

*Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Advice on
Circumambulation*

Compiled by Ven. Sarah Thresher

Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, Inc.
1632 SE 11th Avenue
Portland, OR 97214 USA
www.fpmt.org

© 2014 Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, Inc.
All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system or technologies now known or developed, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Set in Goudy Old Style 12/14.5 and BibleScrT.

Printed in the USA.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Advice on 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.

– 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 bodhichitta. 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, Dromtonga 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 the 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 bodhichitta. Remember the kindness of each sentient being, numberless in each realm, how they are so kind and most precious and have been our mothers 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 and accumulate 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 this first Buddha's name and mantra before you circumambulate. Therefore it is very important to do this:

- (1 and 2) You receive the benefit of having prostrated and circumambulated to all the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha of the ten directions and of the three times, past present future;
- (3) All the negative karmas 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 DE DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG
PAR DZOG PAI SANG GYÄ PAL GYÄL WA SHAKYA THUB PA LA
CHHAG TSHÄL LO

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

By reciting this next Buddha's name and mantra, you increase the power of circumambulation or prostration ten million times:

CHOM DÄN DE DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG
PAR DZOG PAI SANG GYÄ RIN CHEN GYÄL TSEN LA CHHAG
TSHÄL LO (7x)

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

Fourth, visualize the stupa or holy object as your root guru who embodies all Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha as well every single holy object that exists anywhere—statues, stupas, scriptures, relics, etc. Or you can visualize the stupa taking the form of the Guru Puja merit field, or a deity such as Chenrezig or Vajrasattva. Most important is to always keep the mind in devotion seeing the holy object you are circumambulating as a manifestation of your root guru and all other objects of refuge. This is the most skilful meditation to collect the most extensive merit.

If you like you can also visualize that the holy object you are circumambulating becomes empty. Remember that the absolute nature of this holy object is the absolute nature of all holy objects everywhere. If there is no holy object, visualize a yellow syllable BHRUM, which transforms into an extensive wish-granting tree in which all the refuge objects abide. Even though you may not be in Lhasa, Dharamsala or Nepal, think that you are circumambulating all the holy objects of the ten directions. With this visualization, you receive the incredible benefit of circumambulating all these holy objects.

Fifth, as you walk, recite mantras and prayers such as OM MANI PÄDME HUM, the Vajrasattva mantra, the Mitrugpa mantra, the names of the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas, *Praises to Buddha* and Buddha's mantra, *Praises to Tara* and Tara's mantra, Lama Tsongkhapa's Guru Yoga prayer (Migtsema), the Refuge Prayer, the five powerful mantras, and so on.

As you recite, visualize that nectar beams emitted from the stupa completely illuminate you and all other sentient beings around you, purifying the six realms.

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

Sixth, as you do each circumambulation, dedicate it and give away the merit. 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 (1) 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.

Seventh, rejoice at 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

bodhichitta. Give away all the merits to all sentient beings and think they have achieved enlightenment

Colophon:

Compiled and edited by Ven. Sarah Thresher from the advice of Lama Zopa Rinpoche Tushita, Dharamsala. March 2010. Lightly edited by FPMT Education Services, December 2013.



Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition