The Guru-Disciple Relationship
Teachings by
B. Alan Wallace
**Front cover**

In Buddhism, the white conch shell that spirals to the right can mean the deep and joyful sound of the Dharma teachings. It is representative of the awakening that disciples receive when they hear these teachings. The conch shell can also mean the rousing of people from ignorance.

**Acknowledgements**

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Note from editors
Although we had excellent support and assistance from Lama Alan Wallace in the editing and assembling of this text, we take sole responsibility for any errors that might remain. English, rather than American spelling is used throughout.
ABOUT LAMA ALAN WALLACE

Lama Alan Wallace has studied and practiced Tibetan Buddhism for over forty years. He is a direct student of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. His principal Dzogchen (Great Perfection) teacher is the Venerable Domang Gyatrul Rinpoche. Lama Alan has translated the five principal Dzogchen treatises of Dudjom Lingpa. Gyatrul Rinpoche has authorised him to teach, give transmission, and empowerment on these teachings. He has studied with many other great yogis and lamas.
Lama Alan has a PhD in religious studies, an undergraduate degree in physics and the philosophy of science, and has also studied comparative mysticism, including the Christian mystical tradition.

He is a world-renowned meditation teacher who specialises in Shamatha, Vipashyana, and Dzogchen teachings. His approach makes the depth of the Tibetan Buddhist teachings truly accessible for people in the 21st century.
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Introduction

Regardless of the subject, most knowledge has arisen because teachers have shared their skills with students who then go on to become teachers themselves. Almost always the teacher-student relationship is based on mutual respect and commitment, and in this way a lineage of oral and written knowledge is passed through the generations. The main difference between secular and spiritual teacher-student relationships is that the latter requires a greater degree of commitment.

The role of the teacher is significant in all spiritual traditions although modern attitudes can make it difficult for western students to accept the level of respect and trust that is necessary when relating to a spiritual guide. The aim of this book is therefore to clarify the meaning of the teacher-student, or guru-disciple, relationship in Buddhism in general and Tibetan Buddhism in particular. To do this, we have transcribed and edited recent Dzogchen teachings on the guru-disciple relationship given by Lama Alan Wallace.

Chapter 1 introduces the subject with an explanation of the differences between secular and spiritual teacher-student relationships. Chapter 2 presents Lama Alan’s teachings on the meaning of guru and lama and then explains the subtle differences in the way the guru is
perceived through the Three Turnings of the Wheel. The third chapter describes the qualities to seek in an authentic guru; the qualities that a disciple must aspire to cultivate in order for the relationship to be meaningful; the benefits of the relationship for the disciple, and the importance of equal reverence for all teachers.

The fourth chapter explains the guru-disciple relationship in Dzogchen and reiterates how it differs from the first and second turnings of the wheel. The fifth and final chapter gives a guru yoga sadhana based on the Seven Line Prayer to Guru Rinpoche, which was given by Lama Alan in Santa Barbara, USA.

The accompanying CD holds six audio files:
Envisioning our own flourishing
Mindfulness of breathing
Settling the mind in its natural state
Cultivating the causes of genuine happiness
Introduction to Guru Yoga meditation
Shower of Blessings

There is a glossary at the end of the booklet, which explains the meaning of terms used throughout.
Our aspiration in presenting the teachings in this way is to explain the guru-disciple relationship in an easily accessible form. We hope it will answer the doubts and questions that many have around relationships with teachers especially in Vajrayana and Dzogchen. May this book encourage all those who wish to learn from authentic teachers and seek to benefit from buddha-dharma.
The Buddhist symbol, Hung
Chapter 1  Secular and spiritual approaches to the student-teacher relationship

This chapter draws on Lama Alan’s teachings in which he explains the difference between secular and spiritual teacher-student relationships.

Secular approaches

A secular, non-religious approach has become popular for teaching some Buddhist practices in recent years. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has strongly encouraged scientific and secular approaches so that non-religious people can benefit from Buddhist practice and insight. In 2000 he invited a group of scientists and psychologists to a *Mind and Life* meeting to explore psychological and Tibetan Buddhist methods to healing disturbed emotions. The Cultivating Emotional Balance (CEB)\(^1\) training, developed and taught by Drs Paul Ekman and Alan Wallace, was one consequence of this meeting. CEB is secular; it draws from the Buddhist tradition without teaching Buddhism.

The recent mindfulness movement is a further example of secular practices that aim to help people improve the quality of their lives: everyone can benefit because it isn’t necessary to hold any religious or philosophical beliefs or to establish a specific relationship with a teacher.

\(^1\) CEB: for more information about CEB training, please go to Links and Resources.

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Spiritual approaches

Even when starting out on the path of Dharma it is perfectly acceptable to go to Buddhist teachings and receive instructions without regarding the teacher as a guru or lama. We don’t need to have commitment and faith at the outset, even the Buddha said that it’s not necessary to have faith in order to listen to his teachings. Wisdom and discriminating awareness are more important, certainly at the beginning.

However, within Buddhism there is the possibility of a teacher actually leading a student to liberation and enlightenment. If the aspiration to take the path of Dharma becomes the highest priority in our life then naturally we may seek skilful guidance, just as when we are heading off into the wilderness and want a good guide who knows the trail. For this to happen the student asks a teacher to be the guide and entrusts himself or herself to the path. It may feel risky but if the trust is there, it’s incredibly powerful, transformative and liberating.

It requires faith, which can be challenging for westerners. But look at it this way: when you have dental problems you go to the dentist, you ‘take refuge’ in the dentist, you have faith in his or her skills and knowledge. This is trust; it’s not blind because you have good reason to believe
that the dentist knows a lot more about teeth than you do.

