

Preliminary Steps to Meditation in Practice Order

From the Great Book on the Steps of the Path (lam-rim chen-mo) written by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419)

1. Clean room and set up altar

- a. Make the room tidy and clean, then set up a beautiful altar, with representations of the Buddha's body, speech, and mind.

2. Collect offerings, do prostrations.

- a. Collect physical offerings obtained without using any dishonest means. Put them forth in an attractive arrangement.
- b. Do prostrations, at least 3.

*"I bow down, and purely,
In body, speech and mind,
To all those Lions of living kind,
Whosoever they are,
As many as there may be,
To those Who are Gone;
Gone in the past,
In the present, or the future,
Or on any planets
In the ten directions of space"
(King of all Prayers, the Prayer of the Realized One)*

3. Sit in Proper Position

- a. 7 POINTED MEDITATION SEAT
 - i. Legs crossed, lotus, half lotus, or seated in a chair, both feet on the earth. Hips level.
 - ii. Hold right hand on top of left, in lap 2 -3 inches below navel, thumbs gently touching, arms slightly away from torso to encourage alertness.
 - iii. Shoulders level, spine straight and lifted.
 - iv. Eyes in a slight downward gaze toward tip of nose. Eyes a third open.
 - v. Jaw hinge relaxed, lips soft and gently touching,
 - vi. Tip of tongue gently touching the upper palate in mouth just behind top teeth.
 - vii. Head level, chin neither thrusting forward, upward or downward.

4. Take refuge and generate Bodhicitta

- a. Think about all the holy Bodhisattvas that have gone before you, the listeners, self-made Buddhas, protectors of the dharma, and all the Buddhas who have achieved enlightenment in all the ten directions.
- b. Develop the STRONG wish to achieve enlightenment and be free from sorrow and suffering for the sake of all sentient beings. Feel strongly that you will work towards that goal even if you are alone in your quest.

Decide that failure in your quest is not an option, regardless of how many lifetimes it may take.

Decide you will Never Give Up.

5. Visualize Holy Being

- a. Picture a Holy Being sitting down in front of you. See them clearly, their eyes, lips, the shape of their nose, ears, slope of shoulders, robes, etc. Feel their presence; smell the perfume and incense, feel the warmth of their breath. Make them VERY REAL.

6. Gather Virtue

- a. Mental prostrations and offerings
 - i. Collect mental offerings: something that cannot be bought or obtained, like a sunset or an ocean. Visualize placing them at the Holy One's feet. See yourself prostrating in front for this Holy Being. Thank them for their presence.

7. Purify Obstacles Using the Four Forces

a. Refuge

- i. Refuge prayer

b. Regret / confession

- i. Sitting face-to-face with your Holy Being, think of three things you did in the last 24 hours that was not in keeping with your vows/practice. Intelligently regret these actions, because you understand that these deeds will come back to hurt you and others around you. Regret these actions.

*"I confess, one by one,
Each and every one
Of all the wrong deeds*

*I may have committed
In action or word,
And also thought,
Motivated by like or dislike,
Or by dark ignorance”*

c. Restraint / Resolve

- i. Resolve, intelligently, without using guilt, to not commit these deeds again, and to restrain yourself from harming yourself and others in the future.

d. Restitution/Remedy

- i. Decide what you must do to burn out the karmic seed of your deed. How can you balance the negative act you did with a positive one? Hint: it should be difficult, sincere and humbling. RESOLVE to do this VERY quickly!

8. Rejoice in the good you and others have done

- a. Think about 3 things you did in the last 24 hours that were fully awesome and good. Don't give up until you have three. Rejoice in your actions. Then think of all the good deeds that are done in the world by others. Celebrate all the goodness that is done in the world. Sit with that feeling of happiness for a few breaths.

9. Request Teachings and Blessings

- a. Beg your Holy Being and all the holy teachers to continue to teach you in gentle, loving ways. Request blessings.

10. Request Teacher to Stay

- a. Ask your Holy Being to please stay with you. Ask three times. See your Holy Teacher shrink down to the size of your thumb, levitate to above your head, turn around, then descend down your central channel to a place you have prepared in your heart. Make sure they have a beautiful, jeweled paradise inside so they will stay with you. This is the time to ask a question of your teacher and listen for the answer. (If you do not receive a clear message, know it will come to you soon, in a dream or a thought or a sign.)
- b.

11. MAIN MEDITATION OR PRAYERS

12. Dedication of the Deed