

Outer Mandala Offering

The outer mandala is the mandala that you usually say before the teachings or during the practice. There are a number of different ways of doing it; here we have the thirty-seven heaps.

In your practice, when you use the mandala base and rings, you hold the base with your left hand, which is not empty, but holds a few of the grains or jewels you are using. Rub the base with the flesh of your right forearm, not with the shirt or anything, but with your own flesh. Three times circle out, visualizing that you are purifying all your negativities. Then three times in, collecting the body, mind, and speech blessings and the siddhihood of the enlightened beings. You can repeat that three by three, or do only one times three. Then you pour the grain or precious stones on the base.

Thirty-seven heaps mandala offering

Om vajra bhumi ah hum

wang chen ser gyi sa zhi

Om vajra rekhe ah hum

chi chak ri kor yuk yi kor we

u sur i gyel po ri rap

shar lu pak po

lho dzam bu ling

nub ba lang chö

chan dra mi nyen

lū dan lū pak

ngay yap dang ngay yap zhen

yo den dang lam chok dro

dra mi nyen dang dra mi nyen gyi da

rin po che ri wo

pak sam gyi shing

do jö wa

OM VAJRA BHUMI AH HUM

great and powerful golden ground

OM VAJRA REKHE AH HUM.

At the edge the iron fence stands around the outer

In the center mount Meru, the king of mountains
around which are the four continents:³

in the east Purvavideha; (2)

in the south Jambudvīpa; (3)

in the west Aparagodaniya; (4)

in the north Uttarakuru (5)

Each has two sub-continent⁴: Deha and Videha

Tsamara and Abatsamara, (8-9)

Satha and Uttaramantrina, (10-11)

Kurava and Kaurava. (12-13)

The mountain of jewels, (14)

the wish-granting tree, (15)

the wish-granting cow, (16)

² The numbers refer to the placing of the heaps, see the figure of the mandala offering on pg. 161.

³ Purvavideha: Superior Body; Jambudīpa: Island of Jambu fruit; Aparagodanya: Cattle enjoyments; Uttarakuru: Unpleasant Sound.

⁴ Deha and Videha: Body and Superior Body; Tsamara and Abatsamara: Waving-Tails and Other Waving-Tails; Satha and Uttaramantrina: Moving and Traveling the Supreme Path; Kurava and Kaurava: Unpleasant Sound & Moon of Unpleasant Sound.

ma mo pa yi lo tok
kor lo rin po che
nor bu rin po che
tsün mo rin po che
lon po rin po che
lang po rin po che
ta chok rin po che
mak pon rin po che
ter chen po bum pa
gek mo ma
tran wa ma
lu ma
gar ma
me tok ma
duk po ma
nang sel ma
dri chap ma
nyi ma dha wa
rin po che duk
chok le nam par gyel wei gyel tsen
u su lha dang mi
pel jor pün sum tsok pa
ma tsang wa me pa

tsang zhing yi du ong wa
di dak drin chen tsa wa dang gyu par
che pe pelden lama¹
dampa nam dang key par du yang
lama lo sang tub wang dor je chang
chen po lha tsog khor dang che pa nam
la bul war gyio.

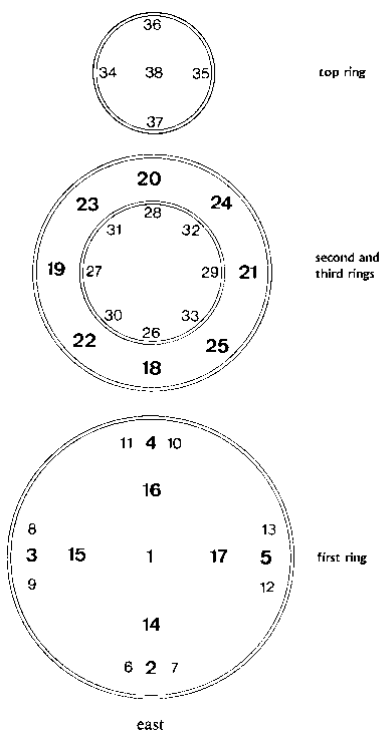
tuk je dro wei dön du zhe su söl
zhe ne chin gyi lap tu söl

