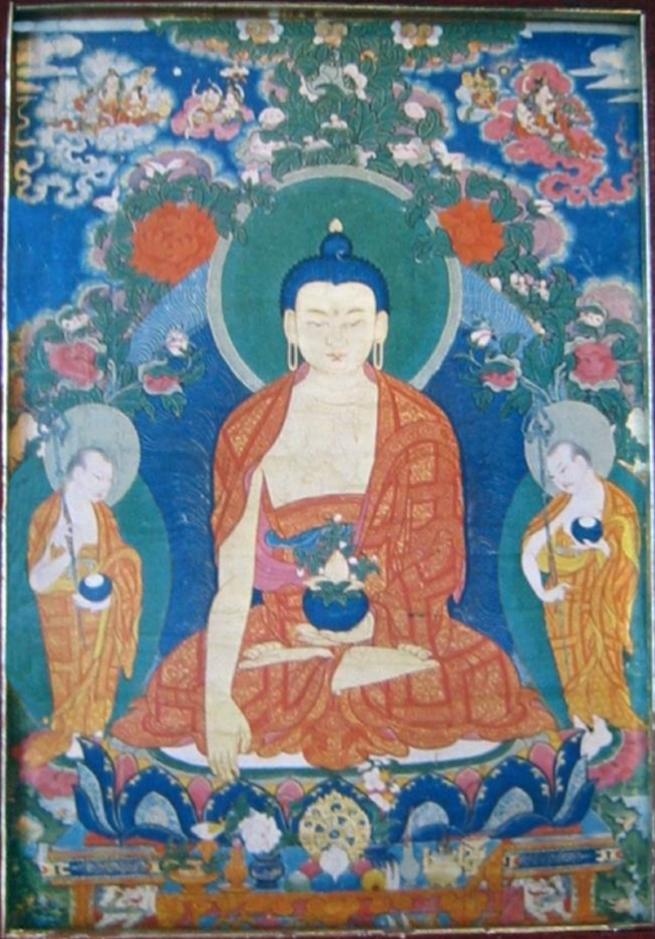


**PRAYERS AND
MEDITATIONS
MIND AND ITS
POTENTIAL
MODULE 1 OF
FPMT'S
DISCOVERING
BUDDHISM
SHANTIDEVA
CENTER NEW
YORK**



THIS IS LAMA YESHES ALTAR
CARRIED ALWAYS WITH HIM

**MIND AND ITS POTENTIAL MODULE 1 OF
FPMT'S DISCOVERING BUDDHISM**

**PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS FOR THE
INTENSIVE PRACTICE DAY**

**PRODUCED FOR THE STUDENTS OF
SHANTIDEVA CENTER, NEW YORK**



**SHANTIDEVA CENTER
NEW YORK**

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PART ONE: PRAYERS

1. REFUGE AND BODHICHITTA, MANDALA

1. TAKING REFUGE AND GENERATING BODHICHITTA

SANG GYÄ CHHÖ DANG TSHOG KYI CHHOG NAM LA

I take refuge until I am enlightened

JANG CHHUB BAR DU DAG NI KYAB SU CHHI

In the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly.

DAG GI JIN SOG GYI PÄI TSHOG NAM KYI

By my merits of generosity and so forth,

DRO LA PHÄN CHHIR SANG GYÄ DRUB PAR SHOG (3X)

May I become a buddha to benefit transmigratory beings.

(3x)

2. MANDALA OFFERING

SA ZHI PÖ KYI JUG SHING ME TOG TRAM

The ground is blessed with scent and with flowers strewn

RI RAB LING ZHI NYI DÄ GYÄN PA DI

Adorned with Mount Meru the four lands, sun and moon

SANG GYÄ ZHING DU MIG TE ÜL WA YI

Transformed as a pure land and offered

DRO KÜN NAM DAG ZHING LA CHÖ PAR SHOG

May all wandering beings enjoy this buddha land.

3. INNER MANDALA OFFERING

DAG GI CHHAG DANG MONG SUM KYE WÄI YÜL

All those objects of my mind's three poisons –

DRA NYEN BAR SUM LÜ DANG LONG CHÖ CHÄ

Coveted friend, foe and stranger, body, wealth, worldly
pleasure,

PHANG PA ME PAR BÜL GYI LEG ZHE NÄ

Without a feeling of loss, I surrender

DUG SUM RANG SAR DRÖL WAR JIN GYI LOB

Receive them please and free all beings from their bondage.

IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAMI

***Mandala offerings adapted for chanting by Rob
Preece***

2. THE HEART SUTRA: SUTRA OF THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM

I prostrate to the Three Noble Rare Sublime Ones.

COMMON PROLOGUE

Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavan was dwelling on Mass of Vultures Mountain in Rajagriha together with a great community of monks and a great community of bodhisattvas.

SPECIAL PROLOGUE

At that time, the Bhagavan was absorbed in the concentration on the categories of phenomena called “Profound Perception.”

BUDDHA BLESSES THE MINDS OF SHARIPUTRA AND AVALOKITESHVARA

Also, at that time, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara looked upon the very practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and beheld those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.

SHARIPUTRA’S QUESTION

Then, through the power of Buddha, the venerable Shariputra said this to the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara: “How should any son of the lineage train who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom?”

AVALOKITESHVARA’S BRIEF ANSWER

He said that and the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara said this to the venerable Sharadvatiputra. “Shariputra, any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom should look upon it like

this, correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.

AVALOKITESHVARA’S EXTENSIVE ANSWER

“Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is also not other than emptiness.

In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness are empty.

“Shariputra, likewise, all phenomena are emptiness; without characteristic; unproduced, unceased; stainless, not without stain; not deficient, not fulfilled.

“Shariputra, therefore, in emptiness there is –

The five aggregates

No form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness;

The six senses

No eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind;

The objects of the six senses

No visual form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no object of touch, and no phenomenon.

The six sense bases

There is no eye element and so on up to and including no mind element and no mental consciousness element.

The twelve links

There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to and including no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death.

The four noble truths

Similarly, there is no suffering, origination, cessation, and path;

There is no exalted wisdom, no attainment, and also no non-attainment.

“Shariputra, therefore, because there is no attainment, bodhisattvas rely on and dwell in the perfection of wisdom, the mind without obscuration and without fear. Having completely passed beyond error, they reach the end-point of nirvana.

“All the buddhas who dwell in the three times also manifestly, completely awoken to unsurpassable, perfect, complete enlightenment in reliance on the perfection of wisdom.

THE MANTRA OF THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM

“Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom, the mantra of great knowledge, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra equal to the unequalled, the mantra that thoroughly pacifies all suffering, should be known as truth since it is not false. The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is declared:

TAYATA OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI
SVAHA

[TAYATA OM GO! GO! GO BEYOND! GO PERFECTLY BEYOND!
GO TO ENLIGHTENMENT! SVAHA]

“Shariputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva should train in the profound perfection of wisdom like that.”

BUDDHA’S APPROVAL

Then the Bhagavan arose from that concentration and commended the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara saying: “Well said, well said, son of the lineage, it is like that. It is like that; one should practice the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have indicated; even the tathagatas rejoice.”

EVERYONE REJOICES IN THE BUDDHA’S WORDS

The Bhagavan having thus spoken, the venerable Sharadvatiputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara, those surrounding in their entirety along with the world of gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas were overjoyed and highly praised that spoken by the Bhagavan.

This completes the Ārya-bhagavatī-prajñâpâramitâ-hridaya-sûtra.

COLOPHON

Translated from the Tibetan by Gelong Thubten Tsultrim (George Churinoff), the first day of Saka Dawa, 1999, at Tushita Meditation Centre, Dharamsala, India. Amended March 7, 2001, in the New Mexico desert. Published by FPMT.

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3. FOUNDATION OF ALL GOOD QUALITIES

The foundation of all good qualities is the kind and perfect, pure
Guru;

Correct devotion to him is the root of the path.
By clearly seeing this and applying great effort,
Please bless me to rely upon him with great respect.

Understanding that the precious freedom of this rebirth is
found only once,
Is greatly meaningful, and is difficult to find again,
Please bless me to generate the mind that unceasingly,
Day and night, takes its essence.

This life is as impermanent as a water bubble;
Remember how quickly it decays and death comes.
After death, just like a shadow follows the body,
The results of black and white karma follow.

