

The Practice of Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas

How to Meditate Before the Practice

The purpose of my life is to free the numberless sentient beings who are the source of all my past, present, and future happiness, temporary as well as ultimate happiness – including all the realizations of the path, liberation from samsara, and enlightenment – from all the oceans of samsaric suffering, including the causes: delusion and karma. In order to do this, I must achieve full enlightenment. Therefore, I need to actualize the path. Therefore, I need to purify the defilements.

If I were now born in hell, it would be so unbearable. Even one tiny fire spark on my body is hundreds of thousands of times hotter than the whole entire fire energy in this world. It is so unbearable that experiencing it for even an instant is like suffering for many eons. I have created numberless causes to be born in the hell realms by creating the ten non-virtuous actions countless times in this and beginningless past lives. I have created numberless causes to be born in the hell realms by breaking the pratimoksha vows, by breaking the bodhisattva vows, and by breaking the tantric vows countless times in this and beginningless past lives. And I have created numberless causes to be born in the hells by creating the heaviest negative karma in relationship with the holy virtuous friend, which includes harming the holy body, breaking the advice, disturbing the holy mind, having non-devotional thoughts, and rising heresy and anger, which produce the

greatest obstacles to achieve realizations and create the greatest suffering.

Every single one of these negative actions has four suffering results: the ripening result (a rebirth in the lower realms), the possessed result (the type of environment I'm born into when again a human), the result similar to the cause in my experience, and the worst one, the result similar to the cause in my actions, which means that again and again I am driven to create the same negative actions in the future, and so again and again I have to experience the four suffering results. In this way, samsara has no end.

Not only that, but karma increases, so from even a small negative action can come huge suffering results. And karma is definite to be experienced, so every negative action I have created will definitely bring its result, no matter how long it takes, until it is purified. So from one negative karma, I have to experience the result over and over again for so many hundreds of lifetimes. Understanding this, how can I stand to live life without purifying myself and getting rid of all these negative karmas, just as I would try to get rid of a deadly poison in my body?

Not only that, but I'm going to die, and death can come even today, any moment. Therefore, I must purify all my negative actions right this second. In order to do that, I am going to do these prostrations with the practice of confessing downfalls, and I'm going to do this so that I can develop myself in order to work for the happiness of all sentient beings.

Visualization



Visualize in the space in front of you your Guru in the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha, with thousand-arm Chenrezig at his heart. At the heart of thousand-arm Chenrezig is the syllable HRIH, and from this beams of light emanate, forming six rows in the space below. At the end of each beam is a throne supported by elephants and adorned with



不空佛
 pearls. On each throne is seated a buddha. In the first row are six buddhas, blue in color and in the aspect of Akshobhya, with the exception of the third buddha, King Lord of the Nagas, who has a blue-colored body, but a white head. In the second row, there are seven buddhas, white in color and in the aspect of Vairochana. In the third row are seven buddhas, yellow in color and in the aspect of Ratnasambhava. In the fourth row are seven buddhas, red in color and in the aspect of Amitabha. In the fifth row there are seven buddhas, green in color and in the aspect of Amoghasiddhi. These are the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas. Each one is in the posture of that particular dhyani buddha. In the final row are the Medicine Buddhas.

此即蓮那佛
 宝生如来
 不空如来佛

How to Meditate During the Practice



Think that each one of these buddhas is the embodiment of all three times ten directions Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and all statues, stupas, and scriptures. Think they embody all holy objects, whose essence is the Guru. Have complete faith that each one has the power to purify all your negative karmas and imprints, accumulated since beginningless time.

Now imagine that you emanate numberless bodies, and that as you prostrate, all these bodies prostrate along with you from all directions, covering every atom of the earth.

Now recite the increasing mantras, refuge verse, and the Confession of Downfalls to the Thirty-Five Buddhas, repeating each buddha's name over and over as many times as you can with each prostration. It is the recitation of the name of each buddha that brings the purification, so there is a big difference

when you recite just a few times or many. Even if you do the recitation by listening to a recording, still recite the name yourself as much as you can. Either recite the prayer three times straight through making one prostration to each buddha each time, or do three prostrations to each buddha as you go through the prayer once. At the end, recite the names of the Medicine Buddhas. This can be followed by Vajrasattva mantra and the Praise to Chenrezig, according to time [see Options for Practice on p. 87]. Then recite the Confession Prayer on p. 15, followed by the General Confession on p. 19.

Reciting the Names of the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas

First, recite the mantras for multiplying the merit of making prostrations:

OM NAMO MANJUSHRIYE / NAMAH SUSHRIYE / NAMA
UTTAMA SHRIYE SVAHA (3x)

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG
DAG PAR DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ RINCHHEN GYÄLTSHÄN LA
CHHAG TSHÄL LO (7x)

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE RATNA KETU RAJAYA /
TATHAGATAYA / ARHATE SAMYAK SAMBUDDHAYA /
TADYATHA / OM RATNE RATNE MAHA RATNE RATNA BIJA YE
SVAHA (7x)

NA MO JANG CHHUB SEM PÄI TUNG WA SHAG PA

Homage to the Confession of the Bodhisattva's Downfalls!

DAG [MING] DI ZHE GYI WA / DÜ TAG TU LA MA LA KYAB SU CHHI WO
I, (say your name) throughout all times, take refuge in the
Guru;

SANG GYÄ LA KYAB SU CHHI WO

I take refuge in the Buddha;

CHHÖ LA KYAB SU CHHI WO

I take refuge in the Dharma;

GE DÜN LA KYAB SU CHHI WO (3x)

I take refuge in the Sangha. (3x)

①

TÖN PA CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR
DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ PÄL GYÄL WA SHA KYA THUB PA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
**To the founder, bhagavan, tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed
buddha, glorious conqueror Shakyamuni Buddha, I prostrate.**

②

DE ZHIN SHEG PA DOR JE NYING PÖ RAB TU JOM PA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
**To Tathagata Thoroughly Destroying with Vajra Essence,
I prostrate.**

③

DE ZHIN SHEG PA RIN CHHEN Ö THRÖ LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Radiant Jewel, I prostrate.

④

DE ZHIN SHEG PA LU WANG GI GYÄL PO LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata King, Lord of the Nagas, I prostrate.

⑤

DE ZHIN SHEG PA PA WÖI DE LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Army of Heroes, I prostrate.

⑥

DE ZHIN SHEG PA PÄL GYE LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Delighted Hero, I prostrate.

⑦

DE ZHIN SHEG PA RIN CHHEN ME LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Jewel Fire, I prostrate.

⑧

DE ZHIN SHEG PA RIN CHHEN DA Ö LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Jewel Moonlight, I prostrate.

⑨

DE ZHIN SHEG PA TONG WA DÖN YÖ LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Meaningful to See, I prostrate.

⑩

DE ZHIN SHEG PA RIN CHHEN DA WA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Jewel Moon, I prostrate.

11

DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRI MA ME PA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Stainless One, I prostrate.

12

DE ZHIN SHEG PA PÄ JIN LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Bestowed with Courage, I prostrate.

13

DE ZHIN SHEG PA TSHANG PA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Pure One, I prostrate.

14

DE ZHIN SHEG PA TSHANG PÄ JIN LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Bestowed with Purity, I prostrate.

15

DE ZHIN SHEG PA CHHU LHA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Water God, I prostrate.

16

DE ZHIN SHEG PA CHHU LHÄI LHA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Deity of the Water God, I prostrate.

17

DE ZHIN SHEG PA PÄL ZANG LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Glorious Goodness, I prostrate.

18

DE ZHIN SHEG PA TSÄN DÄN PÄL LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Glorious Sandalwood, I prostrate.

19

DE ZHIN SHEG PA ZI JI THA YÄ LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Infinite Splendor, I prostrate.

20

DE ZHIN SHEG PA Ö PÄL LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Glorious Light, I prostrate.

21

DE ZHIN SHEG PA NYA NGÄN ME PÄI PÄL LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Sorrowless Glory, I prostrate.

22

DE ZHIN SHEG PA SE ME KYI BU LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Son of Non-craving, I prostrate.

23

DE ZHIN SHEG PA ME TOG PÄL LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
To Tathagata Glorious Flower, I prostrate.

24

DE ZHIN SHEG PA TSHANG PÄI Ö ZER NAM PAR RÖL PÄ NGÖN PAR
KHYEN PA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO

**To Tathagata Pure Light Rays Clearly Knowing by Play,
I prostrate.**

25

DE ZHIN SHEG PA PÄ MÄI Ö ZER NAM PAR RÖL PÄ NGÖN PAR KHYEN
PA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO

**To Tathagata Lotus Light Rays Clearly Knowing by Play,
I prostrate.**

26

DE ZHIN SHEG PA NOR PÄL LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO

To Tathagata Glorious Wealth, I prostrate.

27

DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRÄN PÄI PÄL LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO

To Tathagata Glorious Mindfulness, I prostrate.

28

DE ZHIN SHEG PA TSHÄN PÄL SHIN TU YONG DRAG LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO

To Tathagata Glorious Name Widely Renowned, I prostrate.

29

DE ZHIN SHEG PA WANG PÖI TOG GI GYÄL TSHÄN GYI GYÄL PO LA
CHHAG TSHÄL LO

**To Tathagata King Holding the Victory Banner of Foremost
Power, I prostrate.**

30

DE ZHIN SHEG PA SHIN TU NAM PAR NÖN PÄI PÄL LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO

To Tathagata Glorious One Totally Subduing, I prostrate.

31

DE ZHIN SHEG PA YÜL LÄ SHIN TU NAM PAR GYÄL WA LA CHHAG
TSHÄL LO

To Tathagata Utterly Victorious in Battle, I prostrate.

32

DE ZHIN SHEG PA NAM PAR NÖN PÄ SHEG PÄI PÄL LA CHHAG TSHÄL
LO

**To Tathagata Glorious Transcendence Through Subduing,
I prostrate.**

33

DE ZHIN SHEG PA KÜN NÄ NANG WA KÖ PÄI PÄL LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO

**To Tathagata Glorious Manifestations Illuminating All,
I prostrate.**

34

DE ZHIN SHEG PA RIN CHHEN PÄ MÄI NAM PAR NÖN PA LA CHAG
TSHÄL LO

To Tathagata All-Subduing Jewel Lotus, 1 prostrate.

DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR DZOG PÄI SANG
GYÄ RIN PO CHHE DANG PÄ MA LA RAB TU ZHUG PA RI WANG GI
GYÄL PO LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO (3x)

35

**To Tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed buddha, King,
Lord of the Mountains Firmly Seated on Jewel and Lotus, 1
prostrate. (3x)**

Prostrations to the Seven Medicine Buddhas

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR
DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ TSEN LEG PA YONG DRAG PÄL GYI GYÄL PO LA
CHHAG TSHÄL LO

1

**To the bhagavan, tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed
buddha, Renowned Glorious King of Excellent Signs, 1 pros-
trate.**

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR
DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ RIN PO CHHE DANG DA WA DANG PÄ MÄ RAB
TU GYÄN PA KHÄ PA ZI JI DRA YANG KYI GYÄL PO LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO

2

**To the bhagavan, tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed
buddha, King of Melodious Sound, Brilliant Radiance of
Skill, Adorned with Jewels, Moon, and Lotus, 1 prostrate.**

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR
DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ SER ZANG DRI ME RIN CHHEN NANG TÖL ZHUG
DRUB PA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO

3

**To the bhagavan, tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed
buddha, Stainless Excellent Gold, Illuminating Jewel Who
Accomplishes All Conduct, 1 prostrate.**

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR
DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ NYA NGÄN ME CHHOG PÄL LA CHHAG TSHÄL
LO

④

**To the bhagavan, tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed
buddha, Glorious Supreme One Free from Sorrow, I prostrate.**

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR
DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ CHHÖ DRAG GYA TSHÖ YANG LA CHHAG TSHÄL
LO

⑤

**To the bhagavan, tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed
buddha, Melodious Ocean of Proclaimed Dharma, I prostrate.**

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR
DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ CHHÖ GYA TSHO CHHOG GI LÖ NAM PAR RÖL
PÄ NGÖN PAR KHYÄN PA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO

⑥

**To the bhagavan, tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed
buddha, Clearly Knowing by the Play of Supreme Wisdom
of an Ocean of Dharma, I prostrate.**



CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA
CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR DZOG PÄI
SANG GYÄ MEN GYI LHA BÄI DUR YÄ Ö
KYI GYÄL PO LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO

⑦

**To the bhagavan, tathagata, arhat,
perfectly completed buddha, Medi-
cine Guru, King of Lapis Lazuli Light,
I prostrate.**

If you would like to insert Vajrasattva mantra recitation and
"Po" Praise, go to p. 87.

Confession Prayer

For English, see the next page.

DE DAG LA SOG PA CHHOG CHÜI JIG TEN GYI KHAM THAM CHÄ NA
DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR DZOG PÄI SANG
GYÄ CHOM DÄN DÄ GANG JI NYE CHIG ZHUG TE TSHO ZHING ZHE
PÄI SANG GYÄ CHOM DÄN DÄ DE DAG THAM CHÄ DAG LA GONG
SU SÖL

DAG GI KYE WA DI DANG / KYE WA TOG MÄI THA MA MA CHHI PA
NÄ KHOR WA NA KHOR WÄI KYE NÄ THAM CHÄ DU DIG PÄI LÄ GYI
PA DANG GYI DU TSÄL WA DANG / GYI PA LA JE SU YI RANG PA AM
/ CHHÖ TEN GYI KOR RAM / GE DÜN GYI KOR RAM / CHHOG CHÜI
GE DÜN GYI KOR THROG PA DANG / THROG TU CHUG PA DANG /
THROG PA LA JE SU YI RANG PA AM / TSHAM MA CHHI PA NGÄI LÄ
GYI PA DANG / GYI DU TSÄL WA DANG / GYI PA LA JE SU YI RANG
PA AM / MI GE WA CHÜI LÄ KYI LAM YANG DAG PAR LANG WA LA
ZHUG PA DANG / JUG TU TSÄL WA DANG / JUG PA LA JE SU YI RANG
PA AM / LÄ KYI DRIB PA GANG GI DRIB NÄ DAG SEM CHÄN NYÄL
WAR CHHI PA AM / DÜ DRÖI KYE NÄ SU CHHI PA AM / YI DVAG KYI
YÜL DU CHHI PA AM / YÜL THA KHOB TU KYE PA AM / LA LOR KYE
PA AM / LHA TSHE RING PO NAM SU KYE PA AM / WANG PO MA
TSHANG WAR GYUR PA AM / TA WA LOG PA DZIN PAR GYUR PA AM /
SANG GYÄ JUNG WA LA NYE PAR MI GYI PAR GYUR WÄI LÄ KYI DRIB
PA GANG LAG PA DE DAG THAM CHÄ SANG GYÄ CHOM DÄN DÄ
YE SHE SU GYUR PA / CHÄN DU GYUR PA / PANG DU GYUR PA / TSHÄ
MAR GYUR PA / KHYEN PÄ ZIG PA DE DAG GI CHÄN NGAR THÖL LO
CHHAG SO / MI CHHAB BO / MI BE DO / LÄN CHHÄ KYANG CHÖ
CHING DOM PAR GYI LAG SO

SANG GYÄ CHOM DÄN DÄ DE DAG THAM CHÄ DAG LA GONG SU
SÖL / DAG GI KYE WA DI DANG / KYE WA THOG MÄI THA MA MA
CHHI PA NÄ KHOR WA NA KHOR WÄI KYE NÄ ZHÄN DAG TU JIN PA THA
NA DÜ DRÖI KYE NÄ SU KYE PA LA ZÄ KHAM CHIG TSAM TSÄL WÄI GE
WÄI TSA WA GANG LAG PA DANG / DAG GI TSHÜL THRIM SUNG PÄI
GE WÄI TSA WA GANG LAG PA DANG / DAG GI TSHANG PAR CHÖ

PÄI GE WÄI TSA WA GANG LAG PA DANG / DAG GI SEM CHÄN YONG
 SU MIN PAR GYI PÄI GE WÄI TSA WA GANG LAG PA DANG / DAG GI
 JANG CHHUB CHHOG TU SEM KYE PÄI GE WÄI TSA WA GANG LAG
 PA DANG / DAG GI LA NA ME PÄI YE SHE KYI GE WÄI TSA WA GANG
 LAG PA DE DAG THAM CHÄ CHIG TU DÜ SHING DUM TE DOM NÄ LA
 NA MA CHHI PA DANG / GONG NA MA CHHI PA DANG / GONG
 MÄI YANG GONG MA / LA MÄI YANG LA MAR YONG SU NGO WÄ
 LA NA ME PA YANG DAG PAR DZOG PÄI JANG CHHUB TU YONG SU
 NGO WAR GYI O

JI TAR DÄ PÄI SANG GYÄ CHOM DÄN DÄ NAM KYI YONG SU NGÖ
 PA DANG / JI TAR MA JÖN PÄI SANG GYÄ CHOM DÄN DÄ NAM KYI
 YONG SU NGO WAR GYUR WA DANG / JI TAR DA TAR ZHUG PÄI SANG
 GYÄ CHOM DÄN DÄ NAM KYI YONG SU NGO WAR DZÄ PA DE ZHIN
 DU DAG GI KYANG YONG SU NGO WAR GYI O

DIG PA THAM CHÄ NI SO SOR SHAG SO / SÖ NAM THAM CHÄ LA NI
 JE SU YI RANG NGO / SANG GYÄ THAM CHÄ LA NI KÜL ZHING SÖL
 WA DEB SO / DAG GI LA NA ME PÄI YE SHE KYI CHHOG DAM PA THOB
 PAR GYUR CHIG

MI CHHOG GYÄL WA GANG DAG DA TAR ZHUG PA DANG / GANG
 DAG DÄ PA DAG DANG DE ZHIN GANG MA JÖN / YÖN TÄN NGAG
 PA THA YÄ GYA TSHO DRA KÜN LA / THÄL MO JAR WAR GYI TE KYAB
 SU NYE WAR CHHI WO

**All those [you thirty-five buddhas] and others, as many ta-
 thagatas, arhats, perfectly completed buddhas as there are
 existing, sustaining, and residing^{17c} in all the world systems of
 the ten directions; all you buddha-bhagavans, please pay
 attention to me.**

**In this life and in all the states of rebirth in which I have
 circled in samsara throughout beginningless lives, whatever
 negative actions I have created, made others create, or re-
 joiced in the creation of; whatever possessions^{17d} of stupas,
 possessions of the Sangha, or possessions of the Sangha of
 the ten directions that I have appropriated, made others**

appropriate, or rejoiced in the appropriation of; whichever among the five actions of immediate (retribution) I have done, caused to be done, or rejoiced in the doing of; whichever paths of the ten non-virtuous actions I have engaged in, caused others to engage in, or rejoiced in the engaging in: whatever I have created, being obscured by these karmas causes me and sentient beings to be born in the hell realms, in the animal realm, and in the preta realm; in irreligious countries, as barbarians, or as long-life gods; with imperfect faculties, holding wrong views, or not being pleased with Buddha's descent. In the presence of the buddha-bhagavans, who are transcendental wisdom, who are eyes, who are witnesses, who are valid, and who see with omniscient consciousness, I am admitting and confessing all these negativities. I will not conceal them nor hide them, and from now on in the future I will abstain and refrain from committing them again.

