

MAHAKARUNIKA – CHENREZI 'GREAT CONTINUUM SEEING'

a sadhana for realizing wisdom and compassion in the midst of ordinary living



*This short sadhana was originally prepared and offered along with teaching,
in the beautiful Bay of Plenty, Aotearoa, in April 2012 by Tarchin Hearn.*

It was further refined in late 2020.

May it bring benefit to many.

Preliminaries

Prepare for meditation by taking up a posture of body and mind that feels easeful and alert. Then contemplate refuge and aspire to awaken for the sake of all beings.

Refuge

(This text suggests three different versions of refuge prayer. You could work with all of them, or with whichever one resonates most deeply for you at the time of practice.)

I take refuge in wisdom, compassion and non-clinging awareness.

I take refuge in the full richness of here.

I take refuge in the ever present immediacy of now.

Truth is all pervading.

It is the thusness of this moment,

The suchness that we are.

My refuge is to live within the truth.

I take refuge in Buddha; the natural state of complete authenticity and presence.

I take refuge in Dharma; the universal teachings and demonstrations of awakening.

I take refuge in Sangha; the unfolding community of all life.

May I actively cultivate: generosity, wholesome relating, patience, skilled use of energy, a continuity of caring and enquiry, and profound understanding.

May I and all beings awaken speedily, for the sake of everything and everyone.

We take refuge in love and clear seeing.

We live courageously in this world of birthing and dying.

Our hearts embrace all companions on this path of lucidity and freedom.

Thus contemplating refuge, feeling your ground and support; breathing with refuge, resting in refuge, and exploring this sense of how and what one might be.

Bodhisattva Vow

However innumerable beings are,

I vow to meet them, with kindness and interest.

However inexhaustible the states of suffering,

I vow to touch them with patience and love.

However immeasurable the dharmas are,

I vow to explore them deeply and thoroughly.

However incomparable the mystery of interbeing,

I vow to surrender within it fully.

From this day forth, with wisdom and compassion as my lamp and staff,
I dedicate all my life's energy to the welfare of all beings.

Through the practice of this meditation, may I realize the clear seeing and great compassion of Arya Chenrezi that stirs the depths of *samsara*, liberating all beings from clinging and ignorance. May myself and all beings, in all times and planes, be freed from suffering.

Essential Practice

In the natural flow of whatever is occurring, cultivate a continuity of profoundly nourishing ease, suffused with serene alertness and vivid discernment. Whether sitting, standing, lying down, or walking, let everything relax in its own place.

Contemplating the Spacious Openness of Interbeing

In the very midst of your current experience, contemplate the essential interbeingness of everything. Recognize 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. All forms, sounds and thoughts are like the wind blowing in space, emptiness moving in emptiness – spacious openness intermingling with spacious openness.

Now, in a relaxed manner, repeat the following mantra while contemplating its heart meaning. Recognize that the mantra, yourself, and the act of saying it, are the magical play of emptiness/awareness – the spacious openness of interbeing.

OM SÚNYATA JÑANA VAJRA SVABHAVA ATMAKHO 'HAM

OM,
Enter through interbeing,
Ultimate diamond state,
May this become firm, 'HAM
3x's or more

Breathe with this for a few moments while touching, (and being touched by) a sense of the profound purity and mysterious completeness of all phenomena.

Yoga of Skillful Fabrication

Now, whilst feeling spacious, clear and unimpeded, imagine on the crown of your head, a shimmer of energy. It coalesces into a white lotus in full bloom, radiant and beautiful.

In the center of the lotus there appears a moon-disc, lying flat and radiating moon-colored light which swirls above the moon disc gradually forming into a white HRIH letter.

From this seed syllable, rainbow light of five colors, white, red, yellow, green and blue – altogether appearing as white – is streaming in all directions as an offering to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas throughout space and time. Their blessings in the form of light returns, dissolving back into the HRIH.

Again the rainbow light of profound understanding radiates throughout the universe, illumining all beings and revealing their true interbeing nature. As the light returns, all the seeds of karma, the motivations for activity, are purified.

Then, in a flash, the HRIH dissolves into light and transforms into Chenrezi, the essence of all Refuge.

Sitting in the vajra position upon a white moon-disc and lotus, Chenrezi is radiant with a pure white body, the color of newly fallen snow in bright sunlight.

Of four arms, two are held in prayer and contain a wish fulfilling gem, the second right hand holds a crystal rosary, and the second left hand holds the stem of a beautiful white lotus.

Clothed in the finest of silk garments embroidered with gold, and adorned with many superbly jewelled bracelets and necklaces, a golden-brown skin of an antelope drapes the left shoulder.

