

Advice for Circumambulation

Even if you only circumambulate one or two times using this method,
you become enriched with so many skies of merit
and receive very deep purification.

This is an extremely important practice for quick enlightenment.

Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Circumambulation should be done with the body, speech and mind. Physical circumambulation involves actually going around the stupa or holy object by walking, prostrating, etc. Speech circumambulation is verbally reciting prayers, mantras, praises, Dharma texts etc. continually as you go around. Mental circumambulation involves having a virtuous mind and especially devotion and bodhicitta. Of these three, the most important circumambulation is the mental one. If your mind is distracted and you are gossiping while you are circumambulating there is no great benefit.

In India there were great siddhas who achieved realizations by circumambulating temples, and Lama Atisha and the Kadam geshe did many circumambulations of stupas. Once when Lama Atisha was circumambulating, Dromtönpa asked him, “Why don’t you relax? Why not practice virtue while sitting? Why do you do this ordinary practice of circumambulating?” Lama Atisha replied, “You don’t understand. A circumambulation contains all three actions of body, speech and mind. If you just sit and meditate, you have only one action of the mind meditating, with no virtuous actions of body or speech. In terms of creating virtue, there is no greater merit than that from circumambulating.”

Here is a simple method for circumambulating:

FIRST, generate a strong motivation of bodhicitta. Remember the kindness of each sentient being, numberless in each realm, how they are so kind and most precious and have been our mother countless times.

Remember the sufferings of all the beings in the six realms and feel that you are responsible to free them from their suffering, that you can't stand them suffering even for a moment, therefore you must free them from suffering and its causes and bring them to full enlightenment. For this reason think: "I must achieve enlightenment for the sake of all mother sentient beings. For that, I need to actualize the path, therefore I need to purify all the negative karma and defilements collected since beginningless rebirth and accumulate extensive merit, therefore I am going to circumambulate."

SECOND, think that you have manifested numberless bodies, either all your past lives in human form or yourself in the form of numberless deities. Think that you are leading all sentient beings in the circumambulation.

THIRD, recite the special mantras and Buddha's names.

There are six benefits when you recite the first Buddha's name and mantra before you circumambulate, therefore it is very important to do this. The benefits are:

- (1 and 2) You receive the benefit of having prostrated and circumambulated to all the buddhas, Dharma, Sangha of the ten directions and of the three times, past, present and future;
- (3) All the negative karma collected from beginningless rebirth is purified;
- (4) You will quickly achieve full enlightenment;
- (5) You won't be harmed by enemies and interferers;
- (6) You are liberated from the disease and from the spirit harms.

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR DZOG PÄI SANG
GYÄ PÄL GYÄL WA SHAKYA THUB PA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO

OM NAMO DASHA DEKA TRI KALA SARVA RATNA TRAYAYA MAMA PRADAKSHA
SU PRA DAKSHA SARVA PAPAM BISHODHANI SVAHA (7x)

Reciting the second Buddha's name and mantra increases the power of circumambulation or prostration ten million times:

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

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

FOURTH, visualize that all the numberless buddhas, Dharma, and Sangha in the ten directions are in front of you in the form of the stupa as well every single holy object – statue, stupa, scripture, relic, etc – that exists in every universe anywhere and think that all of these are my root guru integrated into one. Or you can visualize the stupa taking the form of the Guru Puja merit field, or a deity such as Chenrezig or Vajrasattva, with the awareness that this is your root guru. The most important thing is to always keep the mind in devotion seeing all the holy objects you are circumambulating as a manifestation of your root guru. This is the most skilful meditation for the purification to become most powerful and to collect the most extensive merit. It's the same meditation whether you are circumambulating a stupa or in your shrine room.

FIFTH, as you walk, recite mantras and prayers or texts you have memorized such as OM MANI PADME HUM, Vajrasattva mantra, Mitugpa mantra, the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, *Vajra Cutter Sutra*, *Praises to Buddha* and Buddha's mantra, *Praises to Tara* and Tara's mantra, *Expressing the Names of Manjushri*, Lama Tsongkhapa's Guru Yoga prayer (*migtsema*) or *In Praise of Dependent Origination*, the prayer for refuge and bodhicitta, the five powerful mantras and so on. If you haven't memorized you can just read the texts as you go around.

As you recite, visualize that the beams emitted from the stupa completely illuminate you and all other sentient beings around you, purifying all the obscurations and negative karmas of yourself and all the numberless beings of the six realms as you go around.

You can also practice rejoicing, or meditate on any of the topics from the lam-rim teachings, such as death and impermanence, bodhicitta or emptiness. Ask yourself, "Who is circumambulating?"

SIXTH, as you do each circumambulation, dedicate it & give away the merit.

If you are doing just one circumambulation then when you finish think that beams emitted continuously purified yourself and all sentient beings and you as well as all sentient beings become the deity of whichever great initiation you have received.

If you are doing many circumambulations you can expand the practice by dedicating each round differently. (1) First motivate for the beings in the six realms. Think, “I am doing this circumambulation for all sentient beings and particularly the hell beings.” At the end of the circumambulation think, “Now all defilements are purified and every single hell being has attained enlightenment by completing the entire path.” Then dedicate all the merit from that circumambulation to all sentient beings especially those in the hells.

Do the same for the (2) hungry ghosts; (3) animals; (4) humans; (5) asuras; (6) suras.

Then dedicate each circumambulation (7) for the long life of all your gurus and for all their holy wishes to succeed immediately; (8) for the flourishing of the Dharma—so that the teachings last a long time in this world and spread, especially the teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa’s tradition; (9) for the Sangha who preserve and spread the Dharma to complete their scriptural understanding and realization during this life; and finally (10) for the benefactors who support the Dharma to have long lives and their virtuous wishes to succeed. If you know of specific people who are sick or dying or who have died you can also dedicate for them.

SEVENTH, rejoice in this unbelievable practice! Now dedicate the merit by reciting the dedication prayers, long life prayers and mantras to increase the merit. Dedicate well and extensively in order to generate bodhicitta. Give away all the merits to all sentient beings and think they have achieved enlightenment.

Compiled from various teachings of Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche by Ven Sarah Thresher with the help of Ven Tenzin Dekyong, Sandra Smith © LYWA 2014.