



WEEK SIX: COMMON PRAYERS

In addition to mantras, Tibetans commonly use a number of other prayers that they often know by heart. This week we'll focus on four well-known prayers*:

- Refuge prayer, known as kyamdro in Tibetan
- Two common dedication of merit prayers
- An excerpt from another dedication of merit prayer, specifically for bodhicitta

Becoming familiar with a few of these common prayers can be useful in your daily practice and life!

REFUGE PRAYER

Tibetan Buddhists “take refuge” in the Three Jewels of Buddhism: the Buddha, the teachings of the Buddha (Dharma), and the spiritual community of Buddhists (Sangha).

སངས་རྒྱལ་ཚེས་དང་ཚོགས་ཀྱི་མཚོག་རྣམས་ལ།།
 བྱང་ལྷུ་བ་པར་དུ་བདག་ནི་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆི།།
 བདག་གིས་སྤྱིན་སོགས་བགྱེས་པའི་ཚོགས་རྣམས་ཀྱིས།།
 འགོ་ལ་ཕན་ཕྱིར་སངས་རྒྱལ་འགྲུབ་པར་ཤོག།།

Before we look at the meaning of taking refuge, let's see the common refuge prayer, called kyamdro in Tibetan, written out phonetically in Tibetan and then in English:

*Sangye choe dang tsok kyi chok nam la
Jang chup bar du dak ni kyap su chi
Dak gi jin sok gyi pay sonam kyi
Dro la phen chir sangye drup par shok*

Until I am enlightened, I take refuge
In the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.
Through the merit I create by practicing giving and the other perfections
May I attain Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.

Video: How to Say the Refuge Prayer in Tibetan

A Little Bit about the Kyamdro

The idea of “taking refuge” is both very simple and very deep.

On one level, it simply means to take shelter or protection from the danger, trouble and suffering of human life, both our current and future lives, by turning to the Buddha, his teachings, and the community of Buddhist spiritual practitioners. In a sense, the act of taking refuge is what distinguishes Buddhists from non-Buddhists.

On another level, taking refuge is the first step on the path to Enlightenment, as taught by Atisha (982-1053 AD), a great Indian Buddhist master who traveled and taught in Tibet.

These matters are far beyond our training and understanding, but on a very simple level we like the often-stated idea that a person taking refuge is one who wishes to attain Enlightenment, by following the Buddha as the guide, the Dharma as the path and the Sangha as traveling companions.

TWO DEDICATION OF MERIT PRAYERS

A common way to end one’s prayer practice is with a type of prayer called a “dedication prayer.” The basic idea is that praying and other Buddhist practices are good actions that generate merit. The merit can lead to many positive outcomes, such as a better next life, or a good long life, or the seed of enlightenment. In these dedication prayers, we are asking that the good merit generated from our practice be directed specifically to the enlightenment of all beings.

Video: Learn How to Say Two Common Dedication of Merit Prayers

Nagarjuna's Dedication of Merit Prayer

*Sonam diyi tamchay zigpa nyi
Tobne nyepay dranam pam chenay
Kye ga na chi balap drukpa yi
Sipay tsole drowa drolpar sho*

By this merit may all attain omniscience.
May it defeat the enemy, wrongdoing.
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness and death;
From the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings!

Another Common Dedication of Merit Prayer

*Gewa diyi nyurdu dag
Lama sanggye drupgyur nay
Drowa chigkyang malu pa
Kyekyi sala go par shog*

By this virtue may I quickly
Attain the state of Guru Buddha, and then
Lead every being without exception
To that very state!
Both translations above are from Khandro.net

A DEDICATION OF MERIT PRAYER FOR BODHICITTA

Tibetans Buddhists often say a dedication prayer at the closing of a prayer practice which seeks an increase in bodhicitta. One way to think of bodhicitta is simply as a fully awakened mind and heart, which spontaneously seeks to help all sentient beings. The bodhicitta prayers can be longer, but often include this section:

*Jang chub sem chog rin po che
Ma kye pa nam kye gyur chig
Kye wa nam pa may wa yang
Gong nay gong du pel war shog*

May the precious bodhicitta
That has not yet arisen, arise and grow,
And may that which has already arisen not diminish,
But increase more and more.

Video: How to Say the Bodhicitta Prayer in Tibetan

* See the Bonus week materials for three more common prayers

More Resources

- Download the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA) catalogue of their works available in English >>
- View the LTWA website >>

WEEK SIX PRACTICE

Your prayers will likely become a core part of your practice, so it is good to begin to learn them by heart. For this week, we suggest you work on learning how to pronounce the Kyamdro and Bodhicitta prayers. Each day this week practice saying both the Kyamdro and the Bodhicitta prayers 3 times each.

Slowly you can learn them by heart. Over time, after you have mastered these two, you can add one of the two other Dedication of Merit prayers. As always it is your motivation and spirit of practice which is key here, not how well (or badly ;-)) you may say the prayers. Try your best and keep your eyes on the prize of seeking compassion and wisdom and all will be well :-)

PRACTICE TOOLS FOR WEEK SIX

- Handout: Kyamdro (Refuge Prayer)
- Handout: Nagarjuna's Dedication of Merit Prayer
- Handout: Bodhicitta Prayer
- The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA) in Dharamsala produces and sells a booklet with prayers and mantras called Daily Recitations which you can get on sale online at phayul.com.