However, taking spiritual refuge is much more than entrusting your teeth to the dentist. Given the difficulties of relationships in general, and the delicacy and profundity of the guru-disciple relationship in particular, it is not surprising that many misunderstandings and abuses have occurred, particularly in the West, where a committed, devotional relationship to another human being can be quite alien and often confused with a personality cult. For this reason it is essential for the guru-disciple relationship to be developed over time and with skilful means.

Deep faith and confidence are needed. They should not be given easily, but if they are not given, then we’re on our own, and that’s much more challenging than having a rotten tooth and trying to fix it ourselves without having dental training. In the Buddhist world view we’ve had so many chances and so many past lives figuring it out all by ourselves. How many chances do we need, how much more of samsara do we need to roam around before we figure out that it may be crucial to have a spiritual guide.
CHAPTER 2 THE GURU DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP

This chapter presents Lama Alan’s teachings on the meaning of *guru* and *lama* and the qualities, responsibilities and benefits of the guru-disciple relationship. It goes on to explain the subtle differences in the way the guru is perceived through the Three Turnings of the Wheel.

The meaning of *guru* and *lama*

The term *guru* is a Sanskrit term for teacher or master. It also means heavy, heavy in wisdom, virtue, compassion, knowledge and skill. Indeed, the term *guru* emphasises knowledge, the epistemic aspect.

*Lama* is more specifically applied to spiritual teachers in the Tibetan tradition. *La* means supreme, *ma* means mother. *Supreme mother*. It suggests more the pragmatic aspect. What is a mother’s job? To take care of her children, to make sure they grow up well, flourish, and become well prepared for the world. So the supreme mother is one who takes care of her disciples, and leads them on the path to their true flourishing, to awakening itself. The lama is here to help you, not simply to inform you and transmit knowledge.
When Indians say guru, it’s their language, it feels natural and when Tibetans say, lama, it’s their own language and feels totally natural. We don’t have equivalent terms in the English language, but there are two translations which are close even though they don’t completely capture the meaning.

Guru is a spiritual mentor as in mind, information, knowledge and wisdom, leading us to insight, greater understanding, and greater knowing of the nature of reality. It is a specific type of knowing; a type of knowing that we put into practice in order to purify our own minds and set out on the path to awakening.

The second translation is spiritual guide, and this really highlights the pragmatic aspect. This is not simply about the acquisition of knowledge and insight. This is a path, it’s going somewhere. The fourth noble truth (the eightfold path) is a path of irreversible, profound, and meaningful transformation and the spiritual guide is there to help us find the path and once upon it to guide us so that we don’t go astray. The spiritual guide’s responsibility is to lead us all the way to its culmination.

Ways of viewing the guru

The progression of development of the guru-disciple
relationship is clearly reflected in the Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma.

**First turning of the wheel of Dharma**

In the first turning, Buddha is viewed as an historical figure who is said to have passed into *Parinirvana* and gone completely beyond this world never to return. This means that our Dharma teacher is as close as we get to the historical Buddha. The lineage goes back a hundred generations and our teacher is the last representative, the last link, and this is the one we get. Our teacher is the emissary of the Buddha, bringing us the words of the Buddha. We rarely get to meet our teacher’s teacher because he or she has passed away. Our refuge is the Buddha, Dharma and sangha, and the teacher is representative for all three. It is nothing to do with personality. There’s no hero worship, no personality cult. We can expect the teacher as emissary to do his or her absolute best to live in accordance with the teachings.

**Second turning of the wheel of Dharma**

The insights of the second turning of the wheel of Dharma reveal that all phenomena that rise up to meet us, be it people, objects or circumstances, arise relative to our own modes of perception and conceptualisation.

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2 For more information please see under Hinayana in the glossary
Madhyamaka teaches us that everything that arises as an object is arising, in part, in dependence on our own conceptual designation. None of these phenomena have their own inherent existence, existing in and of themselves as independent entities that we’re simply bumping into. Everything that we experience is relational; we’re all getting expressions of reality relative to our mode of observation and relative to the way we conceptually designate phenomena.

Information is always relative: there is that which is informing, there is a process of being informed, and someone who is informed. It’s a triad and they are all inter-related. The object, the process, and the subject are all mutually inter-dependent and none of them have their own inherent, independent existence. We are living in a profoundly relative universe and nothing that we identify, or could point a finger at, outwardly or inwardly, exists in and of itself as a real entity. This is the essence of the Middle Way, Madhyamaka.

Let’s take His Holiness the Dalai Lama as an example. Here is a man who is definitely a Lama, he’s the guru for many people. When we engage with him with respect to ourselves, it’s not the Dalai Lama existing in and of himself. We’ve never seen that being as a self-existent
individual. What we see is the Dalai Lama based on our multiple encounters with him.

How we conceive of the Dalai Lama is always going to be relative to our own conceptual framework and the limits of our imagination. Can we even imagine what an aryabodhisattva is like? Extremely accomplished with direct realisation of emptiness and inconceivable compassion, can we conceive that? The answer is no. If His Holiness is an aryabodhisattva, it means he’s out of our bandwidth and all we can see is something that makes sense to us in our limited experience. The Dalai Lama has said that in the Mahayana approach to guru yoga the guru is perceived as if he or she were a buddha, a manifestation of Dharmakaya for you right now.