and the harvest unsown. (17)
 The precious wheel, (18)
 the precious jewel, (19)
 the precious queen, (20)
 the precious minister, (21)
 the precious elephant, (22)
 the precious supreme horse, (23)
 the precious general, (24)
 and the great treasure vase. (25)
 The goddess of beauty, (26)
 the goddess of garlands, (27)
 the goddess of song, (28)
 the goddess of dance, (29)
 the goddess of flowers, (30)
 the goddess of incense, (31)
 the goddess of light, (32)
 the goddess of scent. (33)
 The sun and the moon (34-35),
 the precious umbrella, (36)
 the banner of victory in every direction. (37)
 In the center
 all treasures of gods and men,
 an excellent collection with nothing left out.
 I offer this
 to you my kind root Guru, and lineage Gurus,
 to all of you sacred and glorious Gurus;
 and especially to you,
 great Lama Lozang Tubwang Dorjechang,
 together with your retinues.
 Please accept with compassion for migrating beings
 (having accepted, out of your great compassion
 please bestow your blessings
 (on all sentient beings pervading space.)

¹ After *pel den lama* up to *bül war gio* the mandala offering changes according to the teachings or the ritual done. For mandala offering to Gehlek Rinpoche: *kye par du yang je tsun Ngawang Gehlek Trinley Namgyal pal zang po sung cho zhab mo zhu wai yon du zing kham bhul wa zhu* (before teaching) – *thop pai yon du zing kham bhul wa zhu* (after teaching)
 Then continue with: *tuk je dro wei dön du zhe su söl zhe ne chin gyi lap tu söl*

Wang chen ser gyi sa zhi is the golden ground. *Chi chak ri kor yuk gi kor we* is the fence.

Now you put the first ring on the base. If you don't have that, you drop a little of whatever material you have around the edge to make a fence. *U su ri gyel po ri rap*, at the center the mount Everest (Mount Meru); you put one little heap symbolizing Mount Meru.



mandala 37 heaps

Now the four continents in the four cardinal directions. You start from the east, but where the east is depends on your purpose in offering the mandala. If the purpose is to offer to someone, then the east is in front far away from you.⁵ If the purpose is to collect blessings, the east is in front near to you.⁶ You know, it is impermanent, it is empty, you can turn it around, make the east west, make the west east, there is no problem.

Shar lu pak po, at the east. *Lho dzam bu ling*, Jampudvipa at the south, *Nup ba lang chö* the west, *Chan dra mi nyen*, the north. After that, the intermediate directions with the sub-continents: *Lü dang lü pak*, the two sub-continents of the east; you go from

southeast to northeast. *Ngay yap dang ngay yap zhen*, the sub-continents for the southern continent; you go from southwest to southeast. *Yo den dang lam chok dro*, the two sub-continents of the western continent, you go from northwest to southwest. *Dra mi nyen dang dra mi nyen gyi da*, the two sub-continents for the north, you go from northeast to northwest. With the sub-continents, you go forward and backward, forward and backward, in a hopping motion.

⁵ E.g. for a long life of the teacher, to request a teaching or an initiation, to thank for a teaching or initiation. Dismantling at the end goes accordingly, i.e. away from the offerer, also if the mandala is offered to dispel obstacles and obstructions.

⁶ To receive blessings and inspiration of the merit field, the dismantling is also towards yourself.

Then you have *rin po che ri wo*, the precious mountain which is the most important thing in the eastern continent. Then you have *pak sam gyi shing*, wish-granting trees, which is the most important thing in the southern continent, then *do jö wa*, the wish-fulfilling cow which is the most important thing in the western continent. No wonder, why Europeans have a lot of cheese! Then *ma mo pa yi lo tok*, the crops that need no cultivation; that is the most important thing in the north.

[Then place the second ring and] it goes round⁷ with *kor lo rin po che*, *nor bu rin po che*, etc⁸. up to *nyi ma dha wa*.

[Place the third ring]. *Nyima* is sun; *dhawa* is moon. The sun and moon should be east and west, but we put them the other way round, south and north. The reason is that you want to put the victory-banner closest to the object to whom you make the offering. *Rin po che duk* is the precious umbrella.

Chok le nam par gyel wei gyel tsen. The victory banner and the general banner are precious banners, precious not just because they are showpieces, but because of their qualities. Even the material it is made of should be expensive. In good old Tibet they used to hang very expensive ones. What we put up here is the cheap stuff. Many of them, I believe, got some kind of white Russian brocade, that was made way before the Russian revolution. When my geshe exams came (at that time Sonam's uncle was my manager), we made the geshe offerings and we offered either the umbrella or a banner, I don't remember which, to Loseling. I think we had all offering banners completely new-made for Nyare Khamtsen, but for Loseling either a banner or umbrella was made. I was told it was one of the most expensive things during that offering. It was 1957 or 1958, and the expenses those days were almost equivalent to 160 or 170 thousand US dollars in 1958. So it was a lot of money. We gave real Chinese silver-coins, one to each monk, and that itself was \$15,000, plus there were all the additional expenses, somebody gets two, someone gets four, or five, thirty, forty, all these systems were there.