Finding firm and definite conviction in this,
Please bless me always to be careful
To abandon even the slightest negative action
And accomplish all virtuous deeds.

Seeking samsaric pleasures is the door to all suffering:
They are uncertain and cannot be relied upon.
Recognizing these shortcomings,
Please bless me to generate the strong wish for the bliss of
liberation.

Led by this pure thought,
Mindfulness, alertness, and great caution arise.

The root of the teachings is keeping the pratimoksha vows:
Please bless me to accomplish this essential practice.

Just as I have fallen into the sea of samsara,
So have all mother transmigratory beings.
Please bless me to see this, train in supreme bodhichitta,
And bear the responsibility of freeing transmigratory beings.

Even if I develop only bodhichitta, but I don't practice the three
types of morality,
I will not achieve enlightenment.
With my clear recognition of this,
Please bless me to practice the bodhisattva vows with great
energy.

Once I have pacified distractions to wrong objects
And correctly analyzed the meaning of reality,
Please bless me to generate quickly within my mind stream
The unified path of calm abiding and special insight.

Having become a pure vessel by training in the general path,
Please bless me to enter
The holy gateway of the fortunate ones:
The supreme vajra vehicle.

At that time, the basis of accomplishing the two attainments
Is keeping pure vows and samaya.
As I have become firmly convinced of this,
Please bless me to protect these vows and pledges like my life.

Then, having realized the importance of the two stages,
The essence of the Vajrayana,
By practicing with great energy, never giving up the four
sessions,

Please bless me to realize the teachings of the holy Guru.

Like that, may the gurus who show the noble path
And the spiritual friends who practice it have long lives.
Please bless me to pacify completely
All outer and inner hindrances.

In all my lives, never separated from perfect gurus,
May I enjoy the magnificent Dharma.
By completing the qualities of the stages and paths,
May I quickly attain the state of Vajradhara.

4. DEDICATION AND LONG LIFE PRAYERS

1. DEDICATION PRAYER TO ACHIEVE BUDDHAHOOD

GE WA DI YI NYUR DU DAG

Due to this virtue, may I quickly

LA MA SANG GYÄ DRUB GYUR NÄ

Become a guru-buddha

DRO WA CHIG KYANG MA LÜ PA

And lead all transmigratory beings,

DE YI SA LA GÖ PAR SHOG

Without exception, to that state.

2. TO ACTUALIZE BODHICITTA

JANG CHHUB SEM CHHOG RIN PO CHHE

May the precious supreme bodhichitta

MA KYE PA NAM KYE GYUR CHIG

Not yet born arise and grow.

KYE PA NYAM PA ME PA YI

May that arisen not decline,

GONG NÄ GONG DU PHEL WAR SHOG

But increase more and more.

3. FOR THE LONG LIFE OF HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA 1

By Lama Zopa Rinpoche

JIG TEN KHAM DIR PHÄN DE MA LÜ PA

The wish-granting Wish-Fulfilling Jewel,

GANG LÄ JUNG WÄI SAM PHEL YI ZHIN NOR

Source of every single benefit and happiness in this world,

KA DRIN TSHUNG ME TÄN DZIN GYA TSHO LA

To the incomparably kind Tenzin Gyatso, I beseech:

SÖL WA DEB SO THUG ZHE LHÜN DRUB SHOG

May all your holy wishes be spontaneously fulfilled.

4. FOR THE LONG LIFE OF HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA 2

GANG RII RA WÄ KOR WÄI ZHING KHAM DIR

In the land encircled by snow mountains,

PHÄN DANG DE WA MA LÜ JUNG WÄI NÄ

You are the source of all happiness and good.

CHÄN RÄ ZIG WANG TÄN DZIN GYA TSHO YI

All-powerful Chenrezig, Tenzin Gyatso,

ZHAB PÄ SI THÄI BAR DU TÄN GYUR CHIG

Please remain until samsara ends.