The Dharmakaya, the living Buddha, has only one task and that is to liberate all sentient beings from suffering. Where the Dalai Lama is, Dharmakaya is there. If we direct our attention to that individual looking upon him as if he were a buddha, the blessings of the Dharmakaya flow right on through. There is nothing in the way; there is no inherently existent Dalai Lama, and there is no self-existent Dalai Lama who is not Buddha getting in the way and blocking the flow.
We look upon the guru as if he or she is a buddha, and thereby our practice becomes turbo-charged by actually receiving the blessings of the buddha by way of the guru. We place upon the guru the sense of him or her being a buddha. We do this deliberately, attending to the buddha who is there. All the personality stuff, that’s to the side. Never mind that. He may be very charming and have a wonderful laugh. That’s all wonderful, but what we’re attending to is the buddha as if he is there. That is guru yoga.

**Third turning of the wheel of Dharma**

Then there is guru yoga for Vajrayana and Dzogchen. If there is no inherently existent non-buddha from the side of the Dalai Lama, what is there? There is buddha-nature, Dharmakaya. So when we designate the Dalai Lama we can simply say, for us the Buddha is there and we will take this form of the Dalai Lama and say this is the form of the Buddha. Our teacher is the Buddha; our Lama is Samantabhadra, the primordial Buddha; that’s Buddha appearing in the form of the Dalai Lama. So now, it’s not as if, but actually is.

As we view the guru as Buddha, then something goes hand in hand with this. We are venturing into Vajrayana practice which involves the practice of pure vision and
*divine pride.* In the first breath we view the Dalai Lama as guru, as Buddha. In the second breath we dissolve our own ordinary sense of identity. It was constructed in the first place by conceptual imputation. What we created we should be able to un-create. We’ve conjured up a sense of who we are with all our limitations, like magicians, like an artist picking a little episode here and there, pasting them together to make our own portrayal inspired by true events. Dissolve it back into awareness, into emptiness. There was nothing really there in the first place that corresponded to our sense of who we are.

Out of that we can generate ourselves, identify ourselves based upon our deepest nature, which is buddha-nature. We arise with divine pride, and we assume the identity of the buddha. So where we are there’s a buddha. We notice nothing special about that at all. Where that tree or that red cushion is, there’s a buddha. Where we are there’s a buddha too. Our minds are completely saturated by Dharmakaya, there’s no part of our thoughts, no petty or angry thought that is not saturated by Dharmakaya. Where our minds are, where our bodies are, there is buddha mind, buddha body. We identify with that, taking the fruit as the path and arousing the realisation that this is our actual nature. Here and now, we are the Buddha, and there is our teacher. Of course he’s a buddha, how could he be less than us?
So now it’s buddha-nature speaking to buddha-nature, maximising the flow and the reception of blessings. This is the platform for Dzogchen. Nowhere, in any of those phases is there an exaltation of personality and cult, all the nonsense that goes on in our celebrity making. There’s none of that when it is practised authentically.

This is a thumbnail sketch of the guru-disciple relationship. When it’s practised well, there are tremendous blessings. There are many ways of not practising it well, but the potential for damage is minimal if we understand it clearly.

The qualities of an authentic guru
For the guru the relationship is something ‘heavier’. As a spiritual mentor the responsibility is to guide us on the path; to free the mind of all mental afflictions and obscurations and to bring us to freedom and awakening. That is a big responsibility; the guru’s role is not simply to help us through psychological problems.

Other than mutual respect and courtesy, the guru-disciple relationship is not symmetrical. The motivation on the part of the guru is a selfless wish to be of service, the relationship is entirely for the benefit of the student.
From the perspective of the disciple, it’s a matter of asking the guru to help unveil buddha-nature.

As we get to know a guru it is beneficial to take a long, close look at motivation. It is essential that we have confidence in the guru’s motivation. Is there an angle, is there manipulation, or is there something else going on which looks a little bit fishy? Even though the teacher’s motivation may be good, if we don’t have the confidence, how can the teachings be helpful? There must be good motivation from the guru’s side and recognition from the disciple’s side that the motivation is authentic. This lays the foundation for trust, as in a friendship.

Then ask if this guru is well motivated, confident, qualified and knowledgeable. Does he or she have appropriate experience to teach effectively? These are very practical concerns; it’s not an objective evaluation, it has to be subjective. Do we resonate with the guru? When we put the teachings into practice are they helpful, do they benefit us or do we simply not resonate with them? It’s an individual and personal question which no-one can answer for us.

Who is a good guru for us? We may get to know a guru, and it may happen that we sense the guru’s motivation is one of true altruism and compassion, arising from a wish
to be of service. If we get the impression the guru is altruistic and competent, knows what he or she is talking about and the teaching method is skilful, the content is good, and it’s beneficial, then we may feel after a matter of weeks, months or longer that we’d really like this person to be our guru, our spiritual mentor.

The qualities of an authentic disciple
What qualities do we need to bring if we are to fruitfully venture onto the path of buddha-Dharma? We don’t need faith before we come. The Buddha didn’t demand that. He never said, *you have to have faith in me first and then I’ll teach you.*

Aryadeva\(^3\) said there are three qualities of an authentic disciple:
The first is that you must be perceptive, awake, alert, and attentive, and use your full intelligence without holding anything back.

The second is to be without prejudice, without bias and without closed mindedness to the best of your ability.

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\(^3\) Aryadeva lived in the third century. He was a disciple of Nagarjuna and author of several important Mahayana Madhyamaka Buddhist texts.
The third is to have great motivation, the sincere, heartfelt and passionate yearning to put the teachings into practice. Putting the teachings into practice, that is all that is called for.

