

6. *Monthly Practices*

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6. Monthly Practices

Scheduling Monthly Practices

In general, the following group practices would be scheduled on a monthly basis at larger centers such as Karma Dzong, Dharmadhatus, and contemplative centers. Protector/warrior day falls on the ninth, nineteenth, and twenty-ninth days of the Tibetan lunar calendar. Vajradhatu follows the general Tibetan calendar published in Dharamsala, rather than the Tsurphu/Rumtek calendar. Practices are listed in alphabetical order; restrictions for doing the practice are noted in italics.

Chakrasamvara feast: 10th day of the Tibetan lunar calendar.
sadhakas only; abhisheka required

Exorcism Chant: every protector/warrior day
only at centers that do protector chants

Jambhala Sadhana: 8th and 28th days of Tibetan lunar calendar
sadhakas only; lung required

Maitri Bhavana: once a month, preferably during a nyinthün

Nyinthün: regularly

Padmasambhava feast: 10th day of the Tibetan lunar calendar.

Poshadha (San; Tib: so-jong): new and full moon days. This is a traditional monastic ritual for purifying and renewing vows.
only at Gampo Abbey

Sadhana of Mahamudra: new and full moon days

Sukhavati: conducted for sangha members who die. Larger centers may perform this ceremony periodically for deceased friends and relatives of sangha members, or upon special request.

Vajrayogini feast: 10th and 25th days of the Tibetan lunar calendar. *Note*: The Chakrasamvara and Vajrayogini feasts should be scheduled on the same day, if possible. If not, the Vajrayogini feast can be moved one day in either direction. In general, it is preferable not to change the day for celebrating a feast.

sadhakas only; abhisheka required

Werma Sadhana: every protector/warrior day

Shambhala Lodge members only

Schedule According to the Tibetan Lunar Calendar

Note: Rigpa Tibetan calendars are available from Rigpa, P.O. Box 7866, Berkeley, California 94707. Phone: (510) 644-3922.

Day 1	New Moon: The Sadhana of Mahamudra, Poshadha
Day 8	Jambhala Sadhana
Day 9	Protector/warrior day: Exorcism Chant, Werma Sadhana
Day 10	Heruka feast day: Chakrasamvara feast, Vajrayogini or Padmasambhava feast for those unable to attend Chakrasamvara feast, or possibly in lieu of Chakrasamvara feast if two feasts are not practicable.
Day 15	Full moon: The Sadhana of Mahamudra, Poshadha
Day 19	Protector/warrior day: Exorcism Chant, Werma Sadhana
Day 25	Dakini feast day: Vajrayogini feast
Day 28	Jambhala Sadhana
Day 29	Protector/Warrior day: Exorcism Chant, Werma Sadhana

Exorcism Chant

The Exorcism Chant is done on protector days by all students in centers where the protectors chants are done. Protector days are the ninth, nineteenth, and twenty-ninth days of the Tibetan lunar calendar. It is done immediately after The Concluding Request to the Protectors and before the longevity and rebirth supplications. For specific procedures, see the Umdze's Instructions (next page).

The chant is a general exorcism of negativity, which is sometimes characterized in terms of the four maras:

1. *skandha-mara*, clinging to the skandhas as a self
2. *klesha-mara*, making a nest of one's conflicting emotions
3. *devaputra-mara*, ignoring the realities of life through attachment to pleasure, notions of harmony, or spiritually materialistic practice
4. *mrityu-mara*, death and the compulsive progression of the nidanas.

The Heart Sutra is considered a powerful means for exorcising the maras, not because it is wrathful, but because the truth of emptiness is powerful and dispels confusion.

The visualization mentioned in the note is not particularly recommended. For those who wish to do it, the Buddha Shakyamuni is sitting in vajrasana, or cross-legged lotus posture, with his left hand in the meditation mudra and right hand in the threatening mudra.

Umdze's Instructions: Exorcism Chant

The Exorcism Chant comes immediately after the *Concluding Request to the Protectors*. Be sure to have a mala before beginning the evening chants.

1. Recite the *Heart Sutra* one time monosyllabically with drum accompaniment, exactly as for morning chants.
2. Recite the mantra 108x (OM GATE GATE ...). Count with a mala. Recite semi-mentally: silently but with tongue and lips moving. Raise your voice at the end of the last repetition (... PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA) to signal the end.