All buddha-bhagavans, please pay attention to me. In this life and in all other states of rebirth in which I have circled in samsara throughout beginningless lives, whatever roots of virtue I have created by generosity, even as little as giving just one mouthful of food to a being born in the animal realm; whatever roots of virtue I have created by guarding morality; whatever roots of virtue I have created by following pure conduct; whatever roots of virtue I have created by fully ripening sentient beings; whatever roots of virtue I have created by generating bodhichitta; and whatever roots of virtue I have created by my unsurpassed transcendental wisdom: all these assembled and gathered, combined together, I fully dedicate to the unsurpassed, the unexcelled, that higher than the high, that superior to the superior. Thus, I completely dedicate to the highest, perfectly complete enlightenment.

Just as the previous buddha-bhagavans have fully dedicated, just as the future buddha-bhagavans will fully dedicate, and just as the presently abiding buddha-bhagavans are fully dedicating, like that I too dedicate fully.

I confess all negativities individually. I rejoice in all the merits. I urge and implore all buddhas to grant my request: may I receive the highest, most sublime transcendental wisdom.

To the conquerors, the best of humans — those who are living in the present time, those who have lived in the past, and those who will likewise come — to all those who have qualities as vast as an infinite ocean, with hands folded, I approach for refuge.

How to Meditate on the General Confession

As you confess each of the negative actions contained in this prayer, think to yourself that you have created this negative action not just once, but countless times in this and beginningless lives, whether you remember it or not. Generate very strong regret. The stronger the regret, the greater the purification.

Then reflect on the emptiness of each of these negative actions, remembering that even negative actions do not truly exist from their own side. They arise in dependence on causes and conditions and are merely labeled by the mind. You can either think they are completely non-existent from their own side, or that they are merely labeled by mind, or that they are hallucination. Whichever method you use to understand emptiness, the conclusion that should come in your heart is that each of these negative actions are completely empty, not existing from their own side, even the slightest atom.

At the end of the confession prayer, pause to make the determination not to commit these negative actions again in the future. This is the power of restraint. Make this promise realistic, even if you are promising simply not to do the negative action even for just the next five minutes or seconds. This is to make sure you that you do not tell a lie to the merit field.

General Confession


For English, see the next page.

U HU LAG!

LA MA DOR JE DZIN PA CHHEN PO LA SOG PA CHHOG CHU NA ZHUG
PÄI SANG GYÄ DANG JANG CHHUB SEM PA THAM CHÄ DANG GE
DÜN TSÜN PA NAM DAG LA GONG SU SÖL

DAG [MING DI] ZHE GYI WÄ TSHE RAB KHOR WA THOG MA MA CHHI
PA NÄ DA TA LA THUG GI BAR DU / NYÖN MONG PA DÖ CHHAG
DANG ZHE DANG DANG TI MUG GI WANG GI LÜ NGAG YI SUM GYI
GO NÄ DIG PA MI GE WA CHU GYI PA DANG / TSHAM MA CHHI PA
NGA GYI PA DANG / DE DANG NYE WA NGA GYI PA DANG / SO
SOR THAR PÄI DOM PA DANG GÄL WA DANG / JANG CHHUB SEM PÄI
LAB PA DANG GÄL WA DANG / SANG NGAG KYI DAM TSHIG DANG
GÄL WA DANG / PHA DANG MA LA MA GÜ PA DANG / KHÄN PO
DANG LOB PÖN LA MA GÜ PA DANG / DROG TSHANG PA TSHUNG
PAR CHÖ PA NAM LA MA GÜ PA DANG / KÖN CHHOG SUM LA NÖ
PÄI LÄ GYI PA DANG / DAM PÄI CHHÖ PANG PA DANG / PHAG PÄI
GE DÜN LA KUR PA TAB PA DANG / SEM CHÄN LA NÖ PÄI LÄ GYI PA
LA SOG PA / DIG PA MI GE WÄI TSHOG DAG GI GYI PA DANG / GYI
DU TSÄL WA DANG / ZHÄN GYI GYI PA LA JE SU YI RANG WA LA SOG
PA / DOR NA THO RI DANG THAR PÄI GEG SU GYUR CHING KHOR WA
DANG NGÄN SONG GI GYUR GYUR PÄI NYE TUNG GI TSHOG CHI CHHI
PA THAM CHÄ

LA MA DOR JE DZIN PA CHHEN PO LA SOG PA CHHOG CHU NA
ZHUG PÄI SANG GYÄ DANG JANG CHHUB SEM PA THAM CHÄ DANG
/ GE DÜN TSÜN PA NAM KYI CHÄN NGAR THÖL LO / MI CHHAB BO /
CHHAG SO / CHHIN CHHÄ KYANG DOM PAR GYI LAG SO / THÖL ZH-
ING SHAG NA DAG DE WA LA REG PAR NÄ PAR GYUR GYI / MA THÖL
MA SHAG NA DE TAR MI GYUR WA LAG SO

U hu lag! (Woe is me!) 

O great Guru Vajradhara, all other buddhas and bodhisattvas who abide in the ten directions, and all the venerable Sangha, please pay attention to me.

I, who am named [say your name], circling in cyclic existence since beginningless time until the present, overpowered by mental afflictions such as attachment, aversion, and ignorance by means of body, speech, and mind have created the ten non-virtuous actions. I have engaged in the five uninterrupted negative karmas and the five nearing uninterrupted negative karmas.¹ I have transgressed the vows of individual liberation, transgressed the vows of bodhisattvas, and transgressed the samaya of secret mantra.² I have been disrespectful to my parents, have been disrespectful to my vajra masters, and to my abbot, and have been disrespectful to my spiritual friends living in ordination.³ I have committed actions harmful to the Three Jewels, avoided the holy Dharma,⁴ criticized the arya Sangha,⁵ harmed sentient beings, and so on. These and many other non-virtuous negative actions I have done, have caused others to do, have rejoiced in others' doing, and so forth.

In the presence of the great Guru Vajradhara, all the buddhas and bodhisattvas who abide in the ten directions, and the venerable Sangha, I admit this entire collection of faults and transgressions that are obstacles to my own higher rebirth and liberation and are causes of cyclic existence and miserable lower rebirths. I will not conceal them, and I accept them as negative. I promise to refrain from doing these actions again in the future.⁶ By confessing and acknowledging them, I will attain and abide in happiness, while by not confessing and acknowledging them, true happiness will not come.

Visualization at the End of the Confession Prayer

Think that through the force of reciting these names of the Thirty-Five Buddhas of Confession and Medicine Buddhas, through the power of their pure prayers and vows, through the power of generating regret and the other opponent forces, and through the power of having made these prostrations, nectars and light rays descend from the holy bodies of the buddhas, **completely purifying all negative karmas, defilements and imprints collected on your mental continuum since beginningless time. Generate strong faith that your mind has become completely pure.**

Then reflect on emptiness. In emptiness there is no I, the creator of negative actions. In emptiness there is no creating of negative actions. In emptiness there are no negative actions created. Even though there are infinite phenomena, **in emptiness nothing exists at all.** There is no this and that, no me and you, **nothing. In emptiness everything is one taste.** From this emptiness, everything comes into existence. **Whatever exists is the manifestation of emptiness.**

Dedication

Due to all the three time merits accumulated by myself, all the buddhas and bodhisattvas and all sentient beings, which are completely empty of existing from their own side, may the I, which is completely empty of existing from its own side, quickly achieve the state of full enlightenment, which is completely empty of existing from its own side, in order to lead all sentient beings, who are completely empty of existing from their own side, to that state by myself alone, who is completely empty of existing from its own side.

Due to all the three time merits accumulated by myself, all the buddhas and bodhisattvas and all sentient beings, may the precious supreme enlightened thought, bodhichitta – letting go of self and cherishing others – which is the source of all success and

happiness for myself and all sentient beings, immediately be generated within my own mind, and within the minds of all sentient beings. May that which has already been generated never decline, but increase more and more.

Additional Dedication Prayers

GE WA DI YI NYUR DU DAG

Due to the merits of these virtuous actions

LA MA SANG GYÄ DRUB GYUR NÄ

May I quickly attain the state of a guru-buddha

DRO WA CHIG KYANG MA LÜ PA

And lead all living beings, without exception,

DE YI SA LA GÖ PAR SHO

Into that enlightened state.

JANG CHHUB SEM CHHOG RIN PO CHHE

May the supreme jewel bodhichitta

MA KYE PA NAM KYE GYUR CHIG

That has not arisen, arise and grow;

KYE WA NYAM PA ME PA YANG

And may that which has arisen not diminish

GONG NÄ GONG DU PHEL WAR SHOG

But increase more and more.

JAM PÄL PA WÖ JI TAR KHYEN PA DANG

Just as the brave Manjushri and Samantabhadra, too,

KÜN TU ZANG PO DE YANG DE ZHIN TE

Realized things as they are,

DE DAG KÜN GYI JE SU DAG LOB CHHIR

I, too, dedicate all these merits in the best way,

GE WA DI DAG THAM CHÄ RAB TU NGO

That I may follow their perfect example.

DÜ SUM SHEG PÄI GYÄL WA THAM CHÄ KYI

I dedicate all these roots of virtue

NGO WA GANG LA CHHOG TU NGAG PA DE

With the dedication praised as the best

DAG GI GE WÄI TSA WA DI KÜN KYANG

By the victorious ones thus gone of the three times,

ZANG PO CHÖ CHHIR RAB TU NGO WAR GYI

So I might perform good works.

DAG GI JI NYE SAG PÄI GE WA DI

I dedicate whatever virtues I have ever collected

TÄN DANG DRO WA KÜN LA GANG PHÄN DANG

For the benefit of the teachings and of all sentient beings,

KHYÄ PAR JE TSÜN LO ZANG DRAG PA YI

And in particular, for the essential teachings

TÄN PÄI NYING PO RING DU SÄL JE SHOG

Of venerable Losang Dragpa to shine forever.

Due to the merits accumulated over the three times by myself
and all the buddhas and bodhisattvas,
Who are empty from their own side,
May the I, which is empty from its own side,
Achieve the state of enlightenment, which is empty from its
own side,
And lead all sentient beings, who are empty from their own side,
to that state as quickly as possible by myself alone.

Because of these merits may my actions never cause
Even the slightest harm to any sentient being.
Instead, may they bring only the greatest of benefit.
Whatever suffering or happy life I experience,
May it be only of the greatest benefit to others,
Causing them to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

Like Lama Tsongkhapa,
May I be able to offer extensive benefits equaling the
limitless sky
To all sentient beings and the teachings of Buddha,

From now on in all future lives,
By having all the qualities of Lama Tsongkhapa within me.

Because of the past, present, and future merit created by me and
by the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and sentient beings,
May I, my family, disciples, and all sentient beings be able to
actualize completely in this very lifetime
Lama Tsongkhapa's path of unified sutra and tantra, which is pure
like refined gold.
May this pure teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa spread in all
directions and flourish forever.

Because of all the merits of the three times created by me and all
the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other sentient beings,
May there be no wars, famines, disease, quarreling, fighting, or
unhappy minds;
May there be great prosperity, and may everything needed be
easily obtained.
May all the human beings in the world be guided by spiritual
leaders teaching only the Dharma, and
May everyone enjoy the happiness of the Dharma.
May everyone have perfect conditions and have only compas-
sion and love for each other in their mindstreams,
And may they only benefit and never harm each other.

May I and all others be able to live lives of pure moral conduct
(like Lama Tsongkhapa himself),
Train the mind in bodhichitta, and live in pure view and conduct.
In this way, may we be able to complete our lives without corrupting
The pure wisdom of the second Buddha's teachings.

Due to the merits of the three times created by myself and oth-
ers and by the buddhas and bodhisattvas,
May I, my family members, all the students and benefactors
of this organization, and all sentient beings be able to meet

perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friends in all our future lives.

From our side may we always see them as enlightened and always perform only actions most pleasing to their holy minds. May we always fulfill their holy wishes immediately.

Notes

1. These five negative karmas – killing one's father or mother, killing an arhat, causing disunity amongst the Sangha, harming the Buddha– are called uninterrupted because if this negative karma is accumulated, then immediately after death, without 'interruption' of another life, one is reborn in the lowest hot hell, number eight, the most unbearable one, which has the heaviest suffering. The five nearing uninterrupted karmas are committing incest with one's mother who is an arhat, killing a bodhisattva who is destined to become a buddha in that very life, killing a Hinayana arya other than one abiding in the result of arhatship, stealing the possessions of the Sangha, and destroying a stupa or monastery out of hatred.
2. Tantric samaya is not just doing a sadhana, not just reciting words. At the time of a highest yoga tantra initiation, the disciple is put under pledge or samaya. There are many codes of conduct to be upheld. It is not just a question of remembering to recite the sadhana or mantra commitment of the particular deity into which one has been initiated.
3. According to Lama Zopa Rinpoche, this refers to the ordained Sangha, those living in celibacy. Literally it says: those who are engaged in similar behavior to perfectness, which means that by living in ordination one's conduct is harmonized to achieve buddhahood. This phrase can also refer to vajra kin, those with whom we have taken initiations.
4. Avoiding the holy Dharma is very heavy negative karma, worse than having destroyed every single holy object – statue, stupa, and scripture – that exists in the world.
5. This is the very heavy negative karma of having criticized holy beings, arya beings – those who have the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness and have achieved the right seeing path, the path of meditation, and the path of no more learning, whether Hinayana or Mahayana. It can also include other members of the Sangha.
6. Think, "The ones from which I can abstain, I will. The ones from which it is extremely difficult, I will abstain for one day, or one hour, or one minute, even one second." Make this promise, but let it be something

you can actually keep so that it doesn't become lying to the merit field. Restraint is the last of the four opponent powers. All four should be complete: refuge, regret, remedy, and restraint.

Colophon:

The Confession of Downfalls is based on an original translation by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, extracted from the booklet entitled *The Bodhisattva's Confession of Moral Downfalls*, Kopan Monastery, Nepal. Originally revised and edited by Venerables Thubten Dondrub, George Churinoff, and Constance Miller, FPMT Education Services, 2000. Additional revisions made according to instructions by Lama Zopa Rinpoche given at the Mitrugpa retreat, Milarepa Center, Vermont, USA, August 2002. Motivation, visualizations, and meditations compiled by Venerable Sarah Thresher according to instructions of Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Additional editing and corrections made by Venerable Gyalten Mindrol, FPMT Education Services, November 2005. Updates to layout and other copy edits by FPMT Education Services, March 2010.

The title *Bodhisattva's Confession of Moral Downfalls* has been changed to *Confession of Downfalls to the Thirty-Five Buddhas* at the request of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, April 2003. Translation of first line of Refuge Prayer on p. 9 by Venerable Steve Carlier, November 2005.

General Confession is based on a translation by Glenn H. Mullin, with adjustments by Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Lightly edited by Venerable Sarah Thresher and Kendall Magnussen, FPMT Education Services, January 2003. The line "have been disrespectful to my spiritual friends living in ordination" was changed according to the verbal instruction of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, October 2005.