**The benefits for the disciple, and the disciple’s responsibilities to the guru**

What is the purpose of a guru-disciple relationship, who benefits? It’s a simple question, who is it for? There is one right answer: for the sake of the disciple. It’s not 90:10, not 50:50, not 99:1. It is one hundred percent for the sake of the disciple. It is not for the sake of the guru. The guru’s entire reason for the relationship is to be of service, to guide the disciple to the best of his or her ability.

However, this does not mean the disciple has no responsibility to the guru. Indeed, throughout the paths of Shravakayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana students are responsible for three modes of service to the guru.

The first is to look after the physical needs of the guru, to ensure he or she has enough food, clothing, medical care and sufficient shelter. It is important to ensure the guru’s basic needs are met, but there is no obligation to make the guru wealthy or famous.
The second is to be of service to the Dharma for the benefit of all sentient beings; in other words, to assist the guru’s Dharma activities where appropriate.

The third, which is the most important, is our own practice. We are missing the point if we attend teachings, build an excellent library of notes and books, but do not put the teachings into practice and test them for ourselves.

If we have qualms that some teachings are not working for us, then with respect we go to the guru and discuss the difficulty. The guru-disciple relationship is fruitful only if it is based on honesty, candour, and respect.

By the disciple attending to the guru in this way, it maximises the benefits and the blessings. The blessings of the guru come by an intricate inter-connectedness of the guru’s altruism, the blessings of the Dharmakaya, and the knowledge and experience of the guru combined with the openness, devotion, receptivity, reverence and prayers of supplication of the disciple. Blessings flow through this inter-connectedness and realisations do indeed arise from the depths of awareness of the disciple.
The Four Reliances

The most important point in the practice of guru yoga is to have respect and confident belief in our guru. If practised authentically a steady flow of inspiration from our guru will fill our mind stream providing the foundation for insight and realisation.

Buddha's scriptural texts stress the Four Reliances: 
*Concerning a teacher, do not rely simply on the person, but on the Dharma he or she imparts.*

*Concerning those measures, do not rely simply on their words, but on their meaning.*

*Concerning that meaning, do not rely simply on their provisional meaning, but on their definitive meaning.*

*For understanding that definitive level of meaning, do not rely on an ordinary consciousness, but on primordial consciousness, or your deepest intuition.*

Equal reverence for all teachers

The wisdom of all Buddhist schools says that if we have deep reverence and practice guru yoga for the ‘big lama’ and somewhat less for the ‘village lama’, and even less for
our ‘own teacher’ then we are engaging in idolatry and we have missed the entire point.

For this to be authentic Vajrayana practice we are not taking refuge in ‘that person’ as someone over there, existing inherently and separate from ourselves. There is an embodiment which we see with as pure vision as we can. But the whole point of authentic guru yoga in the context of Vajrayana is to view all teachers equally, be they a rinpoche, khenpo, geshe, monk, nun or lay teacher, as emanations of one, and that one is indivisible from the Buddha. If we see the mind of our guru as being indivisible from the Buddha and we see all our teachers as nothing other than emanations of our guru whose mind is indivisible from that of the Buddha, then our reverence is equal for all. If we see them all as having one nature, now we’re getting it. We’re not grasping, not reifying, we’re seeing that they are all like reflections of the moon in the water, all from the same source.
CHAPTER 3 THE GURU-DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP IN DZOGCHEN

Dzogchen is seen as the pinnacle of the Vajrayana teachings (Tantras) and it represents the essence of all Dharmas. Within Dzogchen the guru disciple relationship forms an essential part of the practice; indeed, Dzogchen can only be taught authentically when it’s taught by a Dzogchen lama who has been authorised to teach, there is no choice.

In Dzogchen we do not look outside of ourselves for the Buddha. Let’s say you have been practising and studying Dzogchen for a while, doing your best. When you look into the mirror, do you see a buddha who looks like you? If you don’t, you’ve missed the whole point. Here is the essential point: if our practice is to be authentic in Dzogchen, then we must release the notion of practising from the perspective of being a sentient being. You can practice the first and second turning of the wheel as a sentient being, but not in Dzogchen.

If we are practising as a sentient being we are not practising Dzogchen. If we are practising from the perspective of a sentient being, then there is something to achieve which we haven’t achieved and we still have the fear that we may get stuck and be a sentient being for a long time. So, in the *stage of generation* we dissolve
into emptiness the sense of our own ordinary body, mind, speech and identity to the best of our understanding. We dissolve them into primordially non-dual Dharmakaya and Dharmadatu, the absolute space of phenomena indivisible from primordial consciousness.

Out of that, by the power of imagination, we arise in the form of a buddha. We adopt divine pride and through visualisation, imagination and faith we put on the clothing of buddha’s body, speech, mind and identity, and we continue practising from that perspective.

In Dzogchen, practice from the perspective of a sentient being is said to be contrived, or fabricated. It is a really good fabrication, there’s nothing phony about it. It is contrived, but we are contriving something that is enormously meaningful, which is reflecting or symbolising a deeper reality that we have not yet realised. This is skilful means.

The Dzogchen approach is effortless and unmodified. It is a complete release of doing anything, but we’ve got to release all the way down to the core, even our sense of being a sentient being. It is not enough to realise the emptiness of our own identity as a sentient being and then continue to operate as such. It is also necessary to recognise the emptiness of all phenomena as best we can.
Let’s use a mobile phone as an example. If this is inherently a certain model of mobile phone, it will be that forever. That is the implication of something being inherently existent, it never changes. It’s got an iron grip on all its qualities; intrinsically it is holding onto its own characteristics with eternal talons which mean it will never change. It will never interact with anything. It can never be modified by anything and if the other thing is also inherently existent it too can never be modified. Everything will be frozen forever, absolutely as it is with no interaction whatsoever. This is the implication of inherent existence. It is really powerful if you understand it.

