



Dhargyey Buddhist Centre

Teacher:- Venerable Geshe Jampa Tenzin Title:- Sunday Meditation Venue: D.B.C. Dunedin

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Mandala offering

We need to gather merits that are positive spiritual energy to aid meditation to be effective. For that there are seven sublime things practiced. The first is paying homage by way of prostrating to sublime beings. The second is making offering and I want to spend some time to explaining Mandala offering. It has three salient features:

1. Done properly you can gather huge stock of merit
2. Mandala offering must be free of material materialism
3. It does not entail too much physical exertion.

You offer the things in the entire desire realm that has in the middle Mount Meru, the four continents, the four sub-continents and whatever is pleasant in the desire realm, from human to god realms. You offer these to the objects of refuge and the objects of merit. Tantra talks of 4 Mandala offerings, outer, inner, secret and suchness. In offering Mandala you feel that you are in front of sublime objects and objects of refuge. You imagine that all the lifetimes you have taken from beginning-less time to the present, the total number of your past existence, in front of each of the sublime objects of refuge. And before each of your past existences there is the presence of the galaxy of world systems with all their beauty and riches. When we offer these world systems they should not be considered as stemming from karma and delusions, with truth of suffering origins. These stem from Buddha's own pure mind and the entire galaxy that each of your past lifetime offers is nothing but pure and pristine. If you have received Tantra initiations then the entire offering could be considered a reflection of emptiness and bliss as well as the objects to who one offers, the person – everything has the stamp of emptiness. Everything of the Mandala offering is grounded in emptiness. Why do you offer and go through such lengths and elaborate visualisation? You are driven by Bodhicitta.

Inner offering or offering of the inner starts with considering that your skin that wraps up our body becomes the Vajra ground when it says here is the base. The eyes become the continents etc. and each part of the body become part of the Mandala, all the liquids become lakes etc. The practice of the Mandala was done by the Ever Crying Bodhisattva, and in other Tibetan Buddhist order it is called Kusali tsoq offering.

Long Mandala offering

Geshe-la will demonstrate how to offer a Mandala (video was made of this and is available).

You scoop up grains of rice with your right hand. These can ideally speaking be precious fragments, diamonds, gold etc. or grains like rice, corn, and also sand can be used. You hold the mandala base in your left hand. Then you pour some grains on the middle the base and then wipe outwardly clockwise as many times as you have time. When you do that you are wiping away and cleansing your delusive knowledge obstructions to omniscience. Pour more grains a second time in the middle of the base and then wipe anticlockwise and think now that you are scooping blessing and transforming energy from the objects of refuge.

As you say, OM VAJRA BHUMI AH HUM – OM AH and HUM are contained in this, and they represent Buddha's body, speech and mind respectively. Therefore the three letter recitation blesses and consecrates the golden Mandala base. Vajra refers to diamonds but not the real one, but the object of a Vajra. The definite Varja refers to your wisdom and knowledge of emptiness and that is indestructible. BHUMI means golden base. You pour one scoop in the middle, then you put the outer ring on the base.

Then you sat OM VAJRA REKE AH HUM, here is the diamond hard fence. When you say this Mt Meru stands in the centre and you pour a large amount of rice in the middle.

The next scoop is then placed in the east. Where is east? If you offer the Mandala to seek something then east is right in front of you. If you make an offering to the Buddhas then east is opposite to you (furthest away). All further instructions here refer to east closest to one.

We are seeking blessings so the east is right in front of you (6 o'clock) – you say 'in the east the continent Purva Videha' and place some rice at 6 o'clock on the base. The southern continent is poured at 9 o'clock – 'in the south the continent Jampudvipa'. The western continent is at 12 o'clock – 'in the west the continent Aparā Godaniya'. And the northern continent is at 3 o'clock – 'in the north the continent Uttarakuru'. As you pour the rice you recite the names of the continents as above.

Next are the four sub-continent: pour the first two (east): first at 5 then at 7 o'clock – 'in the east the subcontinent Deha and Videha'; the second two (south): 8 and 10 o'clock – 'in the south Camara and Aparā Camara'; the third two (west): 11 and 1 o'clock – 'in the west Satha and Uttara Mantrina'; and the fourth two (north): 2 and 4 o'clock – 'in the north Kurawa and Kaurawa'. (Note that it is going backwards in a way. This is deliberate because from the perspective of Mount Meru in the centre the rice is poured on the right of each continent and then the left.)

Each continent has its own treasure: as you say them you pour a heap on the places where the continents are. 'In the east is the Treasure Mountain, in the south the Wish-granting Tree, in the west the Wish-granting cow and in the north the Unploughed Harvest.'

