

## Appendix A

### "Worship in the Buddhist Tradition"





Buddha Shakyamuni 19<sup>th</sup> century thangka painting © Himalayan Art Collection

# Worship in the Buddhist Tradition

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## Worship in the Buddhist Tradition

Prince Siddhartha who later became known as Buddha Shakyamuni was born in India in 563 B.C. Disillusioned as a young man with materialistic life, Siddhartha left the pleasures of the royal palace in search of an end to the miseries of human existence. After rigorously pursuing and perfecting meditation practices taught by the most advanced teachers of his time, Siddhartha realized that enlightenment, or the awakened state could not be attained by extreme methods of asceticism or by achievement of concentration states, but by practicing the middle way of gently examining the nature of one's own mind. Thus, at the age of 35, Siddhartha attained buddhahood, the enlightened state of being.

Over the next 45 years and until his death, Buddha Shakyamuni traveled throughout India teaching the *dharma*, or 'truth of reality' he discovered through carefully examining his mind in meditation. Although the Buddha gave only oral teachings, his early disciples recorded his teachings and instructions and thus passed them on in their original form. Since the death of the Buddha, an unbroken lineage of realized meditation masters has continued to the present day, with each teacher transmitting the Buddha's understanding of dharma to his/her students, who in turn realize the truth of reality through their own study and practice, and then teach this realization to the next generation of students.

In Buddhism, understanding the truth means removing misconceptions about the nature of reality; therefore it is essential that each student gain his/her own personal experience of the enlightened state of mind through a concerted effort of dharma study, contemplation and meditation practice. As the great 19<sup>th</sup> century meditation master Patrul Rinpoche taught:

“Hearing the dharma, reflecting on it and meditating upon it should go hand in hand. The peerless Dhagpo says: To combine study, reflection and meditation on the dharma is an infallible essential point. The result of study, reflection and meditation should be a steady and real increase in the love and compassion of awakened mind, together with the steady and real diminution of ego-clinging and negative emotions.”<sup>1</sup>

Recognizing the true nature of reality inspires us to improve our behavior and leads to the development of wisdom and compassion in our relationships with others.

The goal of Buddhism is the gradual attainment of the enlightened or awakened state through the study and practice of the dharma. Practicing the dharma is the Buddhist

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<sup>1</sup> The Words of My Perfect Teacher, by Patrul Rinpoche, translated by the Padmakara Translation Group, Harper Collins, 1994, p. 261.

equivalent to worship in the Judeo-Christian traditions. Worship is defined in Webster's dictionary as '*a form of religious practice with its creed and ritual.*' In the Buddhist tradition religious practice encompasses the three activities of studying, contemplating and practicing the dharma and their three aspects of worship – conduct, meditation and understanding.

Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, one of the great meditation masters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who helped establish Buddhism in America explained:

“You might wonder what kind of dharma we are talking about. What is this extraordinary thing? What is the true dharma all about? It is very simple, extremely simple, and therefore it is effective. And it has several different aspects. What the dharma is proclaiming is the notion of conduct, meditation and understanding. They are the contents of all of the true dharma taught by the Buddha.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Three Aspects of Buddhist Worship**

**Conduct.** The Buddhist teachings provide that virtuous moral conduct is both the foundation for spiritual practice and the enlightened result. Being kind and helpful to others are qualities that must be learned and cultivated. Buddhist teachings on virtuous action, karma and its result, and a vast range of selfless activity of generosity and patience must be learned by the student through studying of texts and receiving oral teachings and instruction. In Buddhism, study and meditation practice are likened to the two legs that are needed in order to walk the path to enlightenment. A quiet environment where one can study, receive teachings and contemplate the dharma to make it one's own personal experience is essential to developing right conduct.

**Meditation.** The second aspect of worshipping the dharma is meditation. It is one's mind that forms the basis for perception and therefore, in order to achieve enlightenment the workings of mind are the topic of meditation. Students receive teachings on both progressive meditation techniques and detailed psychological descriptions of the myriad states of mind. In this way the student achieves full knowledge of how to meditate along with descriptions of stages of the path to enlightenment. Again, study and oral teachings form the basis for learning how to meditate with such topics as the stages of meditation, obstacles and antidotes, relating with emotions and instructions on elementary mindfulness meditation up to uncovering the true nature of one's mind. Again, an environment specifically devoted both to the learning process and meditation itself is essential to develop skill in meditation.

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<sup>2</sup> 1978 Seminary Transcripts, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Vajradhatu Publications, p.10.

**Understanding.** Buddhist understanding refers to understanding the nature of mind and reality itself. Buddhism contains both an extensive philosophical system explaining the nature of reality and the means by which one can achieve such an understanding. This aspect of dharma worship is rightfully characterized as learning the view of wisdom. There are stages of understanding, just as there are stages of meditation and proper conduct. As before, receiving direct instruction from a qualified spiritual master who has achieved his own understanding of the nature of reality is essential. This direct oral instruction is combined with the study of texts and must be practiced diligently in a conducive environment.

Buddhist worship of the dharma and achievement of enlightenment is not possible without all three aspects of conduct, meditation and understanding. All three aspects inform and support each other. Conduct acting as a basis creates the desire to help oneself and others. Meditation provides the contemplation necessary to release one's confusion about reality and self-centeredness and provides insight into understanding the nature of reality. Understanding crystallizes the experience of meditation and through this insight compassionate wisdom is generated. Compassion then informs conduct, creating inspiration to work for the benefit of oneself and others. In this way, the three aspects of Buddhist worship work together to define the path, without which the student's chariot to enlightenment could not travel.

