

Commentary on Tsa Tsa Practice

By Lama Zopa Rinpoche

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PART I: THE ORIGINAL TEXT ON TSA TSA PRACTICE (translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan by Tropu, and translated from Tibetan into English by Lama Zopa Rinpoche)

The Text

Here is the advice of utilizing the tsa-tsa practice in the path to enlightenment, written by the great translator, Tropu.

Namo Guru, I prostrate to the gurus who are the glorified saviors of sentient beings, the lords of omniscience and compassion, the refuge object of the transmigratory beings, and the step towards liberation, and who have completely conquered all opposing conditions.

Please grant the sublime and general realizations to me and all other transmigratory beings. In order to accumulate the causes of enlightenment, I am going to write the advice of how to utilize the tsa-tsa practice in the path to enlightenment.

The practice has three divisions: the preliminaries, the actual body and the completion.

The preliminaries

First of all, generate yourself as the deity. Then take refuge and generate bodhicitta. Purify the amount of prepared clay in emptiness with the mantra:

OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHAH SARVA DHARMAH SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HAM.

Your wisdom then manifests in the five syllables OM HUM TRAM HRI AH. Recite this mantra three times. These syllables transform into mountains of jewels. Recite OM AH HUM to bless this material.

While your body is clarified as the mind-bound deity, with your speech recite the essence-of-dependent-arising mantra: OM YE DHARMA HETU PRABHAVA HETUN TESHAN TATHAGATO HY AVADAT TESHAN CA YO NIRODHA EVAM VADI MAHA SHRAMANAH SVAHA, and OM AH HUM, again and again.

While your mind is contemplating absolute truth, sunyata, make one print of the tsa-tsa. As you make this print, think: "I am making this tsa-tsa for the triple gem". With your speech recite this prayer: "May the teachings of the Buddha spread and be developed. May the holy Dharma last a long time. May the Sangha achieve the holy Dharma and may the highest enlightenment be accomplished."

The second tsa-tsa print is dedicated for the direct and indirect gurus to have long lives, for their holy actions to be developed and their wishes to be fulfilled. With that intention, recite the following prayer and make the print of the Buddha: "May the lives and holy actions of the direct and indirect holy gurus be developed, and the experiences of realizations in their holy minds be increased. May the field of objects to be subdued be increased."

The third print is dedicated to your parents (past, present and future), to all the sentient beings who have been your mother and father, to those who are now, and to those who will be your parents in the future. Recite this prayer: “May all the wishes of the fathers and mothers, the transmigratory beings of the six realms, be accomplished. May all the sufferings of each individual be completely purified, and may they achieve the state of omniscience.”

The fourth print is dedicated to sentient beings who have died and not yet taken another body. For these intermediate state beings, say this prayer of dedication: “Due to the good karma of making offerings to the Sangha and of making statues of the holy bodies of Aryan beings, may the hallucinated minds of all intermediate state beings be eliminated completely. May they achieve the three kayas of enlightenment.”

The fifth print is for the practitioner himself. “May I and all sentient beings accumulate merit and purify the two obscurations. May we pacify all disease and suffering, and increase life, merit, wealth, and reputation. May I have whatever control I wish over the three realms, human beings, possessions, and food. I am requesting to dispel the bad conditions of enemies, interferers, obstacles and untimely death.”

Do the seven limb practice.

While you are printing the Buddhas, there are various mantras to recite. On well-cleaned grain, recite the essence-of-dependent-arising mantra. This grain is inserted in the back of the tsa-tsas in the way that mantras are put in statues to consecrate them. Your hands, the clay, and everything else should be kept clean.

If you are making the tsa-tsas for a person who is sick or in danger of not having a long life, at the beginning, before actually printing the tsa-tsas, recite mantras of long-life Buddhas and request these Buddhas to increase the life of the person.

If you are making the tsa-tsas so that a person who has died finds a good rebirth in the body of a happy transmigratory being, recite the mantra of Mitukpa, The Immovable Buddha, from the Guhyasamaja tantra:

(NAMO RATNA TRAYAYA) OM KAMKANI KAMKANI, ROTZANI ROTZANI, TORTANI TORTANI, TRASANI TRASANI, PARTIHANA PARTIHANA, SARWA KARMA PARAM PARANI ME SARWA SATO NAM SOHA Also recite the Vajrasattva mantra, and the mantras of other deities powerful in purifying obscurations.

With the pure attitude of taking the complete responsibility for liberating the person from the lower realms by yourself alone, and for leading them to the perfect body of a happy transmigratory being, begin to print the tsa-tsas.

The main body

When you take the clay, recite:

OM NAMO SAMENTA BUDDHANAM OM VAJRA AYUKE SOHA.

As you cut the clay, recite:
OM BENDZO BAWAYE SOHA

When putting oil on the clay, recite:
OM AHRANDZE BERANDZE SOHA.

