

The Mandala Offering

The text of my presentation of the Mandala offering on the 2022 UK/Ireland Area Order Convention.

I'm not going to say very much, I'd rather we use the time to go deep into the practice. We are going to do the most recent revision by Sangharakshita and Parami, but I'll also be including a few embellishments from the way I learned the practice from Bhante back in June, 1982 — just over forty years ago.

In the Mandala offering practice, this paper plate and rice will come to represent everything. The whole world, the six senses, seeds in the Alaya, everything we value and find precious, the entire treasure of our collective lives. This we will offer to the Buddha creating a living bridge between the mundane and the awakened worlds.

So let's start by sitting in meditation to prepare for the offering. Even without visualising them, Buddha Sakyamuni is there, the Mandala of Five Buddhas and their consorts is there above, and Vajrasattva above all. They have been there ever since we went for refuge.

Tune into the truth of that... we will make our offering to them.

Then tuning into our present experience: this will be the ground of our offering.

We are surrounded by all living beings. All of us have been born. We all came through the gateway of the womb and all of us will arrive at the end of this life. This body and mind is the main cause for the vast world we experience. Looking into it all with great kindness and appreciation, feeling the sensations of the body and mind. And if it's helpful, letting the touch of the breath bring awareness to the entire body system.

Until the point where our experience is all a bit looser and we can see to some extent that our mind is constantly constructing all kinds of ideas and assumptions. We don't try to stop that; we just want to see it, simply relaxing into this, the nature of the mind.

And still recollecting that the Buddha is always there, we recite:

Bhante's 7 line 7 fold puja he translated from the original (Tharpe Delam) version of this practice.

OM AH HUM

To that Trikaya which is the True Nature of all Dharmas, Non-dual, Limitless, Profound and Vast, I make obeisance.

I worship the Unmade, the Unlimited and the Eternal.

I make confession of the sin of not knowing that my own mind is (of the nature of) the Buddha.

Rejoicing in the natural state, the self aware,

I request the Buddha to revolve the Ungraspable, Omnipresent, and All Accomplished Dharmachakra.

I pray that the mundane and the Transcendental may be established in oneness.

Whatever obeisance and worship I have performed I transmute into the Voidness.

May all beings attain both Voidness and Great Bliss.

And some verses of praise of the Buddha by Matrceta:

To be born human

And encounter the great joy of the Dharma

Is rarer than a turtle thrusting its neck through a yoke floating freely in the great ocean.

So, how could I not put my voice to good use, for it is impermanent and may soon be liable to change...

No faults in any way are found in him;

All virtues in every way dwell in him.

To go to him for Refuge, to sing his praise, to do him honour and to abide in his Dharma is proper for one with understanding.

The only protector

his faults are gone without residue

the All Knowing One,

his virtues are present without fail.

Even the most spiteful person

cannot with justice find fault

in the thoughts, words and deeds of the Buddha.

Now holding the base, we reflect on the situation and recite these Verses Of Intention. (Bhante's translation from the Tibetan.)

(With drum)

Meru King of Mountains

Upon a ground of Incense

With Sun and Moon and Continents four

I offer to the exalted One

Together with the Pure Land's radiant store.

Oh may all beings, free from pain

Ere long supreme Enlightenment gain!

Now to purify the base of the mandala we smooth it clockwise with our palm.

(With drum)

Om Vajrasattva samaya manupalaya vajrasattva tventopatista.. x 3

OM VAJRA BHUMI AH HUM

The ground of the Mandala is established.

Now we begin.

1) In the centre we place the King of Mountains

Around that, the four continents

Then earth water fire air...

2) Then placing Space at the centre filled with stars

We add sun, moon, day, night

Then we add all plants, all animals, all men, all women

Then we add Parents, friends, family, animal friends...

3) Then placing Bhante at the centre

We add our personal teachers, Bhante's teachers, the Order as teachers, the entire Sangha of Dharma practitioners as teachers...

4) Then placing the Bodhicitta at the centre

We add our work, our ethical practice, our meditation practice, our insight practice

Then above all, in the centre of the entire mandala, we place the Three Jewels along with the entire treasure of gods and men.

Wonderful! The Mandala is complete. ¹

So reciting these verses:

'The ground is purified with scented water and adorned with flowers.

It is adorned with the King of Mountains, the Four Continents, the Sun and the Moon.

Decorated with the beauty of nature and the work of all sentient beings

And crowned with the Precious Three Jewels.

(Raising the mandala)

Thinking of all this as the Buddha-realm, I offer it to all the Buddhas.

By virtue of this offering may all human beings attain to the Realm of Bliss.'

We offer the mandala. It rises into the sky and comes to rest before the Buddhas.

We let fall the remains into the cloth.

¹ Note: The above description assumes a single plate for the offering with mounds of rice placed over the surface.

If you are using a traditional Mandala set with rings and a base, preferable is a four tier mandala set, filling one ring with rice (or whatever is used) for each of the above stages. If using a three tiered mandala set:

- 1) Purify base
- 2) In first ring: King of Mountains, four continents, four elements
- 3) Then in same ring place space in the centre on top of Mount Meru and add plants, animals, men, women, parents, friends, family, animal friends - all in the first ring
- 4) Second ring: Bhante and all kinds of teachers
- 5) Third ring: Bodhicitta, our practice
- 6) Jewel

We recite this verse.

‘I send forth this jewelled Mandala to you precious Buddhas.
Out of kindness for all beings, please accept it.
Having accepted, please grant us your blessings.’

Now light goes forth from the offerings to all beings dispelling all their obstacles and bringing them to the Pure Land. We recite the Mandala mantra so that mentally we can now make many more mandala offerings.

(with drum)

(OM) IDAM BUDDHA RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAMI

The vision gradually dissolves.

We sit receptively and mindfully.

The practice ends.