5. FOR HIS HOLINESS'S WISHES TO BE SPONTANEOUSLY FULFILLED

TONG NYI NYING JE ZUNG DU JUG PÄI LAM

Savior of the Land of Snow teachings and transmigratory beings,

CHHE CHER SÄL DZÄ GANG CHÄN TÄN DRÖI GÖN

Who extensively clarifies the path that unifies emptiness and compassion,

CHHAG NA PÄ MO TÄN DZIN GYA TSHO LA

To the Lotus Holder, Tenzin Gyatso, I beseech –

SÖL WA DEB SO ZHE DÖN LHÜN DRUB SHOG

May all your holy wishes be spontaneously fulfilled.

6. FOR THE LONG LIFE OF LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

THUB TSHÜL CHHANG ZHING JAM GÖN GYÄL WÄI TÄN

You who uphold the Subduer's moral way, who serve as the bountiful bearer-of-all,

DZIN KYONG PEL WÄ KÜN ZÖ DOG POR DZÄ

Sustaining, preserving, and spreading Manjunath's victorious doctrine;

CHHOG SUM KUR WÄI LEG MÖN THU DRUB PA

Who masterfully accomplishes magnificent prayers honoring
the Three Sublime Ones:

DAG SOG DÜL JÄI GÖN DU ZHAB TÄN SHOG

Savior of myself and others, your disciples, please, please live
long!

7. FOR THE LONG LIFE OF TENZIN OSEL RINPOCHE

LHAG PAR NUB CHHOG SA THÄI DRO WA LA

Venerable one, to you whose kindness exceeds that of all the
conquerors for those wanderers in far-off places, especially
the West,

GYÄL WA KÜN LÄ LHAG PÄI DRIN CHÄN JE

Mindful of your loving concern for us, in intentionally
descending again

LAR YANG SAM ZHIN CHHOG THÄI RIG RÜ SU

Into a family of a far distant land, we make this request:

JÖN LA KA DRIN DRÄN PÄI KHYÖ ZHAB SÖL

Lama, please, please live long.

PART TWO: MEDITATIONS

5. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE INTENSIVE PRACTICE DAY

PREPARATION

Prepare the space to sit comfortably for the day. It should be clean and tidy, free of clutter and distracting objects as much as possible. It's helpful to have virtuous images, such as the Buddha, in front of your meditation seat/cushion. You may wish to make offerings such as light, incense and flowers. Bring into your meditation area any reading materials etc., which you will need during the day.

Remember not to place any Dharma books or materials on the floor.

Remain as mindful as possible during the entire day on the purpose of this practice, to integrate the material you have learned during this module.

In between sessions do not read newspapers, mail or any other non-Dharma material. Keep the day free from television, phone calls etc., and from conversations with others. Regard the day as a time of meditation retreat and spend the day alone without any distractions. If this is not possible in the family home, please investigate another more suitable environment for your retreat.

SESSION STRUCTURE

Two sessions in the morning and two in the afternoon, with adequate break times in between sessions. For example: Session one, then half hour break. Session two, then lunch break. Session three, half hour break. Session four and conclusion.

Session 1: approximately 1 hour

Spend some time generating a strong and clear motivation for the day and the session.

With this motivation in mind, for the first part of the session review the transcript of the teachings from session one, or any of the

other required or suggested readings that you find particularly inspirational.

Then practice the first meditation, Reflection on the Continuity of Consciousness, attempting to gain a deeper familiarity with this meditation, and integrating its meaning within your mind. (It is preferable but not compulsory at this stage to do the meditations without being guided, as it allows for deeper integration.)

Strongly dedicate the merits of this session for the benefit of all living beings.

Take a break.

Session 2: approximately 1 hour

Follow the same procedure for this session as in session 1.

Generate a strong and clear motivation for the session.

Review the transcript of the teachings from session two, or any of the other required or suggested readings.

Then practice the second meditation, Equanimity Meditation, attempting to gain a deeper familiarity with this meditation, and integrating its meaning within your mind.

Strongly dedicate the merits of this session for the benefit of all living beings.

Take a break.

Session 3: approximately 1 hour

Follow a similar procedure for this session.

Generate a strong motivation.

Review the transcript of the teachings from session three, or any of the other required or suggested readings.

Then practice the third meditation, Meditation on the Clarity of Consciousness, attempting to gain a deeper familiarity with this meditation and integrating its meaning within your mind.

Strongly dedicate the merit of this session for the benefit of all living beings.

Take a break.

Session 4: approximately 1 hour

Generate a strong motivation for this session.

