

## Six Preparatory Practices at the Beginning of Each Meditation Session

According to the Middling Lamrim of Je Tsongkhapa one should perform the following practices at the beginning of each meditation session:

1. **clean the place and arrange representations of the enlightened body, speech, and mind**
2. **arrange offerings that were honestly acquired**
3. **posture and mental attitude: sit straight on a comfortable seat; make sure that the mind is suffused with refuge and bodhicitta**
4. **visualize the merit field**
5. **purify the mind with the seven-limb practice**
6. **make requests for inspiration together with offering a mandala**

### A Short Seven Limb Practice:

1. **Prostration / Homage** *"Reverently, I prostrate with my body, speech, and mind;*
2. **Offering** *I present clouds of every type of offering, actual and imagined;*
3. **Confession** *I declare all my negative actions accumulated since beginningless time*
4. **Rejoicing** *And rejoice in the merit of all holy and ordinary beings.*
5. **Requesting to remain** *Please, remain until the end of cyclic existence*
6. **Requesting to teach** *And turn the wheel of Dharma for living beings.*
7. **Dedication** *I dedicate my own merits and those of all others to the great enlightenment."*

(Note that the order of requesting to teach and requesting to remain is reversed in some versions of the seven limbs.)

The seven limbs can be summarized into accumulating merit, purifying obstructions, and making merit inexhaustible:

- Confession purifies obstructions
- Prostration,/homage offering, rejoicing, requesting to remain, and requesting to teach accumulate merit
- Dedication makes the merit inexhaustible

Some Indian sources for the Seven Limb Practice:

- *The Extraordinary Aspiration of Samantabhadra* (also called “*King of Prayers*”) from the from the Gaṇḍavyūha chapter (“*Array of Stalks Sūtra*”) of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra (“*Flower Ornament Sutra*”).
- *Ajātaśatru kaukritya-vinodana sutra* (“*Sutra Dispelling the Regret of Ajātaśatru*”)
- Shanditeva’s *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* (Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior): Chapter 2 and beginning of Chapter 3
- Dharmasaṃgraha (“*Compendium of Dharma*”), attributed to Nagarjuna.  
Note: in this text the 6<sup>th</sup> limb differs and is given as “*Generating the mind of Enlightenment*” and in this text the Seven Limbs are called the Seven Supreme Offerings

## Function of the Seven Limbs

Prostration / Homage	→ accumulates merit
Offering	→ accumulates merit
Confession	→ purifies obstacles
Rejoicing	→ accumulates merit
Requesting to remain	→ accumulates merit
Requesting to teach	→ accumulates merit
Dedication	→ makes merit inexhaustible

## The „Offerings of Samadhi“

Based on the teachings of Chogyal Phagpa (*Chos-rgyal 'Phags-pa*)  
as presented by Dr. Alexander Berzin

Water	Water represents everything we have studied in order to work on ourselves and to be able to help others better.
Flowers	Flowers represent the knowledge we have gained from our studies.
Incense	Incense represents our discipline to put into practice what we have learned.
Light	Light represents the insights we have gained from our practice through which we can illuminate others.
Scented water	Scented water represents the firm conviction that we have have gained based on our insights.
Food	Food represents concentration that can be attained if we practice with firm conviction. Food is used to symbolize concentration because advanced levels of concentration can also sustain the body.
Music	Music represents giving teachings and explaining things to others.

## Purification: Antidotes and the karmic results they purify

A complete karmic action can give rise to four different kinds of results. In order to completely purify these four results, four opponent forces are explained:

Antidote	Karmic result that gets purified
<p><b>Power of the basis (*)</b></p> <p>Refuge and bodhichitta</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refuge purifies negativity towards refuge objects</li> <li>• Bodhichitta purifies negativity towards ordinary beings</li> </ul> <p>Relying of is called „power of the basis“ because one needs to rely on those things towards which one generated negativity in order to purify it.</p>	<p><b>Dominated result / empowered result / environmental result</b></p> <p>Characteristics of the environment in which one is born (e.g.: life-promoting or hostile environment)</p>
<p><b>Power of regret</b></p> <p>Regretting the negative action by seeing it as a mistake and wishing one had not committed the action - like realizing that one just ate spoiled or poisoned food.</p>	<p><b>Result that is similar to the cause in relation to one's experience</b></p> <p>Even when the fully ripened result, i.e., the particular type of rebirth(s) based on an action, has already passed, one still experiences things that have a similar effect to one's earlier action.</p> <p>For example: one experiences help or harm from others.</p>
<p><b>Power of thoroughly applying antidotes (*)</b></p> <p>Consciously performing positive actions to counter a previous negative action</p>	<p><b>Fully ripened result</b></p> <p>Type of existence one assumes (rebirth in higher or lower realms of existence, e.g. as a human or animal)</p>
<p><b>Power of resolve</b></p> <p>Determination not to repeat this type of action.</p>	<p><b>Result that is similar to the cause in relation to one's behavior</b></p> <p>One has the tendency to act similarly again in the future (e.g.: one has a tendency to act in a non-violent or violent way).</p>

(\*) Some sources give a different presentation about the results that get purified by the power of the basis and the power thoroughly applying of antidotes.

According to those texts the power of the basis purifies the fully ripened result and the power of thoroughly applying antidotes purifies the dominated result.