This is just to give you a little idea of how the offering banners are precious materially. Spiritually it is precious because it grows out of bliss-void, and its purpose is to bring bliss-void; you like it, it is beautiful, you enjoy it, admire it, people will come and admire it, you will be happy and that

⁷ Going round in the second ring can be done in two ways: a) east, south-east, south, south-west etc. b) one round the main directions, next round the subdirections; the last one is shown in the diagram.

⁸ The seven royal attributes of a Universal Monarch, *chakravartin raja*, plus the treasure vase. In the Hindu-Buddhist mythology a king (raja) that rules the universe by means of a wheel (chakra).

happiness pushes brings the bliss and void. That is why in the monasteries in Tibet things are extremely expensive. Every single little thing is very expensive because everybody puts efforts to make something wonderful.

[Place the mandala top]. *U su lha dang mi* and so on, ‘all treasures of gods and men...’, is about all the best magical things in the world. One example is the precious shoe, said to have been created by the great fortune of the chakravartin rajas. If you put on such a shoe you can walk over any river, no matter how deep or shallow it is. But, when you put on the shoe, you have to move, you can’t sit still, it makes you go. Go where? Go to enlightenment as fast as you can; that is the purpose, that is why the shoe was put there. The shoe is not mentioned in this mandala offering, it is covered under the *etcetera* business, ‘the best available among gods and humans’. There are a lot of those, like the eight lucky signs, the banners, the queen, the king, the minister, the elephant, the horse, every one of them has been covered.⁹ So, anything you like, anything most wonderful, is there.

Now at least you got an idea. If you have enough rice and substances you go up to three layers of the mandala. If you don’t, one or two layers will do. If it is too difficult, you can even go in a circle, it does not matter, there is nothing wrong with that. The mandala has been taught in that way; however, a lot of people just throw some rice and rub three times, throw some rice and rub three times, that is what they usually do anyway. I tried to show you how the proper order works.

At the end when you close the mandala, when you dismantle it, you collect all the substances into your cloth. If you do the mandala as an offering to somebody, at the end you pour all the substances away from you. If you do it to accumulate merit and blessings, you pour it towards yourself.

Sakya Pakpa.¹⁰ What we have been explaining now is the thirty-seven heap mandala, made by a Sakya lama. The twenty-three heap mandala was made by Dongden Chögyal Pakpa, the earlier Sakya Lama who went to China and became the root guru of the emperor of China.

The funny thing is, they did not invite Pakpa, they invited Pakpa’s uncle, one of the Sakya lamas. The emperor decided to observe him for twelve years, to see if he was fit to be his guru. After that he said, “You have

⁹ Literature on the eight lucky signs and other symbols: Dagab Rinpoche, *Buddhist Symbols in Tibetan Culture*.

¹⁰ Thirteenth century Sakya master who became imperial preceptor under Qubilai Khan. Also known as Chögyal Pakpa. Ref. Glenn H. Mullin, *The Fourteen Dalai Lama's*, pg. 43-47.

observed me for twelve years, now I have to observe you for twelve years.” But in the meantime, he died, so there was no observation. His nephew whom he brought with him, Pakpa, became the guru. He is very famous and well known in Tibetan history. After that time everyone wanted to become the guru of the emperors. Pakpa gave the first initiation to that emperor. To thank him for the initiation, the emperor gave him all Tibet, thirteen ‘provinces’ of ten thousand families. Earlier, Tibet had been united and powerful, then it became completely divided, no ruler, nothing. Tibet was unified again under this Sakya family, who became the first Tibetan rulers, because of that initiation. So Pakpa is important in history, in the thirteenth century.

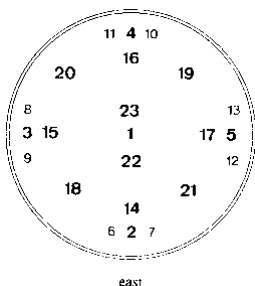
Among the Sakya and among the Gelug, the thirty-seven-heap mandala is popular today, but Tsongkhapa did the twenty-three heap one. Why twenty-three? One reason is that it is Naropa’s way of doing it.

