusion are absent. Wisdom is really non-clinging awareness.

The Six Perfections (Paramita) are often referred to as "the path of the Bodhisattva". They are: *dāna* - generosity, *sīla* - wholesome relationship or moral conduct, *ksānti* - patience, *virya* - energy / effort, also translated as diligence and sometimes enthusiastic perseverance, *samādhi* - concentration and *prajñā* - wisdom.

Triple Gem refers to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. In the Theravadin Tradition this is the historic Buddha, his teaching

and the community of monks and nuns. In a more universal sense, Buddha is the realisation of emptiness, clarity and the unimpeded play of awareness. Dharma is the realisation of Buddhadharma, the laws and teachings (dharmas) of budding, flowering, and awakening – the orderliness of this unfolding universe. Sangha is the realisation of the community of all life, the "interbeingness" of the universe, our friends upon the path. All these qualities are revealed in Wisdom, Compassion and Awareness which are our very nature.

Namo means to name. *Ratanā* means jewel. *Triyaya* is triple. *Namo Ratanā Triyaya* could be liberally translated, "Hail to the triple gem which is my own nature" or "Looking deeply into myself, I recognise and name my triple jewel-like nature."

BODHISATTVA VOW

The concept of the Bodhisattva is central to Mahayana Buddhism, however, the ideal of the Bodhisattva, a being dedicating his or her life to the welfare of others, pervades most of the world's religions. My root teacher, Namgyal Rinpoché, often said that the fastest path of awakening is the path of compassionate involvement. This vow is a grand expression of one's aspiration to that work.

The first and second sections are fairly self explanatory. The third section of the vow speaks of exploring the Dharmas. *Dharma* means natural law or truth or phenomena. Here it is particularly referring to the laws or the paths of awakening.

The fourth section speaks of the "mystery of interbeing." In Buddhism, this is called the void, emptiness or *śūnyatā* and its understanding is called the Perfection of Wisdom. The relationship between emptiness and interbeingness is illustrated in the following quote.

"Now contemplate the essential interbeing of everything. Recognise how each aspect of your existence: body, speech and mind, inner and outer, micro and macro, is interweaving with everything else in the universe. Nothing stands independently on its own. Everything is created, sustained and supported by everything else. All arisings are mutually shaping.

With this understanding, where is this 'me' that so often seems apart from the rest of the universe? The sense of a separate self is seen as empty and illusory, as awareness opens to the fullness of the present moment. One feels clear, relaxed and vitally awake. Breathe with this for a while."

(from the Sadhana of Chenrezi)

"*Gate Gate Pāragate Pārasaṃgate Bodhi Swāhā*" is the mantra of the Perfection of Wisdom, the *Prajñāparamita*. It is found in "The Heart Sutra" which is thought by many to be the most pithy wisdom teaching of the Mahayana Tradition. In this Sutra, Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of compassion (*Chenrezi* in Tibetan), awakens through understanding the non-abiding nature of everything - the union of compassion and emptiness.

The mantra is often translated, "Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone completely beyond; Oh what an awakening, all hail." The verb *Gate* (pronounced gah-tay) actually means coming, going and being, so there could be much richer translation possibilities. It's pointing at the transient nature of life. Physicist David Bohm once described the universe as an unbroken holomovement in which everything is a dynamic expression of everything else. The coming into being of one thing is the passing away of another. As one thing disappears, another thing appears. "Forming is emptying and the very emptying is forming." Contemplate this as you work with the mantra.

THE FIVE TRAINING PRECEPTS

These five precepts are respected and upheld by all the schools of Buddhism. Notice they are called 'training' precepts. These are not commandments but challenges to live with awareness. They touch on all the facets of our daily life and both provoke and deserve a tremendous amount of contemplation.

Consider the first precept. Taken as the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill", it is impossible to keep. Every time we breathe we inhale microorganisms. We have to eat. In attempting to train ourselves in this precept we are inevitably forced to question, what is a living being? What is life? What is of value? And, is there a scale of values?

With each of these precepts we are compelled to look at some of the great conundrums of existence and to discover our own ways of coming to terms with these difficult questions. They challenge us to enlarge our perception and appreciation of the world.

The second precept involves not harming others by taking from them what they are not voluntarily giving. This goes far beyond personal theft. It also includes multinational corporate exploitation of the Third World and of nature itself.

The third precept deals with sensual misconduct. It involves training ourselves to avoid using sensuality in a way that is unhealthy for ourselves or others. This includes using the senses to anaesthetize our awareness, in order to avoid what we feel are painful or unpleasant aspects of life.

This third precept is most often translated as abstaining from sexual misconduct. In other words, any sexual activity that abuses or exploits either of the beings involved. The actual

translation of *Kāme* however, is sensual not sexual. Obviously sex is a sensual activity so sensual misconduct includes sexual misconduct.

The fourth precept to do with speech involves things like lying, slander and gossip; any form of speech that causes hurt in others. Ultimately unwholesome speech harms ourselves. The Buddha said "It's not what goes into your mouth that defiles you but what comes out of your mouth." This is possibly the most difficult precept to practise.

The fifth precept directs our awareness to the effect of food, drink and drugs on our behaviour and quality of mind.

In general the purpose of living by these precepts is twofold; to create a life that is peaceful and healthy, and to support wholesome growth and discovery both in ourselves and others. Although it is suggested they are to provoke question, it is also skilful to try to live by them! In other words when in doubt as to what to do, *follow the precepts*.

PRECEPTS IN POSITIVE EXPRESSION

To live well it is not enough to spend one's time avoiding negative patterns. We also need to be actively engaged in bringing positive states and qualities into being. Over the years, I have had many dialogues with people about a positive expression of the precepts. These five are the fruition of those dialogues and much contemplation. The process is not complete. Perhaps it can never be complete. Even so, many are finding these five to be a useful guideline.

MEDITATION ON THE BODY

This was originally an anatomical meditation on the parts of the body. One would visualise the body as composed of bones, muscle, blood, fat, urine and so forth with the idea of removing any obsessive attachment to "the body beautiful". Today, with the help of scientific instruments, when we examine what makes up the body we are lead into an awesome weaving of dynamic processes which ultimately involve the entire universe.

In this meditation, as each part or process is mentioned, try to visualise or sense that process interacting in the continuum called "you". Eventually you may find yourself asking who it is that's doing the meditation.

*The ancients said, look at that body.
Foul, corrupt, full of filth,
A bag of faeces, urine and blood,
 of vomit, gases, fats and oils.
And so they did, those monks of old,
And came to release all lustful selfish clinging
 to this walking breathing corpse.*

*Today the teachers say, look at that body.
And looking in, I find the out,
Miraculous voyagings of stardust atoms,
Water cycles, chemical cycles, symbiotic
 dancing of plants and animals,
 molecules, cells and organs.
My breath is the breath of the rainforest.
My excretions the banquet of others.*

*My muscles and tissues, blood and bone are
the temporary arrangement of carrots,
fish and herbs on the way to being worms,
insects, birds and trees. How vast and wondrous!
And so they do, those mystic-scientists of today
And come to release all selfish clinging
to a separated "me"
And take a few more steps
on the way to home we never left.*

MEDITATION ON DEATH AND IMPERMANENCE

The purpose of this contemplation is twofold. First it will help us to realise how unpredictable our lifespan is. Everyone is destined to die. We could be dead before finishing this commentary. Life is so precarious, and so precious, we should use it well.

The second purpose is to lead us to a state of non-clinging as we come to realise directly, that everything is in a state of constant flux, not remaining the same for even a moment. Is there anything to cling to anyway?

