

Prostration Instructions, Mantras, and Meditation

By Lama Zopa Rínpoche

FPMT



Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Practice Series

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Set in Calibri 12/15, Century Gothic, Helvetica Light, and Lydian BT.

Technical Note

Comments by the compiler or editor are contained in instruction boxes. For example:

Recite these two verses three times.

Instructions or advice by Lama Zopa Rinpoche are marked by the symbol ❖. For example:

❖ Then recite the following verses and meditate on the guru entering your heart.

The *Lama Zopa Rinpoche Practice Series* is a special collection of practice materials that serves to present and preserve Rinpoche's lineage of practice, oral instructions, and translations.

Prostration Instructions and Mantras

When Doing Three Prostrations

When you are doing three prostrations, for example, to the holy objects on your altar or in a temple, Rinpoche suggests reciting the following holy names. Rinpoche clarified, “You can do both, if you can. It depends on what you can do. If you can’t do both, you can just do one of them.”

❖ Reciting the holy name of Buddha Ratnaketu (Tib. Rinchen Gyaltzen, Eng. Precious Victory Banner) multiplies each prostration by ten million. With the first prostration, quickly recite the holy name as many times as possible.

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR
DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ RIN CHHEN GYÄL TSHÄN LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
**To Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Complete Buddha,
Precious Victory Banner, I prostrate.**

❖ According to the Kangyur, reciting the holy name of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha purifies eight hundred billion eons of negative karma. With the second and third prostrations, quickly recite the holy name as many times as possible.

LA MA 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 Guru, Teacher, Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Complete Buddha, Glorious Conqueror Shakyamuni, I prostrate.

When Doing Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Buddhas

❖ Recite the following holy name mantras while prostrating to increase the power of prostrations. They can be recited very quickly. One recitation does not need to correspond with one prostration.

To multiply every prostration by ten million, prostrate while reciting Buddha Rinchen Gyaltsen's holy name in Tibetan and mantra three times either one after the other or as a pair.¹

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR DZOG
PÄI SANG GYÄ RIN CHHEN GYÄL TSHÄN LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO (3x)

**To Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Complete Buddha,
Precious Victory Banner, I prostrate. (3x)**

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE RATNA KETU RÄJÄYA / TATHÄGATÄYA
ARHATE SAMYAK SAṂBUDDHÄYA / TADYATHÄ / OM RATNE
RATNE MAHÄRATNE RATNA VIJAYE SVÄHÄ (3x)

❖ To multiply every prostration by one thousand, prostrate while reciting:

OM NAMO MAÑJUŚHRIYE / NAMAḤ SUŚHRĪYE / NAMA
UTTAMAŚHRIYE SVÄHÄ² (3x)

❖ Prostrate while reciting Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy name in Tibetan and the mantra as a pair. According to the Kangyur, each recitation of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy name purifies eighty thousand billion eons of negative karmas.

LA MA 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 Guru, Teacher, Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly
 Complete Buddha, Glorious Conqueror Shakyamuni, I
 prostrate.**

OM NAMO DAŚHADIK TRIKĀLA SARVA RATNA TRAYĀYA /
 NAMAḤ³ PRADAKṢHĀ SUPRADAKṢHĀ SARVA PĀPAṂ
 VIŚHODHANI SVĀHĀ (4 or 5x)

❖ Reciting the above mantra has five very important benefits:
 (1) Each prostration or circumambulation you do becomes the
 same as having prostrated to or circumambulated all the Three
 Rare Sublime Ones—Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—and all the
 other holy objects—statues, stupas, scriptures, and so forth—
 of the ten directions and the three times. (2) All your negative
 karmas collected from beginningless rebirths are purified. (3)
 You will quickly achieve full enlightenment. (4) You will not be
 harmed by enemies and interferers. (5) You will be free from
 diseases and spirit harm.

Rinpoche said, “It is not just about adding extra mantras. If you
 think of the purpose, you will understand why to do them.”

Meditation for Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Buddhas

Motivation

Generate the motivation of bodhichitta. As much as possible, generate a strong thought of impermanence-death, which allows your mind to become Dharma. Then, generate compassion toward sentient beings and strong bodhichitta.

