# Thousand-Verse Yoga Flaming-Mouth Rite

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Main Text

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Eleventh Month of the Jiaxu Year

This book is designed especially for lay practitioners to use in their cultivation.

First, it enables beginners to understand Buddhist principles, clearly comprehend cause and effect, eliminate afflictions, and thereby liberate living beings.

Second, it enables those devoted to filial piety and friendship to personally guide their departed forebears across, bring peace and purity to their homes, dispel longstanding grievances, and thereby assist the deceased.

Third, it enables diligent practitioners to investigate and realize the Esoteric Vehicle, contemplate and realize meditative absorption, turn toward the Western Pure Land, and thereby attain integration.

Instructions for the Thousand-Verse Yoga Flaming-Mouth Ritual

A sūtra says: “Before disorder arises in the world, disorder first arises among ghosts and spirits.” To bring peace to ghosts and spirits is therefore to bring peace to the household and settle people’s minds. In recent years, society has displayed much unrest—madness, disappearances, and suicide. Although such karma is created by people themselves, ghosts and spirits may also secretly cause such disturbances. Therefore, guiding the departed across and settling their spirits can indeed lessen calamities, avert disasters, dispel illness, prolong life, awaken filial devotion, and increase wholesome thoughts; its merit and virtue are inconceivable. Here Buddhist principles are explained in simple language in a total of 1,250 verses, including such rites as the Yoga Offering of Food, with reference to the Esoteric Buddhist method of offering food to hungry ghosts. It is called the “Thousand-Verse Yoga Flaming-Mouth Ritual.”

Laymen and laywomen, young and old alike, may all read it. Through it, they may gain some understanding of Buddhist principles and comprehend cause and effect. If one wishes to assist the deceased, or if a family memorial day occurs, one need only set up a memorial tablet, make offerings, and recite mantras in order to guide the deceased across. If one has not learned Esoteric Buddhist mudrās and mantras, one may substitute the Great Compassion Mantra, the Rebirth Mantra, recitation of the Buddha's name, and sūtra reading. Alternatively, the Mengshan rite may conveniently be used. Those wishing to obtain mantras and the food-offering ritual may request them from the empowerment practitioners of this association.

In guiding departed spirits across, communion with spirits is primary. One's own mind and spirit must connect with the departed soul: as I am, so are they; joyful and at ease, they follow my guidance, and by turning their thoughts they are reborn beyond. But if one does not understand Buddhist principles, how can one commune with spirits? Therefore, simple language is used to introduce profound meaning. Let the living first read it and suddenly awaken; then, with this perfect, wondrous, luminous mind, one reaches above to the summit of heaven and below to the wind wheel. Throughout the dharma realm, every spirit responds to the call and is liberated. How could such merit and virtue be measured?

Visualization is of the utmost importance. Therefore, read slowly, sincerely, and with a purified mind. Strike the chime once for each word, or add a wooden fish, chanting and reciting gradually.

Offerings may be arranged according to the illustration. Either the Five Tathāgatas or the Seven Tathāgatas may be used, for in Esoteric Buddhism the Nectar King is Amitābha, and Much Treasure is Ratnasaṃbhava. Thus, the Tathāgata of Vast Body occupies the center and is Mahāvairocana; the Tathāgata of Wondrous Form occupies the east and is Akṣobhya; the Tathāgata of Much Treasure occupies the south and is Ratnasaṃbhava; the Tathāgata Nectar King occupies the west and is Amitābha; and the Tathāgata Free from Fear occupies the north and is Amoghasiddhi. All who uphold the names of these Buddhas may be liberated, for they are nondual with the Western Pure Land.

I. Purifying the Altar

(Offer incense) (Recite the incense praise) (Apply scented powder to the hands)

1. Ascend the seat 2. Offer the maṇḍala 3. Put on the Vairocana crown 4. Form mudrās and recite the mantra for purifying the three karmas (three times) and the emptiness-visualization mantra (seven times) 5. Bless the ritual implements

If one does not have mantras or mudrās, use visualization in their place. If one has no crown or ritual implements, use visualization in their place as well. (Strike the

clapper.)

The Yoga Assembly opens; the gate of nectar is opened. To liberate humans and devas, the Enlightened Sovereign sets the model. The teaching expounds the true vehicle; the esoteric mantras are widely proclaimed.

(Visualize this body as radiant as a Buddha.)

The long night is vast; the ocean of karma is boundless. The Great Being Who Relieves Suffering manifested as the Flaming-Mouth Spirit, compassionately aiding beings to release them from hanging upside down.

The hells are shattered; the hidden realms are thrown open. I now welcome the Buddhas of the ten directions: World-Honored Śākyamuni and Great Being Avalokiteśvara.

(Visualize all Buddhas and bodhisattvas as about to arrive.)

Kṣitigarbha, King of Vows; Venerable Ānanda; Dharma Protector Skanda; the Four Great Heavenly Kings; all spirits and deities; and King Yama, Lord of the Underworld.

As well as the kings of ghosts, local earth deities, and every kind of spirit: gather here like clouds to offer protection. May this place of practice suddenly become like Mount Sumeru.

(Visualize this place of practice as vast and boundless.)

Its greatness is immeasurable; its wonder is inconceivable. Incense clouds now arise, pervading and perfuming the dharma realm. Yet this incense does not descend from heaven,

(Visualize this mind as incense clouds pervading the dharma realm.)

Nor does it grow from the earth. It fills the three realms, yet when gathered it is as minute as a mote of dust. The radiance of sun and moon, the splendor of mountains and rivers, cannot equal its refinement.

(Visualize this place of practice as transformed into a magnificent adornment of the seven treasures.)