If anything existed inherently, you, buddha, space, consciousness and matter for example, it would be immutable, devoid of context and inter-relationship. So the very fact that we interact means we are not inherently existent.

Even when we realise that we are not inherently sentient beings, we may still say, ‘I’m still this person, this is still a cell phone’. But if we take even this conventional sense of identity, ‘I’m just this person and now I’m going to practice Dzogchen.’ NO, you’re not!
In the Dzogchen view your coarse mind is not enlightened, your substrate consciousness is the basis of samsara, but it is still samsara. Yet there is something else that is present right now which has never been in samsara, it has never wandered, it has never been afflicted or obscured. It is rigpa, which means knowing, which means it never became unknowing. Rigpa is always rigpa; it is always knowing. In other words, for every sentient being there is a dimension of being that exists right here that has never been un-enlightened, never wandered in samsara. Always present, always active, always cognisant, and it is not somebody or somewhere else. It is right here.

From the perspective of being a sentient being there’s an awful lot to be done. From the perspective of Dzogchen there’s nothing to be accomplished, nothing to be attained and nothing to be abandoned. The whole of reality is already the Great Perfection.

Practising Dzogchen means releasing everything, every vestige of the sense of being a sentient being, releasing it all and resting in the perspective from which there is nothing to be achieved and nothing to be abandoned. Resting there in total inactivity and allowing that reality to rise up and meet us.
The symbol HRIH
The Sadhana Practice of Guru Yoga

This practice of Shower of Blessings is central to the Nyingma tradition. It is profound and rich, yet simple and easy to do. The essence of the practice is the Seven Line Prayer to Guru Rinpoche.

This version was translated by Alan Wallace and taught to his students in Santa Barbara, USA.
Shower of Blessings

REFUGE

NAMO LA MA DE SHEG DÜ PAI KU
NAMO  In the lama who is the embodiment of the Sugatas,

KON CHOG SUM GYI RANG ZHIN LA
of the nature of the Three Jewels,

DAG DANG DRO DRUG SEM CHEN NAM
I, together with the beings of the six realms,

CHANG CHUB WAR DU KYAB SU CHI
take refuge until our enlightenment.

(Repeat three times)
BODHICITTA

SEM KYED DRO WA KUN DON TU
For the sake of all beings, I generate the spirit of awakening and

LA MA SANGYE DRUB NEI NI
Cultivate the realisation of the lama as Buddha.

GANG LA GANG DUL TRIN LEI KYI
By means of enlightened activity I shall train each being according to their needs.

DRO WA DROL WAR DAM CHA O
And I vow to liberate the world.
(Repeat three times)
TEN LINES (FOR ACCRUING MERIT AND KNOWLEDGE)

LAMA YIDAM KHANDRO SHEG
Lama, personal deities, and dakinis please come forth

NYI DA PEMA'I DEN LA ZHUG
And be seated on the sun, moon and lotus seat.

LU NGAG YID SUM GÜ CHAG TSAL
With my body, speech and mind I reverently pay homage.

CHI NANG SANG WA'I CHOD PA BUL
I make outer, inner and secret offerings.

NYAM CHAG DIG DRIB T'HOL ZHING SHAG
I acknowledge and disclose my degenerate and broken samayas, vices and obscurations.

SANG NGAG DRUB LA JEI YI RANG
I rejoice in the practice of secret Mantrayana.

MIN DROL SANG NGAG CHÖ KHOR KOR
Please turn the wheel of Dharma of secret Mantrayana which matures and liberates.

NYA NGEN MI DA SHUG SOL DEB
I pray, do not pass into nirvana but remain.
NYING PO SEM CHEN DON DU NGÖ
I dedicate the essence for sentient beings.

YANG DAG DORJEI DON TOG SHOG
May we realise the perfect vajra nature.
VISUALISATION

AH RANG LU TA MAL NEE PEE DUN KHA RU AH In the space in front of my ordinary body

OR GYAN DRI MED DHA NA KO SHAI TSO In the midst of deep and pristine Lake Dhanakosha of Oddiyana,

TING ZAB YAN LAK GYAD DAN CHU GANG WEE filled with water endowed with eight qualities,

U SU RIN CHEN PAD DONG DAB GYEE TENG Is a jewelled lotus in full bloom.

KYAB NEE KUN TU OR GYAN DOR JE CHANG Upon it sits the Oddiyana Vajradhara, synthesis of all the objects of refuge,

TSAN PEI PAL BAR TSO GYAL YUM DANG TRIL Gloriously blazing with signs and symbols of enlightenment, embracing his consort Tsogyal,

CHAK YEE DOR JE YON PEE TOD BUM NAM In his right hand he holds a vajra, in his left a vase and skull cup.

DAR DANG RIN CHEN RU PEE GYAN GYI DZE Adorned with silks, jewels and bone ornaments,
Within the expanse of five-coloured lights, they blaze with the glory of great bliss.

Surrounded like a cloud by an ocean of the Three Roots,

They gaze upon me, raining down a shower of blessings and compassion.

To the essence of all the Jinas, the deathless embodiments of primordial consciousness,

With sincere faith I constantly pay homage.