Review the transcript of the teachings from session four, or any of the other required or suggested readings.

Then practice the fourth meditation, Shakyamuni Buddha: Touching the Essence, attempting to gain a deeper familiarity with this meditation and integrating its meaning within your mind.

Dedicate the merits of this session and the day as part of the following conclusion.

Conclusion: approximately 20 to 30 minutes

When you have finished the final meditation, spend some time writing about this intensive day of practice:

- your experiences and any insights you have gained
- how your study and meditation are transforming your attitudes and life
- how you can build upon this experience to meditate and study on a regular basis (e.g.: to make a commitment to continue with these and/or other meditations as a daily practice)

Strongly dedicate the merits of this session and the day by using, for example, the dedication prayers in chapter 4.

6. MEDITATION 1: CONTINUITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

PRELIMINARIES

Begin with a short period of relaxing physical exercise, yoga or tai chi or a short walk in quiet surroundings. Prepare your altar, or simply light a candle or some incense to help create a sacred space within which to meditate.

After you sit in your meditation space, calm the mind further with a few minutes of breathing meditation. Simply bring your awareness to your breath, to the expansion and contraction of your abdomen as you inhale and exhale.

When distracting thoughts or emotions arise simply take note of them and let them go without any conversation whatsoever. Do this for three to five minutes, or more if you wish.

Now, imagine that you are surrounded by all the people of your life – friends, enemies and strangers. Bring these people to life in your contemplation; imagine they are really here, in this space with you, doing this meditation with you.

Then, adjust your motivation. Consider your intention for your spiritual practice in general and this meditation in particular. Carefully make the determination to use your study and meditation to increase your understanding and insight, and to take the next step on your spiritual journey for your own sake, for the sake of all the people of your life, and by extension all universal living beings.

THE ACTUAL PRACTICE

Begin to watch the activity in your mind – the flow of thoughts, emotions, sensations, judgments, projections, expectations. Just watch these mental events without involvement of any kind – no criticism, no attraction, no rejection; watch what is going on like a

neutral, scientific observer who has no investment in the objects of observation. Watch the process.

After some time, catch one of these mind moments and from that point begin to journey backwards in time, from one mental event to the previous one.

Briefly scan your mental experiences, traveling backwards through the last hour, through the morning, back to breakfast, back to your waking. Is there a relationship between one moment and the previous one, or the one before that?

Go back to the dreams that you remember. Back to the night before, to the thoughts that you had as you went to sleep. Are there connections, relationships, between these mental events? Go back through yesterday, the day before, last week, last month, last year.

Don't engage with the story that is unfolding. Simply watch without involvement, without judgment, just looking for connections.

Throughout this reflection, watch whatever arises carefully, without expectation or judgment. Stay open to the possibilities, just looking for the connections and relationships between one mind moment and another, between one sequence of thoughts and another. Do not get involved with the content of your thoughts.

Go back as far as possible in your life watching the mental events of your youth, of your childhood, your infancy, perhaps even your birth.

If you can go back to your birth, what happens then? – in the womb? – at the moment of conception? Try to see the possibilities. Does the flow cease? Does it continue?

Relax, and let each mental event arise in its own time and observe the process at work.

When you have gone back as far as possible, gently return to the present moment. Again, watch the activity of your mind; observe these arising mental events without involvement of any kind – criticism, attraction, or rejection – looking for the connections.

Now, imagine your mind stream flowing out before you, one thought and then the next...into the future. Imagine the process.

Let your imagination go. Watch the possibilities for the future – your mind flowing out into the rest of the day, into tomorrow...next week, next month, next year... and so on...until death.

Consider the possibilities at that point. Does the flow cease? Does it continue? Does it change?

What happens now? What are the possibilities?

DEDICATION

Once again, settle in the present moment. Bring to mind the motivation that you established at the beginning of the meditation. Dedicate the understanding, the spiritual energy and creative potential that you have generated doing this meditation to the realization of your goals, to taking the next step on your spiritual journey, for your own sake and for the sake of all the people of your life.

7. MEDITATION 2: EQUANIMITY

PRELIMINARIES

Begin with a short period of relaxing physical exercise, yoga or tai chi or a short walk in quiet surroundings. Prepare your altar, or simply light a candle or some incense to help create a sacred space within which to meditate.

