

Remembering My Heart
A retreat for the recollection of what is important



This retreat guideline was arranged for the students of the
Buddhist Center of Steamboat Springs

Retreat guidelines

During this retreat you are to be completely alone, to ‘draw the boundary’. You are not to see anyone, talk to anyone, engage in distraction, for instance watching TV, listening to the radio or tapes, or writing letters. Please maintain total silence throughout the retreat, from the first evening throughout the day of retreat (other than the requested recitations during the retreat). It is best if you can do the retreat in a place where you will not hear others talk. Follow this schedule as it is written. If you want to add or subtract aspects of the retreat, do so only after consulting your meditation instructor. For this one day, you will keep the 5 precepts.

“In a remote place, where the thought of death pierces the heart
The retreatant, who has profoundly turned away from attachment
Draws the boundary, giving up all concerns for this life
Hence, his mind is not involved with the eight worldly dharmas”

Kharak Gomchung

Shrine:

It is helpful if you have a shrine for your retreat. A simple shrine could consist of a picture, or statue, or some other representation of the Buddha, 7 water bowls, 2 candles, and an incense offering.

Reading:

Take only 2 books into retreat. Chose one from each of the following two lists. They are available from our library, or can be borrowed.

Take one of the following ‘life stories’:

The Rain of Wisdom
The Life of Milarepa
The One Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa
The Life of Shabkar
Journey to Enlightenment H.H. Khyentse Rinpoche

And one other dharma book, such as one of the following:

As It Is	Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche
Rainbow Painting	Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche
The Way of the Bodhisattva	Shantideva
Counsels from my Heart	H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche
Carefree Dignity	Tsoknyi Rinpoche

Retreat Schedule - (modify this in any way that suites you)

The evening before:

Open your shrine. Kneel in front of the shrine. Take a few minutes to set your intention for the retreat. This means to determine what qualities you would like to emphasize during the retreat, and, if you choose, to dedicate the merit of this retreat to someone, or to the betterment of some particular situation.

Sit for 10 minutes

Before going to bed, read from one of the 'life stories' for 20 minutes

Recite the *Four Boundless Attitudes* three times

As you fall asleep contemplate the *Four Boundless Attitudes*

The day of retreat:

6:00 - Get out of bed as soon as you wake up

6:15 – Recite the entire morning liturgy from:

Four Dharmas of Gampopa from the “Daily Practice Liturgy”

Supplication to the Kagyu Gurus

The Sutra of the Heart of Transcendent Knowledge

The Daily Ritual for Taking the Five Precepts

Sitting meditation

7:30 – light exercise

breakfast

8:30 – Return to your cushion

read out loud *The Dharma Cairns of Kharak Gomchung*

contemplate the meaning of this song carefully

stretch for a few minutes

9:00 sitting meditation - you can stand and stretch for 5 minutes every 20 minutes, or so.

10:00 perform the *Treasury of Blessings, A Sadhana of the Buddha*

(or any other practice of your choice)

10:50 break

11:00 read and contemplate (one of the books that you've brought into retreat)

Noon lunch

1:30 Sit 10 min

recite out loud *Atisha's Heartfelt Advice*, contemplate this for 10 minutes

5 minute break
Sitting meditation
2:30 break
2:40 read and contemplate
3:15 Tea and relax
3:45 sitting 20 minutes
perform the *Treasury of Blessings, A Sadhana of the Buddha*
(or whatever other practice you choose)
4:45 break
5:00 Sitting
6:00 Dinner
7:00 Sitting
7:30 Read
8:00 sitting
8:30 recite out loud the dedication from *The Way of the Bodhisattva*
Sitting
9:00 dedicate the merit 'By this merit...'
relax and go to bed

The Dharma Cairns Of Kharak Gomchung
From *The Rain of Wisdom, The Essence of the Ocean of True Meaning*

Namo Gurave

Once, the great spiritual friend Putowa and the Little Meditator of Kharak were dwelling, one above and one below, among the rocks behind a monastery in the province of Phen. At that time, Geshe Putowa thought, “This Little Meditator of Kharak does not have much technique in his meditation, yet he does have much perseverance in his dumb meditation. If he would request meditation instruction from me, he would come to the true dharma.”