On Chenrezi's head is a many-jeweled crown and, above this, sits Amitabha, the red Buddha of boundless light and boundless love.

A stainless full moon supports the back. The three jewels reside in Chenrezi who emerges as the unity of all refuges in essence.

Now, with great reverence and sincerity, one prays and pays homage to Chenrezi. As one prays, through one's interbeing, sense that all sentient beings are praying together.

(With a vivid sense of the presence of Chenrezi, pray until you feel moved in the depths of your being. You could use the words below or any other words or prayers that inspire you.)

Faultless one of pure white color
With Buddha Amitabha
Adorning your head,
Looking with greatly merciful eyes on all that live
To 'Great Continuum Seeing', Mahakarunika, Chenrezi,
We reverently bow down.

Having prayed, from the sacred body of the Most Compassionate One, there emanates a white (rainbow) light. This light comes from Chenrezi's whole body, including Amitabha, and especially from the heart.

The light, immeasurable and inconceivable, pervades the entire universe – inner and outer – purifying all beings and all manifestation.

The outer realms are experienced as *Deva Chen*, Amitabha's Pure Land Paradise – an immeasurable dancing of responsive knowing. All the beauty – sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches – of nature is here.

Now one begins to repeat Chenrezi's mantra. When saying the mantra, imagine that all sentient beings are repeating it together, sounding like thousands of bees.

OM MANI PADME HUM

The rainbow light – especially from Chenrezi's heart – pours down through the crown of your head and the heads of all sentient creatures. It cleanses your body, permeating the entire of your being. As the light streams into you and through you, all unwholesomeness resulting from the activities of body, speech and mind is healed and oneself, along with all sentient beings, becomes the body, speech, and mind of greatly compassionate Chenrezi.

As Chenrezi, one is radiant, clear and utterly present. All manifestation appears insubstantial and translucent, from the smallest particle to the vastness of cosmic space. What before may have been experienced as impure is now seen as wondrous and worthy of investigation. Form, sound and awareness are inseparable from emptiness in their true interbeing nature. All is jewel-like luminosity. The entire body of experience feels like a rainbow.

Inner Yoga

One imagines in one's heart a moon disc and a six petalled lotus. In the centre is a beautiful white HRIH. Around the HRIH are the six syllables of the mantra. White rainbow light

radiates from the HRIH revealing and illumining all beings and all manifestations throughout the universe.

As you inhale, imagine that illness and suffering, wherever it is appearing, is drawn through your nostrils, into the mandala in your heart where it is transformed in the 'light' of clear seeing and deep understanding. As you exhale with the mantra, the clear light of compassion radiates out, nurturing and supporting all beings. Breathe with this for a while. This is the practice of Tonglen. (*A more extensive form of Tonglen can be found in the Endnotes.*)

When the Tonglen practice comes to its natural conclusion, imagine the HRIH syllable in the centre of your heart mandala is shining even more brightly, with a diamond white radiance. Any remaining illness throughout the universe dissolves in this light and is absorbed back into the HRIH and is purified. (*One now ceases saying the mantra.*)

Yoga of Effortless Naturalness

In the all pervading stillness of profound completeness – a vast expanse of spontaneously present ever-fresh awareness – sense yourself and the purified outer realms as being one with the body of Chenrezi – a living matrix of great continuum seeing. Everything is experienced as a dynamic embodiment of wisdom/compassion. All is included. Nothing is left out.

Now, Chenrezi's body (*which is your body*) dissolves, simultaneously from the head down and the feet up, into the lotus in your heart. The lotus and the six syllables dissolve into the HRIH letter. Then, the HRIH dissolves, a part at a time, until nothing but a dot is left and it too is dissolved into the essential, natural emptiness – the ungraspable spacious openness of interbeing.

One rests without visualization or concepts. Simply remain alert without distraction, without either following the thoughts that arise or attempting to stop them; without accepting or rejecting; without hoping or fearing. Appreciate this *rigpa*, this dancing of awareness that knows no clinging.

At this stage, if your attention needs to fix on something, focus on breathing and let go of everything else. (One continues to meditate in this manner as long as one wishes.)

Having rested, for some time, as the primordially pure state – spacious, clear, naturally occurring, ever fresh awareness – Chenrezi reappears in the form of yourself, just as you are.

All forms are expressions of Great Continuum Seeing.

All sounds the melody of suchness.

All thoughts the blissful unity of wisdom and compassion.
Everything is the heart-breath presence of Chenrezi.
(Carry this way of perceiving into all the activities of your life.)