Visualizing the Objects of Prostration

A simple visualization is to visualize Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, who in essence is the Guru, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha as well as all the statues, stupas, and scriptures. Then, prostrate to him thinking that you are prostrating to the Thirty-Five Buddhas. However, the main thing is to prostrate to the Guru-Buddha: Buddha in the aspect of the guru and the guru in the aspect of Buddha. By thinking the guru is in the aspect of Buddha, you quickly receive blessings.

The elaborate visualization is to visualize the *Lama Chopa* merit field. (Or, as His Holiness has said, you can think that all the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas are there, without following the usual tradition of visualization.)

When visualizing the *Lama Chopa* merit field, the founder of the Buddhadharma, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, is there in the heart of Lama Lozang Thubwang Dorje Chang,⁴ who is in the center of the merit field. In front of him are the direct gurus; to either side of

him are all the indirect lineage lamas of the extensive and profound lineages; and behind him are the lineage lamas of the blessing lineage. Below them are the deities of the four tantric classes: kriya tantra, charya tantra, yoga tantra, and maha anuttarayoga tantra. Then, below them are the Thousand Buddhas of the Fortunate Eon and the Thirty-Five Buddhas; below them, the bodhisattvas; below them, the hearers and solitary realizers, including the Sixteen Arhats; below them, the dakas and dakinis; and below them, the Dharma protectors. However, they are all one entity: your root guru. All of them are your root guru. The whole merit field is your root guru. This is the elaborate way of visualizing the objects of prostration.

If you have thangkas or statues, you should also think that they are manifestations of your root guru.

The Meaning of Touching the Four Places

When you prostrate, keep your feet together, not separated, but also not like you're doing an army exercise. Fold your hands at your heart with the thumbs tucked between the palms.

The meaning of putting your folded hands on your crown is that it causes you to create the merit to achieve a crown pinnacle (Skt. *uṣṇīṣa*), one of a buddha's thirty-two holy signs and eighty holy exemplifications. According to Kyabje Phabongkha Rinpoche, touching folded hands to the forehead purifies the negative karmas collected with the body from beginningless rebirths. It creates the cause to achieve the holy sign of the clockwise-curved tuft of hair at the center of a buddha's eyebrows, for which unbelievable merit is needed. It also creates the cause to achieve the vajra holy body. Touching folded hands to the throat purifies the negative karmas collected with the speech from beginningless rebirths and creates the cause to achieve the vajra holy speech. Touching folded hands to the heart purifies the negative karmas collected with the mind from beginningless rebirths and creates the cause to achieve the vajra holy mind.

What to Visualize When Doing Prostrations Slowly

When doing prostrations to the *Lama Chopa* merit field or the Thirty-Five Buddhas or just Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, what you should visualize is:

- When you put your folded hands on your crown: “I’m prostrating to the numberless Buddhas, Dharma, and Sangha, which are manifestations of my root guru.”
- When you touch your folded hands to your forehead: “I’m prostrating to the numberless statues, stupas, and scriptures, which are manifestations of my root guru.”
- When you touch your folded hands to your throat: “I’m prostrating to the numberless Buddhas, Dharma, and Sangha, which are manifestations of my root guru.”
- When you touch your folded hands to your heart: “I’m prostrating to the numberless statues, stupas, and scriptures, which are manifestations of my root guru.”
- Then, when you lie down on the ground, think, “I’m prostrating to the ten-direction Buddhas, Dharma, Sangha, statues, stupas, and scriptures, which are manifestations of my root guru.”

The last thing, as you put your hands over your head, is to think that you are prostrating to all of them. This means that, from your place, wherever you are, you are prostrating to every single holy object that exists in all ten directions. So each time you prostrate, it creates unbelievable merit.

