

Extensive Offering Practice



to Accumulate the Most Extensive Merit

by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

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Extensive Offering Practice

A practice to accumulate the most extensive merit with lights and other offerings



Motivation

Before beginning your extensive offering practice, generate bodhichitta in the following way (if you are specifically doing a light offering practice, then also recite the words in parentheses):

The purpose of my life is not only to solve my own problems and gain happiness for myself but to free all beings from their problems and lead them to all happiness, especially the state of full enlightenment. Therefore, I myself must first achieve complete enlightenment. To do this, I must complete the two accumulations — the merit of fortune [method] and the merit of wisdom. Therefore, I am going to make charity of these (light) offerings and make offerings (of these lights) to the merit field.

Also remember to motivate for the success of particular projects, for people who have passed away or are sick, or for other specific purposes. Then generate the mind of refuge and bodhichitta.

Blessing the Offerings

Bless your offerings by reciting OM AH HUM three times. If you are making light offerings in particular, now light the candles or switch on the electricity while reciting:

OM AH HUM (3x)

In general, if you don't bless offerings immediately, they can be entered by the possessing spirit Tse-bu chig-pa, and then making those offerings can create obstacles for you; it can cause mental damage. In the case of possessed light offerings, without control, you fall asleep when listening, reflecting, and meditating on the holy Dharma. Similarly, if you don't bless all other kinds of offering, various possessing spirits can enter them. Making those offerings can then damage your mind and create obstacles for you.

Making Charity to the Beings of the Six Realms

Think that you have received these offerings through the kindness of all sentient beings. Think, "These offerings are not mine." Make charity of the offerings to all the hell beings, pretas, animals, humans, asuras, and suras. This is done to counteract the thought that the offerings belong to you. Think that you are making these offerings on their behalf – you and all other beings are going to make offerings to the buddhas together. Generate great happiness at having accumulated infinite merit by thinking in this way.

Also, think that these offerings are given to every sentient being of each of the six realms, becoming whatever they need for both temporary and ultimate happiness.

Offering to the Merit Field

I actually make and mentally transform the offerings of humans and devas. May Samantabhadra clouds of offerings pervade the whole sky.

Offering Cloud Mantra

This mantra multiplies the offerings, making them numberless.

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE VAJRA SARA PRAMARDANE /
 TATHAGATAYA / ARHATE SAMYAKSAM BUDDHAYA /
 TADYATHA / OM VAJRE VAJRE / MAHA VAJRE / MAHA
 TEJA VAJRE / MAHA VIDYA VAJRE / MAHA BODHICHITTA
 VAJRE / MAHA BODHI MÄNDÖ PASAM KRAMANA VAJRE /
 SARVA KARMA AVARANA VISHO DHANA VAJRE SVAHA (3x)

Extensive Power of Truth

By the power of truth of the Three Rare Sublime Ones,
 The blessings of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas,
 The great wealth of the completed two collections, and the
 sphere of phenomena being pure and inconceivable;
 May these piles of clouds of offerings arising through transforma-
 tion by the bodhisattvas Arya Samantabhadra, Manjushri, and
 so forth – unimaginable and inexhaustible, equaling the sky –
 arise and, in the eyes of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the
 ten directions, be received.

Presenting the Offerings

Make offerings to all holy objects, visualizing them as manifestations of your own root Guru, who is one with all other virtuous friends. Since the virtuous friend is the most powerful object in the merit field, by offering like this, you accumulate the most extensive merit. In his text, *The Five Stages*, the Savior Nagarjuna said, “Abandon making other offerings; try purely to make offerings only to your Guru. By pleasing your Guru, you will achieve the sublime wisdom of the omniscient mind.”

In the root tantric text *Buddhaya*, Guru Vajradhara said, “The merit accumulated by making offerings to just one pore of the spiritual master is more sublime than all that accumulated by making offerings to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions.”