After you sit in your meditation space, calm the mind further with a few minutes of breathing meditation. Simply bring your awareness to your breath, to the expansion and contraction of your abdomen as you inhale and exhale. When distracting thoughts or emotions arise simply take note of them and let them go without any conversation whatsoever. Do this for three to five minutes, or more if you wish.

Now, imagine that you are surrounded by all the people of your life – friends, enemies and strangers. Bring these people to life in your contemplation; imagine they are really here, in this space with you, doing this meditation with you.

Then, adjust your motivation. Consider your intention for your spiritual practice in general and this meditation in particular. Carefully make the determination to use your study and meditation to increase your understanding and insight, and to take the next step on your spiritual journey for your own sake, for the sake of all the people of your life, and by extension all universal living beings.

THE ACTUAL PRACTICE

From among all the people of your life, who are surrounding you, select three people and place them in front of you: a close friend, relative or lover, someone you hold dearly in your heart; an enemy, someone you have a problem with, who causes anger or irritation to arise in your heart; a stranger, someone you don't really consider at all, for whom you feel only indifference – uninterested disregard.

Beginning with the friend, reflect in turn on your relationship with each one of these people. We love our friend and can only see the good characteristics that attracted us to this person in the first place. This person we love so deeply can do no wrong, has no negative characteristics.

But there are times when we disagree, have an argument, or our friend, in a forgetful moment, treats us badly. Then how do we feel? Where is our love? Where is the wonderful person who we call 'friend'? In our moment of anger, we cannot find the good qualities that seemed to be inherent in the personality of our friend.

So, in a single mind moment, the friend becomes the enemy.

We have all had this experience many times in our lives. The marriage made in heaven ends in the divorce court, the love affair in catastrophe. The family that everyone admired as exemplary breaks up in anguish. The friendship of a lifetime breaks down under the least pressure.

Where then is the truly findable, eternal friend?

Reflect on the enemy. We have all had the experience of difficult relationships, fraught with irritation, anger and tension. It is impossible in such situations to find anything likeable in this enemy. But, somewhere there is another who dearly loves this irritating person, who thinks they are the tops. Who is right? Where is the real friend or enemy in this human being's mind-body complex?

And, sometimes these difficult, irritating relationships can turn into close friendships. The irritating person we sought to avoid becomes our supporter in a difficult situation. Then where has the enemy gone? Where can we find the true, eternal enemy?

Finally, the stranger. Someone to whom we are quite indifferent. Every friend, every enemy has at one time been a stranger.

Each person in our lives is sometimes the friend, sometimes transformed into the enemy, and sometimes as unknown as the total stranger. Our friend is someone else's enemy, our enemy, someone's beloved. Where can we find a solid, never-changing friend, enemy or

stranger? Only our mind's projections create them. There is nothing inherent in the other that we can safely label friendly or difficult.

DEDICATION

Bring to mind the motivation that you established at the beginning of the meditation. Dedicate the understanding, the spiritual energy and creative potential that you have generated doing this meditation to the realization of your goals, to taking the next step on your spiritual journey, for your own sake and for the sake of all the people of your life.

8. MEDITATION 3: CLARITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

PRELIMINARIES

Begin with a short period of relaxing physical exercise, yoga or tai chi or a short walk in quiet surroundings. Prepare your altar, or simply light a candle or some incense to help create a sacred space within which to meditate.

After you sit in your meditation space, calm the mind further with a few minutes of breathing meditation. Simply bring your awareness to your breath, to the expansion and contraction of your abdomen as you inhale and exhale.

When distracting thoughts or emotions arise simply take note of them and let them go without any conversation whatsoever.

Do this for three to five minutes, or more if you wish.

Now, imagine that you are surrounded by all the people of your life – friends, enemies and strangers.

Bring these people to life in your contemplation; imagine they are really here, in this space with you, doing this meditation with you.

Then, adjust your motivation. Consider your intention for your spiritual practice in general and this meditation in particular. Carefully make the determination to use your study and meditation to increase your understanding and insight, and to take the next step on your spiritual journey for your own sake, for the sake of all the people of your life, and by extension all universal living beings.