Nothing compares with its numinous efficacy. This is the incense of the mind, respectfully offered. Of all offerings, the offering of Dharma is supreme. The offering of Dharma is

Loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity—the four immeasurable minds. Therefore, what has form can never be called great; only

mind, being without form, may be called true.

The three of precepts, samādhi, and wisdom are purified as one body. Now the pure assembly comes together in shared vision and practice. Each should compose their bearing and purify their mind.

Join me in welcome and unite your voices with mine. Cleanse the altar grounds with incense, flowers, water, and lamps. In an instant, the Buddhas of the ten directions arrive.

The six kinds of trembling occur; Māra cannot intrude. All rejoice greatly, and a rain of flowers falls in profusion.

(Visualize flowers falling from the heavens.)

II. Inviting the Buddhas

Recite the Samaya Mantra of the Buddha Family (three times), and form the mudrā for inviting the Buddhas.

Recite the Samaya Mantra of the Lotus Family (three times), and form the mudrā for inviting the bodhisattvas.

Recite the Samaya Mantra of the Vajra Family (three times), and form the mudrā for inviting the vajras.

If one does not have these mantras and mudrās, use incense and flowers to extend the invitations as follows:

Welcome with incense and flowers; invite with incense and flowers. With one mind, we respectfully invite you. (For each Buddha or bodhisattva, recite and invite three times.)

Homage to Śākyamuni Buddha, the Fundamental Teacher, Lord of the Sahā World.

Homage to: (1) Tathāgata of Vast Body; (2) Tathāgata of Wondrous Form; (3) Tathāgata of Much Treasure; (4) Tathāgata Nectar King; and (5) Tathāgata Free from Fear.

Homage to Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, of vast spiritual responsiveness, who saves from suffering and delivers from distress.

Homage to Kṣitigarbha King Bodhisattva, the fundamental deity and lord of the underworld teaching, who relieves the suffering of both the living and the dead.

Homage to Venerable Ānanda, who initiated the teaching.

Homage to Venerable Skanda, Dharma Protector.

Homage to the Four Heavenly Kings and all heavenly Dharma-protecting venerables.

Homage to all bodhisattvas and venerables of the Cold Grove Assembly.

With one mind, we respectfully invite you. (Do not use incense and flowers.)

All ghost kings, spirits and deities, local earth deities, and all other deities of the Cold Grove Assembly.

All deities who protect this altar.

All of you in this pure assembly, respectfully take up your respective duties. Welcome them with utmost sincerity. The Buddhas have arrived; the assembly of bodhisattvas gathers like clouds.

(Visualize the Buddhas and bodhisattvas as already gathered like clouds.)

They bless us with compassion and empower us with the water of wisdom. From the Vairocana crown above down to all the spirits below—how magnificent! Such grace is difficult to repay.

(Visualize nectar falling like rain to empower immeasurable sentient beings.)

Now we bestow universal offerings for the departed. With impartial compassion, unmoving and unchanging, Māra withdraws of itself. The three poisons and four hindrances, even Pāpīyas himself—

(Offer the vajra.)

Wherever the vajra's light points, all give rise to compassionate minds. Ghosts, goblins, and demons, along with spells and curses, lose their power. They bow their heads in submission and together hear the Brahma sound.

(Visualize the light of mind illuminating the great trichiliocosm.)

Alas, you hosts of Māra: your Buddha-nature is equal. Yet stained by accumulated habits, you have vainly lost your original nature. I now, with utmost sincerity, proclaim the Buddha's work.

Adorning this flower altar, reaching above to the summit of heaven and below to the wind wheel, music performs the wondrous Dharma and songs proclaim the unborn, liberating all kinds of beings.

May they enter the supreme vehicle. May those flaming mouths become cool and pure; may the pit of fire of greed, anger, and ignorance become a pool. From this point, the hells

Are themselves places of practice. By the power of impartial vows and the majestic radiance of prajñā, we humbly beseech our Buddha and the noble assembly of the ten directions to bestow protection and blessing.

(Join the palms and make the invitation.)

Have compassion for this Sahā world. At this time, if an Ullambana assembly and place of practice are established, Buddhas and devas rejoice, and there is constant great auspiciousness.

Establish the maṇḍala and erect the banners and canopies. The myriad forms stand in splendid array, adorning the fragrance and light. Every Dharma offering is prepared, fully and completely.

Then, with incense and flowers, we again make our sincere request: Great Being Kṣitigarbha and Venerable Guide of Souls, may you compassionately open the gates of hell.

(Visualize Great Being Kṣitigarbha as granting this request.)

Holding banners and canopies aloft and wearing garlands, gather these sentient beings and bring them together to the Dharma assembly. I shall expediently manifest as a vajra.

(At this point, don the armor, raise the banner, and summon them.)

Don the armor and shake the bell, solemnly displaying majestic radiance. With one mind summon the rulers and kings of old, generals and valiant soldiers, ministers and talented gentlemen,

Young scholars, Daoist adepts and immortals, monastics in black robes, traveling merchants and traders, mothers and children who died in childbirth, and the mute, deaf, and blind,

Maidservants and concubines who died from injury, aggrieved women and fair maidens, criminals, beggars, and prisoners—the ten kinds of solitary spirits; spirits abiding in grass or clinging to trees, and spirits of every kind.

Today, at this time, all come to this Dharma assembly. Receive the nectar, form extensive and excellent affinities, transform your fixed karma, and let all offenses be extinguished.

By the Buddha's power, may all these spirits suddenly emit light, thirst for and revere the Dharma, give rise to no sorrow or fear, and take the Buddha as witness and pledge.

Compassionately receive them. With utmost sincerity, we summon them and now recite the mantra:

III. Summoning

Armor-Wearing Body-Protection Mantra (seven times). (Form the mudrā and visualize one's own body as incomparably majestic and radiant.)

