



PRAYERS FOR REBIRTH IN
— SUKHAVATI —



by Karma Chakme and Tertön Mingyur Dorje



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Translated by Khenpo David Karma Choephel



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Prayers to the buddha Amitabha are popular in all traditions of Mahayana Buddhism. The three prayers by Karma Chakme and Mingyur Dorje included here are among the most popular in the Tibetan tradition, especially in the Kagyu and Nyingma schools. The strong connection both these authors had to Amitabha in their own practice comes through in simple and direct language that eschews poetic flourishes. This gives all three prayers depth, power, and an ability to speak to the heart, making it easy for practitioners to feel the thoughts and words as their own while they recite them.

They are recited frequently in monasteries, nunneries, and dharma centers around the world, and many practitioners also include them in their daily practice to pray either for themselves or on behalf of recently departed loved ones. In Tibetan, they are frequently sung to the melody for the MANI mantra, so they are presented here in a new translation that can easily be sung to that same melody, with instructions, music notation, and recordings at the end of this publication.

I began these translations when my father passed away and have taken far too long to complete them, but I hope that they can now bring some benefit to all of our fathers and mothers who need guidance in this life, at death, and beyond.

AN ASPIRATION FOR REBIRTH IN THE PURE REALM OF SUKHAVATI

by Karma Chakme (1613–78)

*With my own hand, I've made the effort to write
This treasury of daily meditation.
I thought perhaps it might help many beings.
Borrow it if you do not want to copy.
Nothing has greater benefit than this,
And I have no instructions more profound.
This is the root of my own dharma teachings.
Do not discard it; strive instead to practice.
It's from the sutra tradition, so it's fine
To read it even without the transmission.*

EMAHO!

In the direction of the setting sun,
Beyond innumerable many worlds,
And elevated just a bit above,
Is the pure buddha realm, Sukhavati.
Though I don't see it with my eyes of flesh,
It's brilliant and vivid in my mind.

There dwells the Bhagavan, Lord Amitabha,
Ablaze with majesty and ruby colored,
Adorned with an ushnisha on his head,
Designs of wheels upon his feet, and so forth—
The thirty-two great marks and eighty signs.
He has one face, two hands in equipoise.
He holds an alms bowl, wears three dharma robes,
And sits in vajra posture on a moon
That rests upon a thousand-petaled lotus,
A bodhi tree behind his back. His eyes
Compassionate, he views me from afar.
Avalokiteshvara on the right
Is white. In his left hand is a white lotus,
While Vajrapani, on the left, is blue
And holds in his left hand a vajra lotus,
Both their right hands in the protection mudra.
Like Mount Sumeru, the three principals
Are vivid, clear, and bright. Their retinue,
A trillion bodhisattva bhikshus, all
Are gold in color, with the marks and signs,
And wear three dharma robes, aglow in yellow.
As there's no difference of near or far
When one performs prostrations with devotion,
I bow respectfully with my three gates.
From his right hand, the lord of the family

The dharmakaya Amitabha shines
Light rays that issue Avalokiteshvara,
Who emanates a billion of himself.
The light rays from his left hand issue Tara,
Who emanates a billion of herself.
His heart's light rays send forth Padmakara,
Who emanates a billion of himself.
I bow to dharmakaya Amitabha!
A buddha, your eyes ever view with love
All wanderers six times each day and night.
You always know the thoughts all beings think
And hear distinctly every word they say.
I bow to the omniscient Amitabha!
Except for those who have rejected dharma
Or done a heinous wrong, all those who pray
To you with faith will have their prayers fulfilled
For rebirth in Sukhavati—you'll come
To guide them in the bardo, said the Buddha.
I bow to Amitabha, the great guide!
Not passing to nirvana, you will live
For countless aeons—you are present now.
By praying to you with one-pointed faith,
Though life force may be spent, we'll reach a hundred,
And all untimely death will be averted
Unless it is the ripening of karma.