Sharing the Merit

Considering the lack of clarity and the confusion that is still manifesting in the world, consciously share the wholesomeness of this practice with all sentient beings and reaffirm your heartfelt pledge to strive to deepen in wisdom and compassion, for the sake of everything and everyone.

May myself
and all sentient beings
realize the enlightenment of Chenrezi,
the living presence of great continuum seeing,
the natural union of wisdom and compassion.

Conclude by doing a brief review, reflecting on the practice without doubt, skepticism or undue embellishment.

By the power of these wholesome activities,
May our lives be rich with awakening.
Living thus, may we abandon all unwholesomeness.
Through the endless storm of birth, illness, old age and death,
May we help all beings to be free from suffering.

SARVA MANGALAM

ENDNOTES

In the profound practice-tradition of Buddhadharmā, it is often said that wholeness and truth are beyond words and symbols. In spite of this, spoken language is often used to point out the many rich dynamic inter-layerings of lived experience. (Perhaps we should say, of on-going living process.) A word or phrase is not the same as the actual thing it refers to, in fact, in a deep sense it doesn't even 'represent' a thing. A word is a complex resonance between two beings, involving body, speech and mind, that gives rise to a degree of shared experience. The meaning of the word has something to do with one's own embodied sensing of this shared experience. In the process of two beings coupling together through the medium of sound we might say they are 'linguaging' together. With this in

mind, we can begin to appreciate the difficulties that arise in any process of translation, especially if our motivation is to nail down some exact and objectively correct meaning. Meaning is richer, more fluid and multilayered. Having said this, here are a few possibilities for extending your experience of this sadhana.

In Tibetan, *Chenrezi* is the name of the bodhisattva of compassion, an unfolding manifestation of wisdom and compassion or, put in another way, the ineffable union of emptiness (*sunyata*) and compassion. In some traditions, Chenrezi is also known as *Avalokitesvaro* (*Skt.*) which is commonly translated as "Knower of Worlds" or "All Seeing One". In Chinese traditions, Chenrezi is known as *Kuan-yin*, the Goddess of Mercy.

Mahakarunika (*Skt.*) means 'Great Compassion' and is sometimes used as an epithet for Chenrezi. 'Chenrezi' is really a phonetic spelling. In Tibetan scholastic script it is correctly spelled *Spyan ras gzigs*, which wouldn't give you much of a clue as to how to say it. The *Spyan* part is actually pronounced *chen* and it literally means eye. The Tibetan word that is scholastically spelt '*Chen*', means great, large, powerful and magnanimous. *Ras* or "*re*" is related to the idea of continuum or continuity. The great dynamic continuity of reality just as it is, is sometimes referred to in Buddhism as '*suchness*'. *Gzigs* or "*zi*" is a root for the verb to see. It also means to shine, brightness, clearness and splendor. One could play with these derivations and come to a richer more multi-levelled understanding.

Chenrezi, the bodhisattva of wisdom/compassion, is the play of great continuum seeing; a powerful or magnanimous continuity of seeing/knowing/experiencing. Chenrezi is the state of greatly seeing the continuum of Being; or a continuous seeing of greatness, or suchness seeing or shining – radiant suchness, clear suchness.

Compassion, the capacity to sensitively respond to others in life supporting ways, is deeply intertwined with deep seeing/understanding. From the perspective of *Mahamudra*, a great wisdom tradition within Tibetan Buddhism, 'great continuum seeing' or 'vast continuity of clarity' is the very nature of mind itself.

OM SUNYATA JNANA VAJRA SVABHAVA ATMAKO 'HAM

SUNYATA => emptiness, spaciousness, openness, unpindownableness.

JNANA => knowledge, wisdom, ever-fresh awareness.

VAJRA => diamond, unshakable, firm, utterly grounded.

SVABHAVA => essence of being.

ATMAKHO 'HAM => roughly paraphrased as; 'May I realize everything to be . . .'

ATMAN => oneself; essence, nature, character; the body, intellect, mind.

Putting it altogether, we might arrive at something like:

OM, may I realize everything, to be spacious, ever-fresh awareness, the unshakable essence of all being.

– or, with a bit of poetic license;

OM, enter through interbeing, ultimate diamond state, may this become firm, HAM

OM MANI PADME HUM

This mantra of Chenrezi is popularly though perhaps unhelpfully, translated as, "Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus."

Om is a bija or seed syllable which invokes a sense of totality and all encompassing completeness.