Kuṇḍalī Wisdom King Mantra (seven times); form the Vajra-Fist Mudrā.

Hell-Opening Mantra (seven times). (Visualize the gates of hell opening.)

Cloud-Assembly Summoning Mantra (seven times); form the Universal Gathering Mudrā. (Visualize innumerable ghostly spirits as having already gathered like clouds.)

If one does not have this method, use the Mengshan food-offering summoning rite instead.

Strike the clapper. (Visualize the principal spirit for whom this altar is being conducted as having arrived.)

The Dharma gate of nectar universally benefits all beings. All spirits receiving offerings at this altar, having heard the summons, come here. Each of you, with utmost sincerity, bow at the foot of the altar.

Men and women should stand separately. Do not laugh or chatter. Strictly avoid carelessness. Maintain solemn deportment, stand calmly and steadily on either side, join your palms, and listen.

(Imagine that all the ghosts are reverently settled and composed.)

The Vajra Master proclaims each phrase, respectfully repenting again and again on your behalf. Today's Dharma assembly is indeed due to favorable affinities. From the Dharma King's seat:

There is neither partiality nor bias, neither male nor female, neither high nor low. Directly take this up: your fundamental nature is Buddha. Buddha means awakening; delusion is what makes one a sentient being.

I shall now explain in detail; each of you, listen carefully. The Tathāgata, World-Honored Śākyamuni, taught the Dharma and liberated beings for forty-nine years, revealing saṃsāra.

There are altogether six realms: the realms of devas, humans, asuras, ghosts, animals, and hell beings. The sufferings endured there are countless and too terrible to behold.

(Imagine the suffering and pain of sentient beings, and that your own parents and family members of past lives are likewise undergoing such suffering and longing for liberation.)

One may rise or fall, without end. Even if one is born in the deva realm, it is like an arrow shot into the sky: when its force is spent, it falls again. When recompense is exhausted, one returns, now suffering, now enjoying happiness.

Happiness is not ultimate; therefore it is called saṃsāra. Those who enter saṃsāra undergo birth and death. You departed spirits may have come into the ghost realm or emerged from the hells.

Throughout immeasurable kalpas, you have undergone countless births and deaths. Without hearing the Buddhadharma, you cannot be liberated. Therefore I speak of the Three Jewels, so that you may attain liberation. The Buddha's marks and attributes,

are radiantly incomparable; this is called the Buddha Jewel. The Buddha's words are contained in the three collections. What are the three collections? The Buddha taught the sūtras and vinaya; bodhisattvas composed the treatises.

The three—the sūtras, vinaya, and treatises—are called the Dharma Jewel. Yet without a master, we would not understand them. The master expounds them and establishes the ritual forms; this is called the Saṅgha Jewel.

These are called the Three Jewels. Taking refuge in the Three Jewels, one may be called a child of the Buddha. Through the Three Jewels, inwardly illuminate your own mind: my fundamental nature is originally the same as that of all Buddhas.

Awaken at once to the Three Jewels of your own nature. Because of a single error, you have committed the ten evil acts. Refrain from the ten evil acts, transform from ordinary beings into sages, and this is called supreme goodness.

Benefiting oneself and benefiting others is called being a bodhisattva. Therefore I teach the precepts, so that you may awaken on your own.

IV. Teaching the Precepts

(Imagine that the ghosts listen respectfully.)

As for precepts, they are the mind that upholds precepts. Evil arises from the mind, and karma is produced by intention. Intention has three kinds of karma: greed, anger, and ignorance.

Greed is insatiable; anger is resentment and hostility; ignorance is delusion and confusion. When all views are incorrect and one mistakes the false for the true, this is called great inversion.

Speech has four kinds of karma: divisive speech, harsh speech, false speech, and frivolous speech. At first one acts for one's own benefit, but eventually harms others; the guilt returns to oneself.

It also affects one's own body. The body has three evils: killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. Killing must bring retribution; even after a thousand lifetimes, one cannot escape it.

A life owed must be repaid with a life, without distinction of high or low. Stealing is the same. Sexual misconduct is even more perilous: its retribution reaches oneself and further burdens one's spouse,

and one's children follow along as calamities continue in their wake. These are called the ten evil acts. Refraining from the ten evil acts is the gateway to virtue and its foundation.

Do not commit an evil merely because it seems small; do not neglect a good merely because it seems small. Plant such causes, form such conditions,

obtain such results, and undergo such suffering. A small cause may have a great result; the result in turn becomes a cause. Cause after cause, result after result, cannot be exhausted.

(Imagine that the ghosts have awakened to the terrifying nature of cause and effect.)

Reasoning upward, there must be an initial cause; considering downward, there must be a later result. Just observe: the calamity of having no precepts

makes one tremble without feeling cold. How painful it is! Therefore the World-Honored One, compassionate toward sentient beings, painstakingly showed us the path out of delusion.

Reflecting, he said: "Alas! The Dharma-ending age has arrived. How can beings be saved? Even the Buddha cannot save them on their behalf, much less bodhisattvas or even vajra deities."

When children suffer illness and pain, their parents can scarcely bear it for them. Though spouses share deep affection, how could one bear another's guilt? What one does, one receives; one must free oneself and liberate oneself.

One should cultivate the precepts oneself; this is truly self-rescue. Seek abundant blessings for yourself. A noble person seeks for himself. What does such seeking mean? It means solely cultivating oneself.

(Imagine saving yourself.)

The method of self-cultivation relies only on the Buddhadharma. The Buddha taught eighty-four thousand Dharma gates; every gate is supreme, and every dharma is boundless.

(Imagine that all the ghosts suddenly realize that this luminous path exists and that they can thereby attain liberation.)

