

A Sadhana of Samantabhadra



Samantabhadra/Kuntuzangpo

is variously described in Mahayana writings as:

totally positive,
the sky of ultimate reality,
the all-good,
Universal Good,
naturally arising rigpa,
naturally occurring ever-fresh awareness,
innate primordial wisdom/compassion,
the basic space of phenomena,
ground dharmakaya,
primordial buddha-mind,
and
suchness.

Preamble

In many Mahayana scriptures, Samantabhadra is portrayed as a mysterious archetypal presence. Often referred to, but rarely appearing, he/she, or perhaps even it, represents an ephemeral quality of beingness that is powerfully present yet difficult to define or meet with face to face. In the Tibetan Nyingma tradition, Samantabhadra is the name of the primordial buddha – unfabricated buddha-nature. The same realisation, in the Kagyu tradition, is called Vajradhara. In the very extensive and inspiringly syncretic "Avatamsaka Sutra", Samantabhadra is depicted both as primordial buddha nature and, as the archetypal bodhisattva, 'a great and courageous being' whose life is completely shaped by a vast and profound aspiration to awaken infinite skilful means in helping all beings. In some traditions the historical buddha, Sakyamuni, is considered to have been a living embodiment of Samantabhadra / Vajradhara.

Generally, Samantabhadra represents all aspects of bodhicitta, both relative and absolute. From this perspective, the essence of Samantabhadra as bodhicitta manifests through a spectrum of progressive maturation, beginning with 'aspiration' (the stage of accumulation). This is followed by: 'application' (the stage of preparation/integration), 'maturation' (the stages of seeing and familiarization), and realization of buddhahood (the stage of nothing further to learn or practice). The great yogi/scholar Longchenpa once wrote, "buddhahood is just a label for what, in actuality, is simply the essence of awareness, without transition or change, expressing itself fully within the expanse of being." Thus depending on one's realisation, Samantabhadra is seen either as various expressions of maturing bodhisattvahood and or as an Adhi-Buddha.

In Madhyamaka philosophy the word *dharmata* indicates the original nature or condition of reality. *Dharmadhatu* refers to the total field of all events and meanings – the utterly lucid, all encompassing, matrix of knowing. *Dharmakaya* refers to the activity of recognising the dharmadhatu; or, put another way, the spontaneously present activity of the dharmadhatu in the process of knowing itself (self-knowing). To meet with Samantabhadra, or to realise Samantabhadra, is to be a living expression of dharmata, dharmadhatu and dharmakaya.

In western understandings of Tibetan Buddhism the word *sadhana* is often translated as practice and has become largely associated with specified sequences of prayers, and creative imagination, blended with mantra, ritual, and silent contemplation. This particular *sadhana* is much broader than that. Think of it as a praxis – an integrative way of living – a subtle hint from one heart to another that when activated, can lead us ever more deeply into the mystery of life and living and what it means to be a compassionate, fully engaged and thoroughly awake human being.

The words and verses of sadhana are an invitation to dance in and with a timeless mystery, a mystery that is revealed and demonstrated in each movement and moment of living. This way of natural blessing is instantly available to any who, saturated with curiosity, integrity and compassion for all beings, find themselves answering life's invitation to open their senses, their heart of empathy and their deep commitment to supporting this vibrant community of a world unfolding, in all its abundance.

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Preparation

To cultivate this sadhana of Samantabhadra, arrange yourself in a comfortable posture. Then, making friends with your breathing, invite your entire body/brain/mind/community to settle into a place of pristine stillness and vibrantly awake presence.



Contemplating Bodhicitta

Smiling, breathing, present; with an expanding appreciation for the spacious, open, inter-being/inter-knowing nature of all experience, feel the deep stirring of bodhicitta – a naturally evolving disposition for cultivating, both in ourselves and others, the magnificent human potential for panoramic, multi-realmed awareness, and ceaseless compassion and love.

Through cultivating this immeasurable all-encompassing expanse
of spontaneous love and clear-seeing presence,
may we loosen the hypnosis of samsara,
and release into the ocean of collaborative creation.
May we manifest ways of living that uplift all beings.



Refuge

Within this primordial space of contemplation, reflect on refuge – your deepest sense of groundedness, connectedness and belonging.

(You could enhance this contemplation of refuge with the following words, but you should also feel free to express these aspirations and understandings in any other way that feels meaningful.)

