

## **Guidance on practicing visualization of the Merit Field**

The text in the following six pages comes from the book *The Door of Liberation*, edited by Geshe Wangyal. This brief section is from the chapter on Tsongkhapa's "Three Principles of the Path." The chapter offers Tsongkhapa's text before this section, and then here presents guidance for visualizing the "merit field" in order to gain confidence via a sense of blessing. The chapter continues with more detail in subsequent pages but this part here is core for visualizing the merit field.

[A more general description of *why* and *how* to do this practice is in another file called "Visualizing the Merit Field," by the American Buddhist nun Thubten Chodron. These two documents can be used together.]

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THE THREE PRINCIPLES OF THE PATH: INSTRUCTIONS FOR  
MEDITATION BY THE FOURTH PANCHEN LAMA

*Om vasti.* Compassionate, holy, and reverend lamas, I bow down at your feet and go to you for refuge. By your great mercy, may I follow you always.

Herein is the practice of the three guiding principles of the path, the special precepts that the protector Mañjuśrī gave directly to the great Tsongkhapa, King of Dharma of the three realms. These three principles condense the essence of all the teachings and their commentaries into stages of practice for an individual. The instructions for practice have two parts: what should be done in the actual session, and what should be done between sessions. The actual session consists of preparation,<sup>32</sup> subject matter, and dedication.

Clean and dust the room in which you are practicing, and place an image of Buddha or some other religious object before you. Make pure offerings. Sit in meditation posture, and repeat the refuge prayer three times:

I go for refuge to the lama.  
I go for refuge to the Buddha.  
I go for refuge to the Dharma.  
I go for refuge to the Saṅgha.

To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Superior Assembly,  
I go for refuge until enlightenment is reached.

As you say this, visualize rays of light and nectar of five different colors streaming from the objects of refuge. This light and nectar are antidotes; they enter the minds and bodies of all living beings and purify defilements, sins, madness, and sickness, as well as their latent

tendencies, which have accumulated from beginningless time. Feel that you are under the protection of the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha). Then generate bodhi-mind by repeating:

Through whatever merit I have accumulated  
By giving, moral practice, patience, effort, meditation, and  
wisdom,  
May I attain buddhahood for the sake of all living beings.

And pray:

By the roots of virtue that come from giving, moral practice, and meditation that I have done, had others do, or rejoiced at others' doing, may I obtain complete perfect buddhahood for the sake of all living beings. I will do this. For this purpose I will learn the deeds of the bodhisattvas. Bless me, lamas and gods, that I may be able to do this.

By strongly requesting this, you please the assembled lamas and deities; a duplicate image separates from each of their bodies, and by dissolving into you, transforms you into the body of lama and Buddha. Rays of light radiate from your body purified into lama and Buddha. This light shines upon all living beings and purifies them. You should have the intense feeling that you are establishing all beings in the high position of lama and Buddha. This is said to be the special precept of the oral lineage of *Wensa* (*dben sa*), the meditation that generates bodhi-mind through actualizing the path and its final goal.

Then, contemplate the four immeasurables—equanimity, love, compassion, and joy:

All living beings, our aged mothers, are wandering helplessly in *samsāra*. What is the cause of this? They wander in *samsāra* because of desire and hatred, and therefore they are miserable.

If all beings were in a state of immeasurable equanimity, free from desire and hatred, how wonderful it would be! May they achieve this state. I will establish them in this state of immeasurable equanimity. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this.

If all living beings possessed happiness and the causes of happiness, how wonderful it would be! May they possess them. I will cause them to have happiness and the causes of happiness. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this.

If all living beings were free from misery and the causes of misery, how wonderful it would be! May they be free from these. I will free them from misery and the causes of misery. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this.

If all living beings dwelt continually in the happy lives of humans or gods and in the bliss of liberation, how wonderful it would be! May they never separate from these happy states. I will cause them never to separate from this great happiness. Lamas and gods, help me to do this!

Praying very strongly, imagine a rain of nectar falling on all living beings, purifying their defilements.