A "compounded thing" is anything that is made of other things, ie. parts. Material forms are compounded. Feelings are compounded. Perceptions are compounded. Habitual tendencies are compounded. Consciousness is compounded. All these things, called the five *skandhas* in the Heart Sutra, are dynamic weavings of uncountable other factors. If we look deeply into any of them, we may see a present moment that is constantly birthing and dying in eternal freshness.

THE FOUR DIVINE ABIDINGS

(Traditionally known as *The Brahmā Vihāras*)

The "Four Divine Abidings" refers to living or abiding in four radiant states. We could even think in terms of four radiant emotions. These are, loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy (joy in the success and wellbeing of others) and non-attachment, equanimity or serenity. In order to radiate these qualities to others we must first feel their presence in ourselves. There are many different ways to develop this. What follows is an abbreviated meditation on Chenrezi, the Tibetan Bodhisattva of Compassion.

Spend a few moments gently following your breathing and allowing your body to relax. Then imagine, in the heart of your being, a beautiful flower with a jewel in its centre, like a dew drop reflecting the light of the morning sun. A variation to this is to imagine, a radiant globe of light. As you breathe, have a sense that the light of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy and equanimity is flooding from your heart, dissolving tensions and illuminating the entire inside of your body. You will find it helps to work with these four, one at a time, until you begin to realise they really make up a unity.

Practising like this you may discover increasing qualities of spaciousness, clarity and relaxation in your being. As these develop, imagine the Brahmā Vihāra radiance is streaming out from the pores of your body. It expands as a great globe of goodness, touching innumerable beings throughout the universe. In this way you bring the four divine abidings to others.

At this point it may help to recite the mantra of Chenrezi.

Om Mani Padme Hum

Mani means jewel and *padme* (usually pronounced pay-may) means flower.

THE HEART OF AWAKENING

Although there are many different types of meditation, the heart of awakening, the core of all practice lies in developing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

Kāyanupassanā is awareness of the body. Here we pay attention to its posture, how it moves, in fact everything the body does.

Vedanānupassanā is usually translated as awareness of feelings. In this case feeling is not so much an emotion but the process of evaluation or judgement. You may have a feeling of liking or not liking something. Outwardly, these are the value judgements we are constantly making. Inwardly, it is the organism checking out every new moment of experience. Is this pleasurable and supportive of life? Is this threatening or dangerous? Is it neutral? These evaluations propel us into activity.

Cittanupassanā is awareness of states of mind. These are the emotional flavours of experience that colour our world.

Dharmanupassanā is awareness of dharma, the laws of nature, the principles or phenomena of life.

At this point in the pūja, take as much time as you can to sit quietly with your breathing and to attentively study the body, feelings, states of mind and dharmas that are weaving this moment of you meditating.

In our daily activity, especially if things have become a bit hectic, it helps to frequently pause, and to breathe mindfully while becoming aware of these four foundations. By doing this we will rediscover 'SOCCC' the five essential qualities of a healthy, well functioning human being. 'SOCCC' stands for Simplicity, Openness, Clarity, Connectedness and Caring.

Simplicity - One is simply present without embellishing the situation with a lot of projected hopes and fears.

Openness - All the sense doors are open so that the world as it is can come in without distortion. Openness also implies that we can easily express ourselves to others.

Clarity - The mind feels crystal clear and awake in the present.

Connectedness - As the experience of simplicity, openness and clarity deepens we begin to feel how we are profoundly interlinked or interbeing, with all of life.

Caring - This is the heart/mind of compassion in action.

These last four contemplations of the pūja – the body, impermanence, the four divine abidings and the heart of awakening – can lead us to profound insight into the nature of being. Each of them are major meditations in their own right.

SHARING THE MERIT

In the Mahayana Tradition it is customary to dedicate the merit of any wholesome activity to the welfare of others. This reminds us of our connection with all life. As we begin to see that the whole universe is interdependent at multiple levels; that we are, as Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh often writes, "interbeing" with everything else in the universe, we come to realise that simply dwelling in a wholesome state immediately benefits everyone.