I offer my body, enjoyments and collection of my virtues of the three times,

Imagining them as the clouds of offerings of Samantabhadra.
TOK MED NEE SAK DIK TUNG MA LU SHAK
I disclose all my vices and downfalls without exception accumulated since beginningless time.

SRAY CHEE GYAL WA KUN GYI YON TAN GYI
I take heartfelt delight in the illustrious lives of the protectors,

KYAB DAK CHIK PU GON POI NAM TAR LA
The sole lords of the qualities of all the Jinas and their children.

NYING NEE YEE RANG DAD PEE SOL DEB SHING
With faith I pray,

ZAB GYEE CHOO KYI CHAR CHEN BEB PAR KUL
Please let fall a great rain of profound and vast Dharma.

RANG ZHAN GE WEE NGOO PO KUN DOM NEE
Drawing together all the virtues of myself and others,

DRO KHAM GYA TSO JI SRID NEE KYI WAR
For as long as the ocean of realms of beings remains,

GON PO KYOD GYI NAM TAR JE NYEK TE
I shall follow the illustrious life of you, the Protector,

KA KYAB DRO WA DREN PEE DON DU NGO
and dedicate those virtues to the guidance of beings throughout space.

KYAB NEE KUN DU KYEN TSEI TER CHEN PO
Embodiment of all refuges, great treasure of wisdom and love,

DU NGAN NYIK MAI KYAB CHOK RIN PO CHE
Precious and supreme protector in these evil and degenerate times,

NGA DOI GUD PEE NAR ZHING DUNG SHUK KYI
I am tormented and afflicted by the proliferation of the five degenerations,

SOL DEB WU LA TSE WEE TUK KYI GONG
And I pray, “Please, with a loving heart, attend to me, your child.”

GONG PEE LONG NEE TUK JEI TSAL CHUNG LA
Manifest the power of your compassion from the expanse of your enlightened awareness,

MOO DAN DAK GI NYING LA CHIN GYI LOB
And bless my reverent heart.

TAK DANG TSAN MA NYUR DU TON PA DANG
Please swiftly display signs and indications,

CHOK DANG TUN MONG NGOO DRUB TSAL TU SOL
And grant me the supreme and mundane siddhis.

With these words, recite the seven line prayer as much as you can. Due to praying with reverence and devotion, from the point of union and the hearts of the lama and consort, the five types of light rays of primordial consciousness spread forth like filaments, and by dissolving into your heart imagine that they bless your mind stream. Recite the Vajra Guru Mantra as much as you wish.

SEVEN LINE PRAYER

HUNG ORGYEN YUL GYI NUP JANG TSAM
HUNG In the northwest frontier of Oddiyana,

PEMA GE SAR DONG PO LA
In the heart of a lotus

YAM TSEN CHOG GI NGÖ DRUP NYEY
Sits the one renowned as Padmasambhava,

PEMA JUNG NEY ZHEY SU DRAK
Who achieved the wondrous supreme siddhi,

KHOR DU KHAN DRO MANG PÖ KOR
And is surrounded by a host of many dakinis.

KYED KYI JE SU DAK DRUP KYI
Following in your footsteps, I devote myself to practice.

JIN GYI LAP CHIR SHEK SU SÖL
Please come forth and bestow your blessings.

GURU PEMA SIDDHI HUNG

Recite the Vajra Guru Mantra as much as you wish.

OM AR HUM VAJRA GURU PADMA SIDDHI HUM

or

OM ĀḤ HŪṂ VAJRA GURU PADMA TŌTRENG TSĀL VAJRA SMAYAJAḤ SIDDHI PHALA HŪṂ

THE FOUR EMPOWERMENTS

LA MAI NEE SUM YI GE DRU SUM LEE
Rays of white, red and deep blue light emerge
From the three seed syllables in the lama’s three places.

Dissolving into my three places,

They purify the obscurations of my body, speech and mind; and transform them into the vajra body, speech and mind.

Finally, the lama and assembly dissolve into light.

As a white and red bindu marked with HUNG,

They dissolve into my heart,

And the lama’s mind and my mind indivisible remain as the conate Dharmakaya.

AH AH
With these words look upon your own face of the great original Dharmakaya, your own mind-itself, which primordially transcends modifications, rejection and acceptance. Again, look at all illusion-like appearances as being of the nature of the lama, and by dedicating your virtue and uttering auspicious words apply them to happiness and goodness.

SARVA MANGALAM! May all be well!

DEDICATION OF MERIT

GE WAS DI YI NYUR DU DAK
*By this virtue*

ORGYAN LA MA DRUB GYUR NEE
*May I swiftly realise the Oddiyana Lama,*

DRO WA CHIK KHYANG MA LU PA
*And may I bring all beings without exception*

DE YI SA LA GOD PAR SHOK
*To that state of realisation.*
Glossary

**Bodhichitta:** (Skt) *Relative Bodhichitta* is the heartfelt wish to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. *Ultimate Bodhichitta* in Mahayana Buddhism is the realisation of emptiness, whereas in Dzogchen it is *Rigpa* (primordial consciousness).

**Buddha-nature:** (Skt. tathagatagarbha) In the context of Dzogchen this is a synonym for *Dharmakaya* or primordial consciousness, and it is the mind’s ultimate nature.

**Dharmadhatu:** The absolute space of phenomena.

**Dharmakaya:** the ‘truth body’, reality for a buddha, which is the ultimate reality, synonymous with the buddha mind and buddha-nature.

**Divine pride:** The Vajrayana practice of first recognising the conventional nature of your own ordinary identity, and then replacing it with a sense of yourself as being identical to a buddha.