As you make the offerings, think that you are prostrating, making offerings, and that the Guru's holy mind experiences great bliss.

Place your hands in prostration mudra at your heart. Each time you make offerings, think that, "Having received the offering, the Guru's holy mind experiences great bliss." This completes the offering.

First, we make offerings to all the holy objects here in this place, every single thangka, statue, stupa, scripture, picture, tsa-tsa, relic, and prayer wheel, by seeing them as inseparable from our own virtuous friend, who is one with all other virtuous friends. (*Prostrate, offer, and generate great bliss.*)

Then, we make all these offerings both real and visualized to every single holy object in this country – all the statues, stupas, scriptures, pictures, all the centers' altars, every single altar in peoples' homes, the prayer wheels, tsa-tsas, and any virtuous friend in this country, by seeing them as inseparable from one's own virtuous friend. We present these offerings many times and in this way generate great bliss in all the holy minds. (*Prostrate, offer, and generate great bliss.*)

Then, we make all these offerings, both real and visualized, to every single holy object in India, including the Bodhgaya stupa where 1000 buddhas descended. Also we make offerings to all the holy beings in India, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama and other virtuous friends that you have there. By seeing them as inseparable from one's own virtuous friend, we make the offerings many times and in this way generate great bliss in all the holy minds. (*Prostrate, offer, and generate great bliss.*)



We make all these offerings, both real and visualized, to every single holy object in Tibet, including the Jowo Rinpoche in Lhasa that was blessed by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha himself, by seeing them as inseparable from one's own virtuous friend. We make the offerings many times and in this way generate great bliss in all the holy minds. (*Prostrate, offer, and generate great bliss.*)

We make all these offerings, both real and visualized, to every single holy object in Nepal, including Bouddhanath Stupa and Swayambunath Stupa and any virtuous friends in Nepal. By seeing them as inseparable from one's own virtuous friend, we make the offerings many times and in this way generate great bliss in all the holy minds. (*Prostrate, offer, and generate great bliss.*)

We make all these offerings, both real and visualized, to every single holy object in the other Buddhist countries such as mainland China, Thailand, Taiwan, Burma, etc., by seeing all the holy objects as inseparable from one's own virtuous friend. We make the offerings many times and in this way generate great bliss in all the holy minds. (*Prostrate, offer, and generate great bliss.*)

We now make all these offerings, both real and visualized, to every single holy object in the rest of the world, by seeing all the holy objects as inseparable from one's own virtuous friend. We make the offerings many times and in this way generate great bliss in all the holy minds. (*Prostrate, offer, and generate great bliss.*)

We make all these offerings both real and visualized to all the ten direction Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha by seeing all of them as inseparable from one's own virtuous friend. We make the offerings many times and in this way generate great bliss in all the holy minds. (*Prostrate, offer, and generate great bliss.*)

We make all these offerings, both real and visualized, to all the ten direction statues, stupas, and scriptures by seeing them as

inseparable from one's own virtuous friend. Make the offerings many times and in this way generate great bliss in all the holy minds. (*Prostrate, offer, and generate great bliss.*)

We make all these offerings, both real and visualized, to Buddha Chenrezig, by seeing Chenrezig as inseparable from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and one's own virtuous friend. Make the offerings many times and in this way generate great bliss in all the holy minds. (*Prostrate, offer, and generate great bliss.*)

We make all these offerings, both real and visualized, to the seven Medicine Buddhas (which is the same as making offerings to all the buddhas) by seeing them as inseparable from one's own virtuous friend. We make the offerings many times and in this way generate great bliss in all the holy minds. (*Prostrate, offer, and generate great bliss.*)



Then, we make all these offerings, both real and visualized, to the bodhisattva Kshitigarbha by seeing him as inseparable from one's own virtuous friend. Make the offerings many times and in this way generate great bliss in all the holy minds. (*Prostrate, offer, and generate great bliss.*)

The Actual (Light) Offering Prayer

Now recite the actual prayer of the (light) offerings – five, ten, one thousand times, or however many times possible – depending on how many times you want to make the offerings:

These actually performed and mentally imagined (light) offerings, the manifestations of one's own innate awareness – the dharma-kaya – these clouds of offerings equaling the infinite sky, I am

offering to all the gurus and the Three Rare Sublime Ones, and to all the statues, stupas, and scriptures, all of which are manifestations of the Guru.