Dharma has no fixed dharma; medicine is given according to the illness. What are sentient beings? They are another name for afflictions. When afflictions are exhausted, sentient beings are all liberated.

Then I become a Buddha. This is the great vow of bodhisattvas. We and others are equal; cultivate equally. Vajra prajñā is inherent in itself;

it is not bestowed by the Buddha. Sages do not have more of it, and ordinary beings do not have less. It is like two lamps, one bright and one dark. Though the lamps differ in brightness,

how could their fire differ? When conditions are complete and the obscurations are removed, great light shines forth, and one becomes the same as all Buddhas. Therefore, revere the Three Jewels.

(Imagine that sentient beings and Buddhas are nondual.)

Return the precepts to your own body. Your parents gave you birth and endowed you with a human body. You possess your own field of blessings; why not cultivate it? What does cultivating it mean?

(Imagine filial devotion.)

Plant all wholesome roots. Plant melons and reap melons: cause and effect are distinct. This Dharma assembly is like planting a field of blessings, with immeasurable wholesome roots.

Only you can plant them yourself; planting them yourself, you gain them yourself, and no one can take them away. Ever abide in joy, as though granted a great

amnesty. As for all the past acts

of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and false speech, if you do not first repent, how can their karmic offenses be extinguished? I now tell you: there is a method of repentance. Once it enters the ear,

all offenses are immediately extinguished. Each of you, listen carefully and learn repentance.

(Imagine that the ghosts are filled with great joy.)

V. Repentance

All evils are created by the mind. The body is its slave and commits killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. Yet the mind that gives rise to these acts is itself caused by external circumstances.

Circumstances are originally illusory, and the mind is originally empty. Mistaking the false for the true, the mind again becomes a slave, drawn and bound layer upon layer. Thus it is called karmic force.

It is like a dream: within the dream, things are not absent; but when one awakens, they cannot be found at all. Know that they are fundamentally empty and have no real substance.

(Imagine that everything is like a dream.)

This is called repentance. With one repentance, it is empty; do not do it again. Repent former faults and regret later transgressions. It is like dirt on the palm:

whether oil or glue, any movement may incur blame. Good and evil do not arise from external things. If my palm is clean, nothing obstructs it.

Removing the dirt from the palm is called repentance; not allowing it to be soiled again, and remaining forever pure, is called regret. You departed spirits,

having repented, are each already purified. I shall now speak of taking refuge, to aid your deliverance.

(Imagine that all the ghosts have repented and are purified.)

VI. Taking Refuge

(Imagine that all the ghosts are willing to take refuge.)

Taking refuge has four refuges. First, take refuge in the Vajra Master, so that you may enter the hall and hear the Buddhadharma.

Next, take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha. Those who take refuge in the Buddha do not enter the hells; those who take refuge in the Dharma do not enter the animal realm;

those who take refuge in the Saṅgha do not enter the ghost realm. When the body has a refuge, the mind has something to rely on, like a child relying on its mother and not leaving her even for an instant.

Now, with utmost sincerity, join your palms and speak in unison. Through miraculous blessings, all offenses are extinguished, like snow melting in hot water and becoming water again.

In an instant, become a Buddha. Enter my spiritual light and listen to my teaching; its sound is the same as the Buddha's sound. Boundless spiritual power grants this blessing,

and you are immediately liberated. Relying on this Buddha-power and the three mysteries of yoga, take refuge with me. I now recite the mantra:

Ja Hum Bang Ha

Four-Refuge Mantra (twenty-one repetitions)

If there is no mantra or mudrā, recite instead: "I take refuge in the Vajra Master; I take refuge in the Buddha; I take refuge in the Dharma; I take refuge in the Saṅgha," also twenty-one times.

VII. Instructions

You children of the Buddha, having taken refuge, should each rejoice. I shall now give further instruction. With utmost sincerity, follow me in making this vow:

(Imagine that all the ghosts have taken refuge and become children of the Buddha.)

We sentient beings, whether male or female, old or young, may suddenly become confused at the end of life and fall in vain into this realm. How grievous, how painful!

(Imagine that all the children of the Buddha make the vow in unison.)

Now, receiving the Buddha's compassion and the blessing of this mantra, I suddenly awaken. The various evil karmas I created in the past all arose from greed, anger, and ignorance,

through body, speech, and mind, and produced evil results. I now repent of them all. Thereupon I give praise and joyfully make prostrations.

I further thank the presiding teacher for being my guide. I now take refuge, life after life, and respectfully beseech the master to grant me further instruction.

(Imagine that the children of the Buddha make prostrations.)

Only by sincerely asking in this way can one receive genuine benefit. I too rejoice and shall explain it to you.

(With palms joined, return the salutation.) (Imagine that the children of the Buddha bow their heads respectfully and listen to the Dharma.)

The Buddhadharma is supremely wondrous and subtle, yet also plain and accessible. The Way is not far from people; people merely abandon themselves. The Way is in one's own mind.

The mind is originally luminous. Yet a single view of self obstructs your true nature. When the true is lost, the mind is deluded and forever sinks in saṃsāra. Therefore, the six realms,

and even the entire world and all phenomena, are constructed solely by the mind. Wholesome, unwholesome, and indeterminate arise as the three natures. Discriminating them as "I,"

one clings to them firmly as though they were one's very life. Since beginningless time, habitual tendencies have been deep and heavy. The Buddha taught giving in order to eliminate greed;

the Buddha taught equality in order to remedy anger; the Buddha taught the cultivation of wisdom to open delusion. First cultivate the six pāramitās, then practice the myriad conducts.

(Imagine that the three poisons of greed, anger, and ignorance have been eliminated in the children of the Buddha.)

What are the six pāramitās? First is giving; second is upholding the precepts; third is patience; fourth is diligence; fifth is meditative concentration;

sixth is prajñā. Prajñā is foremost and pervades all practices. Without prajñā, one is like a person entering darkness and seeing nothing.

What is prajñā? It is great wisdom. Those without wisdom are called ignorant. When the mind is not illuminated, one cannot see one's true nature.

Cause and effect are inverted; one seeks only immediate gain and does not know the distant harm. This is called delusion. Delusion leads to the creation of karma, and thus one undergoes all kinds of suffering.

There are also eight further kinds of suffering: birth, aging, illness, and death; the suffering of not obtaining what one seeks; the suffering of separation from those one loves; the suffering of encountering those one hates; and the suffering of a mind like fire.

Collectively, they are called a mind that finds no peace. When the mind finds no peace, it seeks satisfaction; yet the world is impermanent, and things rarely go as one wishes.

Thus suffering is multiplied. The mind is never satisfied, and suffering has no end. Only with the sword of wisdom can these afflictions be cut off—the sword of wisdom is prajñā.

This vajra, the supreme treasure, is not possessed by Buddhas alone. Humans, devas, demons, ghosts, and even animals all possess it without diminution. The dharmakāya abides eternally.

(Contemplate that all are equal.)

It differs from worldly treasures, which can be destroyed. This neither arises nor ceases. Therefore, though the body perishes, intrinsic nature does not die; its life exceeds that of heaven and earth.

It is called Immeasurable Life, and is accordingly divided into three bodies: the dharmakāya, the form body, and third, the nirmāṇakāya. The form body consists of the four great elements: earth, water, fire, and wind.

It is borrowed from one's parents and will soon perish of itself. Essence, vital energy, and spirit are aspects of the physical body. What governs essence, vital energy, and spirit is this dharmatā alone.

When its governance departs, they perish; essence, vital energy, and spirit are extinguished. Yet this dharmatā never arises or ceases. Non-Buddhist paths do not understand this and mistakenly regard it as a heterodox teaching.

They vainly hope for long life, carving this rotten wood. Not understanding the treasure, they are like those who plow a field of stones—laboring without result. The sages pity them.

Alas, sentient beings should know that in cultivating the Way, realizing the mind is fundamental. Mind is fundamental virtue; thus it is called illuminating virtue.

Illuminate this illuminating virtue,

and reach the highest good. Then one’s learning is great, one’s achievement vast, one’s benefit universal, and one’s functioning unobstructed.

(Contemplate that all children of the Buddha are suffering and afflicted.)

Yet the fruits of suffering blaze fiercely among sentient beings. Some become hungry ghosts, their bodies burned by the fire of hunger; some are killed or wounded, and their resentment and bitterness run deep.

Some commit suicide, their unjust suffering still unredressed; some encounter calamities inflicted by rulers; some enter the hells, sinking there for hundreds of lifetimes, as if drunk or delirious.

Though they hear the Buddhadharma, they remain like the blind and mute; though shown the supreme Way, they seem not to hear it. The light of prajñā has no means to awaken them.

Unless this thought turns, how can they be liberated? Therefore, out of compassion, the Buddha left behind sacred mantras to be transmitted through ten thousand generations.

(Contemplate that liberation comes with a single turning thought.)

First remove your suffering; next open your throats; then distribute Dharma food, so that you may be fully satisfied. A single drop of sweet dew transforms into a great ocean.

All flames of affliction are completely quenched. A single bowl of food transforms into Mount Sumeru; like fragrant rice, it leaves all fully satisfied, with nothing lacking.

Once you are satisfied, the mind becomes luminous. When the right Dharma is bestowed, you will thereby accord with it. This is called the flavor of Dharma, wondrous and inconceivable.

Children of the Buddha, each of you listen attentively. Join your palms in reverence; be solemn and still. Receive the offerings equally, and do not give rise to greedy contention.

The flames in your mouths are extinguished, and your throats open wide as basins. Now, relying on the Dharma treasure, I shall make you all fully satisfied. I now recite the mantra:

VIII. Offering Food

Throat-Opening Mantra (seven recitations), Food-Transforming Mantra (seven recitations), Sweet-Dew-Offering Mantra (seven recitations), and Universal Offering Mantra (three recitations). (Contemplate that all spirits have had their throats opened.)

If this practice is unavailable, use the Mengshan Food-Offering Practice in its place. (Then raise the vessel and continue reciting.)

Now this pure food, though but a single tiny bowlful, transforms into immeasurable abundance, universally offered throughout the ten directions, exhausting empty space and pervading the dharma realm.

(Contemplate that the food is as abundant as mountains.)

In all lands throughout worlds as numerous as dust motes, all hungry ghosts, those long dead and departed, local spirits of mountains and rivers, and even those in the wilderness—

all ghosts and spirits, please gather here. I now pity you and universally offer you this food. May each of you receive this food from me,

and in turn make offerings throughout the realm of empty space to all Buddhas and sages, and to all sentient beings. May you and all sentient beings be fully satisfied.

May your bodies also, sustained by this mantra food, leave suffering and attain liberation, be reborn in the heavens and enjoy happiness, and travel at will to the Pure Lands of the ten directions.

Arouse bodhicitta, practice the bodhisattva path, always return to become Buddhas, and never retreat. May you also constantly, day and night,

protect me and fulfill my wishes. May this merit and virtue be equally shared by you and all sentient beings; together may we dedicate this blessing

universally to the dharma realm of suchness, unsurpassed bodhi, and the wisdom of all aspects, so that all may attain accomplishment and not invite any further karmic results.

May we rely on this Dharma and swiftly attain Buddhahood.

(Release the food.) (Put the vessels together.)