Putting an End to Suffering

A Teaching on Karma by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

The Four Suffering Results of Negative Actions

During each session of a Vajrasattva retreat we purify vast amounts of negative karma. First of all, think just how heavy one single complete negative karma is. For example, gossiping, ill will, stealing, sexual misconduct, killing and so forth. Leave aside the ripening aspect result, rebirth in the lower realms, such as the hell realms, or the hungry ghost realms, where the heaviest hunger and thirst are experienced for tens of thousands of years. For us humans, it's not sufficient that we get enough food to fill our stomachs. We have to like it as well. It's not sufficient that the food we get fills our stomachs and is enough to live on. It should also be something we enjoy. Compare the lives of us humans with those of the hungry ghosts, who can't find even a damp patch of ground let alone even a spoonful of water for hundreds or thousands of years. Pretas can't find a scrap of food for hundreds of thousands of years. Forget about their filling their stomachs every day, they can't even do it over a lifetime. Imagine what an incredible shock it would be for us if something happened and we had to go without food or water for a week; nothing to eat, nothing to drink.

Of course, in the case of Nyung nä, it's different. It's only a day without food and drink and you know you're going to eat the next morning. But we'd find it terrible to have to experience this not under Nyung nä conditions. If our food and drink stopped for

a day for reasons other than Dharma practice, we'd freak out. Our bodies would freak out, our minds would freak out. Everything would freak out; even our houses would freak out! Anyway, I'm comparing us to hungry ghosts because I myself am quite fussy about food. However, the hungry ghosts have unbearably heavy sufferings like that.

So, as I often mention, as it says in the teachings, the heat of the fire when the world comes to an end is sixty or seventy times greater than that of all the fires of our human world put together, but one tiny spark from the hell realm is seven times hotter than that. When the world ends, there is all this wind and fire that destroy everything. For example, when a volcano erupts and lava, that liquid fire pours out, it melts everything in its path; even the rocks it touches melt. Normally, humans' fire cannot melt rocks, but lava does. So the end of the world fire is like that — everything, even huge rocky mountains, gets burned. So, one tiny spark in the hell realm is seven times hotter than the world-ending fire.

Similarly, the energy of the cold hells is beyond compare with anything we know. The combined energy of the ice and cold of our world is great pleasure compared to that of the cold hells.

Also, even when you discover one new wrinkle on your body, you get so shocked; your mind is terrified. One more gray hair; one more wrinkle. It's such a shock. Therefore, there's no question that after having had this human body you couldn't stand reincarnating as an animal. Having been born human, it would be unbearable to see your consciousness migrate into an animal body. For example, how would you feel if your body gradually turned into that of a cat? Starting with your face; slowly your face becoming that of a cat. Even though you keep many cats around, you like cats, could you bear it? Not your whole body — just your head. Or perhaps starting from the tail? Or your body gradually turning into that of a snake? You couldn't stand it. But it's exactly the same — your consciousness leaves this body and migrates into the next.

It's the same mental continuum, the same continuity of mind.

It's your mind that migrates into the body of a snake, cockroach, mouse, or cat. Exactly the same consciousness, the same mind, the one you have now. So if you can't stand discovering one more wrinkle, one gray hair, your mind gets so freaked out, how will you be able to bear being reborn into an animal body, your body becoming that of an animal? There's no way. Even as a human being, while you are a human being, not having an animal body, if something changes, something decays, you can't stand it.

You need so many instruments to repair the damage, so many chemicals to color it, so much effort and expense to re-shape, uplift, and so forth. Imagine that you're born a cat or a dog, eating the same food, drinking the same water every day from that same container, the same thing from the same shop day after day. Even if you visualize yourself like that, a pet living with people, compared to other animals, those who live in the wild, you're actually very rich, very well off. But even that you can't stand, can't bear.

To conclude what I'm saying, the ripening aspect result of one single complete negative karma is rebirth in the lower realms, such as I've just been describing. However, there are three other types of suffering result, which we experience later, when we're finally, once again, born human.

One is the possessed result, the unhealthy or fearful environment into which you're born. Even though you're born human, you find yourself in a place that endangers your life, that is filthy, dirty, full of excrement and garbage, where people cheat each other, where resources are scarce, there's no food or other means of living, where there's constant drought, nothing grows, there's much fighting, many wars — dreadful places like that.

Then there's the result similar to the cause where what you did to others in the past, the harm you gave them, comes back to harm you in return. Even though you are born human, you receive harm similar to that which you inflicted upon others in the past.

And finally, there's the result similar to the cause where you engage in the same negative actions again. You create the same negative karma — gossiping, killing, sexual misconduct, ill will,

slander, and so forth — over and over again. No matter how much trouble you get into by doing these things, getting punished, imprisoned, fined, or penalized, you can't stop yourself from creating these negative actions. Even though you think they're bad and that you should stop, you find it difficult to do so; your mind is very uncontrolled.

So again, you create the same negative karma in that life, and that again brings the four suffering results, one of which is creating that same negative karma yet again. That complete action, too, has the four suffering results, including that of doing it again, and so it goes, on and on, like that. If you don't purify a negative karma created today — such as gossiping, ill will, sexual misconduct, and so forth — it will go on and on, and you will keep creating the result similar to the cause, bringing the four suffering results. One of these is again creating the result similar to the cause, which itself brings the four suffering results, and in this way your samsara becomes endless. There's no end to your suffering, no end at all. Your suffering becomes endless.

Here we are talking about just one negative karma done today. We are not talking about all of today's negative karma, yesterday's negative karma, this year's negative karma, this life's negative karma, previous lives' negative karma. We are not talking about all that. We are just talking about one negative karma done today, such as gossiping or sexual misconduct. If it is not purified, it makes suffering endless; the suffering goes on and on.

Therefore, by doing the Thirty-Five Buddhas just once — not taking into account all the other different practices but simply considering reciting the powerful names of the Thirty-Five Buddhas just once — you can purify not only having to experience rebirth in the lower realms but also the worst of the four results — that really bad one, the terrifying one, the one that is the worst of all, worse even than rebirth in hell — the result of engaging in the same negative actions again and again. These practices have the power to purify that. Of the three suffering results that you experience in the human realm, that of creating the same negative karma over and over again is the worst because it makes your suffering endless.

It is more terrifying than rebirth in hell because once you have experienced one rebirth in hell, it's over; that karma has finished. Hell suffering is not endless. You don't experience it continuously. When that hell karma finishes, the suffering of hell stops; the vision, the karmic appearance of hell, ceases.

Much more terrifying than that is the result similar to the cause where you engage in the same negative karma over and over again. That is the most terrifying of the four karmic results because it ensures that without end, you will be reborn again and again in the lower realms, as well as later having to experience all the other sufferings of the human realm. Therefore, the bad habit is worse than the suffering of hell.

The Four Opponent Powers

What I'm saying here is that by doing the practice of confession with the four remedial powers you can stop each of the four suffering results. By practicing the power of dependence, you purify the possessed result, finding yourself in a suffering environment.

Here, by taking refuge, depending on Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, you purify the negative karma you have created with those holy objects. By generating bodhichitta, depending on sentient beings, you purify the negative karma you have created with them.

Then, the power of feeling regret for the negative actions [*nam-pa sün-jin-pa'i tob*] purifies the result similar to the cause in experience.

The power that I translate as "the remedy of always enjoying," which in Tibetan is *nyen-po kun-tu chö-pä tob* — I think the meaning might be that by purifying negative karma, you get to enjoy happiness all the time, but I'm not completely sure — this is the remedy to the ripening aspect result, rebirth in the lower realms.

Finally, the power of determining not to commit those negative actions again [*nye-pa lä-lar dog-pä tob*] is the remedy for the suffering result similar to the cause where you continuously create those negative karmas again and again, which, as I explained,

is much more terrifying, much worse than the suffering of hell itself.

The reason I'm going into all this in detail is so that you can understand, feel the kindness of sentient beings and therefore cherish them more than you do.

Through just one practice — reciting the Thirty-Five Buddhas' names or doing the Vajrasattva meditation with the four remedial powers — you can avoid having to experience incredible, unbearable suffering; you can purify so much negative karma. For example, one of today's negative karmas, such as gossiping — through these practices you can either stop its four suffering results from arising altogether, or if you can't stop them completely, at least you can lighten or shorten their effect. Instead of having to undergo hundreds of thousands of lifetimes of inconceivable suffering for eons in the lower realms, perhaps you can experience the result in this life as some kind of trouble, such as illness or lung [wind disease].

It's a strange thing about lung. I don't think I've ever heard Theravadins talk about it, but as soon as you encounter Tibetan Buddhism, you come to know about lung. First, you're introduced to Tibetan Buddhism, second, to lung — that very famous lung! I'm also not sure that Zen practitioners talk about lung; so far I haven't heard them do so.

Anyway, after doing those purifying practices, instead of causing you to experience eons of suffering in the lower realms, your negative karma can manifest in this life as lung.

Frequently, Dharma practitioners who live their lives with a good heart, dedicated to others — or even those who haven't met Buddhism but have good hearts, strong compassion and loving kindness, and who dedicate their lives to others — purify much negative karma. Through their dedicated attitude and the service they offer others, they purify so much.

Sometimes you will find that meditators who practice strongly, who lead pure lives of renunciation, experience many sicknesses and problems, one after another. Of course, whether these experiences become a problem to them or not depends on how

they think. Something that appears as a problem to others might not be a problem for them. It depends on how they look at the situation. Cancer or other serious illnesses can be taken as a very positive sign, because it means that the person will not have to experience many hundreds of thousands of lifetimes of heavy suffering results in the lower realms for incredible lengths of time from just one negative karma. That karma manifests as an illness in this life and finishes in that way. In such cases, it's a very positive, very good thing that happened.

Such heavy karmas can also finish simply by manifesting as other people criticizing you. The teachings talk about this as being one of the benefits of bodhichitta. Due to the power of bodhichitta, the good heart, instead of having to experience heavy suffering in either the human realm or the lower realms for incredible lengths of time, certain heavy negative karmas can get purified by manifesting as people criticizing or blaming you in this life. They finish as simply as that. Or they manifest as other experiences in this life such as migraine headaches, toothaches, nightmares, fearful dreams — things like that can finish heavy negative karmas that would otherwise have to be experienced as unbearable sufferings for great lengths of time.

Therefore, the teachings advise us that when problems like this arise, we should see them as positive and recognize them as signs of the power of our practice — that they are the manifestations of negative karma that is finishing much more lightly than it could have — and see them as positive.

Even if by practicing the remedy of vowing not to commit negative actions again — the antidote to the result similar to the cause of creating the same negative karmas again and again — with Vajrasattva or the Thirty-Five Buddhas, you could avoid having to experience the four suffering results of just one negative karma, that would still be incredible peace. You would stop the constant suffering that arises from continuously creating the result similar to the cause, which brings suffering without end. You wouldn't have to go through it again. The absence of that karma and suffering is peace, peace forever. By purifying these negative

karmas you stop having to experience the suffering result that happens again and again. So the everlasting peace and happiness that you experience in all your future lives from purifying these negative karmas comes from Vajrasattva or the Thirty-Five Buddhas.

Colophon:

Putting an End to Suffering was extracted from *Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche; edited by Dr. Nicholas Ribush and Venerable Ailsa Cameron, Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, 2000. These teachings were given on February 27, 1999.

The Benefits of Making Prostrations

A Teaching by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

General Benefits

One of the general benefits of prostration is that in the future you will achieve a good rebirth with a perfect body, golden in color like Buddha's holy body, with a beautiful shape and complete sense faculties. Having a beautiful body attracts many sentient beings. It draws sentient beings, hundreds, thousands, hundred thousands, millions of sentient beings. Then, because they like you, if you say something or explain something easy for them to listen to and do, it is very easy to bring them to the Dharma, the path to enlightenment, the unmistakable path to happiness.

You will have a very sweet voice. There are singers whose voices attract many millions of people. By having that quality, you are easily able to benefit others and help sentient beings. Because they listen to you, it is easy for you to bring them to enlightenment.

Some people can't communicate; they have no courage to speak, or their speech has no power so people don't listen to them. But another person can speak on the same subject, and the way that person speaks makes it very easy to listen. They can give help to others because people pay attention.

You won't be shy to do things in public; if you aren't shy, you are able to lead sentient beings. The Tibetan is *lha mi ga*; it means devas and human beings are happy with you, wherever you are, wherever you go.

You will appear very glorious like His Holiness the Dalai Lama or His Holiness Ling Rinpoche. His Holiness Ling Rinpoche appeared very radiant and glorious, very special among human beings. Even though he had a human body like ours, there was something special, something glorified. Even in the West, there are some good-hearted, warm-hearted people that, even just by looking at them, you see they are very genuine and sincere. Somehow they look different when they are among others; you see something shiny and glorified.

You will always be accompanied by buddhas and bodhisattvas. If you want to always be accompanied by buddhas and bodhisattvas, you must do prostrations! As many as possible!

You will have great wealth and enjoyment. Prostrations create an unbelievable amount of merit. The results of our virtuous actions don't have to be just in future lives; some of the results can be experienced in this life. That is because in this southern continent where we live, whatever karma we create in the early part of our lives is so powerful, it is experienced in the later part of that same life. Whether it is negative karma or good karma, you can experience the result in the later part of this life.

You will gain a higher rebirth as a deva or human. Also, you will achieve the sorrowless state, liberation from samsara. Every time you make prostration, every time you put your palms together to a statue of Buddha, a picture of Buddha — five-limb or full length or whatever, even one hand like this, even if you just bow down in respect — this immediately becomes the cause of enlightenment. So I think this benefit should include enlightenment, not just the lower liberation but also the great liberation, enlightenment. I added that specifically just to make that conclusion. You achieve the state which is the cessation of all mistakes and the completion of all qualities. That is the conclusion. Any type of prostration has this benefit.

The Ten Benefits

When you put your palms together to a statue of Buddha, a picture of Buddha, or whenever you see a holy object, you immediately get ten benefits:

1. You will achieve rebirth in the king's family. If you are reborn in the king's family, you will have wealth and power, and you can become king. If you were a king, you would have a lot of influence to benefit so many sentient beings. You could make charity of your wealth to many sentient beings and those beings would listen to what you say. In this way, you would cause so many beings to meet the Dharma. You could teach them the right ways to practice, and to abandon wrong things that harm themselves and other sentient beings. You could give them correct wisdom.

That is one big problem in the West. For example, parents have a very difficult time knowing how to guide their children, how to help their children. If you don't have correct wisdom, it is very difficult to help children.

In Nepal, there is one Nyingma lama, Ugyen Tulku Rinpoche, who lives near Bouddha. There is a very big monastery there. Ugyen Tulku passed away. I think he was regarded as Padmasambhava or something like that. Anyway, he was a married lama having the wisdom mother. He had a few sons, I think four or five, and every one was an incarnate lama. The eldest son also has a child who is an incarnate lama. I heard that some other lamas called this family a "lama factory." I think maybe it is a special family; the father and mother were both special. I think the mother's thoughts were always on impermanence and renunciation, and she had no fear. Their minds were not ordinary, always looking for samsaric pleasure, caught in samsaric pleasure. They weren't like that.

In the West, whether the children happened without choice or the parents purposefully planned them, it becomes a huge problem if there is no wisdom how to guide the child. There is so much unhappiness in the life of the parents and

the life of the children. Instead of becoming beneficial to society, to humankind, to sentient beings, they don't benefit anyone.

There is a similar problem in schools, due to lack of real wisdom. This also becomes a huge problem. There is a lot of violence and wrong conduct, which destroys the children's lives. Then they become difficult to control.

So anyway, if you are reborn in a king's family, the people in the country will listen to you. You can open their wisdom eye, teach them what is to be practiced and what is to be abandoned, what is harmful to others and themselves, and what is beneficial for others and themselves. You can bring them to the correct method for achieving even temporary happiness, and no question liberation from samsara and enlightenment. That is the first benefit of making prostrations.

2. You will achieve the extensive form. That means you will have a perfect body with complete sense faculties, as I mentioned before. If you have a perfect body, there are no obstacles to whatever Dharma you wish to practice, such as taking vows, taking ordination. A perfect body allows you to do that.
3. All the people surrounding you, maids or servants, people in the office or your family, will be perfect. Their minds will be harmonized to yours, so there won't be any fighting or difficulties, and they will do exactly as you like according to your wishes. So your practice of benefiting other sentient beings becomes even more beneficial, because you have the help and support of people around you.
4. You will be able to make extensive offerings to the Guru, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.
5. You will receive respect and service from others.
6. You will be able to listen extensively to the Dharma.
7. You will have extensive devotion. Prostrations cause us to

achieve devotion. Without devotion to the Guru, without faith, you cannot receive blessings from the Guru. Therefore, you cannot achieve the realizations of the path to enlightenment. Without devotion to the Triple Gem, you cannot achieve their qualities within yourself, the qualities of Buddha, the qualities of Dharma, and the qualities of the Sangha. Being without faith is like a vehicle without fuel — unable to function; or like everything in a city not functioning and then collapsing when there is no electricity. Devotion is an extremely important foundation.

8. You will have a very good memory and a clear mind. If you want good memory, it means doing a lot of prostrations! If you don't want to become a vegetable or suffer from Alzheimer's, do a lot of prostrations.
9. You will achieve extensive wisdom.
10. You will achieve extensive realizations, all the way up to enlightenment. You will achieve the complete, perfect quality of cessation, the perfect quality of realization. In the case of the Lesser Vehicle, you will achieve the right-seeing path, the path of meditation, the path of no more learning, freeing you from the cycle of death and rebirth and all the sufferings of samsara. In the case of the Mahayana, you will be able to completely abandon the suffering of rebirth, old age, sickness, and death. In the case of Highest Tantra, the clear light of meaning, you will be completely free. You will cease the disturbing-thought obscuration and achieve the pure illusory body.