I have accumulated infinite merit by having generated bodhichitta, having made charity to the sentient beings, and having made the actual (light) offerings to the gurus, Triple Gem, and to all holy objects of the ten directions.

Due to this merit, whomever I promised to pray for, whose name I received to pray for, and whoever prays to me – principally servants, benefactors, and disciples, as well as all remaining sentient beings, living and dead – may the rays of the light of the five wisdoms completely purify all their degenerated vows and samaya right now.

May all the sufferings of the evil-gone realms cease right now.

May the three realms of samsara be emptied right now.

May all impure minds and their obscurations be purified.

May all impure appearances be purified.

May the five holy bodies and wisdom spontaneously arise.

At this point, one may also recite Atisha's Light Offering Prayer as many times as one wishes (see p.20).

Dedication

GE WA DI YI NYUR DU DAG

Due to the merits of these virtuous actions

LA MA SANG GYÄ DRUB GYUR NÄ

May I quickly attain the state of a Guru-Buddha

DRO WA CHIG KYANG MA LÜ PA

And lead all living beings, without exception

DE YI SA LA GÖ PAR SHOG

Into that enlightened state.

JANG CHHUB SEM CHHOG RIN PO CHHE
May the supreme jewel bodhichitta

MA KYI PA NAM KYE GYUR CHIG
That has not arisen, arise and grow;

KYE PA NAM PA ME PA YANG
And may that which has arisen not diminish,

GONG NÄ GONG DU PHEL WAR SHOG
But increase more and more.

Due to these infinite merits, may whatever sufferings sentient beings have ripen on me right now. May whatever happiness and virtue I have accumulated, including all the realizations of the path and the highest goal enlightenment, be received by each hell being, preta, animal, human, asura, and sura right now.

Having dedicated in this way, you have accumulated infinite merit, so rejoice.

May the precious sublime thought of enlightenment, the source of all success and happiness for myself and all other sentient beings, be generated without even a second's delay. May that which has been generated increase more and more without degeneration.

Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, which are empty from their own side, may the I, which is empty from its own side, achieve enlightenment, which is empty from its own side, and lead all sentient beings, who are empty from their own side, to that enlightenment, by myself alone.

Whatever white virtues I have thus created, I dedicate as causes enabling me to uphold the holy Dharma of scriptures and insights and to fulfill without exception all the prayers and deeds of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times.

By the force of this merit, in all my lives may I never be parted from Mahayana's four spheres, and may I reach the end of my journey along the paths of renunciation, bodhichitta, the pure view, and the two stages.

Special Dedication Prayers

With Lama Tsongkhapa as our direct Guru in all future lifetimes, may I, my family, and all other sentient beings never be separated from the complete pure path praised by all victorious ones.

Due to the merits of myself and others, may the victorious teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa, Losang Dragpa, flourish for a long time. May all the centers and projects of the FPMT immediately receive all the conditions necessary to preserve and spread these teachings.

May all obstacles be pacified and may the FPMT organization in general and the meditation centers in particular — all our activities to preserve and spread the Dharma, particularly Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings — cause these teachings to continue without degeneration and to spread in the minds of all sentient beings.

May those who have sacrificed their lives to benefit others through this organization have long, healthy lives, may all their activities please the virtuous friend. In all their lives, may they always be guided by perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friends. May all their wishes succeed immediately, in accordance with the holy Dharma.

You may now turn to p.53 to recite long life prayers for His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Lama Zopa Rinpoche., and the Multiplying Mantras on p.55.