As you put the clay in the mold, recite:
OM DHARMADHATU GARBE SOHA.

And as you beat the mold, recite:
OM VAJRA MUNGARA AKUYATA HUNG,
and also the essence-of-dependent-arising mantra.

Now put the previously blessed grain in the back of the tsa-tsa, like putting mantras in a statue.

As you cut off the extra clay, say:
OM BAYUTE SOHA.

When the tsa-tsa is dry and you are painting it, recite:
OM VAJRA AHRANDZE BERANZE SOHA.

After you finish all this, to consecrate the tsa-tsas, say: OM VAJRA SUPATITA VAJRA YE SOHA.

These are the mantras to recite while doing the different activities.

The completion

The completion involves remembering the benefits of making tsa-tsas, and the dedication prayers. Then put the tsa-tsas in a solitary place.

Do not make less than five tsa-tsas. Making more than five tsa-tsas has inexpressible benefits. Even in this life, you will have less disease, your enjoyments will increase, and you will achieve long life and good reputation. It is the best method to betray death. Making tsa-tsas pacifies obstacles, bad conditions, accidents, and sudden diseases like heart attacks and paralysis. By making tsa-tsas you pacify enemies, interferers, and harms. You accumulate all merit, purify all obscurations, and achieve the resultant three kayas in future life.

This advice on utilizing the tsa-tsa practice in the path to enlightenment should be practiced every day without stopping. I, the great translator Tropolu, translated this text into Tibetan to benefit the transmigratory beings. By this merit, may sentient beings achieve enlightenment.

PART II: TSA TSA PRACTICE (concise version, as it should be performed by the practitioner)

[If you like, you can recite this verse at the beginning of the practice:

Namo Guru, I prostrate to the gurus who are the glorified saviors of sentient beings, the lords of omniscience and compassion, the refuge object of the transmigratory beings, and the step towards liberation, and who have completely conquered all opposing conditions. Please grant the sublime and general realizations to me and all other transmigratory beings. In order to accumulate the causes of enlightenment, I am going to do this tsa-tsa practice.]

The practice has three divisions: the preliminaries, the actual body and the completion.

The preliminaries

Wash your hands and make sure everything is clean.

Generate yourself as the deity, take refuge and generate bodhicitta.

Purify the prepared material in emptiness with the mantra: OM SVABHAVA SHUDDAH SARVA DHARMAH SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HAM, and meditate on the lack of inherent existence of the material.

Your wisdom realizing the emptiness of the material manifests in the five syllables OM HUM TRAM HRI AH, the manifestation of the holy minds of the five Dhyani Buddhas. Recite this mantra three times.

These syllables transform into mountains of jewels, with which you visualize making the tsa-tsas.

While your body is clarified as the mind-bound deity, with your speech recite the essence-of-dependent-arising mantra: OM YE DHARMA HETU PRABHAVA HETUN TESHAN TATHAGATO HY AVADAT TESHAN CA YO NIRODHA EVAM VADI MAHA SHRAMANAH SVAHA, and OM AH HUM, again and again.

On well-cleaned grain, recite the essence-of-dependent-arising mantra. This grain is inserted in the back of the tsa-tsas in the way that mantras are put in statues to consecrate them.

1) If the tsa-tsas are being made for a living person, who is sick or in danger of not having a long life, recite mantras of the long life Buddhas, such as White Tara, the Infinite Light Buddha and Namgyalma, making requests to these Buddhas to increase the life of the person. Also recite the Vajrasattva mantra.

2) If the tsa-tsas are being made for a person who has died to be liberated quickly from the lower realms and find a good rebirth, especially with the opportunity to practice Dharma, first of all recite the Immovable Buddha's mantra: (NAMO RATNA TRAYAYA) OM KAMKANI KAMKANI, ROTZANI ROTZANI, TORTANI TORTANI, TRASANI TRASANI, PARTIHANA PARTIHANA, SARWA KARMA PARAM PARANI ME SARWA SATO NAM SOHA. Also recite the Vajrasattva mantra and mantras of any other deities powerful in purifying obscurations.

Tsa-tsas are made in groups of five, each dedicated to a different purpose.

1) While your mind is contemplating absolute truth, sunyata, make one tsa-tsa. As you make this tsa-tsa, think: "I am making this tsa-tsa for the triple gem". With your speech recite this prayer: "May the teachings of the Buddha spread and be developed. May the holy Dharma last a long time. May the Sangha achieve the holy Dharma and may the highest enlightenment be accomplished."

2) The second tsa-tsa is dedicated for the direct and indirect gurus to have long lives, for their holy actions to be developed and their wishes to be fulfilled. With that intention, recite the following prayer and make the print of the Buddha: "May the lives and holy actions of the direct and indirect holy gurus be developed, and the experiences of realizations in their holy minds be increased. May the field of objects to be subdued be increased".

