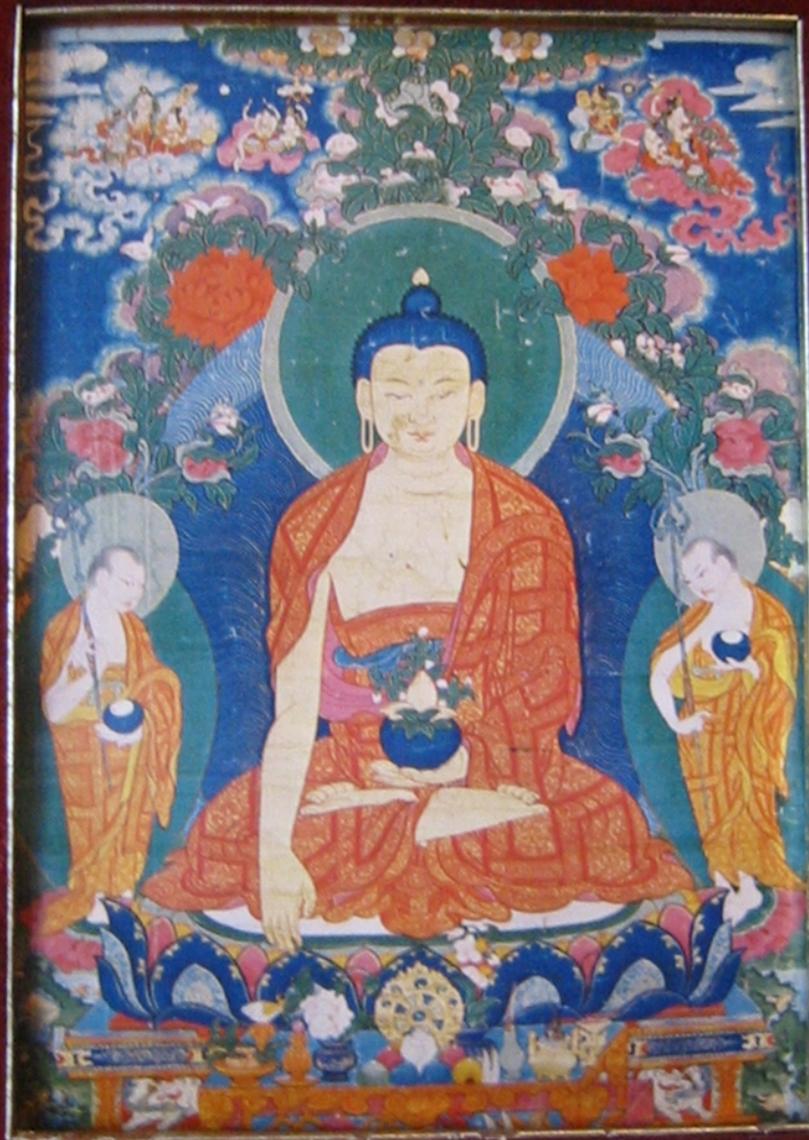


MEDITATION ON SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA



THIS IS LAMA YESHES ALTAR
CARRIED ALWAYS WITH HIM

Meditation on the Buddha

“Buddha” is a Sanskrit word that means “fully awakened.” It refers not only to Shakyamuni, or Gautama, the founder of the teachings that came to be known as Buddhism, but also to any person who attains enlightenment. There are numberless enlightened beings - beings who have completely transformed their minds, eliminated all negative energy and become whole, perfect. They are not confined to a transient, physical body as we are, but are free from death and rebirth. They can abide in a state of pure consciousness, or appear in different forms - a sunset, music, a beggar, a teacher - in order to communicate their wisdom and love to ordinary beings. They are the very essence of compassion and wisdom, and their energy is all around us, all the time.

Every living being, by virtue of having a mind, is able to become a buddha. The fundamental nature of the mind is pure, clear and free of the clouds of disturbing conceptions and emotions that now obscure it. As long as we identify with confused states of mind, believing, “I am an angry person; I am depressed; I have so many problems,” we don’t even give ourselves the chance to change.

