

Nectar of the Path

A Reminder for Daily Practice

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THE FOUR THOUGHTS

The 'Four thoughts that Turn the Mind to the Dharma' are referred to as the 'common preliminary practices' through which we orient our mind towards the truth of the path. These contemplations establish a firm basis for the entire path to awakening.

Begin by cultivating a sense of delight in the qualities of the freedoms and riches:

Through this contemplation we develop confidence and the resolve to make this precious life meaningful by practicing the path.

Seeing its many wonderful qualities,
I rejoice and delight in this human life.

Next, contemplate the impermanent nature of phenomena:

We recall the fact that because this life is fleeting we must practice with exertion by befriending everything in our lives as the basis of the path.

Like waves in the ocean, all things are impermanent.
I will accept whatever happens and make it my friend.

Contemplate the interdependence of causes and conditions:

This is the reminder of the nature of cause and effect and the need to be contentious regarding what we do with our body, speech and mind.

When causes and conditions come together, a result is sure to follow,
So I will do my best to help others and engage in positive deeds.

Contemplate the dreamlike quality of the suffering of samsara:

This is the reminder of the need to practice with diligence to the point where we've gone beyond our 'self-created bonds' until we are established in the truth of 'timeless awareness'.

The suffering of beings is mainly produced by the mind.
I must free myself from my self-created bonds.

Bring to mind the Three Jewels, the guides who will free you from the ocean of samsara's suffering:

Now we begin the 'unique' preliminary practice. We proceed along the path upon the basis of reliance on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Through taking refuge in the 'Three Jewels' we enter the path properly and fully.

Three Jewels, undecieving and everlasting sources of refuge,
Please be the guide, the path, and companions for myself and all beings.

REFUGE & BODHICHITTA

Then recite the following three lines as many times as you are able:

NAMO BUDDHAYA (Homage to the Buddha)
NAMO DHARMAYA (Homage to the Dharma)
NAMO SANGHAYA (Homage to the Sangha)

The ultimate refuge is perfectly complete within me,
For my mind is buddha nature, enlightened from the very start.

The 'ultimate refuge' is our own Buddha Nature. The point of this practice, and the entire path, is to become re-established in our own 'innate wakefulness', our own enlightened nature.

Next, meditate on loving-kindness and compassion by thinking of all the infinite number of beings as members of your own family, recognizing that they share your wish to be happy and free from suffering:

The essential understanding, or 'view', is that all beings are just like us in that we share the same feelings, desires and goals. We all wish to be happy and free of suffering. We pause here to contemplate this truth.

I feel compassion for all the beings

Who, like me, want to be happy and free from suffering.

Generate bodhichitta, thinking to yourself, "I will practice on the path to bring all the infinite number of beings to the state of buddhahood."

'Bodhichitta' encompasses the boundless *attitude*, or intent, of boundless loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity, as well as the *application* of the six 'paramitas' (generosity, right conduct, patience, exertion, meditation and wisdom). Bodhichitta also engenders the resolve to fully realize the path in order to develop the wisdom and ability needed to bring all beings beyond suffering to full awakening.

To bring all beings to the state of omniscient buddhahood,

I will now practice the path.

GURU YOGA

In the space before you, imagine your own guru in the form of Vajradhara or whichever buddha inspires you.

Through associating ourselves with the awakened mind of the guru we connect with the essence of our own enlightened mind. The guru's awakened mind is the bridge to our awakened mind.

Think of me, O Guru.

In essence, you are equal to all the buddhas,

But in the kindness you have shown me, you are even greater.

Then recite the following as many times as you are able:

LAMA KHYENO

Think of me, O Guru.

Here's we're 'calling' to the guru in order to experience the wisdom of the guru's mind.

Imagine that the guru melts into light and dissolves into you, your minds merging indivisibly.

Ultimately, I am the same as the guru in essence,

For the nature of the student is the same as that of all the buddhas.

Rest here

To 'rest here' means to leave mind 'as it is' in the open and clear awareness that is indistinguishable from the guru's mind. This is the essence of the practice and the very essence of the entire path. You can rest here for as long as you like.

To conclude, let the mind rest naturally in the state in which you, the guru, and the buddhas are indivisible in essence. Maintain the flow of the mind's true nature — ordinary, just as it is.

My mind inseparable from the minds of the guru and all the buddhas,

I rest naturally, without fabrication, in my basic nature.

Not meditating and not distracted, in uncontrived ordinariness,

Awareness relaxes into itself.

Here we rest again in awareness for as long as you chose.

DEDICATION

With the buddhas of the three times and ten directions, along with their offspring, as your witnesses, dedicate the virtue to the welfare of others:

By dedicating the virtue of having done this practice to the benefit of all beings, that virtue is never lost or diminished. Through dedication all beings benefit from you having done this practice.

I dedicate all the virtue I have gathered throughout the three times

Along with the virtue of the victorious ones, the bodhisattvas, and all beings,

Following in the footsteps of the buddhas and their heirs,

To the lasting happiness of all the infinite number of beings.