One day, he met Kharak Gomchung at the assembly, and he said, “You the greatly persevering meditator, what degree of experience and realization has arisen in you?”

The Little Meditator of Kharak replied, “By meditating on the difficulty of gaining human birth, free and well-favored, and on death and impermanence, I understand to turn my mind from the world. By seeing the cause and result of karma as well as the retribution of samsara, I understand to turn my mind from the seeming pleasures of existence and from desirable things. By meditating on the impossibility of happiness no matter where one is born, I understand to turn my mind from the three realms of samsara. By meditating on friendliness, compassion, and bodhicitta, I understand to turn my mind from striving to attain my own peace and happiness. By meditating on the unborn nature of all dharmas, I understand to turn my mind from all grasping and fixation.”

Putowa thought, “He is not a little meditator; he is a great meditator!” Putowa then admitted to the Little Meditator of Kharak that he had had his doubts about him, and said, “Tomorrow, when you all have dharma discussion, I shall come and request you to write down your experiences and realizations in meditation.”

The next day, when Geshe Putowa arrived, Kharak Gomchung was in retreat; yet Kharak Gomchung had built four cairns in the four directions.

On the eastern cairn was written:

To this feeble one, many harmful calamities have come.

On the southern cairn was written:

Mara, lord of death, never resting, comes closer and closer.
As for the means to escape him, there is not even one.
This very moment, I do not give in to drowsiness and distraction,

And I think, “Alas, when will he come for me?”

On the western cairn was written:

Enough food and clothing to sustain this life is sufficient.
Later, it may be impossible to seek perfect enlightenment.
Not attached to friends and enemies being near or far,
One should attain enlightenment for future well-being.

On the northern cairn was written:

The sophistries of words are inexhaustible.
Therefore, take up the wisdom of the Victorious One.
The seats of the forefathers are holy solitudes;
When I obtain confidence, calamities dawn as friends.
This confidence is like a spark which ignites a forest fire.
I vow to dwell alone.

On the lintel of the doorway was written:

Not having harvested or hoarded necessities,
Will you die from cold or from hunger, great meditator?
Who will see or hear what happens to you?
Exert yourself in practicing the essential yoga.

On the threshold of the doorway was written:

Those who are selfish, discontent, and callous
Perpetuate trouble: it is best to be without such servants.
My attendants are prajna and exertion.
In order to accomplish the goal you desire, be free from weary sadness.
So dwell there alone like a rhinoceros.

Atisha's Heartfelt Advice

When Venerable Atisha came to Tibet he first went to Ngari, where he remained for two years giving many teachings to the disciples of Jangchub Ö.

After two years had passed, he decided to return to India, and Jangchub Ö requested him to give one last teaching before he left.

Atisha replied that he had already given them all the advice they needed, but Jangchub Ö persisted in his request and so Atisha accepted and gave the following advice.

How wonderful!

Friends, since you already have great knowledge and clear understanding, whereas I am of no importance and have little wisdom, it is not suitable for you to request advice from me. However because you dear friends, whom I cherish from my heart, have requested me, I shall give you this essential advice from my inferior and childish mind.

Friends, until you attain enlightenment the Spiritual Teacher is indispensable, therefore rely upon the holy Spiritual Guide.

Until you realize ultimate truth, listening is indispensable, therefore listen to the instructions of the Spiritual Guide.

Since you cannot become a Buddha merely by understanding Dharma, practice earnestly with understanding.

Avoid places that disturb your mind, and always remain where your virtues increase.

Until you attain stable realization, worldly amusements are harmful, therefore abide in a place where there are no such distractions.

Avoid friends who cause you to increase delusion, and rely upon those who increase your virtue. This you should take to heart.

Since worldly activities never come to an end, limit your activities.

Dedicate your virtues throughout the day and the night, and always watch your mind.

Because you have received advice, whenever you are not meditating always practice in accordance with what your Spiritual Guide says.

If you practice with great devotion, results will arise immediately, without your having to wait for a long time.

If from your heart you practice in accordance with Dharma, both food and resources will come naturally to hand.

Friends, the things you desire give no more satisfaction than drinking sea water, therefore practice contentment.

Avoid all haughty, conceited, proud, and arrogant minds, and remain peaceful and subdued.