**Dzogchen or Dzogpachenpo:** (Translated as Great Perfection or Great Encompassment) The pinnacle yoga of Tibetan Buddhism, especially for the Nyingma school, where one rests in primordial consciousness.

**Emptiness:** (sunyata or shunyata) The absence of inherent existence of all phenomena. (inherent existence is a quality projected onto phenomena by the deluded mind).
**Four Noble Truths:** These formed part of the first teaching which the Buddha gave to his five shravaka friends. They are the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the end of suffering, and the truth of the path that leads to the end of suffering.

**Guru Yoga:** (Skt. *guruyoga*; Tib *lamé naljor*) The practice of merging one’s mind with the wisdom mind of the master. The practice consists of visualizing the guru (either in his own form or in the form of a deity), requesting his blessings, receiving his blessings, and merging one's mind with the master's wisdom mind. The term is often used in the Tibetan tradition to mean all aspects of the guru-disciple relationship.

**Hinayana:** (also called Shravakayana) The term Hinayana (smaller Vehicle) appeared around the first century CE when teachings of a different nature appeared which were called Mahayana (greater Vehicle). In India, non-Mahayana or Hinayana sects developed independently from the form of Buddhism existing in Sri Lanka. Today, there is no Hinayana tradition in existence anywhere, although Theravada could be called the tradition most like Hinayana. The ultimate goal of the Theravada and other non-Mahayana practice is to attain the state of an *Arhat*, as buddhahood is considered practically unachievable for nearly everyone within this aeon. Although helping other sentient beings is accepted as an important Buddhist practice, the main motivation for following the spiritual
path is to achieve liberation for oneself - Nirvana. Due to the negative connotation of the term Hinayana, the World Fellowship of Buddhists decided that the term Hinayana should be dropped to refer to Buddhism existing today, and the term Theravada should be applied.

**Inherent existence:** (Skt. *svabhavasiddhi*) A quality projected on to phenomena by the deluded mind. An inherent existence is a self-sufficient essence that things appear to possess that makes them seem to exist independently from the mind conceiving them.

**Insight:** Most often refers to Vipashyana, but can refer to the realisation of other phenomena besides emptiness.

**Klesha:** Mental afflictions, aversion, craving, delusion, and so forth, mental disturbances that propel us to perform negative actions and perpetuate samsara.

**Mahamudra:** (Skt. *Mahāmudrā*; Tib. Chakgya Chenpo; Wyl. phyag rgya chen po), or ‘Great Seal’ is the meditation tradition of the Kagyü lineage which passed from Maitripa and Naropa in India to Marpa Lotsawa and then to the great yogi Milarepa in Tibet. *Mudra* means that it encompasses all phenomena of samsara, nirvana, and the path. In other words, they are 'sealed' within it. It is called *maha* or “great,” because nothing is superior to it.

**Mahayana:** The Mahayana appears to have developed between the 1st century BC and the 1st century CE. Mahayana became clearly defined in the 2nd century CE.
Master Nagarjuna developed the Mahayana philosophy of sunyata (emptiness) and proved that everything is 'void' (not only the self) in a small text called Madhyamaka-karika. After the 1st Century CE, the Mahayanists took a definite stand and then the terms of Mahayana and Hinayana were introduced.

The Mahayana philosophy is based on the older tradition and fully accepts these teachings, but not all traditional interpretations. One of the most important aspects is for example the traditional interpretation that buddhahood can be achieved only by very few people. The Mahayana teaches instead that every sentient being (being with a mind) can become a buddha, the only thing preventing our full enlightenment is the failure to improve one's own actions and state of mind. The Mahayana tradition claims that all their sutras have been taught directly by Shakyamuni Buddha or have at least been inspired by the Buddha. The main Mahayana motivation is to lead all sentient beings to enlightenment.

Madhyamaka: A philosophical school originating in India in the second century with Nagajuna that became the dominant strain of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. It stresses the emptiness of all phenomena and the freedom from the extremes of nihilism and realism, thus its name, the “Middle Way”.

Merit: (punya) Karmic potential generated through performing positive actions with a virtuous motivation.
Mindfulness:  (Skt. Smriti; Pali Sati) The faculty of continuous sustained attention

Padmasambhava: An eighth century Bengali tantric master who helped usher Buddhism into Tibet and is revered as a second Buddha in the eyes of many Tibetan Buddhists. He also brought the Dzogchen teaching to Tibet.

Nirmanakaya: (Skt.) The body of a buddha visible to ordinary beings that manifests to guide those with sufficient merit along the path.

Paths: Buddhism speaks of five progressive levels of realisation on the way to buddhahood: the paths of accumulation, preparation, seeing, meditation and no more training.

Pure Vision: The tantric practice of viewing all beings and phenomena as manifestations of the Buddha.

Realisation: Direct insight into fundamental features of reality that liberate the mind from afflictions and obscurations.

Reification: Grasping onto inherent existence; projecting true existence on to empty phenomena.

Rigpa: (Skt. Vidya) Pristine awareness, the absolute ground state of consciousness, more profound than the substrate consciousness, for it pervades all of reality and not just one’s own mind.
**Samadhi:** (Skt) In the narrow sense of the term it means focused concentration (achieved through the practice of Shamatha), but in the broader sense it is one of the three “higher trainings”, together with ethics and wisdom, In that context it refers to exceptional states of balance and well-being.

**Sambhogakaya:** A buddha’s “enjoyment body” A rarified form perceptible only to highly realised beings, that is complete with the marks and signs and is adorned with elaborate jewels and elegant apparel.