Light Offering Prayer

One may recite this prayer when making an individual light offering, or in the context of the *Extensive Offering Practice*. After lighting a candle, a butter lamp, or any form of light, recite this prayer in conjunction with the visualization described below.

May the light of the lamp be equal to the great three thousand worlds and their environments.

May the wick of the lamp be equal to the king of mountains –
Mount Meru.

May the butter be equal to the infinite ocean.

May there be billions of trillions of lamps in the presence of each
and every buddha.

May the light illuminate the darkness of ignorance of all
sentient beings

From the peak of samsara down to the most torturous hell,
Whereby they can see directly and clearly all the ten directions'
Buddhas and bodhisattvas and their pure lands.

OM VAJRA ALOKE AH HUM

E MA HO

I offer these beautifully exalted clear and luminous lights
To the thousand buddhas of the fortunate eon,
To all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the infinite pure lands and
of the ten directions,
To all the gurus, meditational deities, dakas, dakinis, dharma pro-
tectors, and the assembly of deities of all mandalas.

Due to this, may my father, mother, and all sentient beings in this
 life and in all their future lives,
 Be able to see directly the actual pure lands of the complete and
 perfect buddhas,
 May they unify with Buddha Amitabha in inseparable oneness,
 Please bless me and may my prayers be actualized as soon
 as possible,
 Due to the power of the truth of the Triple Gem and the assembly
 of deities of the three roots.

TADYATHA OM PĀNCHA GRIYA AVA BODHANI SVAHA (7x)

Visualization

The light transforms into single brilliant five-color wisdom.
 On a lotus and moon disk the syllables OM and DHI appear.
 From them, one hundred and eight beautiful goddesses of light,
 Marmema, appear, wearing beautiful garments and precious
 garlands.
 Every goddess holds lights in her hands and from them emanate
 billions of trillions of infinite replicas of light-offering goddesses.
 All of them make light offerings uninterruptedly to all the buddhas
 in the buddhafiels throughout all of space and to the peaceful
 and wrathful deities.

Dedication

Thus, due to the merits of having made such a light offering
 May all the benefactors, the deceased and migrating beings of the
 six realms benefit;
 May all their degenerated samaya and broken vows be restored;
 May all their superstitious obscurations be purified;
 May all their bad karma, negativities, and obscurations be
 purified;
 May the three realms of samsara become empty immediately.
 Please grant control, power, and realization.

The Benefits of Making Light Offerings

by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

It is said in *The Ten Wheel Sutra of the Essence of Earth* (Kshiti-garbha), “All comfort, happiness, and peace in this world come from making offerings to the Rare Sublime Ones. Therefore, those who want comfort, happiness, and peace should always try to make offerings to the Rare Sublime Ones.”

In general, all goodness in samsara and nirvana comes from making offerings to the Triple Gem, but specifically, different kinds of offerings bring you different benefits. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, whose holy mind was enriched with the ten powers, announced in the Tune of Brahma Sutra Clarifying Karma that making light offerings brings you ten benefits:

1. You become like a light in the world.
2. When born human you achieve the clairvoyance of the pure flesh eye.
3. You achieve the devas’ eye.
4. You receive the wisdom of knowing what is virtue and what is non-virtue.
5. You are able to eliminate the darkness of ignorance, the concept of inherent existence.
6. You receive the illumination of wisdom; even in samsara you never experience darkness.

7. You receive much wealth and enjoyment.
8. You are reborn in the deva or human realm.
9. You quickly become liberated.
10. You quickly attain enlightenment.

Devas or human beings who accumulate the merit of making one light offering, a handful of flowers, will see the Buddha Maitreya. *The Sutra of Arya Maitreya* says, “Those who offer a thousand lights or a thousand blue utpali flowers or make the pinnacle of a stupa or a holy form will be reborn when Maitreya Buddha shows the deed of gaining enlightenment and will receive his first Dharma teaching.”