Twenty-Three Heaps Mandala Offering

*Je wa trak gya ling zhi lhün por chay
rin chen dhun dang nye way rin chen soh
kün ga kye pay nö chü phün sum tsoh
lha mi long cho dho gü ter chen po
dhang way sem kyi phül jung zhing gi choh
kyap gön thuh jei ter la ul war gyi*

- st. 25. **Refuge protector, treasure of compassion,
Perfect field for growing good fortune,
With a mind of devotion I offer to you
The mountain and four continents a million
times over,
All precious royal emblems and possessions,
Perfectly delightful environments and beings
And a grand treasury of divine and human
enjoyments.
(IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM
NIRYATAYAMI)**

This mandala of the twenty-three heaps was recommended for this particular Lama Chöpa practice, but, it does not really matter, whether twenty-three or thirty-seven heaps. When Je Rinpoche practiced, he used the twenty-three heap mandala. In this verse all twenty-three heaps of the mandala in Tsongkhapa’s style are mentioned:



mandala 23 heaps

Ling zhi are the four continents and by mentioning these it is understood that there are also the eight subcontinents, two each at the right and left sides of the four continents. So now we have twelve heaps. *Lhün por che* is Mount Meru. That makes thirteen. Then the text mentions the *rin chen dhun*, the seven precious objects, which are: the elephant [in east], the minister [in the south], the horse in the west, the queen in the north, the general in the south east, the wheel in the south west, the jewel in the north west.¹¹ That makes twenty, to which you add up the treasure-

vase in the north east and the sun in the east and the moon in the west and you have twenty-three. So, if you make the twenty-three heaps offering, that is how to do it.¹²

The *nye way rin chen*, the semi-precious things are also mentioned here. They are: a wonderful garden, a beautiful house, a good bed or blanket, wonderful clothes, the shoes, the big sword, the naga skin. (As there are no nagas here, you may use plastic ones, I believe.) I don't know why a good environment is less precious than gold, but that is how they count. Our text says, *All precious royal emblems and possessions*.

There are always alternate ways of counting the twenty-three heaps. You can use the seven precious things or the seven semi-precious things, etc. Then in addition to that you can have the eight auspicious signs and the eight auspicious substances: yoghurt, sesame seeds, durva grass, mustard seeds, conch shell, mirror, elephant gall stones, then red mud.¹³ You don't have to visualize all of them. You just think that they are all there. It would be too difficult to count them every time. Even for me it is. I have been counting them for sixty years and I don't remember all of them now. So I don't expect you to remember everything. The shortest way to offer everything is according to the Long Six-session yoga where it says,

Whether it is owned by anybody else or not,
actually exhibited or mentally created, whatever is beautiful, I
offer to you.

¹¹ Symbolism of the seven major and minor royal possessions: L.S. Dagab Rinpoche, *Buddhist Symbols in Tibetan Culture*; Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Great Treasury of Merit*, pg. 139-141;

¹² This 23-heap mandala is described in: Tsongkhapa's *A Book of Three Inspirations*, to be found in: Glenn H. Mullin, *Tsongkhapa's Six Yogas of Naropa*, pg. 235-236.

¹³ Literature: L.S. Dagab Rinpoche, *Buddhist Symbols in Tibetan Culture*.

This verse says, *I offer to you perfectly delightful environments and beings.* So whatever you offer, environments and inhabitants, are pure and perfectly delightful.

In the text, it says one offers a billion universes. There is a way of counting to come to that amount. When they count the four continents and so on, they also include [Mount Meru], the gold mountain. The description of the universe in this way comes from the Hindu-Buddhist mythology. I don't know whether there is such a thing as Mt. Meru or not, but it is used as the point of reference, surrounded by these continents. Normally, it is said that we humans are all part of the Southern Continent. But according to Vasubandhu's metaphysical text it is explained that between the southern and northern continent there is a twelve-hour time difference – from midday to midnight. This corresponds to the difference between Beijing time and New York time, provided there is no day-light saving. In this case in the United States we would be in the Northern Continent which has the crops that don't need cultivating. Maybe that is talking about the corn! The most precious thing in the western continent is the wish fulfilling cow. That is why the Europeans have so much cheese – provided there is no mad cow disease! The Southern Continent in that case could be just the Indian subcontinent.

This also includes all six realms, from the lowest hell to the highest peak of samsara. I have a chart produced by Thai monks, similar to the one that Steve K. has produced a while ago but they have many more levels and sublevels than ours.