3. Chant the first paragraph of the chant 3x, in anjali: "I prostrate to the Buddha. . . ." Ring the gong and deaden it at the beginning of each recitation.
4. Clap your hands at three points during the first paragraph. Hands are clapped together in a horizontal, rather than vertical, position:
 - so may I exorcise
 - be annihilated
 - be pacified
5. Do not clap or do anjali for "may they be utterly pacified." Return hands to anjali for the second and third repetitions.
6. After the third repetition, ring one rolldown on the gong and deaden it.
7. Chant the second stanza on interdependence-no anjali.
8. Proceed to the longevity and rebirth supplications.

Maitri Bhavana

The Maitri Bhavana is a regularly scheduled mahayana practice for the seriously ill. Although it contains tonglen practice, it may be done by all students. The practice leader is usually a senior student and meditation instructor. Sometimes a relative or friend of the sick person may want to lead. This is fine, as long as she or he understands how to lead the liturgy properly.

For the umdze's procedures and a copy of the *Friendliness* text, see the next two pages.

Advance Preparations

1. *Notice.* Inform the community in advance that a Maitri Bhavana is scheduled. Schedule it on the first nyinthün Sunday of each month, or at least on a regular reliable basis. Ideally this would be included on your monthly practice calendar.

2. *List.* Well in advance of the scheduled practice, post a list where members can indicate the names and illnesses of friends and relatives. Use the following text:

“Please add to this list the names and illnesses of relatives and friends who are seriously ill, either physically or mentally. You should include someone because you feel a personal concern for their suffering, such as a grandparent dying of cancer. It would not be appropriate, for example, to include someone who has the flu.”

3. *Umdze notebook.* This should contain:

- a copy of Umdze's Instructions
- the talk by the Vidyadhara on the meaning of Maitri Bhavana
- the chant *Friendliness*

Make multiple copies of *Friendliness* for your center. Set them out prominently in the shrine hall before the practice session begins.

Umdze's Instructions: Maitri Bhavana

1. Sit 10-20 minutes.
2. Ring gong 1x and deaden.
3. Announce: We are going to do the practice of *Maitri Bhavana*, which means "meditation on loving-kindness."
4. Read the talk by the Vidyadhara on Maitri Bhavana.
5. Announce: We will be doing this practice in particular for the following persons who are ill.
6. Read the names and illnesses of people on the list.
7. Announce: Next we will chant the text entitled *Friendliness*.
8. Ring gong 1x and deaden.
9. Chant Friendliness.
10. Announce: Next we will do the practice of tonglen, or "sending and taking."
11. Explain tonglen briefly in your own words, related to this particular practice context..
12. Ring gong 2x briskly to begin tonglen.
13. Practice tonglen for 5-10 minutes.
14. End tonglen with 2 rolldowns on the gong and a full stop medium-soft-loud.
15. Sit for 10 minutes or more after tonglen.

Friendliness

This is what should be done by those who are skilled in seeking good, having attained the way of peace:

They should be able, straightforward, and upright, easy to speak to, gentle, and not proud,
Content and easily supported, with few obligations and wants,
With senses calmed, prudent, modest, and without greed for other people's possessions.
They should not do anything base that the wise would reprove.
May they be at their ease and secure—may all beings be happy.

Whatever living beings there are, whether they be weak or strong—omitting none—
Whether long, large, average, big or small,
Seen or unseen, dwelling near or far,
Born or to be born— may all beings be happy.

Let no one deceive another or despise anyone anywhere.
Let none out of anger or hostility wish suffering upon another.

Just as a mother would protect with her life her own child, her only child,
So one should cultivate a boundless mind toward all beings and friendliness toward the entire world.

One should cultivate a boundless mind— above, below, and across,
Without obstruction, hatred, or enmity.

Standing or walking, sitting or lying down, throughout all one's waking hours,
One should practice this mindfulness; this, they say, is the supreme state.

Not falling into wrong views, virtuous, endowed with insight,
Having overcome desire for sense pleasures, one will never again know rebirth.

Note: Buddha Shakyamuni taught this Metta Sutta, which is found in the Sutta-Nipata section of the Khuddaka-Nikaya collection of shorter-length discourses. It was translated from the Pali by the Nalanda Translation Committee with reference to a number of previous translations.

On Maitri Bhavana: Talk by the Vidyadhara

In this practice we share health with other people-in fact, all sentient beings. It involves developing a sense of immense generosity and being willing to suffer for others. One's own personal gain and achievement could be shared-in fact, given up.

Generally sickness and unhealthiness occur from a problem with the environmental situation. People have no chance to express any sense of comfort because the space around them is so cramped. Consequently, one can get disordered in one's body and mind, and get sick because there is no accommodation to relax, open, and celebrate.