The Eight Benefits

1. You will have a beautiful body.
2. Those around you, in your family or office, will be harmonious to your needs, so you can best help others. You will live in harmony and be successful.

3. You will be able to live in pure morality. This one is very important. Without the foundation of living in pure morality, you can't achieve perfect meditation. The most important cause to achieve shamatha, calm abiding, is pure morality. That is the foundation; it's the preliminary. If you are not living in pure morality, then it is difficult to achieve realization of shamatha. You cannot complete the nine stages, perfect concentration, and achieve the rapturous ecstasy of body and mind. Without perfect meditation, calm abiding, you can't achieve the higher training of wisdom. Without calm abiding, you cannot achieve the right-seeing path, the resultant path. You can't develop the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, which ceases the disturbing-thought obscuration and brings liberation that is forever free from all suffering and its cause, delusion and karma. If you practice pure morality, everything else is easy to achieve: renunciation from samsara, bodhichitta, emptiness. Everything is very easy if you keep the mind virtuous.
4. You will have devotion.
5. You will achieve a brave mind of courage for practicing the Dharma and working for other sentient beings, a mind brave in facing up to the delusions.
6. You will be reborn as a deva or human.
7. You will achieve the exalted path.
8. You will achieve enlightenment.

All of this comes from just putting your palms together, no question doing full length or five-limb prostrations. The minute you put your palms together to a statue, stupa, or scripture of Buddha, you get these benefits. So whenever you see a holy object, use your palms like this to prostrate.

If you go through the benefits as explained by the Buddha, you can see they help. Practicing prostrations to the Buddha — not just to the car or your friend or a tree or flower, but making

prostrations to the Triple Gem — Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, statues, stupas, scriptures — takes care of your life. It takes care of so many things in your life, now and in the future, up to enlightenment. It takes care.

So each time you see a stupa or a picture of Buddha, a statue of Buddha, or a text, the minute you put your palms together you achieve all this extensive, incredible benefit. You made it so worthwhile that your parents sacrificed their lives to you for so many years: nine months carrying in the womb, and for so many years sacrificing their human lives, which are so precious, to take care of you. For so many years, they dedicated their lives for you, worked for you, and bore so many hardships, created so much negative karma for your well-being and happiness, for your survival. They exhausted themselves and had so much worry and fear. The minute you put your palms together in respect when you see a holy object makes it all worthwhile. The benefits are unbelievable. You can benefit so many sentient beings by achieving these benefits and enlightenment. You can liberate all sentient beings, including your parents. This makes their sacrifice for you so worthwhile. This gives meaning to their lives, their effort, and how much hardship they bore.

When you go for pilgrimage or when you go to temple where there are many paintings and statues of Buddha, even though you don't have time to precisely look at each buddha and prostrate, you just prostrate to all the holy objects, however many hundreds or thousands there are, small and big. Just turn around with the palms together and think from your heart, "I am prostrating to all of them." It only takes a few seconds. If there are one billion or a hundred thousand paintings or statues of Buddha, you have collected a hundred thousand times the causes of enlightenment, and by the way, liberation from samsara, all the happiness of future lives, and even the success and happiness of this life. Within a few seconds, going around with the palms together, and thinking, "I am prostrating to all of them," you go home with so many hundred thousand causes of enlightenment. You have all this merit when you go home!

It is the same when you look at an art book of Buddha. Each time you see a picture of Buddha, put your palms together. By the time you finish looking through the book, you will have collected so many causes of enlightenment and all other happiness!

Don't only prostrate, but also pray, "May I become like you, the glorified Guru." The deity is the Guru. "May I achieve your holy body and holy name. May I become like you, having all your qualities, and become able to benefit numberless sentient beings and the teachings of the Buddha." Prostrate and then pray like this. Generating this positive wish, you create so many causes to become like those enlightened beings.

In his previous life, Shariputra was on a journey. He stopped in one house to rest and fix his shoes, and he saw a beautiful painting of the Buddha on the wall. It was so beautiful, he generated the wish to become like that. In his next life, he became Buddha's heart disciple, always with the Buddha, and benefited many sentient beings.

Buddha made it so easy for us to achieve enlightenment, so easy to purify negative karma, so easy to be free from this terrifying samsara, which has no beginning. Therefore, we must put this into practice.

There is so much hope in our lives. Our lives are so full of opportunity. It is so easy to purify, so easy to become free from samsara and achieve enlightenment. Even with just prostration, we can achieve all of this.

Colophon:

The Benefits of Making Prostrations is from a teaching given by Lama Zopa Rinpoche at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, September 2004. Compiled and edited by Venerable Gyalten Mindrol, FPMT Education Services, December 2005.

Commentary on the Practice

by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

When you prostrate towards all gurus, numberless buddhas, numberless Dharma, numberless Sangha, you get so much benefit. You receive the ten benefits and the eight benefits immediately by prostrating to one statue of Buddha or one picture of Buddha. If you prostrate to all the ten-direction buddhas just by putting your palms together, you achieve the ten benefits and the eight benefits numberless times. There are numberless statues, stupas and holy objects, so again, when you put your palms together towards all of them, you receive the ten benefits and the eight benefits numberless times. Numberless times you collect merit, because there are numberless statues, stupas, and scriptures. The merit is unimaginable. It is just mindblowing.

Motivation

Before you start the practice, think, "The purpose of my life is to free the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, suras, asuras, human beings, and intermediate state beings, all suffering sentient beings in the six realms. Everyone of these beings is the source of all my past, present, and future happiness, and all my realization up to enlightenment. Each hell being, each hungry ghost, every single animal, every single human being, every single sura and asura, and all intermediate state beings are the source of all my past, present, and future happiness, so therefore, I must free them from their suffering. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment; therefore, I need to actualize the path. Therefore, I need to purify the defilements."

To make it even more effective and powerful, remember that one negative karma from the ten non-virtuous actions — one negative karma of killing, telling a lie, sexual misconduct, produces the four suffering results: the ripened aspect result, which is rebirth in the lower realms; experiencing the result similar to the cause; creating the result similar to the cause; and the possessed result, which creates the environment into which we are born when you are again born human. Then, as a result of past karmā, you create the result similar to the cause, and you commit again the same negative actions. That negative karma produces another four suffering results, including creating the result similar to the cause, and that complete negative karma produces another four suffering results. It goes on forever with no end. As long as you don't purify the negative karma, the effect becomes endless.

Now there are so many negative actions committed in one day, month, or year; from birth, from beginningless past lives. It is unimaginable. Think, "Death can come any time, even in this hour or this minute. I could be born in the lower realms any moment. The moment this breath stops, I could be there. Therefore, how can I stand to live for even one second without purifying this negative karma?" There is no way to relax without doing something to purify the cause, without doing the practice of purification. It is like you have eaten poison and you want to get rid of it the quickest way possible. So therefore, we do prostrations.

How To Visualize the Thirty-Five Buddhas

When you prostrate to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas, one visualization to use is that from the *Ganden Lha Gyäma* practice. In the *Lama Chöpa* merit field, the sutra-aspect buddhas are visualized below the deities of the four classes of tantra. These include the Thousand Buddhas of this fortunate era, the Seven Medicine Buddhas, and the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas. Due to his unbearable compassion, from Lama Tsongkhapa's heart, light beams are emitted; the light beams that radiate from Guru Lama Tsongkhapa do not radiate straight out, but downwards. On the tip of each beam is a throne decorated with pearls and

supported by an elephant. Among the animals, the elephant is the most powerful. Therefore, visualizing the elephant helps make the practice of purification powerful. The elephants lifting up the thrones are white and decorated with pearls. Pearls are white, and according to Lama's advice, due to a dependent arising, purification is more powerful if white is visualized. Here, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is at the heart of Lama Tsongkhapa, so you do not have to visualize Guru Shakyamuni Buddha again. Shakyamuni, the first of the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas, is already there. Then there is a first row of six buddhas, then four rows of seven. The Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas are in the aspect of the Five Dhyani Buddhas, so the first row consists of six buddhas in the aspect of Akshobhya, with the same mudras as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the right hand controlling the earth and the left in the mudra of concentration. They are all blue, except *Lu wang gi gyäl po* (King, Lord of the Nagas), whose face and neck are white, while the rest of his holy body is blue.

The next seven are in the aspect of Vairochana and white in color. According to His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche, Vairochana's mudra is [two fists, one above the other, with index fingers pointing upwards, the upper fist holding the index finger of the lower]. Sometimes you may see old paintings in which the mudra is like this [Rinpoche shows a different mudra].

The next seven are in the aspect of Ratnasambhava, yellow in color. The left hand is in the mudra of concentration, the right in that of granting sublime realizations.

The next seven are like Amitabha, red in color, with both hands in the mudra of concentration.

The next seven are like Amoghasiddhi, green in color, with left hands in the mudra of concentration and right hands in the mudra of giving protection or refuge/guidance.

Visualizing the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas in this way is the simplest method. Another visualization is the one that appeared to Lama Tsongkhapa while he was doing the preliminary practice of prostrating to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas to accumulate merit and purify obscurations. I think he did thirty-

five times 100,000 prostrations — I do not remember exactly — in the cave called Ölka Chöling in Tibet. In that visualization, the buddhas are holding different implements and so on. If you can remember how the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas manifested to Lama Tsongkhapa, you can do it that way. If you cannot remember how to visualize in that way, then you can use the simple method, the Thirty-Five Buddhas divided into the five buddha family aspects.

Many years ago, I asked Peter Iseli, from Switzerland, to make a very large thangka of the Thirty-Five Buddhas. In that, there is Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. The way to meditate, the way to think is that this is the Guru in Guru Shakyamuni Buddha aspect. Then, at the heart, there is Thousand-Arm Chenrezig. That is to signify the compassion of the Guru. The great yogi Sangye Yeshe mentions the psychology of this visualization in the teachings, “Before the Guru there is nothing that is even called Buddha.” That means that all buddhas come from the Guru.

Guru Yoga

The very heart of the understanding of guru yoga is the dharmakaya. Generally, instead of dharmakaya, you can say omniscient mind, but to make it more specific, it is the wisdom of great bliss (this is extremely subtle mind), which is non-dual with the emptiness of all existence. Non-dual means that wisdom directly sees the emptiness of all existence. Not seeing from afar, as we see the other side of a mountain, but pervading everything. It is the wisdom of great bliss directly seeing all emptiness and non-dual with it — just like pouring water into water — having completely cut off dualistic view. This is the dharmakaya. This is what is recognized as the absolute guru.

When we speak of the Guru, there is the absolute guru and the conventional guru. Even if the absolute guru manifests in the aspect of Buddha, we cannot see it at this moment due to our obscured mind. So the way the absolute guru can communicate with us is by manifesting in an ordinary form; this means having the suffering of samsara, having delusions, and making mistakes.

Only in this ordinary mistaken aspect can the absolute guru communicate with us, manifesting an ordinary mistaken aspect that is according to our impure, obscured, mistaken mind. This ordinary aspect is the only aspect we are able to see right now with our present state of mind.

Thus, the only way the absolute guru can guide us, especially in order to reveal teachings, is through this ordinary mistaken form. We don't have the karma to see the Guru manifest in a form more pure than this. Even if the Guru were to manifest, we would not be able to see him or her. For beings such as animals who have a lower level of existence than this, it is difficult even to recognize the Guru in ordinary form; thus, the Guru cannot communicate with them, reveal Dharma, and so forth. Therefore, we should understand how this ordinary aspect that shows suffering and delusion is inconceivably precious to us. This aspect is so precious in our own lives. For us, this becomes extremely important, extremely precious, because all the buddhas are guiding us, are working for us through this, by manifesting through this form.

So it comes to the point that this aspect of showing suffering and having delusions and mistakes is so precious, so extremely important. This is the way we can realize how the Guru is so kind. With this aspect, the Guru grants pratimoksha vows, bodhisattva vows, and tantric vows and, in this way, leads us to happiness in future lives, to a good rebirth, and even frees us from samsara. With this aspect, the Guru leads us to highest full enlightenment, wherein the two obscurations — the disturbing-thought obscurations and the subtle obscurations — are ceased and all realizations are completed.

In Tibet and in Solu Khumbu, for example, even the person who teaches the alphabet is regarded as the Guru. When children learn the alphabet, it means they are going to live their lives in the Dharma. There is no other reason. It is concluded that they are going to learn the Dharma. Also, the person who teaches the alphabet teaches with that mind. It is different from school. So in this way the teacher who teaches the alphabet is also regarded as the Guru.

So, the one who teaches the alphabet, the person who gives oral transmissions and commentaries relating to sutra, who frees from all the sufferings of samsara, from the obscurations, and brings us to enlightenment, and in relation to tantra, the person who gives initiations, explains the meaning of tantra, explains the commentaries and meditation instructions, who again frees us from all suffering, from the obscurations, and leads us to enlightenment: this person is called the conventional guru and is the one who guides us to enlightenment by revealing the whole path to enlightenment. This dharmakaya, the absolute guru, guiding us by means of this ordinary mistaken form is called the conventional guru. Why this is happening is because the absolute guru, the dharmakaya, is bound by infinite compassion. The originator is the absolute guru, the dharmakaya, the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and void. That which is dharmakaya, that which is absolute guru, is bound with infinite compassion embracing ourselves and all sentient beings without excluding even one. Not so much because it is omniscient mind and has perfect power, but the main thing — what makes it manifest in numberless forms according to the minds of all of us sentient beings, helping us from life to life and gradually from happiness to happiness, leading us to enlightenment — what makes it to do all this work for others is compassion. The dharmakaya is bound with infinite compassion embracing all of us sentient beings.

When we say “Guru” in Guru Shakyamuni Buddha we have to remember the absolute guru which manifests, which guides us through the ordinary form which is the conventional guru, which relates to us through the conventional guru. When we say, “Guru Shakyamuni Buddha,” the way to think or realize from our side is “absolute guru.” Then there is conventional guru through which the absolute guru guides us. This manifests into Shakyamuni Buddha. So, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. This has the meaning of being one. We have to think like this then this becomes guru yoga. When we look at Guru Shakyamuni Buddha like this, oneness, the mind which sees in that way becomes guru yoga mind; ordinary mind is transformed into guru yoga mind. Before this, you see

separation of Buddha and the Guru. At that time, the mind is not guru yoga mind. By looking at it this way, seeing oneness, having this devotion, at that time the mind becomes guru yoga mind.

The reason for visualizing Chenrezig at the heart of Shakyamuni Buddha is to signify that all these Thirty-Five Buddhas who are transformed from the heart of Shakyamuni Buddha come in order to purify us. Thus, they come from compassion. To signify that they come mainly due to compassion, we visualize compassion [Thousand-Arm Chenrezig] at the heart of Shakyamuni Buddha. So beams are emitted from that. Because of having compassion for you, the Guru manifests into these Thirty-Five Buddhas to purify all your negative karma, defilements, to bring you to liberation, to enlightenment, to cause all realizations. There are pictures made of that thangka with beams coming out from Chenrezig's heart. The reason why this thangka was made was to understand this way [of visualizing]. Then, there are also the other powerful deities—Vajrasattva and Kunrig [on the left when looking at the picture], Mitrugpa and Namgyälma [on the right]. With Mitrugpa, there is, I think, a mistake. I made a mistake, not his mistake. Mitrugpa is white and doesn't have a vajra. [Mitrugpa is traditionally blue and holds a vajra in his left hand.] That white Mitrugpa was due to my ignorance.

Making Purification Powerful

There are two ways to make purification practice really powerful. The first one is generating regret. Of the four opponent powers, the one that makes karma thinner is regret. The stronger the regret we generate, the thinner negative karma becomes. Why? It is dependent arising; that is how it works. Phenomena affect each other, like fire can burn and water can make things wet. These things are dependent arising. It works in our minds in the same way it works externally. Our positive thoughts have an effect, our negative thoughts have an effect, so there is happiness and there is suffering. It is dependent arising. At the beginning of any purification practice, we generate strong regret to make it really powerful. How much we purify negative karma depends on

the mind. Our minds create negative karma, but our minds can also purify so much negative karma by generating strong regret. This regret is like medicine to us. Probably in Western psychology, anything that causes regret in the mind might be interpreted as negative, but there is positive regret and negative regret. There is harmful regret and there is beneficial regret, regret that is useful. One becomes medicine for your mind, and the other harms us and others.

If we regret having done positive things, or the positive things others have done, that harms us. We regret that someone became a monk or nun. We say, "Oh, terrible! Oh, sorry!" We regret that someone is doing retreat in an isolated place: "So sorry this person is living in a cave. So sorry! This poor person!" Even though that person is attaining realization every year, really doing the best thing and benefiting sentient beings, someone says, "Oh, this person has nothing. So poor. So sorry!" Regretting things like that. Or someone becomes a Buddhist or is studying Buddhism: "Oh, terrible!" Venerable Roger met one Christian person in Sydney and they had a discussion. This Christian person told him, "You are so sincerely following the wrong path." Like that. There is wrong regret, like wrong patience. There is virtuous patience and non-virtuous patience, which is not actually patience. Similarly, there is wrong perseverance. If it's virtue, then it is right perseverance, but if we persevere in actions that are the cause of samsara or the lower realms, negative karma, and put so much effort into that — like trying to achieve a reputation for this life, power, the happiness of this life, sacrificing our life in this way — that is wrong perseverance. Wrong regret is the same; it only harms you and harms others.