Many people are bothered by the feeling that they are not really able to help others in a significant way. Some people get quite depressed thinking about this. If they contemplated the reality of interbeing, they would realise that even more important than what they do is the quality of motivation that energises their activities.

The first step of any kind of sharing is to be in a good state oneself. A good or wholesome state is to be appreciatively alive and responsively awake to the reality and immediacy of ourselves and others. This awakes is a truly great service and a wonderful gift to all beings.

I hope this brief introduction to pūja gives you sufficient clarity and courage to walk with these themes and let them help you deepen the wholesome direction of your life. We are living through a very difficult time in the unfolding of this jewel-like planet Earth. So many things we humans are doing cause pain and suffering for others. Rather than drifting through the day hoping for goodness, we can use these contemplations to help establish a state of wholesomeness and wellbeing. This is a very real offering we can give to others.

*"May these actions produce happiness and illumination
for the uplifting of the world."
13th Dalai Lama*

Sarva Mangalam

ADDITIONAL CONTEMPLATIONS

These six contemplations, one from a biologist, two from ancient traditions, two from contemporary lamas, H.H the Dalai Lama and H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche and a prayer composed by one of my root teachers, the great meditator, Kalu Rinpoché, have all been very inspiring for me. I include them with the thought that you may wish to incorporate one or all of them in your daily practice.

Alexander Skutch's statement points to a vast vision of life's purpose expressed in western language and context. The Heart Sutra is one of the great Mahayana Buddhist teachings on the mystery of Emptiness, *Śūnyatā*. Kalu Rinpoché's prayer to the guru points to the heart of the Tibetan teachings; bringing ourselves to such a degree of openness and receptivity that we can learn from all forms, sounds and thoughts. In other words, the whole universe becomes teacher for us. The Sevenfold Prayer is a widely practiced meditation within the Tibetan tradition and contains all the stages of the path. During longer retreats, we sometimes insert the Sevenfold Prayer between the Bodhisattva Vow and the Precepts. The Guru Yoga prayer is a profound 'pointing out' instruction, straight from the heart. The Dedication Prayer expresses an extraordinary commitment to bringing compassion into the world. May these contemplations inspire you in myriad wondrous ways.

THE AWAKENED SPIRIT
by
Alexander Skutch - Biologist

"An outstanding attribute of an awakened spirit is its expansiveness, its insatiable hunger to experience more widely, to know more broadly and profoundly, to cultivate friendly intercourse with the whole of Being. The noblest mind is that which understands, appreciates and loves the largest segment of the Universe."

THE HEART SUTRA

Om̐ namo Bhagavatyai Ārya-Prajñāpāramitāyai
*Homage to the Perfection of Wisdom,
The Lovely, the Holy.*

Ārya-Avalokiteśvaro bodhisattvo gambhirāṃ
prajñā-pāramitācaryāṃ caramāṇo vyavalokayati
sma: pañca-skandhās tāṃś ca svabhāva-śūnyān
paśyati sma.

*Avalokitesvara, the holy lord and bodhisattva, was moving
in the deep course of wisdom that has gone beyond; he looked
down from on high; he beheld but five heaps and he saw that
in their own-being they were empty.*

Iha Śāriputra rūpaṃ śūnyatā śūnyataiva rūpaṃ;
rūpān na pṛthak śūnyatā śūnyatāyā na pṛthag rūpaṃ
yad rūpaṃ sā śūnyatā ya śūnyatā tad rūpaṃ; evam
eva vedanā-saṃjñā-saṃskāra-vijñānaṃ.

*Here, O Sariputra, form is emptiness and the very emptiness
is form; emptiness does not differ from form, form does not
differ from emptiness; whatever is form, that is emptiness,
whatever is emptiness, that is form. The same is true of
feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness.*

Iha Śāriputra sarva-dharmāḥ śūnyatā-lakṣaṇā,
anutpannā aniruddhā, amalā avimalā,
anūnā aparipūrṇāḥ.