THE ACTUAL PRACTICE

Generate an image of spacious clarity – for example, imagine you are lying on top of a hill with an unobstructed view – no trees, no buildings – you are gazing up into a clear blue sky, without clouds or pollution of any kind.

Focus your awareness on this luminous spaciousness. Allow yourself to merge with this clear, luminous space.

Imagine your body and mind, as well as the surrounding environment, becoming one with this pure empty space; becoming empty, luminous and clear. Without any sense of separation or duality.

Hold your awareness in the experience of this empty luminosity. Just that. Without thinking this and that, without judgments or discrimination.

This is the clear pure nature of your mind. Just rest in this space with intense, but relaxed, awareness.

When thoughts and emotions arise from this space, do not engage with them. Do not gravitate towards them with attraction or push them away with aversion. Simply watch them arise, abide and dissolve back into empty spaciousness.

Don't analyze the thoughts and emotions that arise, or the mind, or your experience. Just observe whatever arises with perfect neutrality, and as the thoughts pass bring your awareness back to the clarity of your own mind.

Everything that arises – thoughts, emotions, feelings and sensations, the experience of sound, smells and so forth – has the nature of spacious, luminous clarity. Formless, space-like clear awareness. This is the pure nature of your consciousness.

Totally relaxed, stay with this experience with intense awareness. Just that. That's all.

DEDICATION

Bring to mind the motivation that you established at the beginning of the meditation. Dedicate the understanding, the spiritual energy and creative potential that you have generated doing this meditation to the realization of your goals, to taking the next step on your spiritual journey, for your own sake and for the sake of all the people of your life.

9. MEDITATION 4: SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA: TOUCHING THE ESSENCE

PRELIMINARIES

Begin with a short period of relaxing physical exercise, yoga or tai chi or a short walk in quiet surroundings. Prepare your altar, or simply light a candle or some incense to help create a sacred space within which to meditate.

After you sit in your meditation space, calm the mind further with a few minutes of breathing meditation. Simply bring your awareness to your breath, to the expansion and contraction of your abdomen as you inhale and exhale.

When distracting thoughts or emotions arise simply take note of them and let them go without any conversation whatsoever.

Do this for three to five minutes, or more if you wish.

Now, imagine that you are surrounded by all the people of your life – friends, enemies and strangers. Bring these people to life in your contemplation; imagine they are really here, in this space with you, doing this meditation with you.

Then, adjust your motivation. Consider your intention for your spiritual practice in general and this meditation in particular. Carefully make the determination to use your study and meditation to increase your understanding and insight, and to take the next step on your spiritual journey for your own sake, for the sake of all the people of your life, and by extension all universal living beings.

THE ACTUAL PRACTICE

Bring to mind all the surrounding people of your life. Think of those you love, your relatives, lovers, friends and partners. Using your own experience as a template, see how your lives are similar. See how those you love have the same desire for happiness and satisfaction

that you have. See how they have the same wish to avoid pain and discontent.

Contemplate their lives. Consider their dissatisfaction, their aspirations, their hopes and dreams for themselves and their loved ones. Consider their pain – both physical and emotional. Consider their joys – their delights and fulfillment. There is not much difference between you. Each one of us seeks satisfaction and attempts to avoid unhappiness.

Now, consider the people of your life with whom you have a problem – people you don't like or who cause you pain, difficult or irritating people – the ones you try to avoid. Using your own experience as a template, see how your lives are similar. See how those you find difficult have the same desire for happiness and satisfaction that you have. See how they have the same wish to avoid pain.

Contemplate their lives. Consider their dissatisfaction, their aspirations, their hopes and dreams for themselves and their loved ones. Consider their pain – both physical and emotional. Consider their joys – their delights and fulfillment. There is really not much difference between you. Each one of us seeks satisfaction and attempts to avoid unhappiness.

Finally, consider all the strangers of your life. All the people you encounter on a daily basis whose names you don't know, who merely walk through some part of your life without really connecting – people in the supermarket, the bank, sitting in the doctor's waiting room, walking along the same street as you...

Using your own experience as a template, see how your lives are similar. See how those strangers have the same desire for happiness and satisfaction that you have. See how they have the same wish to avoid pain.