So we generate regret with awareness of the result of our negative actions, which is unimaginable suffering. You have to be aware of the result. That is how to generate regret.

The second way to make purification powerful is to look at it as empty. We use the understanding of emptiness from studying the philosophical teachings, and we bring that into daily life practice, especially during purification practice. Remembering

emptiness makes the purification like an atomic bomb, so powerful. So after we regret a negative action, we look at it as empty. We don't believe that the negative action doesn't exist, **but we look at it as empty**. The negative action exists in mere name, merely imputed by the mind, but it also appears. When you look at each negative karma, which appears to you at that moment not to be merely labeled by the mind, that is what doesn't exist at all; that is not there at all. We use the Prasangika view of emptiness like an atomic bomb to purify and destroy each negative karma. This makes the practice unbelievably powerful.

If it is difficult to meditate on emptiness, then it might help to think about what is said in the teachings. When you are not examining an object, it looks like it is there, but when you do examine it, you don't find it. When you are not examining, it looks like it is there; but when you look for it, it's not there. That might help to get some idea of emptiness. Even relating to the conventional truth, the merely labeled one, is helpful. It's not meditating on emptiness, because it is not how wisdom sees the object, but it might help in some way to soften the fixed beliefs in the truly existent appearance. It might help.

Each time you think of emptiness, you create inconceivable merit. If you practice charity, morality, patience, perseverance, and concentration for ten eons, you collect so much merit. But listening to the teachings on emptiness, you collect much more. Of course, practicing morality for ten eons itself has so much merit. We can't imagine that. It is difficult to practice for even one day, so ten eons is hard to imagine. But listening to teachings on emptiness collects far greater merit. And if we compare listening to teachings on emptiness for ten eons and explaining teachings on emptiness to others, explaining teachings on emptiness to others collects far greater merit than listening to teachings on emptiness for ten eons. But even one second spent meditating on emptiness collects far greater merit than ten eons of explaining the teachings on emptiness. It's unimaginable, really mindblowing, one second meditating on emptiness. It makes the practice of purification really powerful; it makes it the best practice.

Different Meditations To Do While Prostrating

Sometimes, when you are doing many prostrations, it might be tiring and boring to use only one visualization the entire time. In that case, it is very helpful for the mind to do different meditations. It seems this is helpful for overcoming tiredness or feelings of difficulty because it maintains inspiration. It seems that the degree to which you are able to practice the preliminary practices, such as prostrations, depends primarily on the mind, rather than on the body. If there is something that the mind enjoys and wants to do, then even if there is some physical difficulty, the mind can overcome that. But if the mind has no interest, then even without there being any great pain in the body, the mind can very easily find some difficulty and use that as an excuse!

In the teachings, there are no specific instructions to think this or that while prostrating, but I think these meditations will be beneficial for times when you do many prostrations every day or when doing a certain number as a preliminary practice before an actual retreat.

First, begin with the visualization I mentioned above, then after some time think about every single negative karma and every single disturbing thought that you have created that day, or from beginningless rebirths. Think that without having purified even just one negative karma or obscuration you won't be able to achieve the state of omniscient mind and therefore, won't be able to perfectly guide even one sentient being to enlightenment. Thus, they will not receive any guidance or benefit from you. Even this one obscuration or disturbing thought interferes with the achievement of all temporal and ultimate happiness and success for others. You could start by thinking of your own family or of the sentient beings around you; or you can think that it interferes with the welfare of the human beings of this continent. It is so unbearable that this obscuration interferes with even one sentient being's temporal and ultimate happiness.

Then, consider the uncountable numbers of human beings, devas, and suffering transmigratory beings whose temporal and

ultimate happiness it is preventing. Not only that, but it interferes with the successful attainment of your own temporal and ultimate happiness. By thinking like this, the desire to purify immediately will be so strong. You will not want to live with this obscuration even for a second. It is extremely helpful to think that you are **prostrating in order to purify.**

Another thing you can do is to meditate on the Guru. While you are prostrating, **think: "This is the way the Guru is guiding me.** The gurus have manifested from the dharmakaya as [the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas] out of unbearable compassion for me, who is suffering and obscured." Think that the gurus have manifested as those buddhas in order to purify all the obscurations and the negative karmas that you have accumulated due to ordinary and impure views and wrong conceptions toward the virtuous friend; the negative karmas and obscurations accumulated due to worldly concern, that is, seeking and clinging to samsaric perfections; the obscurations and negative karmas accumulated due to attachment, and the self-cherishing thought; those accumulated with the ignorance grasping the I as truly existent; and those accumulated due to ordinary view and conception. These include all wrong conceptions from the wrong conceptions toward the Guru up to the subtle dual view. Think, "The gurus have manifested like this and are persuading me to do prostrations, and thus, they are freeing me from these obstacles. In this way, the entire path, from guru devotion up to enlightenment, is generated within my mind. The whole of the graduated path of the beings of the three capabilities is generated within my mind as a result of their revealing this method for accumulating extensive merit and purifying the inconceivable obscurations, and persuading me to practice it. In this way, they are guiding me to enlightenment. The Guru exists as the object for my accumulation of merit and to reveal these methods for purifying and accumulating merit. Each prostration purifies so many obscurations and negative karmas causing rebirth in the lower realms, as well as those obscurations and negative karmas that are causing me to remain in samsara and to fall into the blissful state of peace, the lower nirvana."

You should prostrate with this awareness, thinking: "This is the way my virtuous friends are guiding me to enlightenment." It is very effective. If you relate to Chenrezig in this way during Nyung nä retreats, it makes tears come uncontrollably. That itself is meditation on kindness. How kind the virtuous friends are! It brings it all together, and so it is very effective. The guidance that manifests each time you do a prostration is unbelievable.

It is mentioned in the *Lankavatara Sutra* that each time you prostrate, it creates the unbelievable merit to be born as a wheel-turning king the number of times equal to the number of atoms of the earth covered by your body from the surface down to where the earth ends. In the teachings it says to the "golden base"; however, this can mean to wherever the earth finishes. This includes even the smallest parts of the body, such as the hairs and nails. This does not mean that one will necessarily be reborn as a wheel-turning king; instead, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is giving us an idea of how much merit we accumulate, since to be born even once as a wheel-turning king requires an accumulation of inconceivable merit. Actually, many wheel-turning kings are bodhisattvas, and during their lives they not only have great wealth and perfect surroundings and power, but they again accumulate unbelievable merit with respect to holy objects and sentient beings. So we should think like that. Therefore, if you prostrate on the highest place it is better; there is unbelievable profit! Once, when I was in my room at Kopan, it occurred to me that there would be a big difference in doing prostrations on top of the hill, where Lama planned to build a stupa! Maybe you should build a house on the top of Mount Everest for practicing the preliminaries. Such knowledge is given to us by the Guru, so each time you prostrate, inconceivable merit is given to you by the Guru. The causes from guru devotion up to enlightenment are given to you by the Guru. So you can think of this. The second method is to think, "This is how the Guru guides me," and to remember his kindness.

The third meditation is to remember, as in the above example, how much merit you accumulate with each prostration. After

each prostration, dedicate all this merit (the cause) and its result (happiness, including enlightenment) completely to every sentient being. Sentient beings are infinite so the merit you create is doubled and tripled, as you can do with money. It makes the mind so unbelievably happy to be giving something to sentient beings. If you relate to prostrating in this manner, strong compassion will suddenly arise, such that you will cry extensively. You will see how extremely kind sentient beings are to you, that they are suffering so much and that you have not done anything to repay them because of your selfishness. Even if it has been difficult to prostrate, the tiredness will disappear, and you will want to do more prostrations and do them faster!

When a very discouraged mind arises, it is very useful to think: "Even if I die right now because of prostrating, it's okay. I have died during so many lifetimes due to having created negative karma, not due to practicing Dharma. So even if I die now through bearing the hardships of practicing Dharma by doing these preliminaries, it's okay. My death will be worthwhile. Anyway, death will definitely happen and I can die at any time, so if I die now by practicing Dharma, it is very worthwhile." Thinking in such ways does not allow space in the mind for laziness or excuses.

While you are prostrating, remember and be aware of the infinite merits from each prostration, and then, after each prostration, dedicate every single merit and every single good result — temporal and ultimate happiness — to each sentient being. During the session do as many prostrations as you intend to do, and then at the end of each session, recite the last part of the prayer. In that way, the remedy of the four opponent powers is perfectly done.

How To Make Prostrations

We don't do prostrations only to the Thirty-Five Buddhas. No. You prostrate to all the Gurus, Buddhas, all Dharma, Sangha, all the ten direction holy objects. You don't concentrate just on the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas. While reciting the Thirty-Five Buddhas' names, visualize the entire merit field. Even if you do only one prostration, but you prostrate to numberless buddhas,

one billion buddhas, you create the cause for enlightenment one billion times. There are numberless buddhas, so this way is much more profitable. There are numberless Buddhas, numberless Dharma, numberless Sangha, numberless statues, stupas, scriptures, and other holy objects, so think that you are prostrating to every one.

As you start to lie down, think, "I am prostrating towards all the ten direction Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and all statues, stupas, and scriptures, whose essence is the Guru." You create the highest, most extensive merit by thinking all of these are the Guru. If you offer perfume or ointment to even one tiny pore of the Guru, you collect more merit than having made offerings to numberless Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and numberless statues, scriptures, and holy objects. So when you think, "I am prostrating towards all the ten direction Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and all the holy objects which is the essence of the Guru," you collect the most extensive merit.

When Lama Tsongkhapa explained how to collect the most extensive merit while doing mandala offerings, he said to visualize as many as possible and to *visualize as clearly as possible*. When Lama Tsongkhapa explained how to make prostrations the means of collecting extensive merit, he said to visualize many bodies. So as you start to bow down, think, "I am prostrating towards all the ten direction Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and all the holy objects which is the essence of the Guru." Then *think you have numberless bodies*. If you visualize yourself as Thousand-Arm Chenrezig, it is much easier and also *you create much more merit*. If you haven't received a great initiation, just visualize your ordinary body. In that case, it is good to visualize it as being as tall as possible, like a mountain. Whether you visualize your ordinary body or the deity, visualize numberless bodies covering the whole earth from every direction, all prostrating towards the holy object or altar you are prostrating towards.

Even though we do not have the necessary level of realization to actually transform ourselves into many bodies with many limbs and many mouths accumulating merits as can high bodhi-

sattvas, we can still visualize. It is explained in the teachings that you should visualize around you all the numberless bodies you have previously taken, in either deity or human form. You are all prostrating together with all sentient beings who are around you in human form or deity form, as during the tsog offering. Think that in nature they are suffering, but they have a pure appearance. In Pabongkha Dechen Nyingspo's lam-rim notes from when he was receiving teachings from Dakpo Lama Rinpoche, it says that rather than prostrating with just one body, if you visualize many bodies, you accumulate much more merit. You may find that strange, but it is similar to accumulating merit by mentally transforming offerings, which in itself is offering respect to the merit field. If doubts arise, it may be easier to understand if you use that example.

Whether you do the five-limb or long prostration, you get the ten and the eight benefits that I explained before. But as the Buddha explained in the Lankavata Sutra, if your body covers one atom of the ground when you do prostration, you create the cause to be born as a wheel-turning king for one thousand lifetimes. The reason Buddha uses a wheel-turning king as an example is because to be born as a wheel-turning king once, you need to collect inconceivable merit, **so Buddha gives us an idea of the unbelievable amount of merit we collect by doing prostrations.** If your body covers one atom of the ground, you collect the merit to be reborn as a wheel-turning king one thousand times. If you are prostrating from here down to the bottom of the earth, there are so many atoms. It is unbelievable. Your body covers unimaginable numbers of atoms. All your fingers and limbs cover unimaginable numbers of atoms. However many atoms your body covers, you create that many causes to be born as a wheel-turning king in one thousand lifetimes. This gives an idea of how much merit is created by doing prostrations.

Usually I emphasize that when you prostrate, you should keep your feet flat. Even one toe covers unbelievable numbers of atoms! You collect unbelievable merit when you prostrate with even just one toe or one finger, because you cover unimaginable

numbers of atoms. So it is a great loss if you don't keep your feet flat. You lose unbelievable merit. All actions done with bodhi-chitta become the cause of enlightenment, so at the end of your practice, if you dedicate your merit to achieve enlightenment but you didn't keep your feet flat, you lost so much.

Of course, it also depends on how big your body is, how tall and how fat. More fat means more merit. More width means more merit when you do prostrations. The same thing if you are tall. For example, if I do 100,000 prostrations, a person who is twice as tall as me doing 100,000 prostrations receives twice the merit! That is unbelievable! If you have a tall body and you don't use it for prostration, you lose so much. Using your body to prostrate makes it so easy to achieve enlightenment and to enlighten other sentient beings, but if you don't do it, you lose so much. It's an unbelievable loss. Sometimes I tell people who are very tall, "You are so lucky, because you do one prostration, but I have to do two prostrations!"

So why did Lama Tsongkhapa say to visualize many bodies? How does that become the means to collect the most extensive merit? Because when you visualize one body doing prostrations, you receive exactly the same amount of merit as this actual body doing prostrations. If you visualize one more body, you get twice the merit. That is unbelievably profitable. Therefore, Lama Tsongkhapa explained to visualize numberless bodies doing prostrations. If you visualize 100,000 bodies doing prostrations, then with each one, you collect the same amount of merit as your single body. As far as merit is concerned, the merit you receive by doing 100,000 prostrations with your actual body and the merit you receive by visualizing 100,000 bodies doing one prostration is the same.

When you do prostration *ngön-dro*, many hundred thousands of prostrations, it is much more profitable to do it in a high place, like a mountain. With one prostration, there are so many atoms. This is such an easy way to collect merit. Now Kopan Monastery has a new gompa, but I think before, the mountain was higher than the roof of the monastery, so I used to think that doing

prostrations on the hill was better than doing prostrations in my room, because it is so much higher.

When you are traveling, you pay a lot of money to stay in a hotel, so as soon as you arrive in the room, you should turn on all the lights. There are many lights in one room and bathroom, so make offering. You spend a lot of money to stay there, so make all the lights an offering to the gurus and all the ten-direction Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and all the numberless statues, stupas, scriptures, and so on. Then you can dedicate the merit for all sentient beings. The money you spent is nothing if you make it meaningful for sentient beings, if you use it for offering like this. Also, prostrate on this huge bed, this very large bed where you can roll anywhere! You can prostrate on that very comfortably. Even if you do just one set, without counting but just going straight through, the expense of staying in the hotel is nothing. With each prostration you collect so much merit, and then you give it to sentient beings. By doing this, you have made it so meaningful. The comfort is used to practice Dharma.

Whenever there is space, always take the opportunity to do long prostrations, full-length prostrations. Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo explained this, and it is also Naropa's tradition to do full-length prostrations.

When you prostrate, you must be mindful of all those shortcomings and mistakes mentioned in the texts, those mistakes that show disrespect and create negative karma. Not everyone makes these mistakes, but many have these habits, and when you see other people doing prostrations like this, you also do them in a similar way. Many people prostrate without standing up all the way. They keep the body down and do them quickly like that. It is mentioned in the teachings that if you don't stand up straight, you create the cause to be born as a pig or something like that, an animal that has a round body, or maybe as a worm. Then there is the mistake of spreading out the fingers. Due to that disrespect, you create the cause to be born as a duck, as an animal with webs. Or some people put their hands like this [going down on the knuckles] and that creates the cause to be born

as animals with hooves. The main thing is to be respectful in the presence of the holy objects, so you create good karma.

Putting your palms together at the crown of your head creates the cause to receive the special sign of the holy body, the crown pinnacle or *ushnisha*, the *tsug tor*. Putting your palms together at your brow creates the cause to receive the hair between the eyebrows that curls towards the right side. It is mentioned in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* that you need to collect unbelievable merit to achieve that holy sign. You need these thirty-two holy signs and the eighty exemplifications, the special holy marks of the Buddha's body, to benefit sentient beings. I think similarly, doctors wear a certain dress, nurses have their own dress, armies have a certain dress to show the function of what they do. The holy marks of the Buddha's body expresses realization and what kind of merit they collected in the past. These signs signify an enlightened being, so they show the function of an enlightened being, which is liberating sentient beings and bringing them to enlightenment. So we need to create the cause to receive these holy signs; we need them to benefit sentient beings.

Putting your palms together at your brow purifies the negative karma collected with the body and creates the cause to achieve the vajra holy body of the Buddha. Putting them together at your throat purifies the negative karma collected with the speech and creates the cause to achieve the vajra holy speech of the Buddha. Putting your palms together at your heart purifies negative karma collected with the mind and creates the cause to achieve the vajra holy mind of the Buddha. However many qualities the Buddha's holy body, holy speech, and holy mind have, prostrating causes us to achieve all of them.

The left hand signifies the wisdom path, and the right hand signifies the method path. When you put them together, they signify the rupakaya, the form body. Then the empty space inside is the dharmakaya. So it is the two truths, method and wisdom, and the resultant goal, the rupakaya and the dharmakaya. The hands together are the rupakaya, and this empty space inside is the dharmakaya.