Here, O Sariputra, all dharmas are marked with emptiness, they are not produced and not stopped, not defiled or immaculate, not deficient or complete.

Tasmāc Chāriputra śūnyatāyāṃ na rūpaṃ na vedanā na saṃjñā na saṃskārāḥ na vijñānaṃ; na cakṣuḥśrotra-ghrāṇa-jihvā-kāya-manāṃsi; na rūpa-śabda-gandha-rasa-spraṣṭavya-dharmāḥ; na cakṣur-dhātur yāvan na manovijñāna-dhātuḥ, na avidyā na avidyā-kṣayo yāvan na jarā-maraṇaṃ na jarā-maraṇa-kṣayo na duḥkha-samudaya-nirodha-mārgā, na jñānaṃ, na prāptir na-aprāptiḥ.

Therefore, O Sariputra, in emptiness there is no form, nor feeling, nor perception, nor impulse, nor consciousness; no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; no forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables, or objects of mind; no sight organ elements, and so forth until we come to, no mind consciousness element. There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance and so forth, until we come to there is no decay and death, no extinction of decay and death. There is no suffering, no origination, no stopping, no path. There is no cognition, no attainment and no non-attainment.

Tasmāc Chāriputra aprāptivād bodhisattvo prajñāpāramitāṃ āśritya viharaty acittāvaraṇaḥ; cittāvaraṇa-nāstitvād atrasto viparyāsa-atikrānto niṣṭhā-nirvāna-prāptaḥ.

Therefore O Sariputra it is because of his non-attainment that a bodhisattva, through having relied on the Perfection

of Wisdom, dwells without thought-coverings; he has not been made to tremble, he has overcome what can upset, and in the end he attains to nirvana.

Tryadhva-vyavasthitāḥ sarva-buddhāḥ
prajñāpāramitām āśritya-anuttarāṃ
samyaksambodhiṃ abhisambuddhāḥ.

All those who appear as Buddhas in the three periods of time, fully awoken to the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment because they have relied on the Perfection of Wisdom.

Tasmā jñātavyam: prajñāpāramitā mahā-mantro
mahā-vidyā-mantro 'nuttara-mantro 'samasama-
mantraḥ, sarva-duḥkha-praśamaṇaḥ, satyam
amithyatvāt, prajñāpāramitāyām ukto mantraḥ.

Therefore, one should know the Perfection of Wisdom as the great Mantra, the mantra of great knowledge, the utmost mantra, the unequalled mantra, allayer of all suffering, in truth - for what could go wrong? By the Prajnaparamita has this mantra been delivered. It runs like this

TADYATHĀ: OM
GATE GATE PĀRAGATE PĀRASAMGATE
BODHI SVĀHĀ

Iti prajñāpāramitā-hṛdayaṃ samāptam.
Thus the Heart of Perfect Wisdom is completely expounded.

BLESSINGS FALL AS RAIN
A Supplication to One's Lama
by the
Venerable Kalu Rinpoché

*Homage to the Guru:
The myriad forms and appearances,
Interdependent yet unobstructed,
Arise as my teacher around me.
Indescribable is the harmonious dance of magic.
From this state,
Experiencing the natural freedom of visible space,
I supplicate you,
Bless me with the direct understanding of Nirmanakaya,
Enlightenment manifesting skilfully in the world of form.*

*Sounds and voices of all kinds, emerge unimpeded,
From various causes and conditions,
My teacher as mantra arises around me.
Inconceivable is the symphony of melody and song.
From this state,
Experiencing the natural freedom of sound and emptiness
I supplicate you.
Bless me with the unfolding of Sambhogakaya,
Enlightenment free from limitation.*

*The panorama of thoughts in the unutterable
Expanse of awareness,
Arise in my own mind as my intuitive guide.
Vast and pervasive is the display of thought and memory.
From this state, blissful, luminous and open,
I supplicate you.
Bless me, that I may realise unborn Dharmakaya
Enlightenment pure and simple.*

*Thus the whole universe – visible, audible, and conceptual
Which points out to myself and others
The direct apprehension of the nature of being,
Is nothing but the expression of my lama.
Ever conscious of your kindness,
I supplicate you,
Grant me the realisation of the fundamental nature of all.*

*Whole oceans of the Three Roots, everywhere appearing,
Dancing like mirages, responding to my devotion,
Are not separate in the least from my venerable lama.
From the state where all qualities are perfect and complete,
I supplicate you,
Bless me, that my mind may merge with yours.*

*Inspire me to renounce ego's hold
Bless me that I may experience true contentment.
Bless me that I may develop
Loving kindness and compassion.
Bless me that I may give rise to sincere devotion.
Bless me that I may cut off perverse thoughts.
Bless me that I may pacify confusion in its own ground.
Bless me that I may perceive
The true nature of being, Mahamudra.
Bless me that I may realise Buddhahood in this very life.*

*From this time on, until enlightenment is reached,
With pure discipline as my adornment,
Enriched with the enlightening attitude,
Equaniminous to all,
May I see the phases of development and completion
To their end
And with no distinction between the mind of student
And teacher, realise full enlightenment.*

SEVENFOLD PRAYER

(from the Sakya tradition)

To the Triple Gem I go for refuge
Konchog sumla dagchab chi

And lay open unwholesome states separately
Digpa miḡé sosor shag

I rejoice in the unfolding of beings
Drowé géla jéyi rang

And grasp the Bodhicitta with the mind
Sangyé chanchub yidchi zung

To the Buddha, the Dharma and the excellent Sangha
Sangyé churdang tshog chola

Until Bodhi is realised, I go for refuge
Changchub bardo chabsu chi

I and others, for the sake of the highest attainment
Changchub semsu diji dé

Will allow the Bodhicitta to arise
Dag dang shandon rabdòb chir

As the mind of excellent Bodhi arises
Dāgi changchub semcho ché

All beings will I invite to the banquet as guests
E, MA, HO, semkun tronyer

Following the path of the Bodhisattva
Chanchub chocho dzeshin cha

*In order to benefit all beings,
may I quickly attain Buddhahood*
Drola panchir sangyé shog *

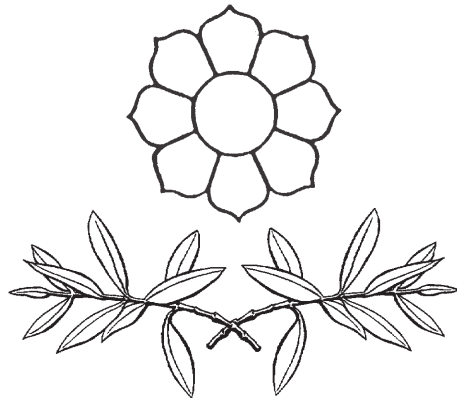
* Tibetan Phonetics

GURU YOGA
by
His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoché

*Since pure awareness of nowness is the real Buddha,
In openness and contentment
I found the Lama in my heart.
When we realize this unending natural mind
is the very nature of the Lama,
Then there is no need for attached grasping,
or weeping prayers, or artificial complaints.
By simply relaxing in this uncontrived,
open natural state,
We obtain the blessing of aimless self-liberation
of whatever arises.*

PRAYER OF DEDICATION
by
His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

*May I become at all times, both now and forever
A protector for those without protection
A guide for those who have lost their way
A ship for those with oceans to cross
A bridge for those with rivers to cross
A sanctuary for those in danger
A lamp for those without light
A place of refuge for those who lack shelter
And a servant to all in need.*



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Tarchin

*May any shortcomings of this work
not be a source of distress.*

*May any goodness emerging from contemplating these themes
become a lamp of compassionate understanding,
lighting the path for all beings.*

Sarva Mangalam