Avoid activities that are said to be meritorious, but which in fact are obstacles to Dharma.

Profit and respect are nooses of the maras, so brush them aside like stones on the path.

Words of praise and fame serve only to beguile us, therefore blow them away as you would blow your nose.

Since the happiness, pleasure, and friends you gather in this life last only for a moment, put them all behind you.

Since future lives last for a very long time, gather the wealth of merit to provide for the future.

You will have to depart leaving everything behind, so do not be attached to anything.

Generate compassion for lowly beings, and especially avoid despising or humiliating them.

Have no hatred for enemies, and no attachment for friends.

Do not be jealous of others' good qualities, but out of admiration adopt them yourself.

Do not look for faults in others, but look for faults in yourself, and purge them like bad blood.

Do not contemplate your own good qualities, but contemplate the good qualities of others, and respect everyone as a servant would.

See all living beings as your father or mother, and love them as if you were your child.

Always keep a smiling face and a loving mind, and speak truthfully without malice.

If you talk too much with little meaning you will make mistakes, therefore speak in moderation, only when necessary.

If you engage in many meaningless activities your virtuous activities will degenerate, therefore stop activities that are not spiritual.

It is completely meaningless to put effort into activities that have no essence.

If the things you desire do not come it is due to karma created long ago, therefore keep a happy and relaxed mind.

Beware, offending a holy being is worse than dying, therefore be honest and straightforward.

Since all the happiness and suffering of this life arise from previous actions, do not blame others.

All happiness comes from the blessings of your Spiritual Guide, therefore always repay his kindness.

Since you cannot tame the minds of others until you have tamed your own, begin by taming your own mind.

Since you will definitely have to depart without the wealth you have accumulated, do not accumulate negativity for the sake of wealth.

Distracting enjoyments have no essence, therefore sincerely practice generosity.

Always keep pure moral discipline for it leads to beauty in this life and happiness hereafter.

Since hatred is rife in these impure times, don the armor of patience, free from anger.

You remain in samsara through the power of laziness, therefore ignite the fire of the effort of application.

Since this human life is wasted by indulging in distractions, now is the time to practice meditation.

Being under the influence of wrong views, you do not realize the ultimate nature of things, therefore investigate the correct meaning of things.

Friends, there is no happiness in this swamp of samsara, so move to the firm ground of liberation.

Meditate according to the advice of your Spiritual Guide and dry up the river of samsaric suffering.

You should consider this well because it is not just words from my mouth, but sincere advice from my heart.

If you practice like this you will delight me, and you will bring happiness to yourself and others.

I who am ignorant request you to take this advice to heart.

This is the advice that the holy being Venerable Atisha gave to Venerable Jang Chub Ö.

Atisha was a famous Indian scholar of profound learning. He arrived in Tibet in 1038 and stayed until his death. He started a movement to reform the Buddhism in Tibet. He introduced the practice of 'mind training', lojong, and emphasized moral discipline. Those teachings formed the basis of Kadampa tradition ('those bound by ordinance'). In the fifteenth century Tsong-khapa again reformed this school and renaming it Gelugpa.

Dedication

Dedication - from Shantideva's *The Way of the Bodhisattva*

“May all beings everywhere
Plagued by sufferings of body and mind
Obtain an ocean of happiness and joy
By virtue of my merits.

May no living creature suffer,
Commit evil, or ever fall ill.
May no one be afraid or belittled,
With a mind weighed down by depression.

May the blind see forms
And the deaf hear sounds,
May those whose bodies are worn with toil
Be restored on finding repose.

May the naked find clothing,
The hungry find food;
May the thirsty find water
And delicious drinks.

May the poor find wealth,
Those weak with sorrow find joy;
May the forlorn find hope,
Constant happiness, and prosperity.

May there be timely rains
And bountiful harvests;
May all medicines be effective
And wholesome prayers bear fruit.

May all who are sick and ill
Quickly be freed from their ailments.
Whatever diseases there are in the world,
May they never occur again.

May the frightened cease to be afraid
And those bound be freed;
May the powerless find power,
And may people think of benefiting each other.

For as long as space remains,
For as long as sentient beings remain,
Until then may I too remain
To dispel the miseries of the world.”