佛的色身
佛法

In sutra, this contains the Lesser Vehicle path of method and wisdom, and the Paramitayana path of method and wisdom. It is method and wisdom practicing cooperatively. In the tantric path, it is one unified mind practicing method and wisdom, the unification of clear light, the illusory body, and the unification of no more learning. So the whole path to enlightenment is in this prostration mudra. It can even become direct meditation if someone who has studied the grounds and paths puts their palms together and remembers the meaning.

Keeping the thumbs inside represents offering a jewel, so the hands are not empty. Kyabje Kuntu Lama Rinpoche, the great bodhisattva from whom His Holiness took the *Bodhicharyavatara* commentaries and other teachings, gave this teaching. He said leaving the thumbs outside the palms is *namaste*, and that putting the thumbs inside the palms is prostration.

I haven't read Lama Tsongkhapa's extensive life story from the beginning to the end, but I haven't heard much about his having done many hundred thousand Vajrasattva mantras, but he did do many hundred thousands of prostrations by reciting the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas' names. So I asked Denma Locho Rinpoche, and Rinpoche said this is because if you do the practice of confessing downfalls even one time well, it purifies the five uninterrupted negative karmas. So in the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition of lineage lamas, they put so much effort in their daily lives doing so many hundreds of thousands of prostrations. So it seems this is very much emphasized, the practice of reciting the Thirty-Five Buddhas and doing the practice of confessing downfalls.

If you have memorized the names, then in airplanes or cars where there is no space to do prostrations, you can still put the palms together, recite the names, and visualize numberless bodies from all directions prostrating to the merit field. In this way, you collect inconceivable merit. If you can't do prostrations due to sickness or are missing legs or whatever, you can still prostrate physically by putting your palms together and visualizing.

Mantra Recitation

Begin the practice with this mantra: OM NAMO MANJUSHRIYE NAMAH SUSHRIYE NAMA UTTAMA SHRIYE SVAHA. His Holiness Serkong Rinpoche explained the meaning of this mantra to me, but I think at the time I must have been distracted. I did not write it down immediately, so now I have forgotten. I think it is quite uncommon for someone to know the meaning of these mantras.

It is said in the teachings that if one does full-length prostrations while reciting this mantra three times, one receives the same merit of having listened, reflected, and meditated on the Tripitaka, the three baskets of teachings. Also, if one does three full-length prostrations with this mantra every day, one will receive the benefit of being able to achieve the path of right-seeing — the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness — in this life. In addition, one will not be afflicted by disease, spirits, or human beings. One of the main advantages of doing prostrations with this mantra is that it increases each prostration one thousand times.

Then reciting the mantra and these buddhas' names, CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ RINCHHEN GYÄLTSHÄN LA CHAG TSHÄL LO, and then, OM NAMO BHAGAVATE RATNA KETU RAJAYA TATHAGATAYA ARHATE SAMYAK SAMBUDDHAYA TADYATHA OM RATNE RATNE MAHA RATNE BIJE YA SVAHA seven times with prostrations, each prostration increases by ten million times. It is the same when you circumambulate statues, scriptures, stupas, holy objects. If you recite this mantra, you receive the benefit of having circumambulated ten million times. So this is not only for prostration, but also circumambulation.

Reciting the Buddhas' Names

During one prostration, you recite each buddha's name three times. Try to get familiar with the names. Of course, it is best if you memorize them; otherwise it is difficult. Otherwise, you can have a recording on tape, your leader of the prayer is the tape recorder. The tape recorder leads and you follow. The main thing

is to recite the name as many times as possible during one prostration. When you do a very short practice of prostration to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas with the *Confession of Downfalls*, that is different. But normally, you want to do a certain number. Repeat the name many times, then after you've touched your forehead to the ground, you change. Then, you do the next buddha's name. You recite the name as many times as possible. Why? What is the importance of doing that? It is because just reciting the Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's name purifies 80,000 eons of negative karma. 80,000 eons of the cause of suffering — negative karma that is collected over that duration — is purified.

For example, the hospital and doctor have said that you have cancer and you only have two or three months or three weeks to live, or something like that. Then, somebody did some healing, or whatever, and cured you from cancer. That person has saved you from the danger of death. You are able to live for so many years. That is considered an incredible gift, an unbelievable gift — so precious — that life that was given by healing your cancer. Otherwise, you would have died, you wouldn't be in this world. It is a sort of miracle, amazing. Here, for 80,000 lifetimes you won't get cancer. Because of purifying negative karma, for 80,000 lifetimes you won't get cancer. For this life, which has only a few years, one has been enabled to live, one doesn't have to experience cancer, one thinks that is an incredible achievement, a miracle. You are so happy. Now, it's 80,000 lifetimes of not having cancer — how incredible is that! But that is just one problem. That is not the whole suffering of samsara. It is not the only problem of being in samsara. Purifying 80,000 eons of negative karma by reciting the first buddha's name one time means purifying the cause not only of cancer, but the cause of so much suffering, causes of the lower realms. 80,000 eons of accumulated negative karma gets completely purified. You don't have to experience that much time suffering in the lower realms, or as a deva, or in the human realms — by reciting Buddha's name one time. All those negative karmas which result not only in lower realm sufferings, but in so many problems in the deva and human realms get purified, as

well as the obstacles for realization.

Your reciting Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's name once becomes the solution because it purifies negative karma, not merely the cause of cancer. Not only is the cause of cancer purified, but the negative karmas which are the cause of all the problems of samsara are all purified. This is the solution for everything. It becomes the solution for all problems — depression, relationship problems, all of this painful life, so many years of painful life. It is the one solution for all these problems — poverty, recession, all of these. Now, by reciting the remaining buddhas' names once, each one purifies many thousands of years of negative karma.

Therefore, during one prostration, recite as many times as possible that one buddha's name. That's the purpose. This is the extremely quick way to liberate yourself from the suffering of samsara and a quick way to actualize the path and achieve enlightenment. If you are doing prostrations specifically to those buddhas whose name you are reciting, in order to collect the most extensive merit with each buddha, while you are prostrating to that one, think that is all the gurus, all the buddhas, all the Dharma, all the Sangha. You can even think it is all the holy objects. If you prostrate to all of those, then you have made prostration to all the gurus, numberless buddhas, numberless Dharma, numberless Sangha, numberless statues, numberless scriptures, numberless stupas, all the holy objects. You've made prostrations to everything, just as when we do the extensive offering practice. **At least think this is all the Guru, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha** — at least do that. While you are prostrating, one by one, to each buddha, rather than thinking "I am prostrating to only one buddha," with that buddha, you think everything, all the merit field. Then, even if you only did one prostration, you have prostrated to all of them. Therefore, you have created numberless causes of enlightenment, numberless causes of liberation from samsara, numberless causes of happiness in future lives. Then, when you

finish thirty-five, you can imagine how much merit you have created — numberless causes of enlightenment and happiness of future lives.

Since reciting the name of each buddha has incredible benefits, such as purifying many thousands of eons of negative karma, as you prostrate to each buddha, it is very good if you can recite his name as many times as possible. Doing this is an incredibly skillful way of purifying quickly. While you are prone, a replica of the first buddha absorbs into you. Then, as you stand up, start reciting the name of the second buddha, *Dorje nying po* (Thoroughly Destroying with Vajra Essence). **If you prostrate three times to each buddha, it will add up to more than a hundred prostrations.** In that way, it is easy to count without having to concentrate on counting beads or something else. **You should also make prostrations at the beginning as you recite the refuge formula,** “Lama la kyab su chhi wo...” [or “I go for refuge to the Guru; I go for refuge to the Buddha...”]

After you have finished reciting the names of the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas, you can also recite the prayer to the Seven Medicine Buddhas. Reciting the names of the Seven Medicine Buddhas is so powerful, not only for healing, but for success. In these degenerate times, praying to the Medicine Buddhas causes your prayers quickly to succeed due to the pledges they made in the past when they were training in the bodhisattva’s path. They made many prayers for sentient beings and promised to accomplish all prayers; therefore, they grant blessings very quickly. Therefore, reciting the Medicine Buddhas’ names is extremely precious and important. At the time of death, any beings, animals or humans, who hear the mantra or name of Medicine Buddha will never be born in the lower realms. Also, anyone who recited the name and mantra in daily life will never be born in the lower realms. Whatever happens, there is no fear of death.

In other traditions, such as Kagyu, Nyingma, etc., when they

recite the names of the Thirty-Five Buddhas, they just recite the name. In their text, they don't have *de zhin sheg pa*, "tathagata," this word that expresses their qualities and describes their realization of the dharmakaya. The dharmakaya covers the whole sky of emptiness, the emptiness of all phenomena. They have realized the ultimate nature of all phenomena; they have directly seen all of this and are non-dual within this forever, realizing as it is, gone as it is. At the beginning, Lama Tsongkhapa was doing this practice without reciting this word, *tathagata*, just like saying your name "Peter" or "George," only mentioning the main name. I think Lama Tsongkhapa saw the Thirty-Five Buddhas in a cave, but without heads. He saw only the body without a head. After that, Lama Tsongkhapa added *de zhin sheg pa* when he recited; then he saw the Thirty-Five Buddhas complete with heads. That is how the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition of the lineage lamas — how they practice using the title *de zhin sheg pa* (tathagata) — began. Sometimes when you do this prayer without this tradition or when you see other texts in which this title isn't included, you might find it strange. So this is the story.

The Benefits of Reciting the Buddhas' Names

There are two texts that explain the benefits of prostrating to each of the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas. One is as Lama Atisha explained and the other is by Gyältsab Rinpoche, Lama Tsongkhapa's disciple. Then there is another text by Ngülchu Dharmabhadra that explains it a little bit differently.

The prayer begins, "I, (say your name), throughout all times, take refuge in the Guru..."

Say your name where it says ming in Tibetan. This has some effect in the mind. In one way, you can feel sad because you have created negative karma and are obscured. In another way, you can feel happy because of having met a reliable object of refuge. Reciting each name purifies the following negative karmas:

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha (Sha kya thub pa) – Purifies 40,000 eons of negative karma. Sometimes it is said that 80,000 eons are purified.

Thoroughly Destroying with Vajra Essence (Dorje nying po) – 10,000 eons of negative karma are purified. Also, by reciting it, you become enlightened.

Radiant Jewel (Rin chhen ö thrö) – 10,000 eons.

King, Lord of the Nagas (Luwang gi gyälpo) – 1,000 eons. Purifies naga harms. This buddha liberated so many nagas from suffering, benefited them so much, healed their sicknesses. Therefore, the nagas are indebted to this buddha, King, Lord of the Nagas. So, if you recite the Naga King mantra name, any sicknesses caused by nagas such as cancer and ulcers, leprosy, sicknesses, infections — both inside and outside — and all skin disease, white marks on the skin, is purified. All skin disease is due to nagas. Also bone aches, like when people sit, is all due to nagas. By reciting this name, you purify naga harms. Also, you can think of people who have these sicknesses and then when you recite this, nectar comes from this buddha and purifies them. This can be very, very helpful. Of, if you have those sicknesses caused by nagas, you can also purify yourself by visualizing and by reciting the name mantra. This is regarded as very powerful purification. By reciting this buddha's mantra 100,000 times, it completely heals the sickness of leprosy. Those very heavy negative karmas that result in suffering you see in this life, they get purified by reciting this buddha's name mantra.

Army of Heroes (Pa wö de) – 1,000 eons. Purifies negative karma created with speech, especially gossip.

Delighted Hero (Päl gye) – 2,000 eons. It is like inflation! Like the stock market! I'm joking. Purifies negative karma created with the mind.

Jewel Fire (Rin chhen me) – 2,000 eons. Five uninterrupted nega-

tive karmas, especially causing disunity amongst the Sangha. Also, receiving pollution of Sangha. This means that people offer food, money, and so forth with devotion to the Sangha. Then, as a member of the Sangha, you receive it. Then, one doesn't practice, doesn't live in pure morality or doesn't practice — either you have to offer service to the Sangha or you have to practice Dharma, do service, or studies, or practice, and live in pure morality. Otherwise, it becomes pollution. It obscures the mind, obscures realizations. This purifies that.

Jewel Moonlight (*Rin chhen da ö*) – 8,000 eons. Purifies criticizing the arya Sangha. In general, this means the arya Sangha, those who have realization of the absolute Dharma (emptiness). Of course, by criticizing them, one creates much heavier negative karma. However, even criticizing the ordinary Sangha is very, very heavy. The meaning of “arya” is exalted, because they are exalted from lay people. Even ordinary Sangha are exalted from the lay because they are living in a greater number of vows, living in renunciation, having left the householder's life, and so forth. Exalted, special, exalted from the lay — it can have that meaning.

Meaningful to See (*Tong wa dön yö*) – 1,000 eons of negative karma. The general five uninterrupted negative karmas, and in particular, killing one's mother. Also purifies heresy.

Jewel Moon (*Rin chhen da wa*) – Purifies the five negative karmas of immediate retribution, especially killing one's father.

Stainless One (*Dri ma me pa*) – Purifies the negative karmas close to those of immediate retribution: for example, stepping over monks' robes or stepping on the shadow of, or on animals belonging to, the Guru. Also stepping on the shadows of stupas.

Bestowed with Courage (*Päl jin*) – The negative karmas accumulated with anger. Also killing arhats.

Pure One (*Tshang pa*) – The negative karmas accumulated with attachment. Also causing blood to flow from a buddha.

Bestowed with Purity (Tsang pä jin) – 10,000 eons. Causing disunity among the Sangha.

Water God (Chu lha) – 1,000 eons. Provoking or criticizing a female arhat. You advertise the mistakes, telling people.

Deity of the Water God (Chu lhä lha) – 5,000 eons. Also killing a bodhisattva.

Glorious Goodness (Päl zang) – 5,000 eons. Also having killed the Guru

Glorious Sandalwood (Tsän dän päl) – 7,000 eons. Taking belongings of the Sangha and limiting offerings made to the Sangha. For example, a benefactor wants to offer butter to the Sangha and you cut the amount of butter the Sangha gets. You make a limit even though the benefactor wanted to offer more or already offered. Then you say, they don't need that much and give it back. There is a Tibetan term for this that means, "belongs to the Sangha." In this way, you take away from the Sangha. This is regarded as heavy karma, so this heavy karma gets purified. If this negative karma is not done in this life, you might think, "Oh, I never did that. I'm not in this situation. What's the use for me to recite this buddha's name." You might think that. However, since there is no beginning to our past lives, samsaric rebirth, we have created all kinds of negative karmas in the past, even some karmas not done in this life.

Infinite Splendor (Zi ji tha yä) – 7,000 eons. Destroying holy objects such as stupas.

Glorious Light (Ö päl) – 7,000 eons. This has immeasurable benefits. Also purifies negative karma collected with anger.

Sorrowless Glory (Nya ngän me pä päl) – Negative karmas collected with attachment gets purified. Also, that accumulated with ignorance.

Son of Non-craving (Se me kyi bu) – 10,000 eons of negative karma is purified. Also the imprints of negative karma. When you

create negative karma, there is an imprint left on the mind, so that is purified.

Glorious Flower (*Me tog pä*) – 100,000 eons. The negative karmas accumulated with the body.

Pure Light Rays Clearly Knowing by Play (*Tsang päi özer nam par röl pä ngön par khyen pa*) – 1,000 eons. The negative karmas collected with speech.

Lotus Light Rays Clearly Knowing by Play (*Pä mäi özer nam par röl pä ngön par khyen pa*) – 7,000 eons. The negative karmas accumulated with the mind.

Glorious Wealth (*Nor pä*) – The negative karmas accumulated with respect to the Sangha by the Sangha, and possibly also by lay persons, karmic pollutions received from the Sangha with respect to food and so forth. Also the defilements and imprints get purified.

Glorious Mindfulness (*Drän pä pä*) – The negative karmas accumulated by criticizing holy beings. Also, criticizing others in general and negative actions done with the body.

Glorious Name Widely Renowned (*Tshän pä* *shin tu yong drag*) – the negative karmas accumulated out of jealousy, so somebody who has a lot of jealousy has to recite a lot of this buddha's name! Also being unhappy with a buddha's descent.

King Holding the Victory Banner of Foremost Power (*Wang pö tog gi gyäl tshän gyi gyäl po*) – The negative karmas accumulated with pride, and also jealousy.

Glorious One Totally Subduing (*Shin tu nam par nön päi pä*) – It says subtle vices and karmas, mainly slander. Also causing others to collect negative karma.

Utterly Victorious in Battle (*Yül lä shin tu nam par gyäl wa*) – The negative karmas accumulated with all the delusions. Also negative karmas done with pride.

Glorious Transcendence Through Subduing (*Nam par nön pä sheg päi päl*) – the negative karmas from causing others to create negative karma. Also slander.

Glorious Manifestations Illuminating All (*Kün nä nang wa kö pä päl*) – The negative karmas accumulated by rejoicing in the negative karmas created by oneself and others. For example, when there was war between the United States and the Muslims — the Afghanis, the Taliban. When one hears that so many of the Taliban were killed or something, if one rejoices, feels happy that so many Taliban were killed, this is what that is. This is very heavy negative karma, rejoicing when others have created negative karma. You recite this buddha's name to purify that.