Of course, our problems *are* very deep and complex, but they are not as real or as solid as we think. We also have the wisdom that can recognize our mistaken thinking, and the capacity to give and to love. It is a matter of identifying with and gradually developing *these* qualities to the point where they arise spontaneously and effortlessly. It is not easy to become enlightened, but it is possible.

In this meditation, we visualize the form of Shakyamuni Buddha and recite his mantra.

Shakyamuni was born a prince, Siddhartha, into a vastly wealthy family two-and-a-half thousand years ago in the north of India. He lived in his kingdom for twenty-nine years, sheltered from the more unpleasant realities of human existence. He eventually encountered them however in the form of a sick person, an old, senile person and a corpse.

These experiences affected him profoundly. His next significant encounter was with a wandering meditator who had transcended the concerns of ordinary life and reached a state of balance and serenity.

Realizing that his way of life led only to death and had no real, lasting value, Prince Siddhartha decided to leave his home and family and go to the forest to meditate. After many years of persistent, single-minded effort, meeting and overcoming one difficulty after another, he attained enlightenment - became a buddha. Having thus freed himself from all delusions and suffering, he aspired to help others reach enlightenment too; his compassion was limitless.

He was now thirty-five years old. He spent the remaining forty-five years of his life explaining the way to understand the mind, deal with problems, develop love and compassion and thus become enlightened. His teachings were remarkably fluid, varying according to the needs, capabilities and personalities of his listeners. He led them skillfully towards the understanding of the ultimate nature of reality.

The Buddha’s life itself was a teaching, an example of the path to

enlightenment, and his death a teaching on impermanence.

A powerful way to discover our own buddha-nature is to open ourselves to the external buddha. With continual practice, our ordinary self-image gradually falls away and we learn instead to identify with our innate wisdom and compassion: our own buddhahood.

THE PRACTICE

Calm your mind by doing a few moments of breathing meditation. Then, contemplate the prayer of refuge and bodhicitta.

I take refuge until I am enlightened,
In the buddhas, the dharma and the
sangha.
Through the merit I create by
practicing giving and the other
perfections,
May I attain buddhahood for the
sake of
all living beings.

Generate love and compassion by reflecting briefly on the predicament of all beings: their wish to experience true happiness but inability to obtain it, and their wish to avoid suffering but continual encounters with it.

Then think: "In order to help all beings and lead them to the perfect peace and happiness of enlightenment I myself must attain enlightenment. For this purpose I shall practice this meditation."

VISUALIZATION OF THE BUDDHA

Every aspect of the visualization is of light: transparent, intangible and radiant. At the level of your forehead and between six and eight feet away is a large golden throne adorned with jewels and supported at each of its

four corners by a pair of snow lions. These animals, in reality manifestations of bodhisattvas, have white fur and a green mane and tail.

On the flat surface of the throne is a seat consisting of a large open lotus and two radiant discs representing the sun and the moon, one on top of the other. These three objects symbolize the three principal realizations of the path to enlightenment: the lotus, renunciation; the sun, emptiness; and the moon, bodhicitta.

Seated upon this is the Buddha, who has attained these realizations and is the embodiment of all enlightened beings. His body is of golden light and he wears the saffron robes of a monk. His robes do not actually touch his body but are separated from it by about an inch. He is seated in the vajra, or full-lotus, posture. The palm of his right hand rests on his right knee, the fingers touching the moon cushion, signifying his great control. His left hand rests in his lap in the meditation pose, holding a bowl filled with nectar, which is medicine for curing our disturbing states of mind and other hindrances.

Buddha's face is very beautiful. His smiling, compassionate gaze is directed at you and, simultaneously, towards every other living being. Feel that he is free of all judging, critical thoughts and that he accepts you just as you are. His eyes are long and narrow. His lips are cherry red and the lobes of his ears are long. His hair is blue-black and each hair is individually curled to the right and not mixed with the others. Every feature of his appearance represents an attribute of his omniscient mind.

Rays of light emanate from each pore of Buddha's pure body and reach every corner of the universe. These rays are actually composed of

countless miniature buddhas, some going out to help living beings, others dissolving back into his body, having finished their work.

PURIFICATION

Feel the living presence of Buddha and take refuge in him, recalling his perfect qualities and his willingness and ability to help you. Make a request from your heart to receive his blessings to help you to become free from all your negative energy, misconceptions and other problems and to receive all the realizations of the path to enlightenment.