### **Three Aspects of Worship at Mahamudra Hermitage**

The development of Mahamudra Hermitage has been carefully considered to provide an ideal environment for Buddhist worship. Modeled after 2500 years of successful retreat centers, the Hermitage will enable lay Buddhist practitioners from across North America to study and practice the dharma in varying levels of intensity, based upon their level of commitment. The Bodhisattva Temple will provide teachings and meditation training to a wide public audience. The short-term Milarepa Meditation Center will provide an environment of study and meditation practice for groups and individuals from one week to three months in duration. The long-term Naropa Center will provide worship opportunity for those students desiring to undergo the traditional three-year meditation retreat commitment. All three aspects of worship will focus on learning, contemplation and meditation to ripen in the student a deep appreciation and experience of conduct, meditation and understanding.

While Buddhism is studied and practiced in daily life by lay practitioners, it is essential to mix daily worship with times of intensive retreat experience. Residing in a meditation center for extended periods is the only way to truly immerse oneself in Buddhist worship. Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche taught that 24-hour awareness is the means of practicing the true dharma. Students learn through group and individual lectures, study and meditation practice, and also through sharing the workload at the retreat centers.

All students participate in cooking, serving and cleaning, and performing routine work tasks during breaks from meditation and study periods. These times of work are regarded as “post-meditation activity,” or the opportunity to exercise proper conduct in selfless service to each other. Even during sleep, students are taught practices that encourage mindfulness.

The establishment of retreat centers such as Mahamudra Hermitage will enable both the public and serious students of Buddhism to properly worship the dharma and ultimately to further their experiences of enlightenment, the awakened state for the benefit of all beings.

## Trungram Gyaltrul Rinpoche, Founder of Mahamudra Hermitage



Known by Buddhist masters and scholars as an emanation of the beloved yogi Milarepa, His Eminence Trungram Gyaltrul Rinpoche is regarded as one of the highest lamas of the

Kagyü lineage, one of the four great schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Born into a Sherpa family in Nepal in 1968, many auspicious signs accompanied Rinpoche's birth. The 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, head of the 1000-year old Kagyü lineage, recognized Rinpoche at 18 months old, predicting this 4th Trungram Gyaltrul Rinpoche would be of great benefit to all sentient beings.

Gyaltrul Rinpoche studied at Rumtek Monastery and the Nalanda Institute for Higher Buddhist Studies in Sikkim for over eighteen years and received a Masters degree with first class honors in 1990. There, he also received many transmissions and teachings from some of the greatest spiritual masters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 2004, Gyaltrul Rinpoche received a PhD from Harvard University in the fields of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism and Comparative Religion.

Each year Gyaltrul Rinpoche travels throughout Europe, Asia and the US giving teachings and overseeing activities of his worldwide organization, the United Trungram Buddhist Foundation (UTBF). It is Gyaltrul Rinpoche's deepest wish to share the buddhadharma – the truth, the path of non-violence and the path of peace with others.

## Examples of Centers for Buddhist Worship

Following in the 2500-year old Buddhist tradition, centers for intensive worship have been established throughout Europe and the US to accommodate Western practitioners of the dharma. Below are several examples of many such retreat centers.

### **Dhagpo Kagyu Mandala**

[www.dhagpo-kagyu.org](http://www.dhagpo-kagyu.org)

The Dhagpo Kagyu Mandala located in the countryside of central France is the direct result of the aspirations of the 16<sup>th</sup> Karmapa (1924 -1981), former head of the Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism. Thirty years ago, the 16<sup>th</sup> Karmapa set in motion the establishment of a European seat for the Kagyu lineage to provide a public dharma center, retreat facilities where Buddhist practitioners could undertake short-term and long-term retreats, and an Institute for the preservation, study and translation of authentic dharma texts. To date, over 400 Westerners have completed the traditional three-year meditation retreat at Dhagpo. His Eminence Gyaltrul Rinpoche is closely affiliated with and serves as one of the main teachers of the Dhagpo Kagyu Mandala.



Dhagpo Kagyu Public Meditation Center and Institute



Pende Ling Hermitage



Karmapa Temple

## Karme Choling Retreat Center

[www.karmecholing.org](http://www.karmecholing.org)



Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, considered one of the great meditation masters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, founded Karme Choling Retreat Center in Barnet, Vermont in 1970. Karme Choling offers public teachings and meditation programs, group retreats (up to 1 month in length) and individual retreats of varying lengths of time. The Center can accommodate 150 people in individual rooms and dormitories in the main building and in retreat cabins throughout land. Visitors also patronize local Bed & Breakfast's and hotels during programs at Karme Choling Retreat Center.

## Shambhala Mountain Center

[www.shambhalamountain.org](http://www.shambhalamountain.org)



The Shambhala Mountain Center located in rustic Red Feather Lakes, Colorado was founded in 1971 by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Shambhala Mountain offers public teaching & meditation programs, group retreats (up to 1 month in length) and individual retreats of varying lengths of time. Shambhala Mountain Center can accommodate 125 people in its main building in individual rooms and dormitories and in retreat cabins throughout the land.

## Zen Mountain Center

[www.zmc.org](http://www.zmc.org)



The Zen Mountain Center founded in 1981 by the renowned Zen master, Taizan Maezumi Roshi is situated in the wilderness of the San Jacinto Mountains of Southern California. Zen Mountain offers public teachings and meditation programs and individual and group retreats of varying lengths of time. Zen Mountain Center can accommodate 40 retreatants at a time and offers a variety of housing in shared rooms, dormitories and rustic cabins throughout the land.