All of these together are counted as one universe. That is multiplied by 1000 which is then called *tong chi to*. That is multiplied a 1000 times which is called the second 1000. When each of these is multiplied by 1000 it is called one great 1000 and this multiplied by 100 becomes 1 trillion. This is what *je wa trak gyei* means. So it has to be more than 1 billion. Our translation says *A million times over*. In any case it is a very, very big multiplication. And according to that metaphysical text all these 1 trillion universes have one big base that is an air mandala. This they then count another 1000 times and multiply that by another 1000 and that again multiplied by 1000 is supposed to be the rough estimate of the existing universes, traditionally. I never paid much attention to that in detail, because it is way beyond my imagination. Who really cares how many universes are around! A 'close encounter with a third one' is enough for us right now.

Whether you offer the thirty-seven heap mandala or the twenty-three heap mandala, though you use the metal offering things in your hands, in your

visualization everything is put on the lotus-ground. You manifest the lotus-ground from your bliss-void-nature and put all the elements mentioned on top of that. Out of bliss-void nature you can generate a beautiful offering-tree, a wonderful jewel-tree, which has twenty-five branches.¹⁴ On top of each one of those branches you have the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra standing, radiating nice light from the navel. On top of that light another tree is formed, a duplicate of the first, another twenty-five branched jewel offering-tree. On each one of its branches stands another Samantabhadra, from whose navel another twenty-five branched tree is generated. Again that tree is multiplied twenty-five times, *etcetera*. That is how the mandala is multiplied. That is what you visualize.

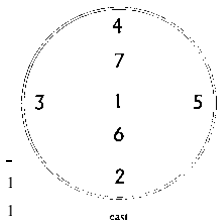
You may be throwing rice and this and that, but what you *really* do is this. Ultimately, all the earth and space, any empty place wherever, is completely filled up by your manifested Samantabhadra-offerings. In your visualization you offer this multi-galaxy of universes full of offerings to Lama Buddha Vajradhara. You do that to accumulate big merit. The merit also comes from abundance, not from miserliness, so everything has to be big and nice.

The offering is so attractive that it brings joy to anybody who sees it, hears about it, smells it; that is the *kün ga kye pay*. *Nö* stands for environment, *chü* stands for inhabitants. When you offer the total universe, there are a lot of people in there and they are all pure. That is the mandala offering.

Seven-heap mandala offering

sa zhi po kyi jug shing me tok tram
ri rab ling zhi nyi de gyen pa di
Sang gye zhing du mig te ul wa yi
dro kun nam dag zhing la cho par shok

By directing to the Fields of Buddhas
 this offering of a mandala,
 built on a base, resplendent with flowers,
 saffron water and incense,
 adorned with Mount Meru, and the Four Continents
 as well as with the Sun and the Moon,
 may all sentient beings be led to these Fields.



You don't need to say the *Sa zhi po kyi* verse here, because the verse *Je wa trak* serves the purpose.¹⁵ If you do want to say it, you can say it either before or after the verse *Jewa trak*. Also this thirty-seven or even

¹⁴ gyal Wangchen, *Awakening the Mind of Enlightenment*, pg. 68.
¹⁵ long mandala down to *zhe ne chin gyi lap tu söl* and immediately

the twenty-three heap mandala is not compulsory. You can even just say the *Sa zhi po kyialone*. It is very flexible.¹⁶

One thing you have to learn is that, in Tibetan Buddhism, a certain order is necessary, yet it is very flexible within that. You find that in your own practice. Also, we say that this is very important and that is important, so first it looks very rigid and strict, but, again, within that it is very flexible. You find that within your own experience. If I talk to you that way, with your normal scientific Western mind may object, but when you really do it, you'll notice it yourself.

When you accumulate a hundred thousand mandala offerings you will probably just go three times outward, three times inward and then use the short mandala offering of *sa zhi pö kyī*...while you pour rice on the mandala base for each of the items mentioned. In that case you only fill up one level.

Mudra. I'd like to mention here something about the hand gesture of the mandala offering which some people are doing. That is very nice, but when you do the hand gesture, don't use your empty hands. Either you use your mala around your hands or something else. Perhaps your bell; now would be the time to take it out,¹⁷ but don't ring it! You could also use rice or flowers or something else.



¹⁶ 1: Mount Meru, 2-5: four continents; 6: sun; 7: moon.

¹⁷ Refers to how to handle sacred objects. See page 148.