Contemplate their lives. Consider their dissatisfaction, their aspirations, their hopes and dreams for themselves and their loved ones. Consider their pain – both physical and emotional. Consider their joys – their delights and fulfillment. There is not much

difference between you. Each one of us seeks satisfaction and attempts to avoid unhappiness.

We all, each one without exception, seek happiness and fulfillment; each one of us, without exception, attempts to avoid distress and pain. This is natural; it is the way we are – all beings share the desire to be happy and to avoid suffering.

Let the experience of your shared human nature grow within you. Feel this connection and let your heart open to each and every one of these people of your life. Let a wish for their happiness begin to grow within you – reach out to each and every one without exception.

Just sit quietly within this experience for a few minutes. Let it sink in. Let it become a part of your inner reality.

VISUALIZATION

Now, continuing your meditation together with all these people of your life, imagine in the space just above your head (about 8 inches/20 centimeters), facing the same way that you are, an image of Buddha.

His form is non-obstructing glorious golden light, luminous and vibrant. His essence, the energy of pure unconditionally compassionate and loving wisdom.

His face is peaceful and smiling; he radiates love to you, to all the surrounding people of your life, and beyond to all the myriad living beings of the universe, human and non-human.

Buddha is seated on a lotus topped with two radiant disks representing the sun and the moon. The lotus rests on a golden throne adorned with jewels and supported by snow lions. He wears the saffron robes of a monk and sits in the crossed-leg vajra posture. The palm of his right hand rests on his right knee, his left hand rests in his lap in meditation gesture, holding a bowl filled with nectar – the medicine to heal all conflict.

His face is radiant, smiling compassionately on you and all living beings, each and every one without exception. Pure light shines from

every pore of his body, reaching the limits of the universe, filling all space, dispelling all darkness.

Gently hold this mental image until it is stable. Stay relaxed and comfortable, and open your heart to the Buddha's serene, compassionate energy which radiates out from his luminous form filling the universe with light.

This light, from the heart of the Buddha, flows into your heart and the hearts of all the surrounding people of your life. As the light touches your heart, the light of your own spiritual essence is ignited and you are filled completely with the light of your buddha-nature. Your physical body is transformed into light; your very thoughts become an expression of your spiritual being.

Filled completely with light, having become an expression of your own inner light, this light begins to flow out from your heart into the hearts of each and every one of the surrounding people of your life. And, meditating with you, their light flows into you.

Sit quietly in the experience of this exchange of pure luminous wisdom light energy – from the Buddha to you and all the others surrounding you, and between you and all the people of your life. You connect with one another within the energy of your shared spiritual essence – heart to heart, spirit to spirit, buddha-nature to buddha-nature.

From your heart, make a strong decision to sustain these healing spiritual connections in every moment of your life.

Delighted and moved by your heartfelt determination, the Buddha sends an even stronger radiant light into your heart and the hearts of those around you.

This light completely transforms your negative habit patterns, your dissatisfaction and pain. It dissolves any sense of separation and dualistic thought. You become the perfect expression of your own compassionate buddha-nature. You are light, blissful, and filled with a sense of peace and clarity.

RECITATION OF MANTRA

Staying with this experience of your own spiritual being and your connection with others, chant the mantra of the Buddha at least seven times, more if you wish:

TAYATA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SVAHA

ABSORPTION

Following recitation of the mantra, bring the light that you have been sending out back into your own heart. Imagine that the Buddha dissolves into light, which flows into you through the crown of your head.

Your being becomes utterly one with the form, resonance, and consciousness of the Buddha, and you experience perfect tranquility and peace; and the clarity and luminosity of your own being. Total unification without any sense of separation or duality.

Stay with this experience single-pointedly for as long as possible.

When thoughts begin to impinge on your experience – I'm bored, sleepy, this is silly, my knees ache – each time a thought arises, simply let it go, gently bring your awareness back to the sense of luminosity, unity, and peace.

Gently bring the mind back into the awareness of who you really are. Think: I am the Buddha.

DEDICATION

Dedicate the spiritual energy and creative potential that you have generated doing this meditation to maintaining these two precious connections – Buddha/your own buddha-nature and your heart-to-heart connection with all the people of your life – in order to realize your aspirations and take the next step on your spiritual journey, for your own sake and for the sake of all the people of your life.