**Samsara:** (Skt.) Cyclic existence; a being’s circling among the six realms through the force of karma and mental afflictions.

**Shamatha:** (Skt.) Meditative practices designed to refine the attention and balance the mind in preparation for the practice of vipashyana.

**Skilful means:** (Skt. *upaya*) A buddha’s capacity to tailor instructions to the particular mindset of each individual. It can also just mean the method by which one advances along the path.

**Stage of completion:** The second of the two main stages of tantra, wherein one manipulates the energies of the subtle body to produce samadhi on ultimate reality.

**Stage of generation:** The first of the two stages of tantra, wherein one builds up the visualisation of the deity and the mandala, makes offerings and practices pure vision.
Substrate: (Skt. *alaya*) The space of the mind that appears to the substrate consciousness: a luminous vacuity in which self, others and objects disappear.

Substrate Consciousness: (Skt. *alayavijnana*) The ground of the ordinary mind, a continuum that travels from life to life and from which springs all ordinary mental activity.

Vajra: (skt.) Diamond-like, immutable.

Vajrayana: (Skt. *vajrayāna*; Tib. *dorje tekpa*; ) or 'Vajra Vehicle'. The teaching, and practice, of the Vajrayana or ‘Secret Mantra Vehicle’ lies at the heart of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition of Tibet. Based on the motivation of bodhichitta - the wish to attain the state of complete enlightenment for the sake of others - Vajrayana is a path centred on cultivating pure perception. It contains many powerful methods for accumulating merit and wisdom, in order to arrive swiftly at a direct realisation of buddha-nature and the nature of reality itself. It is said to be the swift vehicle, the practices of which can lead to enlightenment in one life time. However for this reason it carries some risks if misused, so some aspects of Vajrayana are kept secret and are dependent on empowerment and an initiation.

The Vajrayana is not a separate vehicle from Mahayana, but actually belongs within Mahayana as a distinctive vehicle of skilful means.

Mahamudra and Dzogchen are seen as the pinnacle of Vajrayana.
Vinaya (a word in Pāli as well as in Sanskrit, with literal meaning 'leading out', 'education', 'discipline') It is the regulatory framework for the Buddhist monastic community, or sangha, based on the canonical texts called Vinaya Pitaka.

Vipashyana: (Skt.) Contemplative insight into fundamental aspects of reality including the emptiness of inherent nature of all phenomena.
Guru Rinpoche with consort
LINKS AND RESOURCES

B Alan Wallace
www.alanwallace.org
Dr Alan Wallace is the founder of the Santa Barbara Institute for Consciousness Studies. Information on his background, his teachers, his teaching schedule, books, articles and videos are all available on this site.

Contemplative Consciousness Network (CCN)
www.c-c-n.org
CCN is a UK charitable company set up to advance education in the nature of contemplative consciousness, and to promote human potential and well-being by supporting research and personal investigation into human consciousness. To this end the charity works closely with the Santa Barbara Institute for Consciousness Studies and its founder and president Dr Alan Wallace. We are placing special emphasis on support for the creation of a European Mind Centre for the study and development of human consciousness. Buddhist practices are an important part of this work.
CCN have a range of CDs available of teachings on retreats that Alan has led in the UK. For further information, please contact Elizabeth West: emwest1944@gmail.com
Contemplative Observatories  
www.contemplativeobservatory.com
In collaboration with organisations and individuals from around the world, we are hoping to create contemplative observatories in many countries to facilitate long-term contemplative practice as well as scientific research on the benefits of sustained meditation.

Cultivating Emotional Balance (CEB)  
www.cultivatingemotionalbalance.org
CEB is a research project that arose from a dialogue between bio-behavioural scientists studying emotion and His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Buddhist monks and scholars at the Mind and Life Institute in Dharamsala India in March 2000. As a result Drs Paul Ekman and Alan Wallace developed a training programme that integrated Buddhist contemplative practices with western techniques for dealing with negative emotional experiences. The purpose of the training is to reduce emotional responses that are destructive to self and others, and to enhance compassion and empathy. This research project, Cultivating Emotional Balance in Challenging Times, is the result of that interchange.
Santa Barbara Institute for Consciousness Studies successfully held the first five-week Cultivating Emotional Balance Teachers’ Training (CEBTT) in the summer of 2010
in Phuket Thailand, which was taught by Drs Paul Ekman and Alan Wallace. Annual trainings have been held since and now the CEB course is taught in many places.

**Santa Barbara Institute:**

**www.sbinstitute.com**

This is the institute that was founded by Alan Wallace for the study of consciousness from a first person perspective and for collaboration with scientists in the study of consciousness. There are podcasts of talks and retreats available on this website which can be excellent resources for people interested in deepening their meditation practice. The website also has an online shop which sells Alan’s books, DVDs and audio files of retreats and guided meditations.

**Podcasts**

Alan Wallace makes his teachings widely available through podcasts.

Podcasts can be found at: [http://www.sbinstitute.com/phuketpodcasts](http://www.sbinstitute.com/phuketpodcasts)

CCN have a range of CDs available on retreats that Alan has led in the UK. Please contact Elizabeth: emwest1944@gmail.com
RECOMMENDED READING BY ALAN WALLACE

Genuine Happiness: Meditation as the Path to Fulfillment (2005)

Buddhism with an Attitude: The Tibetan Seven-Point Mind-Training. (2012)

Stilling the Mind: Shamatha Teachings from Dudjom Lingpa’s Vajra Essence (2011)

Dreaming Yourself Awake: Lucid Dreaming and Tibetan Dream Yoga for Insight and Transformation (2012)