Bringing to mind my teachers and ancestors, along with
my human and non-human companions on this path of life-unfolding,
– on behalf of all of us –
I take refuge in the true state of affairs;
– spontaneously ever-present, timeless awareness,
– radically inclusive love, unfolding in all it's fullness,
– the vast ungraspable suchness that is this living world / universe.
This is ever fresh Buddha in action.

I recognize, celebrate and cultivate
the paths, teachings and encouragements
that support our realizing the true state of affairs.
Daily, I bring forth generosity, wholesome relating, patience,
skilled use of energy, a continuity of caring and enquiry,
and wise understanding.
This is Dharma put to good use.

Releasing into a profound sense
of being this continuously gestating mystery of communion,
I am home.
This is the experiencing of true Sangha,
the fruition of all refuge practice.

Gradually, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha
appear to merge and mingle,
until we realize that each one contains and reveals the other two.
This is a wondrous three-in-one refuge;
the natural presence of Samantabhadra.
It's where we all belong.

Smiling, breathing, present, appreciating, offering,
I deepen this confident knowing / experience of refuge.



Bodhisattva Vow

However innumerable beings are
I vow to meet them with kindness and interest.

However inexhaustible the states of suffering are
I vow to touch them with patience and love.

However immeasurable the dharmas are
I vow to explore them deeply and thoroughly.

However incomparable the mystery of interbeing
I vow to surrender within it fully.

From this day forth with wisdom and compassion as my lamp and staff,
I dedicate all my life's energies to the welfare of all beings.

Smiling, breathing, present, appreciating, offering, I abide continuously in this heart felt aspiration, allowing it to become well established and unshakably firm.



Meditation on the Four Immeasurables

May all beings have happiness and
the causes of happiness.

May all beings be apart from sorrow and
the causes of sorrow.

May all beings be filled with joy
when sensing the wholesome activity of others.

May all beings be graced with the serenity of unshakable mindfulness
and loving presence.



Essential Practices

In the natural flowing of whatever is occurring,
cultivate a continuity of profoundly nourishing ease,
suffused with serene alertness and vivid discernment.
Whether sitting, standing, lying down, or walking,
allow everything to rest in its own place – the unique ever-fresh
fullness and vastness of being/becoming, that it is.

In the midst of this abiding – (*depending on what feels most appropriate at this stage in your life*) –
deepen your involvement by emphasising one of the following great themes of dharma
practice.

1. *silā, samādhi, prajñā => purification, illumination and the beatific*
2. *the six paramitā*
3. *progressive mastery of samatha/vipassana*
4. *illusory body practice => multi-realmed transluscentizing*
5. *a union of skilful fabrication and effortless naturalness*
6. *guru yoga*



Deepening Adhiṭṭhāna

Through practising these meditations, may I realise the essential union of profound
engagement and utter peace; the natural space of mahāmudrā and dzogchen. Cultivating
this openness of being in an ever widening mandala of situations and circumstances, may I
traverse the path of great bodhisattvas. May I and all beings come to realize the natural way
of abiding, the vast abode of Glorious Samantabhadra.



Yoga of Skilful Fabrication

While contemplating the following mantra, reflect on the innate purity and non-abidingness of all phenomena.

OM SVABHAVA SUDDHA
SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SUDDHO HAM

Beginning with the immediately present body, speech and mind of your ongoing experience; with a transluscentizing gaze, empowered by a deep seated disposition to explore and come to understand the universe more profoundly and more compassionately; expand into the wider life of the planet – this living universe of inter-being/inter-knowing that we are.

In the very midst of this dancing matrix of multi-levelled knowing, appears the full moon of one's own heart/mind/aspiration, reflecting the brilliant incandescence of the sun – the total field of all events and meanings. The light of love and clear seeing is radiating in all directions, illumining every domain of existence. Like a reflection, this luminous natural blessing of light returns, coalescing as your own true nature in the form of an all-in-one living presence – glorious Samantabhadra.

Smiling, breathing, present, appreciating, offering; you abide resplendently, in both meditative equipoise and in subsequent attainment – a union of complete ease and awake discerning engagement. You are a perfectly integrated dyad of deep unfathomable blue, and dazzling radiant whiteness; open space, all embracing and infinitely inclusive – intimately merged with serene awakeness and clear incisive discernment. In this unending display embodying knower and known, apprehender and apprehended – an ever-fresh communion of transient transient parts – all is stripped bare; revealed in the translucent gaze of love and wonderment.

