

Frequently Asked Questions at Lion's Roar Dharma Center

We are frequently asked questions about Tibetan Buddhist practice and etiquette. In order to provide a library of helpful information, we are compiling this list of frequently asked questions and answers.

How do I start a meditation practice?

Correct meditation practice is done under the guidance of a lama. This is because our needs and personal styles are so varied. Although there are many books on meditation, we need personal supervision of a qualified teacher to have the best results. Learning to meditate is like learning a musical instrument, driving a car or running a marathon. To save ourselves time, avoid injuries and have a positive result, we need personal instruction. Feel free to contact Geshe Phelgye or Lama Jinpa at jinpa@middlewayhealth.com.

What styles of meditation are offered at Lion's Roar Dharma Center?

We teach Calm Abiding and Special Insight meditation. Loving kindness and Mindfulness form the core of these practices. We also lead pujas and teach meditation using visualizations and mantras.

What is a mantra?

A mantra is a short prayer in Sanskrit that generally recites the names of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas it is dedicated to.

What is the mantra of Tara The Liberator?

OM TA RE TU TA RE TU RE SO HA

It is called the ten syllable mantra.

What is the mantra of the Bodhisattva of Compassion – Chenresig?

OM MANI PE'MAY HUNG

It is called the six syllable mantra.

Can I recite a mantra if I have not been to a teaching or empowerment for that mantra?

Everybody can recite these mantras. If you are not sure how to do them, you may ask Geshe Phelgye or Lama Jinpa about each specific mantra.

What is a puja?

Puja (literally an offering) is a Meditation Ritual on one of the Bodhisattvas or Buddhas. It is a ceremony in which prayers are offered to the Buddhas to request their blessings or invoke their help.

Why are there different pujas?

There are different pujas for different purposes in our lives. There are pujas for meditation practice, purification, removing obstacles, long life, death, illness, business, and so on. Pujas are performed to avert and clear the three types of obstacles, conditions which prevent us from achieving our worldly and spiritual goals.

The three types of obstacles:

- ☞ *Worldly obstacles* ~ these are affecting day to day life, relationships, business, finances.
- ☞ *Inner obstacles* ~ these affect our health or mental state.
- ☞ *Secret obstacles* ~ these obstruct the attainment of innate wisdom.

By doing meditation, prayers and offerings with sincere motivation, unfavorable circumstances that bring problems may be changed. It is said that prayers performed by ordained ones are especially powerful and effective as they are done on the base of pure morality.

Pujas can be performed for various purposes:

- ☞ For the dying ~ to help pacify their mind and decrease fear during the time of death.
- ☞ For the deceased ~ to bless and guide their mind to a higher state of rebirth and liberation.
- ☞ For sickness ~ to remove obstacles to mental and physical health.
- ☞ For success in one's activities ~ for removing obstacles to success in one's activities, be they worldly or dharma.

The puja performed depends on the type of problem and the individual's karma. Buddha taught us pujas for everything that we need in this life and also future lives. Buddha himself experienced and practiced many different rituals or pujas in his life.

How much does it cost to have a puja performed?

There is no limit to the amount of a donation that can be made. It depends on one's financial ability and how much you want to make as an offering toward the pujas. Some pujas are complicated and require a lot of materials and a great deal of time to perform.

How do I know which puja I need to do for myself and my family?

Ask Geshe Phelgye or Lama Jinpa which puja is appropriate.

How do I greet a Geshe or a Lama?

Take a Khata or a white scarf with you to meet a lama or Geshe, then say TASHI DELEY. This means Auspicious and Good Health. Whenever you see a Lama or Geshe, you humbly bow down your head and place both hands together as a prostration gesture. Most of the Tibetan Lamas don't shake hands, but rather they raise their right hand as a half prostration when they greet you.

How do I greet a monk?

Say TASHI DELEY and place hands together at the heart.

What does Ven. Mean?

Ven. is shorthand for Venerable monk or nun.

What does Geshe mean?

Geshe literally means "spiritual friend". It is the highest teaching degree in Tibetan Buddhism.

What does Gen mean?

Gen means: master, teacher or senior. It is a term of respect for a monk or a nun.

What is a Khata?

A Khata is a ceremonial silk scarf offered to Lamas. (We have them for sale at Lion's Roar Dharma Center for a small donation.) It should be white and long. White represents purity and it is long to represent long life. Some can be yellow to represent gold or something precious.

When and how do I use it?

You can use a Khata anytime, anywhere with anyone as a greeting. It is particularly used on special occasions whether spiritual or business.

How do I do a prostration?

There are three different ways to do prostration in the Tibetan tradition.

Simple prostration: You put both hands together and hold them near you heart.

Half prostration: put both hands together and touch them first on your crown, then on your throat, then on your heart. Then kneel down and touch your forehead to the ground. Your hands and knees must also touch the ground. That is one set of prostrations. Repeat three times. Never do a single prostration.

Full prostration: place your hands together and touch your crown, throat and heart, then stretch your entire body on the ground and stretch both of your hands as far as possible away from you head. Then rise up quickly and repeat. That is one set of prostrations. Repeat three times. Never do single prostration.

How do I use a mala?

A mala is a string of prayer beads. Some have 108 and some 111 beads. You use a mala to count the recitation of mantras or the names of the Buddhas.

What offerings should I bring?

When you visit a temple, you should bring fresh flowers, fruit or candles for offerings to the Buddhas.

To meet privately with Geshe Phelgye or Lama Jinpa, do I need an appointment?

Yes, this can be done in person or by e-mail at jinpa@middlewayhealth.com.

Can I attend all events at Lion's Roar Dharma Center?

Yes. All publicized events are open to the public. Beginners are welcome.

How much does it cost to attend events at Lion's Roar Dharma Center?

Teacher and the Teachings (Dharma) are priceless. They are supported by offerings (called Dana). It is expected that a dana offering be generally \$20 and above for a teaching or ceremony and \$60 and above for a private interview.