The next set contains the eight auspicious symbols that include the seven precious royal emblems. There are two ways of offering them:

1. You can either pour in the sequence of east, south, west, north, south-east, south-west, north-west and north-east) like so: 'here is the Precious Wheel (east), the Precious Jewel (south), the Precious Queen (west), the Precious Minister (north), the Precious Elephant (south-east), the Precious and Best of Horses (south-west), the Precious General (north-west) and the Great Treasure Vase (north-east).
2. Or you can pour in the sequence of (east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, north, north-east) like so: 'here is the Precious Wheel (east), the Precious Jewel (south-east), the Precious Queen (south), the Precious Minister (south-west), the Precious Elephant (west), the Precious and Best of Horses (north-west), the Precious General (north) and the Great Treasure Vase (north-east).

Next you place another ring (number two) on your Mandala set.

The next set contains the eight Goddesses, each placed in the four directions and sub-directions – the same two options as above (first the main four continents then the sub-continent or alternatively continents and sub-continent in sequence clockwise):

1. 'Here is the Goddess of Beauty (east), the Goddess Garlands (south), the Goddess of Song (west), the Goddess of Dance (north), the Goddess of Flowers (south-east), the Goddess of Incense (south-west), the Goddess of Light (north-west) the Goddess of Perfume (north-east).
2. 'Here is the Goddess of Beauty (east), the Goddess Garlands (south-east), the Goddess of Song (south), the Goddess of Dance (south-west), the Goddess of Flowers (west), the Goddess of Incense (north-west), the Goddess of Light (north) the Goddess of Perfume (north-east).

Next you place another ring (number three) on your Mandala set.

The next offerings are the sun, moon, Umbrella and Victory Banner. Again there are two ways of doing this:

1. You offer the sun (east) and the moon (west) – 'here is the sun and here is the moon.' Then you offer: 'here is the Umbrella of All that is Precious (south) and here is the Banner of Victory in All the Directions (north).'
2. Or you offer the sun (south), moon (west), Umbrella of all the is Precious (north) and the Banner of Victory in All Directions (east). This option is used for reasons of serendipity and fortuitous occasion as it will create the cause for you to be able to uphold the Banner of Victory of Dharma.

At the very end you say 'IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAMYAMI' which means 'I send forth this jewelled Mandala to my precious teacher and you lift the Mandala up. When you have finish the Mandala offering you pour everything towards yourself into your lap in the manner of seeking and having received what you have been seeking.

Short Mandala offering

At times we skip the long Mandala and we do only the short Mandala. Everything I have just built in three or four tiers is contained in the first line – 'This ground anointed with scented water and strewn with flowers, adorned with Mount Meru, the four continents, the sun and the moon'.

At the end of this, it is crucially important that you think the sublime objects before who all your past lives have made this Mandala offering have accepted them. They don't need such precious items but they have accepted them to create an opportunity for you and your past life persons to gather merits. They have accepted the offering happily with and with delight in order to help you gather merit. Because they have accepted it now in return imagine or feel they send forth a stream of nectar that enters you by way of your crown aperture and then the nectar flushes out all unpleasantness, delusions, sickness from your mind and body.

Seven-heap Mandala:

Buddhist practitioners do Mandala offering 100 000 times. They do not do the detailed version all the time. At the start of each session they do the long version. If you collect many Mandalas you do the Seven-heap Mandala:

Holding the Mandala base in your left hand, you scoop up a handful of rice in your right hand. As you wipe your wrist clockwise three times around the base recite the first two lines of the refuge prayer – 'I go for refuge until I am enlightened to the Buddhas, the Dharma and the Highest Assembly.'

As you wipe your wrist anti-clockwise three times around the base recite the third and fourth line of the refuge prayer – 'From the virtuous merits that I collect by practicing giving and the other perfections, may I attain the state of Buddha to be able to benefit all sentient beings.'

Then you place a handful of rice on the centre of your base for Mount Meru, some rice on the places of the four continents (east, south, west and north – as above), then some rice east for the sun and some rice west for the moon while reciting 'This ground anointed with scented water and strewn with flowers, adorned with Mount Meru, the four continents, the sun and the moon: by offering this to the assembly of Buddhas may all migrating beings enjoy the pure realm.'

Next you lift it up reciting 'IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAMYAMI' which means 'I send forth this jewelled Mandala to my precious teacher.' Next pour everything towards you into your lap. And then you start again – 100 000 times!

How can this be possible? Like the world systems of Mars etc. are brought to us on TV, you believe things you see are happening on TV and you react with human emotions in response. In the same way, you offer the entirety of world system to the entire galaxy of sublime objects like Buddhas and gurus, from entire existences one has ever had. Here, too you need a make-believe conviction that this is really happening although everything is a construct of mind. If there is a willingness to make it real, it goes a long way to gathering necessary merits.