What to Visualize When Doing Prostrations Quickly

The above is what to do when you do prostrations slowly at the beginning of a practice. But when you need to do them quickly in order to finish a certain number, you can't do that. As you begin to bend down, the main thing to think is: "I'm prostrating to the numberless Buddhas, Dharma, and Sangha and the numberless statues, stupas, and scriptures, which are manifestations of my root guru." This is unbelievable—with each prostration you prostrate to every single holy object in the ten directions. Not one is left out, not even the statues in shops or the tsatsas in people's homes. By thinking that all these holy objects are the guru, you collect the highest merit and do the greatest purification. Don't stay on the ground for long; you might fall asleep! Then, as you start to bend down again, do the same as before.

At the end, do the dedications that come at the end of the practice of the Thirty-Five Buddhas.

Colophon:

Lama Zopa Rinpoche gave these instructions to Vens. Joan Nicell and Tenzin Tsomo at Root Institute, Bodhgaya, India, January 2017. *Meditation for Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Buddhas* was transcribed by Ven. Tenzin Tsomo, March 2017, and checked against the audio and edited by Ven. Joan Nicell, May 2017. A few words were added by Ven. Joan Nicell from teachings on the same topic given at Light of the Path 2016 in North Carolina, USA, and at Rinchen Jangsem Ling, Triang, Malaysia, in 2016. Edited by Ven. Joan Nicell, FPMT Education Services, January 2018. Lightly edited by Michael Jolliffe, FPMT Education Services, September, 2020.

Notes

- 1 The holy name can be recited with or without his mantra OM NAMO BHAGAVATE RATNA KETU....
- 2 During a commentary on the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga* at Tushita Retreat Centre, Dharamsala, India, March 1986, Lama Zopa Rinpoche taught, “It is said in a teaching that if one does full-length prostrations while reciting the following mantra three times, you receive the same merit of having listened to, reflected on, and meditated on the entire Tripitaka, the Three Baskets, or collections, of Buddha’s teachings. Also, if you do three full-length prostrations with this mantra every day, you will receive the benefit of being able to achieve the right-seeing path—the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness—in this very life. In addition, you will not be afflicted by diseases, nor will you be harmed by spirits and human beings. However, one of the main advantages of doing prostrations with this mantra is that it multiplies each prostration a thousand times.”
- 3 Although both the Derge and Pedurma editions of the Kangyur give MAMA instead of NAMAḤ, Lama Zopa Rinpoche said that NAMAḤ is correct. The mantra is called *Dharani of Circumambulation of the Arya Holy Objects of the Rare Sublime Ones* (Skt. *ārya pradakṣā ratnatrayā nāma dhāraṇī*, Tib. *'phags pa dkon mchog gi rten la bskor ba bya ba'i gzungs*).
- 4 Lama Lozang Thubwang Dorje Chang refers to the guru in the aspect of Lama Tsongkhapa with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha at his heart and Vajradhara at the heart of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha.

Care of Dharma Materials



Dharma materials contain the teachings of the Buddha and thus protect against lower rebirth and reveal the path to enlightenment. Therefore, they should be treated with respect.

Printed Dharma materials, as well as phones, tablets, laptops, and hard drives containing Dharma, should be kept off the floor, beds, chairs, meditation cushions, and all other places where people sit or walk. Dharma materials should not be stepped over or put in places where the feet or buttocks will point at them. They should be covered or protected for transporting and kept in a high, clean place separate from more mundane materials. Other objects, including statues, stupas, ritual implements, malas, reading glasses, and so forth, should not be placed on top of Dharma books and devices containing Dharma materials. Avoid licking the fingers to turn the pages of Dharma texts.

If it is necessary to dispose of printed Dharma materials, they should be burned rather than thrown in the trash. When burning Dharma texts, visualize that the letters transform into an A (ཨ) and the A absorbs into your heart. Imagine burning blank paper. As the paper burns, recite OM ĀḤ HŪṂ or the *Heart Sutra*, while meditating on emptiness.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche recommends that images of holy beings, deities, and holy objects not be burned. Ideally, if undamaged, they should be put in a stupa. Otherwise, put them high up in a tree inside a well-sealed structure, something like a bird house, so that the images are protected from the weather and do not end up on the ground.



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