3) The third tsa-tsa is dedicated to your parents (past, present and future), to all the sentient beings who have been your mother and father, to those who are now, and to those who will be your parents in the future. Recite this prayer: "May all the wishes of the fathers and mothers, the transmigratory beings of the six realms, be accomplished. May all the sufferings of each individual be completely purified, and may they achieve the state of omniscience."

4) The fourth tsa-tsa is dedicated to sentient beings who have died and not yet taken another body. For these intermediate state beings, say this prayer of dedication: "Due to the good karma of making offerings to the Sangha and of making statues of the holy bodies of Aryan beings, may the hallucinated minds of all intermediate state beings be eliminated completely. May they achieve the three kayas of enlightenment."

5) The fifth tsa-tsa is for the practitioner himself. "May I and all sentient beings accumulate merit and purify the two obscurations. May we pacify all disease and suffering, and increase life, merit, wealth, and reputation. May I have whatever control I wish over the three realms, human beings, possessions, and food. I am requesting to dispel the bad conditions of enemies, interferers, obstacles and untimely death."

Do the seven limb practice.

The main body

As you pour out or measure the material, recite:
OM NAMO SAMENTA BUDDHANAM OM VAJRA AYUKE SOHA.

As you mix the material, recite:
OM BENDZO BAWAYE SOHA.

When adding water to the material, recite:
OM AHRANDZE BERANDZE SOHA.

As you pour the material into the mold, recite:
OM DHARMADHATU GARBE SOHA.

And as you brush the material in the mold, recite:
OM VAJRA MUNGARA AKUYATA HUNG,
and also the essence-of-dependent-arising mantra.

Now put the previously blessed grain in the back of the tsa-tsa, like putting mantras in a statue.

As you demold the tsa-tsa and break off the extra material, recite:
OM BAYUTE SOHA.

When the tsa-tsa is dry and you are painting it, recite:
OM VAJRA AHRANDZE BERANZE SOHA.

After you finish all this, to consecrate the tsa-tsas, recite: OM VAJRA SUPATITA VAJRA YE SOHA.

These are the mantras to recite while doing the different activities.

The completion

The completion involves remembering the benefits of making tsa-tsas, and the dedication prayers. Store the tsa-tsas in a safe, clean, solitary place.

PART III: COMMENTARY ON TSA TSA PRACTICE (with explanation of each verse)

One of the practices for accumulating merit and purifying negative karma is making tsa-tsas: clay [or plaster] statues of Buddha and stupas. Many previous meditators and yogis like Lama Tsongkhapa and the Kadampa Geshes, practitioners of the graduated path to enlightenment, did this practice of making tsa-tsas. When not doing the actual sessions, in the break-times such as after lunch, they would do the practice of making tsa-tsas and also Dorje Khadro fire puja. When they were not doing other Dharma activities for sentient beings, they would do these.

These are practical methods which are easy to do and incredibly beneficial in purifying obscurations, and in accumulating merit for the practitioner and other sentient beings. Also, in order to do the three-year retreat of a special deity, you have to do the nine preliminaries, of which making tsa-tsas is one. “Special deity” means the particular aspect of Buddha with which you have close karmic contact. Having close karmic contact with that deity now means that you had close karmic contact in the past. If you practice that particular aspect of Buddha, it is much easier for you to transform your mind into Dharma. You receive blessings more quickly, which means you are able to transform your mind much more easily from the self-cherishing thought into bodhicitta, from self-grasping into the wisdom of sunyata, and from attachment clinging to samsaric perfections into renunciation. As well as realizing those, you are able to realize the two stages of the tantric path, the generation and completion stages, more easily. So you can see that it becomes quicker and easier for you to achieve enlightenment.

These nine preliminaries need to be done before you actually do the three year retreat of that deity, which involves meditations and recitation of the deity’s mantra. One of the preliminaries is the practice of offering sesame seeds to Dorje Khadro, and another is making tsa-tsas of Buddhas in clay with a mold.

Using the same techniques for these practices as those great yogis brings more merit. If we use the same meditations and prayers as those who have generated all the realizations of the path and purified all obscurations, if we practice in the same way, the merit is much greater. It is not that without saying these mantras or without knowing the meditations and techniques we do not accumulate merit when we make statues of Buddhas but, with this right advice, the practice is more perfect and creates more merit.

Here is the advice of utilizing the tsa-tsa practice in the path to enlightenment, written by the great translator, Tropu.

I think Tropu was a very high lama who translated scriptures from Sanskrit into Tibetan.

Namo Guru, I prostrate to the gurus who are the glorified saviors of sentient beings, the lords of omniscience and compassion, the refuge object of the transmigratory beings, and the step towards liberation, and who have completely conquered all opposing conditions.

There is another prayer which says: I request you, the virtuous teacher, who is the eye to see all the extensive scriptures, the door for the fortunate ones to receive liberation and, out of compassion, a skilful guide. Some prayers call the guru the door to liberation, but here it says the step towards liberation. In this sense, it means that you cannot get into a house from down below without using the steps. Similarly, without a virtuous friend you cannot achieve liberation. Opposing conditions means any conditions which prevent the achievement of enlightenment.

Please grant the sublime and general realizations to me and all other transmigratory beings. In order to accumulate the causes of enlightenment, I am going to write the advice of how to utilize the tsa-tsa practice in the path to enlightenment.

The practice has three divisions: the preliminaries, the actual body and the completion.

The preliminaries

First of all, generate yourself as the deity. Then take refuge and generate bodhicitta.

Purify the amount of prepared material in emptiness with the mantra: OM SVABHAVA SHUDDAH SARVA DHARMAH SVABHAVA SHUDDO HAM.

The simple way of purifying the material in emptiness is to think like this: when you look at it, the material appears as if it exists from its own side, but “material” is merely labeled by thought on that collection of atoms mixed with water. This is how the material is existing in reality but to you it does not appear as existing in mere name. It appears as the complete opposite - not as merely labeled but as unlabeled, existing from its own side. The label “material” and the base on which you label somehow appear to you as oneness. The material does not seem to be merely labeled but existing from its own side. This is how the material appears.

Now, this truly existent, independent material does not exist; it is completely empty. It is completely empty there. The material which appears as if existing from its own side is empty of existing from its own side. This wrong conception which grasps the truly existent appearance of the material disturbs your seeing the reality of the absolute nature of the material, and interferes in your achieving enlightenment. This wrong conception believing in the appearance of the truly existent material interferes in your liberation from samsara.

So, while making the tsa-tsas, have the awareness that the material is empty of existing from its own side. And also, as it is empty of existing from its own side, that it is a dependent arising. This means the way the material is really existing is by being merely labeled on the base, the group of atoms. On that base, thought is merely labeling “material”. If you do the tsa-tsa practice with awareness of emptiness and dependent arising, it becomes a direct remedy to samsara, cutting off the true cause of suffering. As it becomes a remedy to the true cause of suffering, the practice also eliminates the true sufferings.

Those of you who have received maha-anuttara initiations know the meaning and meditation of this mantra, OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHAH SARVA DHARMAH SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HAM, which you use when you bless the inner offering and before the dharmakaya meditation. Do that same meditation here, according to the meaning of the mantra. This is the dharmakaya meditation. Meditate that your own mind is the actual result-time dharmakaya of the deity you practice. If it is Chakrasamvara, think: “This is my actual result-time Chakrasamvara holy mind, the dharmakaya.” This is the basic meditation according to the meaning of this mantra. Details of this meditation can be explained only after you have received a maha-anuttara initiation. There are three basic meditations: dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. This one is dharmakaya.

The simple way is just to analyze the material that is there. Look at the appearance of the material and analyze how it appears. Analyze whether it is appearing as merely labeled or not as merely labeled but existing from its own side. If the material appears to exist from its own side, this is the hallucination. This material does not exist. Think: “This is completely false.” Concentrate on the meaning of “false” - not even the slightest atom of that material on the table in front of you exists at all. If you look at the material on the table, this truly existent material, this independent material, this material existing from its own side, it is completely empty there. Not even an atom of that material exists. Meditate on this emptiness.

With this awareness you continue to work. Even though the material is still appearing as if it exists from its own side, keep the continuation of the understanding that this material existing from its own side is completely empty. It is like a magician who has transformed a beautiful palace and dancing girls, and is playing with these transformations. There is the appearance of these things to the magician, and he does activities with them but, at the same time, he has an understanding in his mind that they are empty of reality.

Similarly, there are appearances but in our hearts we have an understanding that they are empty. Keep the awareness that the material which appears as if existing from its own side is empty. The material with which we are printing Buddha statues is merely labeled by thought on the base. If you do the tsa-tsa practice with this awareness that the material is a dependent arising, empty of existing from its own side, the whole practice becomes a remedy to samsara.

Your wisdom then manifests in the five syllables OM HUM TRAM HRI AH. Recite this mantra three times.

To make the meditation a little more profound, your wisdom realizing the emptiness of the material manifests in the syllables of the holy mind of the five Dhyani Buddhas: OM HUM TRAM HRI AH. Both the truly existent material and the impure appearance of the material are purified in emptiness, and then your wisdom which realizes this emptiness manifests in the five syllables of the Dhyani Buddhas. You recite this mantra OM HUM TRAM HRI AH three times.

These syllables transform into mountains of jewels.

This is the material with which you are going to make the tsa-tsas. Even though to your eyes the material is still material, if you visualize that you are making the tsa-tsas with jewels and precious materials, you make more merit. Visualizing the material as jewels and precious stones follows the same logic as the mandala offering. By visualizing offering the entire universe, you gain the merit of having actually offered it. However many millions of universes and jewels you visualize and offer, in that short time you actually gain the extensive merit of having offered that many universes and jewels. Even if you do not have the smallest piece of gold or diamond, by visualizing and offering gold and diamonds, you receive the extensive merit of actually offering them.

This is proved by the story of King Ashoka. In one of Ashoka's past lives he was one of three children playing in the sand when Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was going past on his way for alms in the village. These three children wanted to make an offering to Buddha but, because his holy body was very tall, they had to stand one on top of each other's shoulders. They had nothing to offer but the third child, standing on top of the second child's shoulders, offered a handful of sand in Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's begging bowl, visualizing that he was offering gold. That child received the extensive merit of having actually offered gold and, by that good karma, was born in India as the Dharma king, Ashoka.

During his life as King Ashoka, he built many monasteries and made much offering to the sangha. In one day, in different places, King Ashoka was able to build ten million stupas. By being born as a Dharma king with all the enjoyments and power, he was able to accumulate unbelievable merit. This all came from that one small good karma of making an offering of sand to Buddha, visualizing it as gold.

This is the main reason we accumulate extensive, inconceivable merit by offering the mandala, visualizing the whole universe and best quality enjoyments. Similarly, these lamas practice Buddha's technique for sentient beings to accumulate merit. Even though the material is material, visualizing it as jewels is a skilful meditation technique which creates much more merit.

Recite OM AH HUM to bless the material.

OM is a combination of three syllables - AH, O and MA. These three signify Buddha's holy body, speech and mind, as do OM, AH and HUM. OM represents Buddha's holy body, AH his holy speech, and HUM his holy mind. When you recite this mantra, think that you are blessing the material with which you are going to make the tsa-tsas in the essence of Buddha's vajra holy body, holy speech and holy mind.

While your body is clarified as the mind-bound deity, with your speech recite the essence-of-dependent-arising mantra: OM YE DHARMA HETU PRABHAVA HETUN TESHAN TATHOGATO HY AVADAT TESHAN CA YO NIRODHA EVAM VADI MAHA SRAMANAH SVAHA, and OM AH HUM, again and again.

While your mind is contemplating absolute truth, sunyata, make one tsa-tsa. As you make this tsa tsa, think: "I am making this tsa-tsa for the triple gem". With your speech recite this prayer: "May the teachings of the Buddha spread and be developed. May the holy Dharma last a long time. May the Sangha achieve the holy Dharma and may the highest enlightenment be accomplished."

"Sangha" means those intending virtue, and this virtue means liberation. It means those who are seeking liberation by living in the virtue of the vows - the path of liberation. "May the highest enlightenment be accomplished" means for yourself and the sangha, those who are practicing virtue, and all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment.

The second tsa-tsa is dedicated for the direct and indirect gurus to have long lives, for their holy actions to be developed and their wishes to be fulfilled. With that intention, recite the following prayer: "May the lives and holy actions of the direct and indirect holy gurus be developed, and the experiences of realizations in their holy minds be increased. May the field of objects to be subdued be increased".

This means for the gurus to be able to benefit by subduing as many sentient beings as possible, and guiding them to enlightenment.

The third tsa tsa is dedicated to your parents (past, present and future), to all sentient beings who have been your mother and father, to those who are now, and to those who will be your parents in the future. Recite this prayer: "May all the wishes of the fathers and mothers, the transmigratory beings of the six realms, be accomplished. May all the sufferings of each individual be completely purified, and may they achieve the state of omniscience."

The fourth tsa-tsa is dedicated to sentient beings who have died and have not yet taken another body. For these intermediate state beings, say this prayer of dedication: "Due to the good karma of making offerings to the Sangha and of making statues of the holy bodies of aryan beings, may the hallucinated minds of all intermediate state beings be eliminated completely. May they achieve the three kayas of enlightenment."

The intermediate state beings who have not yet found their next-life body are not only kind people like your friends and parents, but even your enemies: sentient beings with whom you had a bad, harmful relationship, not a beneficial one. Now that person is dead and you want to help him find a better rebirth, and achieve temporal and ultimate happiness. The "good karma" could be that of both the intermediate state beings and you.

The fifth tsa-tsa is for the practitioner himself. "May I and all sentient beings accumulate merit and purify the two obscurations. May we pacify all disease and suffering, and increase life, merit, wealth, and reputation. May I have whatever control I wish over the three realms, human beings, possessions, and food. I am requesting to dispel the bad conditions of enemies, interferers, obstacles and untimely death."

Of “the two obscurations”, one is the disturbing thought obscuration, which mainly disturbs the achievement of liberation; the second, which mainly interferes in achieving enlightenment, is the obscuration to fully knowing all existence.

You need a long life because without it you cannot complete the actualization of the path. You need merit because without merit, or fortune, you cannot accomplish the wishes and obtain happiness for yourself and other sentient beings. If there is shortage of merit, there are difficulties even to gain temporal happiness, and particularly to achieve liberation and enlightenment.

Why is there a need to pray for reputation? It is not for you yourself but, to be able to work for sentient beings, there is also a need for a good reputation so you dedicate merit for that. With a good reputation, you can benefit many sentient beings. Because they will listen to and obey you, there is an opportunity to guide them to enlightenment by revealing the teachings. This is the purpose of dedicating for reputation.

To dedicate for wealth is the same. To work for other sentient beings and even for you yourself to complete the practice, there are always necessary conditions - a suitable place, food, and clothing. And then, especially to work for others, you need wealth. It does not suit many sentient beings to be guided through having Dharma revealed to them right at the beginning. They can, however, be guided through first giving them wealth, food and clothing ; then gradually they become receptive to the teachings, and you can give them teachings. Giving them wealth is a preliminary which also pacifies their difficulties and suffering.

“May I have whatever control I wish over the three realms” means that, to be able to continue your Dharma practice for the sake of other sentient beings, and especially to guide them to enlightenment, you need control over the humans dependent on the six sense objects here in the realm of desire, and over the sentient beings in the form and formless realms. “Whatever control I wish” means control over the particular conditions - places, possessions, food - that are needed. If you are doing Dharma activities to benefit sentient beings, other people may interfere. Even though your motivation and actions may be very pure - wanting to guide sentient beings by leading them to accumulate the unmistakable causes of temporal and ultimate happiness - other beings may interfere in that. “Whatever control I wish” means control over these beings who are interfering in your ability to do these works for sentient beings. If you need to practice Dharma by doing retreat in a certain place, for example, you need to be supported and to have visas. This depends on people helping you financially, and also with visas. If you do not have control over them, they may become obstacles to your wish to succeed in the practice. This is the purpose of praying to have control over beings and wealth.

You are also requesting to dispel your enemies. The main enemy is the inner enemy of the self-cherishing thought. This selfish mind is your worst enemy. Another enemy is the ignorance which grasps at the I, the aggregates, the six sense objects and all phenomena, as existing from their own sides. While in reality they are merely labeled by thought and exist in mere name, they do not appear as merely labeled but as existing from their own sides. You completely grasp and believe 100% in these objects as truly existent. This particular ignorance is grasping at things as truly existent. The other branches of ignorance are not knowing Dharma (the causes of happiness and

suffering), ignorance in karma, the five wrong views and the five non-views. However, the origin of these branches is the ignorance grasping at true existence.

The self-cherishing thought and ignorance grasping at true existence are the real enemies, the real obstacles. Because of being friends with these, your greatest enemies and delusions, you find outside enemies. By having inner enemies, you find outside enemies who harm you. Through being friends with the inner enemy, external obstacles arise. These obstacles are not necessarily sentient beings but can even be non-living things such as fire, water, air and earth which can cause danger to your life and harm you. Even non-living things can become conditions that disturb you. Other sentient beings, instead of giving the help you wish, can give you harm that you do not like. Similarly, the four elements, instead of benefiting you, can become disturbances.

All these disturbances are created by inside enemies. Things bother you instead of benefiting you because of the inner enemy. This is why the great bodhisattva, Shantideva, said in Bodhicharyavatara: “Once the one enemy, the inner enemy, is destroyed, it is like having conquered and destroyed all outside enemies.” Otherwise, if you do not destroy the inside enemy, you have endless enemies. Destroying those people giving you harm whom you have pointed out as enemies only makes continual enemies. Look at the examples in the world of two countries or even two people fighting. Even if you are able to defeat and kill the other person, for the time being no one may come to kill you, but eventually your own life will be in danger. The relatives of your enemy may come to kill you, for example. And even if this does not happen in this life, in other lifetimes, by the evolution of karma, the person you killed in the past will kill you.

The example is given that if you want to destroy all the thorns on this earth, you will not be able to finish the work of cutting them. But wearing shoes is like covering all the thorns on the earth with leather. If you wear shoes, these small pieces of leather, wherever you walk on this earth, no thorns can go into your feet. It is similar with the enemy. The greatest profit comes from attempting, your whole life long, to destroy the inner enemy. This example shows the disadvantages of dedicating your whole life to destroying the outside enemy, and the inconceivable advantages of destroying the inner enemy.

Once this inner enemy is eliminated, it is impossible for it to arise again. It is impossible for you to be controlled by disturbing thoughts because there is no cause for them to arise. Once the seed of ignorance holding things as truly existent is eliminated, there is no way disturbing thoughts can arise. This is why Dharma practice is one-time work. Worldly work, no matter how many times it is done, cannot be completed. There is no end to it. In other words, there is no way worldly work, work for the delusions, can ever be finished. Doing worldly work makes the work continue longer.

The prayer also mentions dispelling “untimely death”. There are general death and untimely death. Untimely death means that although you have accumulated the karma to live longer, to seventy or one hundred years, because of some heavy negative karma or obstacle, death happens before this life span is finished. If you are going to die because of some heavy negative karma, you can postpone death and live longer by purifying with practices like Vajrasattva and making tsa-tsas. Some Buddhas, such as the Immovable Buddha and Kunrig, have manifested to allow sentient beings to purify. Then for obstacles to long life, there are White Tara, the Long Life Buddha and the Infinite Life Buddha, whose particular function in guiding sentient beings is to grant long life.

Shortage of life happens because of shortage of merit, finishing your good karma. You can accumulate more merit if you practice these methods.

As objects of merit, starting from this life, there is more power and more merit in offering service to and helping your parents than other people. Next is the sangha, which here seems to mean only those living in vows of celibacy. The absolute Sangha are much greater objects of merit than ordinary sangha. Bodhisattvas are much greater objects of merit than arhats.

There is quite a big difference in regard to bodhisattvas. Looking respectfully at one bodhisattva with a calm devoted mind has much greater merit than making charity of eyes to all the beings of the three galaxies. Looking disrespectfully, with an angry mind, is also very powerful: the negative karma is much greater than taking out the eyes of all those beings. The big difference is because of the realizations of a bodhisattva. Even though he is only one being, because of his realizations of bodhicitta, a bodhisattva is an unbelievably powerful object. And this is only talking about looking at a bodhisattva with a little respect, not even beginning to talk about making offerings to him. Buddhas are much more powerful objects of merit than bodhisattvas. Higher than Buddhas, though this may sound strange to you, is your own virtuous friend. This is explained in the teachings. Try to practice what is the most powerful according to this explanation.

Do the seven limb practice.

All statues need to be filled with scriptures and the mantras of different deities in different parts of the statue such as the throne, lotus and holy body. Tsa-tsas are the same. The different parts inside our bodies have different functions; similarly, statues have different parts that need consecration.

On well-cleaned grain, recite the essence-of- dependent-arising mantra. In other words, bless the grain by reciting the mantra.

This grain is inserted in the back of the tsa- tsas in the way that mantras are put in statues to consecrate them. Your hands, the material, and everything else should be kept clean.

If you are making the tsa-tsas for a person who is sick or in danger of not having a long life, at the beginning, before actually printing the tsa-tsas, recite mantras of long-life Buddhas and request these Buddhas to increase the life of the person.

If you are making the tsa-tsas so that a person who has died finds a good rebirth in the body of a happy transmigratory being, recite the mantra of Mitukpa, The Immovable Buddha, from the Guhyasamaja tantra: (NAMO RATNA TRAYAYA) OM KAMKANI KAMKANI, ROTZANI ROTZANI, TORTANI TORTANI, TRASANI TRASANI, PARTIHANA PARTIHANA, SARWA KARMA PARAM PARANI ME SARW A SATO NAM SOHA

Recite the Vajrasattva mantra also, and the mantras of other deities powerful in purifying obscurations.

Reciting these mantras purifies the negative karma to experience the suffering of the narak, animal and preta realms. Actually, the most important thing is for the person to find a body which has the opportunity to practise Dharma. Otherwise, if the person does not meet Dharma, being born in the upper realms does not mean much. It does not mean that he will not be born later in the body of an unhappy transmigratory being. Where he will go depends on what he does with his life, with his body, speech and mind. Being born as a deva, a worldly god, does not mean much because they do not have the opportunity to practice Dharma. Worldly gods are only living on previous merit and not creating any more. When that previous good karma is used up by enjoying its results, there is nothing left.

By taking a body which has the opportunity to practice Dharma, a person not only experiences his previous good karma, but creates more good karma. From life to life, it gets better and better; and by continuing to practice, the person can achieve peerless enlightenment. Therefore, praying to find a perfect body in which to practice Dharma is most important.

With the pure attitude of taking complete responsibility for liberating the person from the lower realms by yourself alone, and for leading them to the perfect body of a happy transmigratory being, begin to make the tsa-tsas.

The main body

While you are making the tsa-tsas, there are various mantras to recite:

When you measure the material, recite:

OM NAMO SAMENTA BUDDHANAM OM VAJRA AYUKE SOHA.

As you mix the material, recite:

OM BENDZO BAWAYE SOHA.

When adding water to the material, recite:

OM AHRANDZE BERANDZE SOHA.

As you pour the material in the mold, recite:

OM DHARMADHATU GARBE SOHA.

And as you brush the material in the mold, recite:

OM VAJRA MUNGARA AKUYATA HUNG, and also the essence-of-dependent-arising mantra.

Now put the previously blessed grain in the back of the tsa-tsa, like putting mantras in a statue.

As you demold the tsa tsa and break off the extra material, say:

OM BAYUTE SOHA.