I bow to the protector, Amitabha!
Great Amitabha and Sukhavati—
To hear these names and join your palms in faith
Is said to be far greater merit than
To fill innumerable universes
With jewels and give them as an offering.
Thus with respect, I bow to Amitabha!
A person who hears Amitabha's name
And even just one single time feels faith
Not insincerely but from deep within
Cannot be turned back from the path of bodhi.
I bow to the protector, Amitabha!
Until they reach the heart of enlightenment,
All those who hear the name of Amitabha
Are born advantaged in good families.
In all their lives, they'll have pure discipline.
I bow to Amitabha, Sugata!
I give my body, virtues, and belongings
And all the actual offerings I have.
I emanate and offer mentally
Auspicious signs, auspicious substances,
The seven precious royal articles.
In mind, I take and give to Amitabha
The billion Mount Sumerus, continents,
And suns and moons of the primeval worlds

Of the great universe of the Three Thousands
With all the wealth of humans, gods, and nagas.
Accept it for my benefit from compassion!
Now I confess the three misdeeds of body—
The killing, stealing, and unchaste behavior
That I, my parents, and all beings have done
From time without beginning up to now.
And I confess the four wrong acts of speech—
Of lies, divisive speech, harsh words, and chatter—
As well as the three wrongful acts of mind
Of covetousness, malice, and wrong view.
I expiate the heinous actions—killing
My mother, father, teacher, or an arhat,
Or having malice toward a victor's body—
As well as the five nearly heinous acts—
To kill monastics, cause a nun to fall,
Demolish stupas, images, or temples.
I confess swearing falsely by the Jewels,
By temples, scriptures, and the three supports,
And other misdeeds of rejecting dharma.
Slandering bodhisattvas is far graver
Than killing every being in the three realms.
I admit committing pointless great misdeeds.
When told of virtue's good, the harms of evil,
And sufferings and lifespans in the hells,

To think that they're not true but are just tales
Is graver karma than the heinous acts,
So I confess inevitable bad karmas.
I confess the five types of violations
Of pratimoksha—the defeats, remainders,
Downfalls, confessables, and the offenses.
I confess breaking bodhisattva precepts—
The four black dharmas and the eighteen downfalls.
I confess violating my samaya,
The fourteen root and eight grave secondary.
I confess naturally unwholesome acts—
Wrong acts I've done without a vow against them,
Like unchaste conduct, drinking alcohol,
And such, not knowing these misdeeds are wrong.
I've taken refuge, vows, and empowerments
But don't know how to keep vows and samaya,
So I confess my disobedient downfalls.
Without regret, they can't be purified,
So with fear, shame, and rue as strong as if
I'd swallowed poison, I confess past wrongs.
Without resolve to abstain in the future,
They won't be purified, so from now on
I vow—at cost of even my own life—
To never do unvirtuous acts again.
Sugata Amitabha and your offspring,

Bless me to fully purify my being.
If when we hear of someone doing good,
We give up all unvirtuous, jealous thoughts
And from our heart rejoice, we will receive
An equal share of merit, said the Buddha.
Thus I rejoice in all the virtuous acts
That ordinary and noble beings do,
Their wish for unexcelled enlightenment,
And deeds that bring vast benefit to beings.
To give up the ten wrongs is the ten virtues—
To save another's life; be generous;
To keep the vows; speak truthfully; heal discord;
Speak gently, peacefully, straightforwardly,
And meaningfully; to have few desires;
To cultivate love and compassion; practice
The dharma—I rejoice in all such virtues.
I exhort the buddhas who have recently
Achieved completely perfect buddhahood
In countless worlds in all the ten directions
To swiftly turn the great, vast wheels of dharma.
Please know my plea with your clairvoyant mind.
I supplicate all buddhas, bodhisattvas,
Upholders of the dharma, and spiritual friends
Who wish to pass to nirvana to remain.
I dedicate this, representing my virtue

Of the three times, to benefit all beings.
May all reach unexcelled enlightenment,
And may I dredge samsara from its depths!
May all that virtue ripen on me soon
And in this life prevent the eighteen types
Of early death, bring good health, youthful vigor,
And wealth as flush as the Ganges in monsoon.
Unthreatened by any maras and enemies,
May I practice true dharma and accomplish
All I intend in dharma as I wish.
May I help beings and the teachings greatly
And make this human body meaningful.