So this practice is a token gesture to provide lots of room, openness, and space for others, and not make demands on the environment itself. In order to change the environment, one has to create some seed from within oneself. If one is creating one's own spaciousness, that spaciousness becomes contagious and expands to others who are suffering, so they also could be helpful. That seems to be the basic meaning of generosity in this practice.

The technique of meditation here is very old, and has come down through generations of mahayana practitioners. It is similar to working on the in- and out-breath, but is more like contemplation, in that deliberate thoughts, mental objects, are used. As you breathe out, you breathe out your spaciousness and your goodness completely. As you breathe in, you breathe into yourself the sickness, neurosis, and problems of other people. This is the practice that we are going to do.

The Sadhana of Mahamudra

The Sadhana of Mahamudra is chanted on the full and new moon days of each month at Dharmadhatus and at Dharma Study Groups that have a significant number of vajrayana students. All students may participate. It is also appropriate to chant the sadhana at the end of an intensive practice program, such as a dathün. If the sadhana falls on the same day as a public program, such as an open house, it would be preferable to chant it after the public has left.

The sadhana is primarily a group practice. Only vajrayana students may purchase the text and practice the sadhana individually. The version always used for group practice is the Vidyadhara's translation of the sadhana. A more literal translation, prepared by the Nalanda Translation Committee, is useful for study. It is available to vajrayana students only. If possible, the sadhana should be led by a senior vajrayana student, preferably one who has received abhisheka.

For instructions: on leading the group practice, refer to the Umdze's Instructions (next page). Those who lead the sadhana could also study the short commentary written by the Dorje Loppön Lodrö Dorje (available from Vajradhatu Publications).

Study of the Sadhana

Community study of the sadhana is recommended. It could be the topic for a weekend seminar taught by a senior student who is well versed in the sadhana. A weekend seminar could be led by a sadhaka, using tapes of the Karmê-Chöling seminar (four talks total). The Vidyadhara's own presentation on cassette is often preferable to another person's summary. Discussion should be encouraged. During the weekend, the *Sadhana of Mahamudra Sourcebook* could be distributed and further classes scheduled to study the topic in more depth.

The Sadhana of Mahamudra Abhisheka and Feast Practice

The abhisheka and feast offering for the *Sadhana of Mahamudra* was composed during the summer of 1990 by His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche at the request of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche (then the Sawang Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo). The abhisheka was conferred on the Sakyong by His Holiness, who instructed the Sakyong to empower others. He has performed this abhisheka

several times, beginning in 1993. The abhisheka is a prerequisite for the retreat practice (discussed in Section One of this manual).

With the exception of the Parinirvana of the Vidyadhara Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, at which time the feast is open to everyone, only tantrikas may practice the feast offering for the *Sadhana of Mahamudra*. It can be practiced in the same way as the feast for *The Sun of Wisdom* sadhana. Though it can be practiced at any time considered auspicious, such as feast days or holy days, the Sakyong has recommended that we reserve this feast practice for special occasions, such as the Vidyadhara's parinirvana day, and in general keep our semi-monthly practice of the *Sadhana of Mahamudra* as it has been – on the new and full moon days of the month.

Umdze's Instructions: Sadhana of Mahamudra

In general, the sadhana is chanted briskly, with no pauses between sentences, paragraphs or stanzas. In the body of the text, the triple HUM and other seed syllables are not emphasized; they are chanted in the same tone as any other word.

Page numbers [enclosed in brackets] refer to the 1990 edition of the Vidyadhara's translation of the sadhana, published by the Nalanda Translation Committee.

Begin by sitting for 15-20 minutes.

- [6] "NAMO Earth, water, fire ... take this vow in meditation": Repeat 3x, then sit for 5 minutes.
- [8] "In the state of nonmeditation. . .": The visualization text beginning on this page is chanted fairly rapidly.
- [12] ". - . It is the great guru mandala": Pause briefly (about 5 seconds) after this line. Chant the following supplication section more slowly and with feeling.
- [17] ". . . is to follow your example": Pause briefly (about 5 seconds) after this line. Chant the next section with more vigour.
- [18] The four dharms of Gampopa: Chant 7x.
- [23] Chant the triple HUM audibly, but not in unison, for about 5 minutes. This is recited softly as a triplet of syllables, over and over. Then continue to chant the mantra silently for a time, followed by about 10 minutes of formless meditation, during which one does not even mentally recite the triple HUM.

In sum, there should be approximately

- 5 minutes of audible recitation of the triple HUM
- 5 minutes of silent (mental) recitation
- 10 minutes of formless meditation, without recitation

- [23] "HUM HUM HUM When the precious guru approaches...": Chant the remainder of the text to the end.

Close with about 20 minutes of formless meditation.