Mani is popularly translated as jewel or gem, inferring something beautiful and precious, multifaceted and clear. In its Sanskrit roots it is related to mind, thinking, intelligence, discernment.

Padme (often pronounced pehma or peh-meh) is lotus, flowering, unfolding, blossoming; a lotus flower lifts itself clear from the often swampy water, in which it flourishes.

Hum is another essentially untranslatable bija which invokes a sense of bringing this realization home, or, realization within oneself.

As you say the mantra, you might contemplate the whole universe and all the parts that make it up, as a flowering (padme) of intelligence (mani). Your very being is a union of something clear and discerning, soft and supporting, which nurtures the realization of wholeness in your own lived field of experience, and that of others.

HRIH

HRIH is a bija that invokes the sense of heart, core or essence. It derives from the Sanskrit word hridaya which means heart, not the muscular pump in your chest, but heart as in the heart of the matter, core, truth, ground or root. The pronunciation of HRIH can emphasize the 'r' in a rolling and explosive way. Or it can be a soft 'r' with lots of escaping air as if one were speaking, not from the mouth but directly from the heart. With this pronunciation the feeling can be very internal and intimate.

RIGPA

Rigpa (tibetan) is the state of naturally present, ever fresh awareness, devoid of ignorance and dualistic fixation

CHENREZI SYMBOLOGY OF FOUR

Four arms indicate mastery of:

- the 4 foundations of mindfulness
- the 4 Brahma vihara
- the 4 efforts
- the 4 aspects of enlightened knowledge: mirror-like knowledge (unbiased perception of things as they are); knowledge of essential equality (realization of the 'empty-of-absolute-reality-ness' of things [dharmas]); differentiating knowledge (distinguishing the relative characteristics of things [dharma]); practical knowledge (involved in the accomplishment of tasks)
- the 4 means of integration and liberation: generosity, kind speech, purposeful-beneficial action, cooperation

INNER YOGA

The version of 'inner yoga', found in the main body of the text is a simple yet profound form of practice. For a more detailed version, you might find it valuable to explore the following:

One imagines in one's heart a moon disc and a six petalled lotus. In the centre, is a beautiful white HRIH. White rainbow light radiates from the HRIH touching all beings and all manifestations throughout the universe.

As you inhale, imagine all illness and suffering is drawn through your nostrils, into the mandala in your heart where it is transformed in the light of clear seeing and deep understanding. As you exhale with the mantra, the clear light of compassion goes back out nurturing and supporting all beings. *Breathe like this for a while.*

On each of the surrounding petals of the heart lotus is one syllable of the mantra . . .

OM MA NI PA ME HUM

These appear as white letters facing in towards the HRIH. From the letters, light radiates in the following manner:

From the OM emanate innumerable and uncountable white OM syllables. These stream forth illumining uncountable realms of existence, empowering all activity with a spirit of generosity. As you inhale, imagine all traces of stinginess, tightfistedness, stickiness and obsessive control, both in yourself and others, are absorbed into your heart where they soften and dissolve in the embrace of love and rich understanding. As you exhale with the mantra, streams of OM letters in the form of white light, flood in all directions suffusing all activity with qualities of uninhibited generosity and flow.

Breathe this way for a while.

From the *MA* emanate innumerable and uncountable green MA syllables. These stream forth illumining uncountable realms of existence, empowering all activity with qualities of wholesome relating. As you inhale, imagine all disruptive emotions that hinder wholesome relating, both in yourself and others, are absorbed into your heart where they soften and dissolve in the embrace of love and rich understanding. As you exhale with the mantra, streams of MA letters in the form of vibrant green light, flood in all directions illuminating relationships at every level of being and suffusing them with qualities that enhance life and well-being.

Breathe this way for a while.

From the *NI* emanate innumerable and uncountable yellow NI syllables. These stream forth illumining uncountable realms of existence, empowering all activity with a quality of natural patience. As you inhale, imagine all traces of irritability and life negating reactivity, both in yourself and others, are absorbed into your heart where they soften and dissolve in the embrace of love and rich understanding. As you exhale with the mantra, streams of NI letters in the form of golden yellow light, flood in all directions suffusing all activity with qualities of effortless forbearance and loving patience.

Breathe this way for a while.

From the *PA* emanate innumerable and uncountable sky-blue PA syllables. These stream forth illumining uncountable realms of existence, empowering all activity with a capacity to skillfully apply energy and effort in life enhancing ways. As you inhale, imagine all traces of time wasting, life diminishing activities, both in yourself and others, are absorbed into your heart where they soften and dissolve in the embrace of love and rich understanding. As you exhale with the mantra, streams of PA letters in the form of sky-blue light, flood in all directions empowering all beings to use their energies and apply their efforts in ways that support awakening in themselves and in others.