IX. Resolving Grievances

Children of the Buddha, having been satisfied, always be grateful for the Buddha's kindness and swiftly eliminate karmic grievances. The power and merit of the sacred

mantras are towering and immense.

(Contemplate that all are fully satisfied.)

Karma cannot be turned, yet this mantra can turn it. Offenses cannot be undone, yet this mantra can undo them. On hearing this mantra even once, one immediately gives rise to great luminosity.

(Contemplate that all children of the Buddha instantly shine with great light and are nondual with me.)

Whence comes this light? It does not arise from the mantra, is not born of heaven, and does not come from the earth. It fills the dharma realm everywhere, like thunder and clouds.

In one thought, one is a Buddha; the light issues from your own mind. It is like a great bell that sounds when struck: when the two come together, the mantra is your own mind.

When the mind turns, it becomes empty, and affliction and resentment do not arise. With one turning thought, the great earth is luminous; suffering turns into happiness, and one is born by transformation in a lotus.

(Contemplate that all pain has completely vanished.)

You are already satisfied; the fire of hunger cannot invade you. You are already free; pain is like awakening from a dream. Your offenses have already been eliminated; enemies and loved ones are equal.

Do not dwell on old wrongs, and there should be no thought of retribution. Though you see enmity and resentment, do not give rise to anger or hatred; instead, give rise to joy and resolve to liberate them.

Establish this great vow, and you will immediately leave the realms of suffering. I now bestow this merit and first liberate you; relying above on the Buddha's compassion, I perform this rite for universal benefit.

The greatest happiness in the world lies only in resolving grievances. When long-standing wishes are dissolved, the mind is utterly at peace. When the mind is without hindrance, there is no fear.

Far removed from inverted dreaming, delusive thoughts vanish. Only through such giving may one enter the Way; only with such a purified mind may one hear the Dharma.

Letting go of everything is great merit and virtue. I now resolve your karmic grievances and enable your liberation. I now recite the mantra:

(The Middle Great Compassion Mantra [seven recitations]; the Great Jeweled Pavilion Grievance-Resolving Mantra [one hundred and eight recitations].

The Heaven-Covering Vajra Heart Mantra [twenty-one recitations]; the Medicine Buddha Heart Mantra [twenty-one recitations].

If these are unavailable, use the Great Compassion Mantra or the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra in their place.)

X. Expounding the Dharma

Children of the Buddha, now that your karmic grievances have been resolved, you may hear the Buddhadharma. Each of you listen attentively. This Dharma treasure surpasses the seven treasures.

(Contemplate that all the past karma of the children of the Buddha has been completely eliminated.)

To attain the luminous mind-ground and be liberated from birth and death, the foremost matter is to hear the Buddhadharma. You should understand that a human body is hard to obtain;

the Buddhadharma is hard to hear, and to hear the right Dharma is harder still.

(Contemplate that from this point onward all children of the Buddha are able to hear the right Dharma.)

The Buddhadharma has no fixed dharma. It concerns only the fundamental matter of seeking right awakening. Awaken to this wondrous nature, which from the beginning has never been deluded

and is nondual with the Buddha. Only because one does not awaken does one become deluded by external objects and thereby lapse into madness and confusion. Those who do not understand the mind suffer ten thousand times more.

Therefore, seek to realize the mind as the foundation. To seek realization of the mind, first know intrinsic nature. This numinous and wondrous nature is neither real nor unreal,

neither empty nor existent, unmoving in suchness. Its essence is luminous, and its wondrous functioning inexhaustible. Your mind arises from this nature

and returns to this nature when it ceases. Nature is like water: without wind, there are no waves. Waves are like the mind: they suddenly arise and suddenly cease.

They illusorily arise and illusorily cease, and ultimately cannot be grasped. Therefore it is called the empty mind: existing, yet not truly existing. But this wondrous nature ultimately does not move.

(Contemplate that all children of the Buddha empty their minds and enter samādhi.)

What does “unmoving” mean? It is not like wood or stone, but alive and freely responsive. Like still, clear water, it neither arises nor ceases, is neither defiled nor pure,

neither one nor different, neither increasing nor decreasing. Only in dependence on external objects does this thought arise. This thought is called mind, but it is entirely a provisional name.

No substantial entity exists; it temporarily forms a delusive appearance. When objects are empty, mind is empty; inwardly empty and outwardly empty, all dharmas bear the mark of emptiness. This is the true mark.

All things, whether possessing form or formless, belong to appearances. Appearances are illusion, because they are constructed by mind; mind itself is originally unborn.

Illusion too does not exist. All appearances are therefore empty, and thus one sees the true mark. Worldly people see appearances and take emptiness as something real; this is called inversion.

When mind and objects come into contact, one unconsciously revolves onward. Within are the six sense faculties—eyes, ears, nose, tongue—and also body and mind; without are the six sense objects—

form, sound, fragrance, flavor, touch, and dharmas. When faculties and objects confront one another, thoughts arise dependently and become the six consciousnesses, which cognize their forms and appearances.

Delusively grasping them as perceptions, one sees good and sees evil, pervasively discriminating and making distinctions. Because of discrimination, the nature of absolute reality and perfection gives rise to disturbance.

This is called delusion. The evil causes of the three karmic activities are thereby evoked, immeasurably and without limit. This is the ocean of karma. Long unaware,

one remains forever submerged. Our Buddha pities them and entrusts the bodhisattvas to manifest in various regions. Those awakened first awaken those awakened later; they do not shrink from this duty.

Using various skillful means, they lead beings to faith and entry. What do they have faith in? Cause-Buddhas and fruition-Buddhas. Fruition-Buddhas belong to the past: Śākyamuni and Amitābha.

(Contemplate that all children of the Buddha have faith that they themselves are Buddhas.)