Your request is accepted. A stream of purifying white light, which is in the nature of the enlightened mind, flows from Buddha's heart and enters your body through the crown of your head. Just as the darkness in a room is instantly dispelled the moment a light is switched on, so too is the darkness of your negative energy dispelled upon contact with this radiant white light.

As it flows into you, filling your body completely, recite the following prayer three times.

To the guru and founder,
The endowed transcendent
destroyer,
The one-thus-gone, the foe
destroyer,
The completely perfected, fully-
awakened being,
The glorious conqueror, the subduer
from the Shakya clan,
I prostrate, turn for refuge and
make offerings:
Please bestow your blessings.

Now, recite Buddha's mantra,

TAYATA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA
MUNAYE SOHA (pronounced *ta-ya-ta*

*om mooni mooni ma-ha moon-aye-ye
so-ha*).

Repeat it out loud, or chant it, at least seven times, then say it quietly to yourself for a few minutes.

When you have finished reciting, feel that all your negative energy, problems and subtle obscurations have been completely purified. Your body feels blissful and light. Concentrate on this for a while.

Receiving inspiring strength

Visualize that a stream of golden light descends from the Buddha's heart and flows into your body through the crown of your head. The essence of this light is the excellent qualities of his pure body, speech and mind.

He can transform his body into different forms, animate and inanimate, to help living beings according to their individual needs and particular states of mind.

With his speech he can communicate different aspects of the dharma simultaneously to beings of various levels of development and be understood by them in their respective languages.

His omniscient mind sees clearly every atom of existence and every occurrence - past, present and future - and knows the thoughts of every living being: such is his awareness in each moment.

These infinite good qualities flow into every part of your body. Concentrate on this blissful experience while again repeating the mantra,

TAYATA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA
MUNAYE SOHA

When you have finished the recitation feel that you have received the infinite excellent qualities of

Buddha's body, speech and mind. Your body feels light and blissful. Concentrate on this for some time.

ABSORPTION

Now, visualize that the eight snow lions absorb into the throne, the throne into the lotus and the lotus into the sun and moon. They, in turn, absorb into the Buddha, who now comes to the space above your head, melts into light and dissolves into your body.

Your ordinary sense of I - unworthy and burdened with faults - and all your other wrong conceptions disappear completely. In that instant you become one with the Buddha's blissful, omniscient mind in the aspect of vast empty space.

Concentrate on this experience for as long as possible, allowing no other thoughts to distract you.

Then, imagine that from this empty state there appear in the place where you are sitting the throne, lotus, sun, moon and upon these yourself as the Buddha. Everything is of the nature of light, exactly as you had visualized before in front of you. Feel that you *are* Buddha. Identify with his enlightened wisdom and compassion instead of with your usual incorrect self-view.

Surrounding you in every direction and filling all of space are all living beings. Generate love and compassion for them by recalling that they too want to achieve happiness and peace of mind and freedom from all problems. Now that you are enlightened you can help them.

At your heart are a lotus and a moon. Standing upright around the circumference of the moon, reading clockwise, are the syllables of the mantra, *tayata om muni muni maha munaye soha*. The seed-syllable *mum* (*moom*) stands at the moon's centre.

Visualize that rays of light - actually your wisdom and compassion - emanate from each letter and spread in all directions. They reach the countless sentient beings surrounding you and completely purify them of their obscurations and delusions and fill them with inspiration and strength.

While imagining this, again recite the mantra,

TAYATA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA
MUNAYE SOHA

When you have finished reciting, think: "Now I have led all sentient beings to enlightenment, thus fulfilling my intention for doing this meditation."

Visualize that everyone surrounding you is now in the form of Buddha and is experiencing complete bliss and the wisdom of emptiness.

You should not worry that your meditation is a sham and that you have not helped even one person achieve enlightenment. This practice is known as "bringing the future result into the present path" and is a powerful cause for our own enlightenment. It helps us develop firm conviction in our innate perfection - our buddha-potential; that what we have just done in meditation we will definitely accomplish one day.

Conclude the session by dedicating all the merit and insight you have gained by doing this meditation to sentient beings.

By Robina Courtin, based on the teachings of Lama Zopa Rinpoche.