Breathe this way for a while.

From the *ME* emanate innumerable and uncountable red ME syllables. These stream forth illumining uncountable realms of existence, empowering all activity with samadhi, a continuity of focused caring and enquiry. As you inhale, imagine all traces of scatteredness and inattentiveness, both in yourself and others, are absorbed into your heart where they soften and dissolve in the embrace of love and vibrant interest. As you exhale with the mantra, streams of ME letters in the form of red light, flood in all directions suffusing all activity with qualities of continuity and flow.

Breathe this way for a while.

From the *HUM* emanate innumerable and uncountable blue-black HUM syllables. These stream forth illumining uncountable realms of existence, empowering all activity with

wisdom and deepening understanding. As you inhale, imagine all traces of anger, bigoted opinion, and closed mindedness, both in yourself and others, are absorbed into your heart where they soften and dissolve in the embrace of love and clear seeing. As you exhale with the mantra, streams of HUM letters in the form of blue-black light, flood in all directions suffusing all activity with understanding that is spacious, open and profoundly inclusive.

Breathe this way for a while.

Finally, imagine the HRIH syllable in your heart shines even more brightly with a diamond white radiance. Any remaining illness throughout the universe is absorbed as light into the HRIH and is purified.

One now ceases saying the mantra and continues in the main text with The Yoga of Effortless Naturalness.

NOTES ON THE MANTRA FROM BOKAR RINPOCHÉ

As you repeat the mantra you could think that:

OM closes the door of rebirths in the world of devas. (*radiant beings*)

MA closes the door of the world of asuras / titans. (*competitive beings*)

NI closes the door of the human realm.

PAD closes the door of the animal realm. (*instinctual realms*)

ME closes the door of the preta realm. (*insatiable greed and desire*)

HUM closes the door of the hell realms. (*intense anger and hatred*)

OM purifies the veils of body.

MA purifies the veils of speech.

NI purifies the veils of mind.

PAD purifies the veils of conflicting emotions.

ME purifies the veils of latent conditioning.

HUM purifies the veils that cover knowledge.

OM is the prayer addressed to the body of the buddhas.

MA is the prayer addressed to the speech of the buddhas.

NI is the prayer addressed to the mind of the buddhas.

PAD is the prayer addressed to the qualities of the buddhas.

ME is the prayer addressed to the activity of the buddhas.

HUM gathers the grace of the body, speech, mind, qualities and activities of buddhas.

OM corresponds to the perfection of generosity.
MA corresponds to the perfection of wholesome relationship.
NI corresponds to the perfection of patience.
PAD corresponds to the perfection of diligence.
ME corresponds to the perfection of concentration.
HUM corresponds to the perfection of wisdom.

OM corresponds to Ratnasambhava and the Wisdom of Equality.
MA corresponds to Amoghasiddhi and the All-Accomplishing Wisdom.
NI corresponds to Vajradhara and the Wisdom Born of Itself.
PAD corresponds to Vairocana and the Wisdom of Dharmadhatu
ME corresponds to Amitabha and Discriminating Wisdom
HUM corresponds to Akshobya and the Mirror-Like Wisdom

DAILY LIFE PRACTICE

To extend the practice of Chenrezi into your daily life, you could try the following.

(1) Let appearances be self-liberated.

The external and internal - arising in the empty clarity of mind. Empty yet not nothing.
This view, free from the extremes, is the "seeing" of Chenrezi.

(2) Let 6 sense groups be self-liberated. (*five senses plus mind*)

ie. eyes, form and visual consciousness, ears, sound and audio consciousness, and so forth.
No duality; an appearance in emptiness. This is the "meditation" of Chenrezi.

(3) Let both agreeable and disagreeable circumstances be self-liberated. This is the "action" of Chenrezi. (The actor, the action and the thing acted upon are all interdependent and hence individually empty.)

(4) When appearances and the mind arise in the pure knowledge of emptiness/clarity, this is the "mind" of Chenrezi.

FURTHER ENCOURAGEMENT

In the training I received in my early years, we were encouraged to engage in the practice of Chenrezi while repeating the mantra many hundreds of thousands of times. With such extensive involvement, the import and possibilities, hinted at in this sadhana began to

reveal themselves. If you find yourself taking this practice to heart, you may benefit from integrating it with the study and practice of "*A Sadhana for Recognizing the Natural Way of Abiding Through the Grace of Chenrezi*" This can be found on Green Dharma Treasury under "practices".