Cause-Buddhas belong to the future: I and all sentient beings. Therefore, arouse the resolve and become a Buddha at once. Of all cultivation, arousing the resolve is most difficult.

(Contemplate that all children of the Buddha arouse the resolve.)

This Dharma is hard to believe: have faith that you yourself are a Buddha. Those of lesser wisdom do not know that they should not decline what is rightfully theirs; delighting in lesser dharmas,

they mistake this for humility and restraint. Thus they conclude that Buddhahood cannot be attained in this very life, misleading themselves and others and destroying others' wisdom-life. Children of the Buddha, you should understand this for yourselves.

Though you have fallen into the realm of ghosts, do not lose Buddha-nature. With one turning thought, you will attain liberation. To pass from the ordinary to the noble, first transform consciousness.

Transform consciousness into wisdom, and you will no longer be deluded. Delusion gives rise to suffering, which does not depart from the five aggregates. What the five aggregates comprise is only form and mind.

External objects are called form. The mind clings to conditions; feelings, perceptions, formations, and consciousness continue without cease. Inverted and unsettled thoughts arise by the tens of thousands each day.

Ordinary beings do not know this and delight in it without wearying. Unable to free themselves from all suffering and adversity, their habitual tendencies accumulate deeply; this is called karmic obstacles.

There are five kinds of karmic obstacles: first, afflictions; second, karmic enmities; third, obstacles to birth; fourth, obstacles of the Dharma; and fifth, what is known.

What are afflictions? They are the greed and anger of one's own mind. What are karmic enmities? They are enmities and harms from past lives. What are obstacles of the Dharma? They arise because, in past lives,

one was by nature miserly and did not impart the Dharma to others; consequently, in this life one also finds it difficult to hear the Dharma. What is meant by what is known? It refers to practitioners of the Way

who cling to what they know, thereby forming views of self. From views comes doubt; from doubt comes slander. Slandering the Dharma and slandering teachers, they ultimately enter hell.

These five obstacles all obstruct my path. Yet all illusions arise from the mind; what the deluded mind grasps, it falsely reckons to exist.

Dreams and thoughts are inverted and confused. Not understanding their cause, one does not know that mind and objects are provisionally combined through causes and conditions; in their very substance they are empty, and emptiness itself is empty and extinguished.

Empty the five aggregates solely through the power of prajñā. Through prajñā contemplation, emotional and conceptual views suddenly vanish. Emotion belongs to self-love, which is held fast and firmly.

Views constitute attachment to self; Dharma obstacles are as numerous as hairs. The coarse are easy to remove, but the subtle are difficult to resolve. I shall now remove their root for you.

The first sublime truth: return to questioning your own mind. First uphold the five precepts.

(Visualize all the Buddha's children arousing the resolve to uphold the precepts.)

Do not kill, steal, lie, or engage in sexual misconduct. Alcohol is their medium; do not let it lead you on. Let the mind remain free of defilement and attachment, and the substance of the precepts will be pure.

Rely above on the Buddha's compassion, and you will ascend to the other shore. Beginners cultivate the precepts; from precepts comes samādhi, and from samādhi comes wisdom. Samādhi and wisdom support one another.

Samādhi and wisdom are themselves the precepts. Foolish people forcibly divide them and call them three; the wise understand them, knowing samādhi and wisdom to be one. One gate is the universal gate.

Whether in the Western Pure Land or the ten directions, one can remain without discrimination; this is called ultimate bliss. This is true pure karma. Dharma gates are immeasurable: some are Chan, some Esoteric Buddhism;

some concern nature, some appearances; all return to prajñā. Some involve recitation, some contemplation. When contemplation and recitation are accomplished, they return to the source as one: one appearance is no appearance.

One thought is no thought. What is ultimate reality? Not even one can be obtained; this is called pure emptiness. Emptiness is not one-sided emptiness; its function is inexhaustible.

Therefore, the wise empty all things. With emptiness, samādhi naturally arises; with samādhi, wisdom arises. When samādhi and wisdom are equal, one governs through non-contrivance.

This is called the great giving. The Buddha called it liberation; it is nirvāṇa. What is nirvāṇa? It is the Tathāgata. To practice in this way

is called sudden entry. Sudden entry into what path? Into the ground of the Tathāgata. Now that you have heard the Dharma, you should rejoice greatly and transform suffering into karma.

(Visualize all the Buddha's children rejoicing greatly.)

Transform consciousness into wisdom. Yet your strength is weak, and you cannot free yourselves from suffering. You can only rely on sacred mantras to empower you. The power of the vajra mantra

is called the Hundred-Syllable Mantra. Its light illumines the great thousandfold world. Greatly luminous and greatly numinous, its merit and virtue are lofty indeed. Its thousand eyes are wide open; its body is boundless.

Its treasury is inexhaustible. The gate of ambrosia opens, and all the earth becomes spring. There is also the sacred mantra of Amoghapāśa and Vairocana empowerment,

called the Great Light, the Five-Colored Seal Mantra. Spread the five fingers evenly apart. Those who see this light will have their evil karma naturally purified and attain great liberation.

(Visualize all the Buddha's children seeing the five-colored light and thereby attaining liberation.)

They rise beyond ultimate bliss, taking birth according to conditions as devas or humans, forever leaving the three lower realms and never again sinking down. You should be grateful and mindful.

The Buddha's grace is inexhaustible. Only with utmost sincerity may it be repaid through a pure mind. Thus you will rise beyond. To assist your joy, I now recite the mantra:

Eleven. Performing the Ritual

Recite the Vajra Hundred-Syllable Mantra (twenty-one times), the Great Empowerment Light Mantra of Amoghapāśa Vairocana Buddha (forming the five-colored-light mudrā) (one hundred and eight times), and the Ear-Blowing Rebirth Mantra (twenty-one times).