As soon as I and all with whom
I am connected pass away,
May Amitabha's emanation
With a retinue of bhikshus
Come before us into view.
May we delight on seeing him
And feel no suffering at death.
May the eight bodhisattvas come
Miraculously in the sky
To show and guide us down the path
That leads us to Sukhavati.
No one can bear the sufferings

Of lower realms, and the delights
Of gods and humans are too brief.
May they strike terror in my heart.
From time without beginning till now,
I have been in samsara long.
May I feel weariness for it.
Even if born a human again,
I'd undergo birth, age, disease,
And death more times than one could count.
In times of such degeneration,
Obstacles are numerous.
Divine and human pleasures are
Like poisoned food—may I not have
The least bit of desire for them.
Food, family, riches, and good friends
Are fleeting, like illusions and dreams.
May I not be at all attached.
Like houses in a land I've dreamt,
May I know that my region, land,
And home do not exist in truth.
Like criminals escaped from jail,
I'll flee the inescapable,
The ocean of samsara, for
Sukhavati and not look back.
Like vultures who escape a snare,

May I cut through all ties of clinging
And fly west across the sky,
Past universes beyond count,
To in a single moment reach
The blissful realm, Sukhavati.
Once there, may I then see the face
Of Amitabha and be cleansed
Of all my obscurations, too.
May I take birth miraculously—
The best of the four types of birth—
Inside a budding lotus flower,
My body instantly full grown.
May it have all the marks and signs.
To doubt that I could take birth there
Would mean I'd spend five hundred years
Inside that flower in joy and ease,
But though I'd hear the Buddha's voice,
The blossom would not open up—
I'd be delayed in seeing his face.
May that not happen! May the flower
Bloom as soon as I take birth
So I see Amitabha's face.
Through merit, powers, and miracles,
May I then issue from my palms
Vast clouds of offerings to give

The Buddha and his retinue.
May the Tathagata extend
His right hand, place it on my head,
Foretelling my awakening.
May I then receive teachings on
The vast, deep dharma, ripening
And liberating my own being.
May Lokeshvara and Vajrapani,
The two foremost bodhisattvas,
Bless and take me in their care.
Each day, there come from all directions
Countless buddhas and bodhisattvas,
Offering to Amitabha.
May I attend them and receive
The amrita of the true dharma.
With unhindered magic powers,
In the morning, may I go
To Abhirati, Shreyasi,
Prapurna Karma, Ghanavyuha,
To receive empowerment
As well as vows and blessings from
Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava,
Amoghasiddhi, Vairochana,
And the other buddhas there.
May I make many offerings,

And go back to Sukhavati
That evening without weariness.
In Potala, Alakavati,
Chamaradvipa, Uddiyana—
A thousand times a million realms
Of the nirmanakaya buddhas—
I will see and offer to
A billion Lokeshvaras, Taras,
Vajrapanis, and Lotus Borns.
May I receive empowerments
And profound spiritual advice,
Returning swiftly to my home,
Sukhavati, without delay.
May I, with divine eye, see clearly
My surviving family,
My monks, and students, and so forth.
May I protect them, bless them, and
Then guide them to that realm at death.
An aeon of this fortunate age
Is one day in Sukhavati.
For countless aeons I won't die.
May I stay ever in that realm.
When buddhas of this fortunate age
From Maitreya to Rochana
Appear in this world, may I come

With my miraculous power here.
May I revere the buddhas, listen
To the dharma, and return
Without delay to Sukhavati.

All of the qualities and features of
Eight hundred ten sextillion buddha realms
In their entirety are found within
The realm superior to any other—
May I be born there, in Sukhavati.
Its ground of jewels, as even as a palm,
Is vast and spacious, glowing radiantly,
And soft and springy to the touch. May I
Be born in that soft, pleasant, spacious realm.
The wish-fulfilling tree, comprised of gems,
Is decked with leaves of silk and fruits of jewels.
Above it, flocks of emanated birds
Sing melodies of the profound, vast dharma.
May I be born in that most wondrous realm.
The scented waters of the many rivers
Have the eight traits; the bathing pools of nectar
Are ringed by steps and bricks of seven jewels.
Sweet, fragrant lotus flowers bearing fruit
Shine countless rays of lotus light, whose tips
Are graced with emanations of the buddhas.

May I be born in that most wondrous realm.
“The lower realms,” “the eight states with no leisure”—
Such words are never spoken in that realm.
One never hears of any suffering
Such as from the afflictions, illnesses,
Döns, conflict, enemies, or poverty.
May I be born in that most blissful realm.
There is no gender or birth from a womb,
And all are born inside of lotus buds,
Their bodies same in being golden colored,
Adorned with marks and signs such as ushnishas.
All have the five clairvoyances and eyes.
May I take birth there, in Sukhavati,
The realm where all have countless qualities.
In self-arisen palaces of jewels
Of many colors, everything you wish
Arises just from merely being thought of.
All wants and needs are fulfilled with no effort.
There is no you or me, no ego-clinging.
Whatever offerings you might wish to make
Will issue from your palms as offering clouds.
There, everyone engages in the practice
Of unsurpassable Mahayana dharma.
May I take birth there, in Sukhavati,
The source of every happiness and joy.