All-Subduing Jewel Lotus (*Rin chhen pä mäi nam par nön pa*) – The negative karma of avoiding the Dharma. The means while something is Buddha's teaching, thinking or saying that this is not Buddha's teaching. For example, Theravadan teachings, or Mahayana teachings, a Theravadan teaching which is the Hinayana teaching of the Buddha – saying it is no good and so avoiding it, or rejecting another teaching saying it is no good. Or being a Hinayana and then rejecting a Mahayana teaching, saying it is not Buddha's teaching or that it is no good, so rejecting it. Then a tantric practitioner rejecting sutra practices saying there is no point to practice them or that they are no good and so rejecting or avoiding them, like that. The real meaning of avoiding the Dharma is to give up from the heart. Pabongkha Rinpoche mentioned of the four teaching traditions, while it is a teaching of the Buddha, then saying that while it is a teaching of the Buddha, it is no good. That's avoiding Dharma. Of course, something which is not Buddha's teaching, of course that doesn't become avoiding Dharma, when you say the truth, that you know it is not Buddha's teaching. In order to avoid the holy Dharma, it has to be the holy Dharma, Buddha's teaching.

King of the Lord of Mountains Firmly Seated on Jewel and Lotus

(Dra chom pa yang dag par dzog päi sang gyä rin po chhe dang pä ma la rab tu zhug pa ri wang gi gyäl po) – Purifies the negative karma created by degenerating samaya with the Guru and from criticizing the Guru. If things like this have happened, you can recite this name two or three times more. Even if you recite all the other names only once, but you can recite this name three times. These things have happened; they have happened in this life many times.

Lama Atisha explained why these names have so much power. When the Thirty-Five Buddhas were following the bodhisattva's path, they made prayers. They prayed that when we become enlightened, anybody who recites our names and does prostrations, may they purify such-and-such — this and that negative karma. They made so many prayers in the past, when they were bodhisattvas. This is the reason why these names have so much power to purify and benefit. Also, when they became enlightened, they achieved the ten powers. One of the Buddha's qualities is having achieved the ten powers. Amongst the ten powers, the power of prayer is one of them. Because the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas became enlightened and achieved all the Buddha's qualities, they achieved the ten powers, including the power of prayer. Because of that, when sentient beings recite their names, it has the power for the sentient beings to receive all that benefit. This is how we get benefit. So there are unbelievable skies of benefit from reciting these buddhas' names, even once. There is unbelievable purification. That is the result of karma and that came from the root, compassion.

Not only during the time they were bodhisattvas, but even before they generated bodhichitta, there was the root of bodhichitta, compassion — the great compassion they generated to us sentient beings. So actually, all these skies of benefit we get from reciting these names and this mantra came from that compassion; even before bodhichitta — the root of bodhichitta — compassion. Even before entering the path to enlightenment, there

was the root, which is compassion. This is how I think. This is the power of compassion, the benefit of compassion that we numberless sentient beings receive.

How To Do the General Confession Prayer

Generating Regret

We purify by feeling strong regret for each negative karma that is done; even if we don't remember doing it in this life, we have definitely done it in past lives. The purpose of going through the major, heavier negative karmas, naming each one, is to be able to recognize that we have committed this, then remembering how that karma is heavy, and the suffering results. Then it becomes unbearable. It generates great regret and that makes the negative karma thinner. As much strong regret is generated, the negative karma becomes that much thinner. How much gets purified depends on that. That is the general way to do it. Then, one particular method is meditating on the emptiness of each negative karma. As you go through the prayer, with each negative karma, meditate on the emptiness of each negative karma. Then it becomes an extremely powerful purification, by adding this meditation.

It starts with "Woe is me." Is this "wow" or "woo"? It reminds me of coyotes when they make that sound, "who." I think they are doing the General Confession! "Oh, great guru Vajradhara, I, who am named..., circling in cyclic existence..." Here you are supposed to meditate on emptiness. Then, as I have mentioned earlier all the benefits of putting the palms together, prostrating, so like this, then meditate and recite:

"Since beginningless time until the present, overpowered by mental afflictions such as attachment, aversion, and ignorance by means of body, speech, and mind have created the ten non-virtuous actions." We purify the negative karma from having collected the ten non-virtuous actions. One way of purifying, as I mentioned before, is by generating regret at having collected the ten non-virtuous actions from beginningless rebirth as well as in this life. Up to now, anything that has been collected, feeling sor-

ry, feeling regret for that, which becomes the method for your happiness. Feeling regret, regret for one's own negative karmas, becomes the method to purify the cause of problems and it becomes the powerful means to achieve happiness. So, it's not negative, it's positive. It's positive, not negative. What benefit you get from that is happiness, not only temporary happiness, not only the happiness of this life, not only the happiness of future lives, but the realizations of the path to liberation and the realizations of the path to enlightenment. This is the benefit you receive from this regret, from generating the thought of regret to having created the cause of suffering, having killed, having told lies, having engaged in sexual misconduct, and so forth. If one rejoices in the opposite, if you rejoice or feel good about it, then that makes the negative karma stronger. The negative karma is multiplied. It increases the negative karma.

For example, if a Tibetan person rejoices that one million Chinese from mainland China were killed. Even though he or she was not involved in the killing, if he or she rejoices, then that person creates the same heavy karma — receives the same heavy karma — as the leader of the army who killed one million people in mainland China. Even though that person didn't do the killing, by rejoicing and feeling good about it, they receive the same heavy karma as having killed one million people. That is a wrong way of rejoicing, to feel good about having done any of the ten non-virtuous actions, thinking it was good because you feel happy. This feeling happy is no good if you are rejoicing, thinking, "I have done this, good." That is misleading. That is a wrong advice and a lack of understanding of karma. It only leads the person, that sentient being, into more suffering, to continuously create the cause of suffering, and to suffer all the results. It goes on and on like that.

I'm giving this introduction because in the West, anything that makes your mind feel unhappy is regarded as no good. Without discriminating, without thinking of the long run benefit, lacking in knowing karma. Not thinking of the long run benefits that comes from that (regret) — transforming your mind and your actions

and developing your mind in the path to enlightenment. Not understanding the skies of benefits from this practice of regretting negative karmas, regretting one's own mistakes. Not understanding that this feeling of regret at having created the cause of suffering only purifies the cause of sufferings. Not understanding how this benefits one's own mental continuum, so looking at it as negative because it makes you feel bad. Seeing it as negative, not understanding all the advantages. Not understanding that this is the way you achieve all the happiness up to enlightenment: generating regret to the thing which harms you, that which you did — and rejoicing in something that is a good thing you did, that benefits yourself and others.

Not understanding what is wrong rejoicing and what is right rejoicing, like right patience and wrong patience. Practicing patience, bearing hardships, to create negative karma, suffering to create negative karma and the causes of negative karma — that is wrong patience, wrong tolerance. The correct patience is to bear hardships to practice Dharma — to achieve the happiness of future lives, to achieve liberation from samsara, to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, bearing hardships to cause happiness to all sentient beings. That is correct patience.

Meditating on Emptiness

"...Have created the ten non-virtuous actions." One way to do is to think of the general action which is merely labeled by mind, which is merely imputed by the mind, then you concentrate on the meaning of that. Concentrate on the extremely subtle meaning of dependent-arising, the Prasangika school view. So, with the heavy negative karma, which is merely labeled by the mind, then concentrate right on the meaning of that. When you do that, as a result of understanding, what comes in your heart is empty. That it is empty — does not exist from its own side. Before, the ten negative karmas appeared as real. When you remember, it appears as real ten non-virtuous actions, existing from their own side. Now, by thinking of them as merely labeled by mind, then the understanding, what comes in your heart, is

that one is totally non-existent. Totally non-existent — does not exist at all from its own side. So, as a result, the impact of the effect, what comes in your heart should be like this.

So, one session, you can do like this, “the ten non-virtuous actions, which are merely labeled by mind.” Then meditate on the meaning of the extremely subtle dependent-arising, the Madhyamika Prasangika School view, according to that school. Then another session you can say, “which is non-existent from its own side,” or “which is totally empty from its own side,” “which is totally non-existent from its own side,” or “which is empty from its own side.” It can be said either way whichever is more effective. Then, another session, one can say, “the ten non-virtuous actions, which are a hallucination.” That sounds like negating what exists, it sounds like nihilism. But the way to understand — what it is saying — is when we think of the ten non-virtuous actions, when we say it, when we think of them, it’s not the ten non-virtuous actions merely labeled by the mind, but rather the ten non-virtuous actions which are not merely labeled by mind. This is the one which doesn’t exist. When we say, “ten non-virtuous actions,” how that appears, how we believe the ten non-virtuous actions are — is that which is not merely labeled by mind, which means existing from its own side. “Ten non-virtuous actions, which are an hallucination;” the hallucination refers to that “ten non-virtuous actions,” the way it appears normally when we think of them, the way we believe. It is relating to that. It is not relating to the ten non-virtuous actions, in general, the merely labeled one, but it’s referring to the one, ten non-virtuous actions, which doesn’t exist, but we believe to exist.

We believe “I have done, I have committed this,” but we believe the ten non-virtuous action that doesn’t exist. One believes, “I have created.” It is an inherently existent ten non-virtuous action which doesn’t exist. There is no such thing, but believing in that, thinking, “I have created the real ten non-virtuous action,” not merely labeled by mind. So, the “ten non-virtuous action, which is an hallucination...” refers to that ten non-virtuous action

that doesn't exist. That's another option to meditate on emptiness. When you think, "This is an hallucination," as I mentioned those other days during the walking meditation, it brings an understanding, what comes in your heart is "empty," that the ten non-virtuous actions are empty. It comes to the same point, but using different ways of meditating. So, "...have created the ten non-virtuous actions, which are merely labeled by mind."

"...And the five uninterrupted negative karmas." Five uninterrupted negative karmas meaning uninterrupted by another life. Between the negative karma, these five negative karmas, and the result, the rebirth in the hell realm and all those sufferings, is uninterrupted. It is easily experienced right after this life. Usually, you experience another life as a rebirth caused by another karma, either virtuous or non-virtuous. If you create negative karma in this life, even though the result of that negative karma is rebirth in the hell realm, because that karma is not very heavy, you can experience another rebirth before getting reborn in the hell realm. You experience another rebirth, either in the human world or animal, preta, deva, something caused by another virtue or non-virtue. However, these five uninterrupted negative karmas — having killed one's father, mother, an arhat, harmed a buddha, caused disunity among the Sangha — these are very heavy. It's very heavy karma. So, without interruption of another life, you immediately experience the result of this negative karma as rebirth in the hell realm, then experience those heavier sufferings. So, "...the five uninterrupted negative karmas, which are merely labeled by the mind."

"I have transgressed the vows of individual liberation." It's also very good to think every time, of not just one negative karmic action, but of everything collected from beginningless rebirth. Every time, bring that idea. Don't think of just one negative karma that was done. In your heart, think of all that has been collected from beginningless rebirth, which is merely labeled by mind. Then, it's like you're throwing an atomic bomb. When you say "which is merely labeled by mind," when you meditate on the meaning, you're throwing an atomic bomb on all that negative karma. By

meditating on emptiness, you are throwing an atomic bomb over all that negative karma in order to completely destroy it. In that second, you destroy it. This is very important, the bomb — emptiness. Meditate on emptiness right on that negative karma. It is appearing as real from its own side, so you throw an atomic bomb. Meditate on emptiness right on top of that, the object of ignorance.

Clarification of Specific Phrases

Then, “...contradicted the trainings of bodhisattvas” — taking the mind from beginningless rebirth, the negative karma which is merely labeled by mind — “transgressed the samaya of secret mantra” This depends on the person’s understanding, whether the individual person has correct understanding or not. When you say, “transgressing the samaya of secret mantra,” what should come in the mind is not just mantra commitments, not just prayers or sadhanas. That’s what most people think, but what should also come to mind is the vows — during a highest tantric initiation, we take the tantric vows, to abstain from fourteen root falls, and the other vows. Those vows are listed in the long version of the *Six-Session Guru Yoga*. “Samaya” means pledge. In Tibetan, “samaya” is *dam tsig*. *Dam* is pledge, *tsig* is burn. If you translate it completely — *dam* is a promise, *tsig* is burn. You promised those vows, you took those vows from Vajradhara, the deity, inseparable from the guru deity. You took those vows. So, if one transgresses that vow, that promise, one burns in hell. The shortcoming is that one burns in the hell realm. That is the *dam tsig*. In Tibetan, that’s how it is, it talks not only of the pledge, but it also talks about what happens if you don’t do that. It comes together *dam tsig*, pledge burn, pledge burning, promising and burning, promise burning. I don’t know how if there is a better way to make the English. That is what it is.

“Transgressed the samaya of secret mantra, which was done numberless times from beginningless rebirth, which is merely labeled by mind.” “Have been disrespectful to my vajra masters,

and to my abbot." The abbot is the one who gives refuge, who gives five precepts, eight precepts, pratimoksha vows. The vajra master is the one who gives tantric initiations and commentaries. So, this negative karma that we have done numberless times from beginningless rebirth, and which is merely labeled by mind.

"And have been disrespectful to my spiritual friends living in ordination." This refers to one's Dharma friends, who are living in the pratimoksha vows, the five lay precepts, or in ordination. This disrespect also includes, I think, vajra brothers and sisters, those have taken initiations and tantric teachings from the same guru. This includes boys, girls, aunts, uncles; everyone is part of the same family, like vajra kin. Remember the tantric vow, "speaking badly of my vajra brothers." The first one is criticizing, giving up the Guru, giving up on the object of respect. Then, being careless to practice the precepts like the pratimoksha, bodhisattva, and tantric vows, those precepts. Then, criticizing vajra kin. Also in other traditions, it is strongly emphasized to respect your vajra kin, to have respect. It is very much stressed to keep good samaya, not to criticize. Just as in the guru relationship, not to criticize each other. So, these negative karmas collected from beginningless rebirth up to now, which are merely labeled by mind.

Then, "I have committed actions harmful to the Three Jewels," which has been done numberless times from beginningless rebirths, which is merely labeled by mind. Then, "avoided the holy Dharma," which has been done numberless times from beginningless rebirths, which is merely labeled by mind. When you say, "which is merely labeled by mind," suddenly it is as if it becomes non-existent in the view of your mind. It does not really become completely non-existent, but it is like that, in your mind's view. Suddenly, how you see it is as if it were totally nonexistent, like that, existing in mere name. That's what it is. Then, "criticized the arya Sangha," having created this negative karma numberless times from beginningless rebirth. Any negative karma done with the Sangha is so very, very powerful. It becomes very dangerous, so heavy. I remember when I created one negative karma, no sorry, not just one! I think to one Sangha. I think one student

went there and I mentioned that somebody is like a spider. So, I have that heavy negative karma to be purified. This came in my mind, referring to one Sangha as a spider. Anyway, that Sangha member is not here, in case you are thinking, "Maybe it is me!"

As you know from lam-rim, with the negative thought I have mentioned, you have to be born a spider for 100 or 500 lifetimes, or even 1,000 lifetimes as a spider, because karma is expandable. Arya Sangha have the realization of the true path and true cessation of suffering. But, I think — I'm not 100 percent sure on this point — I think we should count just general Sangha. We should include them here, general Sangha, ordinary Sangha, because karma is very heavy.

Then, "...harmed sentient beings," which I have done numberless times from beginningless rebirth, which is merely labeled by mind. These and many others, and so on and so on — all the leftovers! "These and many other non-virtuous actions I have done, caused others to do..." There are a lot of them. "...have caused others to do," numberless times from beginningless rebirth, which are merely labeled by mind.

"In the presence of the great guru Vajradhara, all the buddhas and bodhisattvas who abide in the ten directions, and the venerable Sangha, I admit this entire collection....promise to refrain from doing these actions again in the future." Here, "not to commit again," usually it is advised by the gurus not to tell a lie. Make the vow, "The ones from which I can abstain, I will abstain from them; the ones that are extremely difficult, I will abstain from them for one day, or one hour, or one minute, or even for a few seconds." The idea is to make the vow in such a way as to be more truthful. If one is not meditating on the meaning, that's different. But, if one is thinking of the meaning, then there are many difficult ones, and one cannot really abstain from all of them forever. So, the lamas' technique, what they advise, is to do that. "... By confessing and acknowledging them, I will attain and abide in happiness, while by not confessing and acknowledging them, true happiness will not come."

Conclusion

So, this is what the lineage lamas — especially in Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition — this is what they did as a daily practice. It was something very important to do, prostrations while reciting the Thirty-Five Buddhas' names. Even though their holy body was shaking (with old age), they still did simple prostrations. Some lamas they do thousands. One Rinpoche, one of the great lamas from Sera Je, every day as a daily practice he did three hundred, or one thousand prostrations. Even though Lama Atisha was of a very old age, still he did prostrations like a fox running, very fast. His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche, from whom I received many initiations — hundreds of sets of initiations from the *Rinjung Gyatsa* and *Suka Gyatsa* — every day before going to bed he did prostrations. Therefore, it is very good for us, who want to have lam-rim realizations, also to do the same. Even though you are finished, even though you have finished 100,000 or 200,000 or 400,000 prostrations, whatever, you should still continue to do some number of prostrations each day with the confession of downfalls.