When the tsa-tsa is dry and you are painting it, recite:

OM VAJRA AHRANDZE BERANZE SOHA. After you finish all this, to consecrate the tsa-tsas, say: OM VAJRA SUPATITA VAJRA YE SOHA.

These are the mantras to recite while doing the different activities.

The completion

The completion involves remembering the benefits of making tsa-tsas, and the dedication prayers. Then put the tsa-tsas in a solitary place.

There are many different types of dedication prayers you can make for the sake of yourself and others. The tsa-tsas you make can be used to put inside big statues or stupas, or on altars to make offerings to. In Tibet and other countries of the Himalayan region, if they do not have place for the tsa-tsas in the house, they put them in caves or on rocks where there is protection from the rain. There is also a practice relating to nagas where you take the tsa-tsas to the ocean and respectfully - not throwing them or putting them upside down - put them in the water so that the nagas can accumulate merit with them as their holy objects. You put the tsa-tsas in the water for the happiness of the nagas. Doing this also purifies the animals living in the ocean who are touched by the water which has touched the tsa-tsas, the holy bodies of the Buddhas. And there are many other benefits.

If many people are making tsa-tsas and there is no place to put them, build a small square house and put the tsa-tsas inside it. In this way, the tsa-tsas are respected and you do not break your refuge precepts. If the tsa-tsas are not taken care of well but just left on the road, other people create negative karma by breaking and disrespecting them. The main point is that you keep them in a safe, clean place.

The benefits of making tsa-tsas and statues were explained by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha to King Sengyäl, in a sutra. The essence is that the happiness of sentient beings depends on the teachings lasting a long time and being developed. This does not mean just the scriptures. If you remember when you say “teachings” that the meaning is abandoning bad karma and creating good karma, it is clear why the happiness of sentient beings depends on the teachings. The teachings were revealed by Buddha and accomplished by the Sangha, through practicing them. So it is all dependent on the triple gem. For ordinary sentient beings, it is difficult to see directly the internal triple gem of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, so there are statues, scriptures, and stupas which represent Buddha’s holy body, holy speech and holy mind. Ordinary sentient beings can directly perceive these things, so can easily accumulate merit.

By the condition of the existence of these holy objects, sentient beings accumulate merit in many ways: by praying, making offerings, prostrating and paying respect. Every single action such as making offerings, prostrating and paying respect, not just to the actual Buddha but even to statues or paintings of Buddha, becomes the cause of achieving the highest, peerless happiness. This is without counting all the inconceivable temporary happiness such as receiving the body of a happy transmigratory being, wealth, a long life, and all the desirable things that can be enjoyed. From the good karma of making one offering, you can enjoy the result for so many lifetimes.

Without counting these temporal enjoyments, each and every action becomes a cause of highest enlightenment. It is unbelievable. Making statues or stupas becomes a very skilful and easy means to guide sentient beings to create the cause of happiness. This sutra also says that, equal in number to the atoms in the statue or stupa you have made, you will receive a human or a deva's body, and be born as a king. You will reach the perfect concentration of the form and formless realms and, after enjoying all these perfect places, you will be liberated from rebirth, aging, sickness, and death, and achieve enlightenment.

There are also stories of beings like the previous Kadampa Geshe making statues to prolong their lives. For example, Depu Rinpoche was advised by White Tara to make a statue of her to postpone his death. He did so, and his death was postponed for eleven years. Tara advised him to make another statue, and Depu Rinpoche lived for ten years more. By this time he was more than eighty years old. When the ten years were up, he requested Tara again; once more she advised him to make a statue for his long life. So he made a painting of Tara on a wall and lived until he was ninety-five. Even in these present times, there have been experiences of life being lengthened and death postponed by doing this practice.

It is also commonly mentioned in the teachings, especially in regard to astrology, that making statues and paintings of Buddhas can change the next rebirth. Instead of being born in the lower realms, you can be born in the upper realms, in the body of a happy transmigratory being, as a religious person relying on Dharma, and also take the body of a wealthy person.

Do not make less than five tsa-tsas. Tsa-tsas are made in groups of five, each dedicated to a different purpose. Making more than five tsa-tsas has inexpressible benefits. Even in this life, you will have less disease, your enjoyments will increase, and you will achieve long life and good reputation. It is the best method to betray death. Making tsa-tsas pacifies obstacles, bad conditions, accidents, and sudden diseases like heart attacks and paralysis.

By making tsa-tsas you pacify enemies, interferers, and harms. You accumulate all merit, purify all obscurations, and achieve the resultant three kayas in future life.

The benefits of making tsa-tsas are inexpressible; the telling of all the details can never be finished.

This advice on utilizing the tsa-tsa practice in the path to enlightenment should be practiced every day without stopping. I, the great translator Tropa, translated this text into Tibetan to benefit the transmigratory beings. By this merit, may sentient beings achieve enlightenment.

Colophon

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