If these are unavailable, substitute twenty-one recitations of the Great Compassion Mantra, the Diamond Sūtra, the Heart Sūtra, the Amitābha Sūtra, and the Rebirth Mantra.

You Buddha's children have already obtained the light and may rise beyond. This rising beyond is truly sudden transcendence. Birth itself is no birth; the meaning of no birth

lies only in direct realization. Yet, having left this land, where would you wish to go? I now point out that there is a Western Pure Land. Since you have awakened,

do not cling to this world. The love of parents and children, the affection of husband and wife, must ultimately be parted. Fields, houses, and property are also all impermanent.

How could they be carried to the Western Pure Land? Only by relinquishing everything can you hold this treasure. This is the treasure of the mind, which the world cannot take away.

(Visualize all the Buddha's children letting go of everything, with body and mind light and at ease.)

You need not trouble to carry it, yet it will not be lost of itself. You are now born in the Western Pure Land; the one who is born is this very mind. The assembly of superior good people is there to welcome you.

Let go of everything, and you will suddenly see the light. This light means that Buddha and self are of one mind; all Buddhas share the same Way, and mind seals mind.

Perhaps lotus flowers will appear, perhaps terraces and pavilions will manifest. Amitābha is in their midst, with great bodhisattvas at his left and right. In compassion they gather me in, as a mother leads her child.

The Western Land of Ultimate Bliss is a Buddha land magnificently adorned. It has no evil realms and no attachments of craving. Its various merits and virtues are immeasurable and boundless.

The Buddhas of the ten directions, bodhisattvas, and vajra beings rain down heavenly māndārava flowers and gather like clouds. Thus, when the flowers open, they are flowers of wisdom.

How does one see the Buddha? One's own nature is Buddha. My Buddha and that Buddha differ only in earlier and later attainment. Though causes and effects may differ, the mind of the Way is nondual.

You are now about to depart. You should make great vows. Join your palms with me and recite together: "Greatly compassionate Amitābha Buddha."

(Visualize all the Buddha's children joining their palms and reciting together.)

The Buddha emits light to guide you, in accordance with his original vow. One thought such as this equals ten thousand recitations. Reverently go forth! The Western Pure Land is not far away.

Turn your head just once, and you will immediately reach the other shore. I now recite the mantra:

Recite the Great Rebirth Mantra (forty-nine times).

If it is unavailable, recite the Rebirth Mantra (forty-nine times).

Twelve. Sending Off

You Buddha's children have vowed to be born in the Western Pure Land and will gain great benefit from the Dharma. Sacred mantras serve as your sails, and prajñā as your boat. The Four Heavenly Kings

protect you on your journey, and no demons or māras can invade. Venerable Skanda has gathered you here and now sends you on your way.

Each of you should prostrate and bid farewell. All who travel with you are your Dharma companions. When you attain realization in a future time, return again to the Sahā world,

make vast vows, and liberate beings broadly. Do not forget my words; do not retreat from your resolve. Rise with the clouds and travel, riding the wind.

(Visualize clouds arising beneath the feet of all the Buddha's children, who are about to ascend.)

Now the sound of the mantra is issued; it is the sound of great thunder. Through such merit and virtue, completion occurs in an instant. The Western Pure Land suddenly appears, like awakening suddenly from a dream.

(Visualize all the Buddha's children bowing, leaving the altar, and ascending.)

In the Land of Ultimate Bliss, the ground is gold and the seven treasures provide magnificent adornment beyond compare. The assembly of sages gathers like clouds amid towers, terraces, and pavilions.

Lotus flowers suddenly appear, and there is transformation-birth within them. Thus this excellent affinity is formed. I now recite the mantra:

Recite the Sending-Off Mantra (seven times) and the Sending-the-Buddha Mantra (three times). At the same time, carry out and burn the spirit tablet (removing the armor and ascending to the crown).

If these mantras are unavailable, recite the Great Compassion Mantra to send them off, while those on both sides recite the Buddha's name together.

The merit and virtue of this Dharma assembly is now complete. All lonely spirits have reached the other shore. I shall dedicate this merit and declare it for those of the future.

(Visualize the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, vajra beings, and deities of this altar as having all withdrawn from their places.)

The giving of Dharma is inexhaustible, but such opportunities are difficult to encounter again. May those who have not yet aroused the resolve each arouse it. Everyone has parents, perhaps a wife or children,

who have not attained transcendence. Each should keep them in mind. Let such filial reflection be an example throughout the ages. There is no greater filial piety than the Buddhadharma.

The dead are unaware, yet the Buddhadharma can reach them. Before disorder arises in the world, ghosts and spirits first fall into disorder. Through this one assembly, the dharma realm is universally at peace.

From this time onward, may warfare, floods, fires, and epidemics all be extinguished through the power of my vows. I bow to the World-Honored One and pray that, in compassionate mercy,

all the bodhisattvas will offer their protection. May this merit be dedicated to all, so that all may attain Buddhahood.

(At this point, the master leaves the meditation seat.)

I. Paying Homage to the Buddha

II. Reciting the Three Refuges

III. Leaving the altar area and entering the rest room

IV. Removing the ritual garments

Explanation:

1. Lamps may be used on the platform; candles are unnecessary.

2. If banners are unavailable, use small paper flags in their place.

3. If ritual implements are unavailable, they need not be used; substitute visualization.

4. No one other than the Dharma master may bow at the ritual platform.

5. For a ritual performed at home, the hour of Xu in the evening is appropriate; it should be completed during the hour of Hai. Other times are unsuitable.

6. Do not use so much incense that its smoke becomes overpowering.

7. Write the mantra on the invocation flag; if there is no flag, it may also be omitted.