It is also said that those who offer even one flower or rejoice in the merit of others who offer will achieve buddhahood. This means that even if you don’t get enlightened during the time of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s teaching, during Maitreya Buddha’s teaching your mind will ripen and you will gain liberation.

Offering light, in particular, is a special door of dependent arising for quickly completing the accumulation of merit and receiving great blessings. It is said in the second chapter of the root tantra of Chakrasamvara, who is a manifestation of Shakyamuni Buddha, “If you want sublime realizations, offer hundreds of lights.”

If you want to know the detailed results of making offerings to holy objects or of offering service to the buddha or other holy objects, you should study *The Sutra of the One Who Looks with a Compassionate Eye* (Avalokiteshvara), the *Sutra of Sogyal*, where Buddha gave instruction to King Sogyal, or the *Könchog Tala*.

The text, *Immortal Drum Sound Mantra*, says, “If you devote yourself to the Inconceivable One, the results will similarly be inconceivable.” In the same way, *The Sutra of the One Who Looks with a Compassionate Eye* says, “Since the dharmas (i.e., the qualities) of the buddha gone thus (tathagata) are limitless, making offering to the tathagata brings limitless, infinite, inconceivable, incomparable, unimaginable, numberless benefits.”

The Small Quotation (Lung-ten-tseg) sutra says, “It is possible for the moon and stars to fall to earth, for mountains and forests to rise up into the sky and for the water of the great oceans to completely dry up, but it is not possible for the great sage (the Buddha) to tell a lie. Keep this in mind and generate strong devotion to and faith in the root of all happiness and goodness – actions and their results (karma) and the blessings of the Three Precious Rare Sublime Ones. While you have this body and possessions – which are as if borrowed for a year, a month or a few days – night and day, all the time, attend to the practice of taking the essence of this human life, whose short duration is like a flash of lightning, by planting as many seeds as possible in the special field of merit.”

Colophons:

Extensive Offering Practice originally composed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche in Taiwan in February 1994. Lightly edited for publication by Venerable Constance Miller and made available by FPMT Education Department, May 1998. That version was edited further and included as an appendix in *Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat*, Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, 2000. Revised edition, August 2001. Further revisions made by Kendall Magnussen, FPMT Education Department, April 2003.

This *Light Offering Prayer* was composed by Lama Atisha and translated by Venerable Pemba Sherpa.

Notes regarding this practice:**Altar and Gumpa Set-up**

Set up as many offerings as possible: water bowls, food offerings, lights, flowers, etc. Be sure to recite OM AH HUM as you place your offerings on the altar. When making offerings, cover your mouth with a cloth so as not to breathe on the offerings.

If you are specifically doing a light offering practice, set up your lights and then before actually lighting them, begin the practice.

Be especially careful in the case of many candles. Do not set them very close to one another, especially if they are in plastic holders, as the excessive heat may melt the plastic and result in a fire out of control! Also, it is good to cover the surface where candles are sitting with aluminum foil or some other flame-resistant covering.

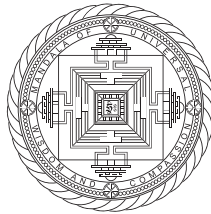
Practice tips

If one wishes, the Light Offering Prayer found on p. 20, composed by Lama Atisha, can be added to the basic practice. Recite it just before the dedication prayers as indicated on p. 15.

This extensive practice can also be used for the preliminary practice of water bowl offerings. Begin by setting your motivation, make three prostrations to the altar, generate refuge and bodhicitta, and then set up your water bowl offerings, reciting OM AH HUM as you pour the water. Then present your offerings.

If one likes and has time, during Presenting the Offerings, one may practice according to Lama Zopa Rinpoche's method of counting on a mala the prostrations, offerings, and generating great bliss in the holy mind. One may do as many repetitions as one likes for each offering.

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