Sweet-scented breezes shower rains of flowers.
From all the rivers, trees, and lotuses
Come offering clouds, the greatest of delights—
Attractive forms, sounds, perfumes, tastes, and touches.
Though people have no gender there, great hosts
Of emanated offering goddesses
Continuously make great offerings.
There are jeweled mansions when you wish to sit;
When you wish to recline, there are jeweled beds
With mattresses and pillows of many silks.
Birds, rivers, trees, and musical instruments
Make the sweet sound of dharma when you wish.
When you do not, no sounds come to your ears.
The pools and streams of amrita arise
At any temperature you might desire.
May I be born where wishes are fulfilled.
For countless aeons, Buddha Amitabha
Will live there without passing to nirvana.
May I attend to him for all that while.
When Amitabha passes into peace,
His dharma will remain for aeons twice
As many as the sand grains in the Ganges.
May I uphold his dharma that whole time,
Never parting from his regent, Lokeshavara.
One day at dusk, the dharma will disappear,

But the next dawn, Avalokita will waken
To buddhahood, and thus become the buddha
Samudrata Rashmi Shri Kuta Raja.
May I attend him and hear the true dharma.
During his lifetime of nine hundred sixty
Sextillion aeons, may I always serve
And attend him, remembering the dharma
With dharanis of perfect memory.
Then after he has passed into nirvana,
His teachings will remain six hundred million
And thrice a thousand times a million aeons.
For that whole time, may I uphold his teachings,
Inseparable from the great Vajrapani.
Then Vajrapani will reach buddhahood
As the tathagata named Supratitishta
King Guna Ratna Kuta, with his lifespan
And dharma equal to Avalokita's.
May I continually attend that buddha,
Make offerings, and uphold all his dharma.
As soon as I pass on to my next life,
May I, in that or in another pure realm,
Reach unsurpassed and perfect buddhahood.
Like Amitayus, may just hearing my name
Mature and liberate all wandering beings.
With countless emanations, may I guide

And benefit beings in boundless other ways,
Spontaneously and without any effort.
Your life force, merit, qualities, and wisdom,
And majesty are beyond any measure.
O Dharmakaya of infinite light,
O Bhagavan of boundless life and wisdom,
Unless it is the ripening of past karma,
Those who recall your name will be protected
From fire, flood, poisons, yakshas, rakshasas,
And every other danger, said the Sage.
Remembering your name, I bow to you;
Protect me from all suffering and danger.
Bless me with the most excellent good fortune.
By the blessings of the buddhas gaining the three kayas,
The blessings of the truth, unchanging dharmata,
And the blessings of the sangha's indivisible wish,
May my aspirations be fulfilled just as I've prayed.

The dharani for the fulfillment of aspirations:

I prostrate to the three jewels.

TADYATHĀ PAÑCHENDRIYA AVABODHANĀYE SVĀHĀ

I prostrate to the three jewels.

NAMO MANJUŚHRĪYE. NAMO SUŚHRĪYE.

NAMO UTTAMAŚHRĪYE SVĀHĀ.

It is said that doing three prostrations while saying this mantra is equivalent to doing one hundred. Doing one hundred prostrations is best, as many as you are able is middling, and seven is the minimum.

It is best to recite this prayer daily; every month or year is middling, or when you have time at the minimum. Face to the west, recall the realm of Sukhavati in your mind, join your palms toward Amitabha, and recite this one-pointedly. This will eliminate obstacles to this life, and there is no doubt you will be reborn in Sukhavati. This is the intention of The Amitabha Sutra, The Sutra of the Features of Amitabha's Realm, The Pundarika Sutra, and The Drumbeat of Immortality.

Written by the bhikshu Raga Asya. May it be the cause for many sentient beings to be reborn in Sukhavati.

TWO SHORT PRAYERS FOR REBIRTH IN SUKHAVATI

by Tertön Mingyur Dorje (1645–67)

EMAHO!

How wondrous is the Buddha Infinite Light
With the lord Great Compassion on his right,
Great Power on his left, all in the midst
Of buddhas and bodhisattvas beyond number.
As soon as I pass on, may I be born
Without another lifetime in between
In that pure land of untold happiness
And wonder that is called Sukhavati
And see the buddha Amitabha's face.
I ask all buddhas and bodhisattvas of
The ten directions, bless me that my prayer
May be fulfilled without impediment.