The power, the benefit of reciting these holy names is unbelievable. There are numberless buddhas, but I think these are the essential, the key, to purify different negative karmas. Because of my interest, I have collected several different texts on the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas. It is very inspiring. There is Nagarjuna's commentary, a commentary on the names, then another commentary from one great Amdo lama, then another from one famous Mongolian lama, etc. There are about seven texts. I also tried to collect texts from other traditions, if they have, texts that explain about the benefits of the Thirty-Five Buddhas' practice. I asked Gene Smith, who has incredible knowledge of texts and who himself has a collection of an unbelievable number of texts. Even if he doesn't have them himself, he knows from which country he can get them. He knows which texts His Holiness has, and which text His Holiness the Dalai Lama's gurus have. So, I asked him if there are commentaries or teachings on the Thirty-Five Buddhas from other traditions, but he could not find any. Also, as

with the Sixteen Arhat Puja, or the Medicine Buddha Puja, there is a similar practice that you can do with the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas. It is similar to how the Medicine Buddha Puja is done, with the seven limbs, extensive offerings, all of this. There is a text from Mongolia that explains how one can do a similar practice with the Thirty-Five Buddhas. It is extremely good, so powerful to do it in that way for a retreat, perhaps for a weekend. From this text, hopefully, we can have a Thirty-Five Buddhas' practice to do retreat, such as for one or two days, to make sessions as with the Medicine Buddha Puja or Tara Puja, something like that. This practice is unbelievably powerful.

Colophon:

Commentary on the Practice of Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas and commentary on the *General Confession* are a compilation of teachings by Lama Zopa Rinpoche. One is extracted with permission from *Ganden Lha Gyäma, The Hundreds of Deities of the Land of Joy*, commentary by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, published by Kopan Monastery, Kathmandu, Nepal, 2001. Additional commentary extracted from teachings given at Milarepa Center, Vermont, August 2002, and Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, September, 2004. Transcripts provided courtesy of Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive. Benefits of prostrations to each of the Thirty-five Buddhas were taught from commentaries written by Ngülchu Dharmabhadra and Gyältsab Je Rinpoche. Lightly edited and reformatted by Venerable Constance Miller, Kendall Magnussen, FPMT Education Services, April 2003. Commentary from teachings at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa edited and re-formatted into former version by Venerable Gyalten Mindrol, FPMT Education Services, December 2005. All errors are the responsibility of the editors.

Options for Practice

Adding Vajrasattva and Chenrezig Practice

According to the advice of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, one may add twenty-one long Vajrasattva mantras and the *Praise to Avalokiteshvara* ("Po" Praise) to the practice of *Confession of Downfalls to the Thirty-Five Buddhas*. This way, the accumulation of merit and the power of purification is increased.

After reciting the names of the Seven Medicine Buddhas, continue prostrating while reciting twenty-one long Vajrasattva mantras. Follow the mantras with the *Praise to Avalokiteshvara* from the Nyung Nä practice. Then continue the Thirty-Five Buddhas' practice with the *Confession Prayer*, *General Confession*, and so on.

The Hundred Syllable Vajrasattva Mantra

OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA / VAJRASATTVA
TVENOPATISHTHA / DRIDHO ME BHAVA / SUTOSHYO ME
BHAVA / SUPOSHYO ME BHAVA / ANURAKTO ME BHAVA /
SARVA SIDDHIM ME PRAYACCHA / SARVA KARMA SU
CHAME / CHITTAM SHRIYAM KURU HUM / HA HA HA HA HO /
BHAGAVAN SARVA TATHAGATA / VAJRA MAME MUNCHA /
VAJRA BHAVA MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA AH HUM PHAT (21x)

Praise to Avalokiteshvara

OM I prostrate to the protector of the world.
You are the Guru of the world, praised by the three realms.
The one who is praised by the chief of the worldly gods, the maras
and Brahma.

Praising you, supreme king of sages, fulfills (the wishes of beings).
I prostrate to the supreme protector of the three realms.
Holder of a noble holy body (containing) the bodies of infinite
ones gone to bliss,
Your crown holds the One Gone to Bliss of Infinite Light.
Your supremely generous right hand dispels the hunger and thirst
of the hungry ghosts;
Your left hand is perfectly adorned with a golden lotus.
You are the one with a swift, orange garland of fragrant top-hair.
Your face is beautiful like the full moon.
Your lotus-like eyes are exquisite and encompassing.
Your fragrant (body) is pure white, like snow or a conch.
You wear clusters of flawless glittering pearls;
You are adorned with beautiful light rays like the red of dawn.
Your arms are arranged like a pond of lotuses;
You are youthful and have the color of the autumn moon.
Your two shoulders are adorned by many jewels;
Your palms are as smooth and young as the best of leaves.
Your left breast is covered by an antelope skin;
You wear alluring earrings, bracelets, and ornaments.
You dwell on a supreme stainless lotus;
The surface of your abdomen is as smooth as a lotus petal.
You have a sublime golden belt adorned with jewels;
You wear a skirt of exquisite cloth around the hips.
You have the Able One's supreme wisdom, gone beyond the
great ocean;
You have collected a multitude of merit to acquire the
supreme state.
You are the source of constant bliss and the dispeller of aging and
disease;
You are the triple-liberator and display holy deeds to those
enjoying space.
Supreme embodied being, victor in battle with mara's forces,
Your feet are alluring with the sound of golden anklets.
You isolate (beings from self-interest) with four abodes of Brahma.
You move with a swan's gait and like a proud elephant.

You fully completed the accumulation and look after the doctrine.
You are the one who frees from the ocean of milk and the ocean
of water.

Whatever man or woman always rises at dawn,
Respectfully brings Avalokiteshvara to mind, and
Purely and clearly recites this supreme praise,
All their mundane and supramundane needs will be fulfilled in
this life and all future lives.

To return to the Thirty-Five Buddhas' practice, go to p. 14.

Evening Practice Advice from Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Every night, before going to bed, do Vajrasattva practice, reciting one mala, a half mala, or at least twenty-one repetitions of the long mantra. If you can combine your recitation with prostrations, it will be very powerful; two powerful practices combined. You will collect extensive merit and purify unbelievably heavy karma. Otherwise, you can do your Vajrasattva practice while seated. It depends on whether you have the opportunity to do prostrations and on how you feel. You can decide for yourself.

You can begin your evening Vajrasattva practice with prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas, going straight through, not repeating each buddha's name over and over with each prostration as in the morning practice, that will be very powerful because reciting each buddha's name even once purifies many thousands of eons of negative karma. This practice is unbelievably powerful.

Colophon:

Instructions on options for practicing prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas was compiled by Venerable Mindrol, FPMT Education Services, December 2005, from teachings given by Lama Zopa Rinpoche to Venerable Sarah Thresher, New Zealand, 2000, and from *Making Life Meaningful*, Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, 2000.

Guidelines for Completing 100,000 Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas

Individuals wishing to do the preliminary practice of 100,000 prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas may do so in full-time retreat or as a daily practice. You may also do part of your 100,000 prostrations as a daily practice and the rest in full-time retreat. The main thing is once you have begun your prostrations, it is essential to recite the *Confession of Downfalls to the Thirty-Five Buddhas* every day together with a minimum of three prostrations (seven is better) in order not to "break" the retreat until you have completed your 100,000.

Prostrations as a Daily Practice

To do prostrations as a daily practice, it is best to do two sessions a day, one in the morning and one at night. If this is not possible, then it is best to do at least one session in the morning as it is said that having done prostrations to the Thirty-Five Buddhas, all subsequent prayers and virtuous activities of the day will be more successful. Of course, if that is not possible, doing the practice in the evening is fine, too!

It is essential to make sure that the four opponent powers of purification are complete whenever you do a session. These are:

- refuge in the Three Jewels infused with a mind of bodhichitta
- regret for negative actions done
- remedy (in this case the *Confession of Downfalls*)

- resolve to refrain from these negative actions again for as long as one is able

In addition, it is important to generate a mind of bodhichitta to ensure that your practice leads to enlightenment and empowers you to be of greater and greater benefit to others.

When doing a session of prostrations, spend time to generate the mind of refuge and bodhichitta. Then reflect on specific negative actions you wish to purify both for yourself and others and generate a mind of regret. Visualize the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas in the space before you and then go through the practice as it is laid out. You may either:

- prostrate three times to each buddha as you recite their name until you have recited the entire list of names, or
- prostrate once to each buddha and go through the entire list three times in a row.

Either way, if you complete three prostrations to each of the Thirty-Five Buddhas together with one prostration to each of the Seven Medicine Buddhas, at the end of one session, you will have completed at least 111 prostrations. This is helpful since it is traditional to do 100,000 repetitions plus 10 percent to make up for mistakes. This way, your additional 10 percent is included in the practice and once you have counted your 100,000, you are indeed finished!

It is extremely important to verbally recite each buddha's name as many times as you can with each prostration. This allows you to receive the greatest benefit of the practice since merely reciting the names of the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas is extremely powerful to purify past negative actions.

You can do 100, 200, or any number of prostrations during any given session using the list of names as your basis. For example, if you want to do 200 prostrations in your session, then just go through the list making three prostrations to each buddha and recite the list all the way through two consecutive times (3 prostrations x 35 names x 2 consecutive times = 200+ prostrations). If you are using the alternate method, then you would recite the

entire list six times through, making a prostration to each buddha as you recite their name (35 names x 1 prostration x 6 repetitions of the list = 200+ prostrations).

Once you have completed however many prostrations you intend to do in a given session, then continue the practice by prostrating to the seven Medicine Buddhas and reciting the confession prayer. If you do more than 300 prostrations a session, you may need to make additional prostrations to the Seven Medicine Buddhas to make sure to complete your extra 10 percent of prostrations required for each session.

When you get to the **confession prayer**, you can either continue prostrating or **kneel on your right knee with head bowed and hands in prostration mudra at the heart**. Make sure when you get to the section in the confession prayer where you vow not to do these actions again that you make a firm resolve in your mind as this completes the four opponent powers. If resolving not to do a certain action again for the rest of one's life isn't realistic, then resolve not to do the action again for a year, a week, or even for one day. The important thing is to resolve not to do the negative action again for a specific period of time, stick to your promise and then strengthen it by repeating the resolve day after day. Then, continue with the *General Confession* prayer and dedicate.

Keep track of how many prostrations you have completed on a calendar or some other easy reference so that you can rejoice as you make your way through this extraordinary purification journey!

Doing a Prostration Retreat

If doing prostrations in full-time retreat, it is best to do them as part of a practice of guru yoga such as *Ganden Lha Gyäma* or *Lama Chöpa* together with lam-rim meditation. To do this, you begin your day with your guru yoga practice up to the point in the seven-limbed prayer of confession. After the confession verse, you do your prostrations to the Confession Buddhas as described above, complete your guru yoga (if it is a short one) and then dedicate.

If you are doing the *Ganden Lha Gyäma*, after prostrations, you can complete the seven-limbed prayer and recite the *Foundation of All Good Qualities*, doing a short lam-rim meditation on whatever topic you have reached. For example, your first topic is on guru devotion. So, recite the first verse of this lam-rim prayer and then pause to do the appropriate meditation. Your second session would include meditation on the precious human rebirth, third on death and impermanence, etc. using the lam-rim prayer as your guide for the next meditation topic.

This way, with each session, you do the *Ganden Lha Gyäma*, prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas, and a short lam-rim meditation. Continue this for anywhere from four to six sessions a day. It will probably take you from between two to three months to complete 100,000 prostrations in full retreat.

If you are doing your prostrations with *Lama Chöpa*, your first session would begin with the *Lama Chöpa*, proceeding all the way through Verse 38. Here you stop and do your prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas as explained above, then dedicate. Your next session begins with recitation of a short lam-rim prayer such as the *Foundation of All Good Qualities*, stopping to do ten or fifteen minutes of lam-rim meditation on whatever topic you have reached in the outline. You can do a short lam-rim meditation without reciting the lam-rim prayer, if you like. Then do your prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas as before and dedicate. Continue this for four to six sessions each day. After your final session of prostrations, complete the *Lama Chöpa* spending time to reflect more in depth on the lam-rim topics you have meditated on that day when you get to those points of the lam-rim prayer.

Whatever guru yoga practice you use, after your final session of the day, do extensive dedication prayers together with the multiplying mantras found in the *Dedication Prayers* section of *Essential Buddhist Prayers: An FPMT Prayer Book, Volume 1*.

Advice from Lama Zopa Rinpoche

In the Lam-rim, Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo explained three points on preliminary practices that I think are particularly effective for the mind. Our minds are like rock or iron and thus are difficult to purify and to subdue, and difficult to fertilize. So it is difficult for the crops of realization of the graduated path to enlightenment to grow. Therefore, it is very useful for the mind to hear advice based on some of the points from Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo's Lam-rim.

He said: "In order to accumulate merit, you should do each prostration correctly, not just very quickly in order to complete high numbers."

According to Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition, when doing the preliminary practices the total numbers, such as 100,000 and so on, are not regarded as the most important thing. "Even if one doesn't do many, the few that are done should be done correctly," is what Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo is advising. He goes on to say: "Some people say, 'I have done the preliminary practices,' after having done 100,000 prostrations, but they have taken it very easy!" There are two ways of interpreting "taken it easy"; what he means here is that they have not been aware of the correct manner of prostrating; they have not concentrated on the object of prostration, the merit field, and they have not been aware of their motivation. He means that the practice was done imperfectly. Perfect prostrations are not easily done! So, we should not do that. He is saying that you should not be too concerned about the numbers: "Prostrations should be done correctly, and if possible, many should be done."

Colophon:

Guidelines on Completing 100,000 Prostrations compiled and edited by Kendall Magnussen, FPMT Education Services, April 2003. Lama Zopa Rinpoche's advice taken from teachings at Milarepa Center, August 2002. All errors are solely the responsibility of the editor.

Appendix

How to Make a Prostration

1. Put your hands together, with the thumbs cupped inside the hands. Start with your hands in this position at the heart with the fingertips pointing upward. This is known as the "prostration mudra."
2. Now, place your joined hands at the crown of your head, with fingertips pointing upward.
3. Then take your hands, still in prostration mudra, to touch your forehead, throat, and heart keeping the fingertips pointing upward.
4. Place your hands flat onto the floor while you drop forward onto your knees. Keep your fingers together neatly.
5. Now, move your hands farther out in front of you and lie all the way down onto the floor with your chin tucked in and your forehead touching the floor.
6. While you are prostrate, you may either: (a) bring your hands together into the prostration mudra, raise them up over your head and bring them down again to the space in front of your head; or (b) alternatively, you can simply raise your fingers.
7. Now, bring your hands to the side of your body and press the palm of your hands against the floor to raise yourself up to a kneeling position, and then stand up.

This series of postures is considered as one full-length prostration. To begin your next prostration, again place your hands in

prostration mudra at the crown of your head and repeat the series. Once you have finished with your prostrations, after you stand up for the last time, place your hands in prostration mudra and again touch the crown, forehead, throat, and heart. Finish with your hands in prostration mudra at your heart.

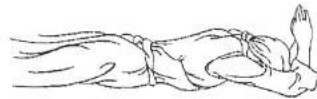
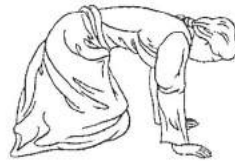
For a “five-limb” prostration, go through the same process as above, except instead of laying yourself down on the ground, after kneeling down, bow forward and touch your forehead to the ground. Then stand up as before. The “five limbs” that should always touch the ground are the two hands, two knees, and forehead.

The shortest form of prostration is to place your hands in prostration mudra at your heart.



Prostration Mudra





Colophon:

How to Make a Prostration was extracted with permission from *Everlasting Rain of Nectar*, by Geshe Jampa Gyatso, Wisdom Publications. A more elaborate explanation of how to do prostrations can be found in the original text. Line drawings of prostrations by Peter Iseli. Line drawing of the Buddha image by Andy Weber.

Helpful Resources

Bodhisattva's Confession of Moral Downfalls Practice CD: Guided practice of prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas done precisely as outlined in this booklet. Led by Venerable Sarah Thresher.

Poster of the 35 Confession Buddhas: Legal-size poster of the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas, a helpful aid for visualization.

Confession of Downfalls: Commentary on prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas and Vajrasattva purification practice by Arya Nagarjuna, Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, Geshe Rabten, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and Gegen Khyentse. Previously entitled *Mahayana Purification*, translated and edited by Brian Beresford. Available through Snow Lion Publications (www.snowlionpub.com).

Everlasting Rain of Nectar: Commentary on prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas, by Geshe Jampa Gyatso. Available from Wisdom Publications (www.wisdompubs.org).

Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga: Practice booklet of *Ganden Lha Gyäma* with instructions by Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

Ganden Lha Gyäma: Commentary on *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga* with additional instructions on how to do the preliminary practices of refuge, prostrations, mandala offerings, and water bowl offerings by Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

Lama Chöpa Jorchö: *Lama Chöpa* practice with additional prac-

tices for purification and accumulation of merit such as a bath offering and requests to the lineage lamas.

Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat: Commentary on Vajrasattva, prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas and other important practices, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Available from the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive (www.lamayeshe.com).

Essential Buddhist Prayers Volumes 1 and 2: Volume 1 of this 3 part Essential Buddhist Prayers series contains all the Basic Prayers and Practices for daily practice. Volume 2 contains a comprehensive collection of the practices that Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche advises should be practiced regularly by all FPMT centers.

FPMT Retreat Prayer Book, 2010: This edition of the FPMT Retreat Prayer Book will be used in retreats with Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Students are also encouraged to use this edition in their personal retreats as it includes all of the daily practices advised by Lama Zopa Rinpoche when in retreat.

All FPMT Education Publications, as well as many other dharma items, are available from the FPMT Foundation Store. Go to our website (www.fpmt.org/shop) or call toll-free (866) 251-3674.