To generate bodhi-mind as it is specifically taught here, think, "For the benefit of all living beings, my aged mothers, no matter what happens to me, I will attain as quickly as possible the precious position of a completely perfected buddha. With this aim, I will enter into meditation on the three guiding principles of the path."

Repeat this prayer again and again.

The objects of refuge then dissolve gradually into light, merging inward from the outer limits of the holy assembly. This light dissolves into Tsongkhapa, who is seated in the center. Tsongkhapa then melts into light and dissolves into your forehead between your eyebrows. Feel intensely that you have been blessed by all the objects of refuge.

In order to visualize the field of assembly, clearly imagine in the vast space in front of you the extensive wish-fulfilling jewel tree, its branches laden with leaves, flowers, and fruit. On its top are one hundred thousand lotus petals; upon them, eight magnificent lions hold up a magnificent and resplendent throne. Your own kind root lama, appearing as Tsongkhapa, King of Dharma, is seated on a cushion of sun and moon and lotus. His clear white face is smiling with pleasure. He is wearing the three religious robes and a golden pandit's hat, and his hands, at his heart, form the mudrā of turning the wheel of Dharma.

Each hand holds the stem of a blue lotus. Upon the blossoming blue lotus at his right shoulder, the wisdom of all the buddhas is embodied in the form of a flaming sword. Its light fills the world, and the flame that burns from its tip consumes all ignorance. Upon the blossoming blue lotus at his left shoulder is a volume of the *One Hundred Thousand Verse Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, the sole mother of all buddhas of the three times. On its sapphire pages are glowing letters of burnished gold, from which shine rays of light, clearing away the ignorance of living beings. These letters are not just shapes, but speak out in a clear tone the stages, path, and final goal. They proclaim the way of acting for the benefit of all living beings, beginning from the first arising of bodhi-mind to the twenty-seven great deeds of a buddha. Merely by holding this image in mind, you are awakening your inclination to the Mahāyāna path.

Seated in the heart of Tsongkhapa is the conqueror Śākyamuni, and seated in his heart is the conqueror Vajradhara. In each pore of Tsongkhapa's body are countless buddha-fields, and from each of these, innumerable rays of light shine in the ten directions. On the tip of each ray appear an inconceivable number of buddhas, equal to the number of beings in samsāra. The actions of each buddha are for the benefit of all living beings.

Tsongkhapa is seated in the middle of a five-colored rainbow in

the full lotus position, and upon a ray of light that radiates upwards from his heart are many lamas, beginning with the root lama who actually revealed this teaching to you through the conqueror Vajradhara at the top. Except for the conqueror Vajradhara, all are actually your own root lama, yet they appear in the form of Mañjuśrī, orange in color, whose right hand holds aloft a flashing sword and whose left hand holds at his heart a book that has as its nature radiant light. From Tsongkhapa's heart a ray of light emanates to his right. Upon it are seated, on moon-lotus cushions, the lamas of Maitreya's lineage of the extensive deeds of love and compassion. Upon a ray of light emanating to his left are seated the lamas of Mañjuśrī's lineage of the profound view of voidness. On a ray of light extending directly in front of Tsongkhapa are seated the lamas with whom you have actual dharmic connection.

Surrounding Tsongkhapa, a multitude of yidams, buddhas, bodhisattvas, dākinīs, and protectors of the Dharma are seated on lion thrones. On jeweled stands in front of each of them, their own teachings appear as books that have radiant light as their actual nature. On the crown of the head of each in the holy assembly is a white *Om*; on the throat of each is a red *Āḥ*; and at the heart of each a blue *Hūm*. From the *Hūm*, light radiates in the ten directions. This light invite wisdom beings, like those on whom you have been meditating, to come from their dwelling places. These wisdom beings dissolve into those of the holy assembly. Feel intensely that by this, your lama has the nature of the three refuges—Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha.

Then, generating yourself as a deity, make offerings of pure water, fine cloth, and so on to the field of assembly. Having done this, when you meditate on the path, your mind will become clear and you will be purified of defilements.

Then, offer the seven acts of worship<sup>33</sup> and the *mandala*. These are the keys to accumulation and purification, which increase merit and clear away sins. In this way meditation is furthered and obstructions disappear.