TADYATHĀ PAÑCHENDRIYA AVABODHANĀYE SVĀHĀ

On the seventh day of the Vaisakha month of the Female Fire Bird Year, at the age of thirteen, the Tulku Mingyur Dorje saw the buddha Amitabha and his retinue and heard Amitabha actually speak these words.

Buddhas and bodhisattvas of all times
And all directions, please consider me.
Rejoicing in the two accumulations,
I offer all my merit to the Jewels.
Thus may the teachings of the Buddha thrive.
I dedicate this virtue to all beings.
May every sentient being reach buddhahood.
I gather all the virtues there may be
In one, so they may ripen in my being.
May I be cleansed of the two obscurations
And then perfect the two accumulations.
May I live long, be healthy, and increase
In both experience and realization.
In this life, may I rise through the ten levels,
And when I pass away, may I at once
Be born in the pure realm Sukhavati.
When I am born there, may the lotus open.
May I reach buddhahood with that same body.
Once I've achieved enlightenment, may I
Guide beings forever with my emanations.

Samaya. Sealed, sealed, sealed. This is a revelation of Tulku Mingyur Dorje.

SINGING THE SUKHAVATI PRAYERS

In Tibetan, all three of these prayers are commonly sung to the melody for the MAṆI mantra, though they can also be sung to other melodies as well. Likewise, these translations can also be sung to that same tune (with slight variations), though practitioners should feel free to sing them to any melody they find inspiring. The rhythms of English are less regular than those of Tibetan, and English words are longer, so the translation adds extra lines compared to the Tibetan and some extra syllables have slipped into a few lines. But otherwise they should be straightforward to sing.

Karma Chakme's *Aspiration for Rebirth in Sukhavati* has three main sections. The melody is the exactly the same in the first and third sections, as show in Figure 1. Note how the extra syllables at the very beginning are slipped in, and how some lines that end with an extra unstressed syllable have an extra note, as in lines 7 and 8. In the middle section, the lines are slightly shorter (as they in the original), so the melody is also shortened and the lines run together without a pause, as shown in Figure 2. When singing in a group, it is traditional for the chant master to ring a bell on every beat, but not obligatory.

The two prayers by Mingyur Dorje have lines of the same length and are sung to the same tune as Chakme's prayer, as shown in Figure 3 and 4.

SINGING THE SUKHAVATI PRAYERS

E - ma - ho!

In the di-rec-tion of the set-ting sun, Be -

yond in - nu - mer - a - bly ma - ny worlds And

e - le - va - ted just a bit a - bove, Is

the pure bud - dha realm Su - kha - va - ti. Though

I don't see it with my eyes of flesh, It's

bril - li - ant and vi - vid in my mind. There

dwells the Bha - ga - van, Lord A - mi - ta - bha, A -

blaze with ma - jes - ty and ru - by co - lo - red... etc.

Figure 1: The opening lines of Karma Chakme's *Aspiration for Rebirth in Sukhavati*



(The audio might not play in all viewers.)

As soon as I and all with whom I
 am con - nec - ted pass a - way, May
 A - mi - ta - bha's e - ma - na - tion
 With a re - ti - nue of bhik - shus
 Come be - fore us in - to view. May
 we de - light on see - ing him And
 feel no suf - fer - ring on death. May
 the eight bo - dhi - sat - tvas come... etc.

Figure 2: The melody for the middle section



SINGING THE SUKHAVATI PRAYERS

E - ma - ho! How
won-drous is the bud-dha In-fi-nite Light With
the lord Great Com-pas-sion on his right, Great
Po-er on his left, all in the midst Of
bud-dhasand bo-dhi-sat-tvas be-yond num-ber. As
soon as I pass on, may I be born With-
out a - no-ther life-time in be-tween In

Figure 3: The melody for the prayers by Mingyur Dorje



SINGING THE SUKHAVATI PRAYERS

that pure land of un-told hap - pi - ness And
won - der that is called Su - kha - va - ti And
see the bud - dha A - mi - ta - bha's face. I
ask all bud - dhas and bo - dhi - sat - tvas of The
ten di - rec - tions, bless me that my prayer May
be ful - filled with - out im - pe - di - ment.
tad - ya - thā pañ - chen -
dri - ya a - va - bo - dha - nā - ye svā - hā

Figure 4: The melody for the prayers by Mingyur Dorje

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