Look deeply into each and every manifestation of your currently arising experience. The true nature of phenomena is a dancing of ever fresh transluscentizing awareness, which is ultimately indescribable, inconceivable and inexpressible.

Cultivate the subtle art of resting at ease in this unconfused state of complete authenticity and presence.



Mantra Yoga

Blending the samadhi of innate naturalness with the mystery of speech, contemplatively explore the following themes. (*In each session spend a little time with the short mantra-themes before integrating them all with the longer mantra.*)

OM SAMANTABHADRA SAMMAKAYA HUM

OM SAMANTABHADRA SARVADHARMA HUM

OM SAMANTABHADRA MAHAMETTA HUM

OM SAMANTABHADRA VAJRABHUMI HUM

OM SAMANTABHADRA DHARMADHATU HUM

OM SAMANTABHADRA SAMMAKAYA SARVADHARMA MAHAMETTA
VAJRABHUMI DHARMADHATU HUM SAHAJA

Om is beyond words – the naturally occurring living dharmakaya.

Samantabhadra, totally positive with nothing to refute, is the timeless state of all-inclusive perfect union. Samantabhadra in deep blue aspect, represents the expanse of spacious, open, fundamentally ungraspable conversation; braidings of languaging and emotioning weaving in and through each other in the process of bringing forth worlds. Samantabhadri in pure white aspect, represents physiological autopoietic functioning; the biological roots of clear, unmistakable discernment, weavings of co-emergent realms interpenetrating realms, and multi-domained and multi-levelled symbiosis. Together, Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri comprise a unity which is continuously manifesting in and as this constantly evolving, presently appearing universe.

Sammakaya: Samantabhadra is a summation of all conceived forms both physical and mental.

Sarvadharmas: Samantabhadra expresses, contains, manifests and integrates all dharmas: all truths, understandings and phenomena.

Mahametta: Rooted in the evolving biology of love, intimacy, and mutually interdependent responsiveness, Samantabhadra is great love (*mahametta*) – a capacity for magnanimous acceptance of the legitimacy of 'other' in dynamic co-existence with oneself.

Vajrabhumi: Samantabhadra is the unshakable (*vajra*) ground of every thing and process.

Dharmadhatu: Samantabhadra is the total field of all events and meanings.

Hum Sahaja: Realising/being, the perfect co-emergence (*sahaja*) – the seamless integration – of all the above qualities.

OM SAMANTABHADRA SAMMAKAYA SARVADHARMA MAHAMETTA
VAJRABHUMI DHARMADHATU HUM SAHAJA



Sevenfold Training (*in the skilful activity of Samantabhadra*)

As the illumination of love and clear seeing fills the universe, revealing everything and everyone to be radiant demonstrations of suchness (*tathāta*), consciously activate the Sevenfold Training of Samantabhadra.

1 – Reverencing the Infinite Realm of Awakening

To all the Tathagatas

however they appear in the immeasurable expanse of space and time;
to each and every one of them, with body, speech and mind,

I bow with great sincerity and respect.

By the power of this prayer of profoundly inclusive activity,

bowing with as many bodies as atoms in the myriad fields of awakening,
in the presence of all these Enlightening Ones, manifest in my mind,

I fully honour and revere this Ocean of Blessing.

Around each single atom, there are as many Buddhas as atoms,

seated in the midst of their countless spiritual sons and daughters,
and so I imagine the immeasurable realms of dharma

as filled with myriad radiant beings; victorious in the flow of awakening.

With unending oceans of praises for them all,

with a symphony of wonder, appreciation and heartfelt reverence,

I extol the Tathāgata's virtues

and sing hymns to all these Sugatas.

GURU BUDDHA DHARMAKAYA NAMO

2 – Releasing into the Vast Flow of Offering

Beautiful flowerings and networks of flowerings,
 easeful communication and the balm of healing presence,
 canopies of shelter and refuge,
 lamps of clear seeing and deep understanding,
 and the fragrance of love and wholesome relating,
I offer these to all beings who are awakening to, or abiding as,
 the flow of primordial ever-fresh awareness.

With the clothing of harmonious thought forms and the exquisite perfume of devotion,
 with activities that beautify the body of manifestation
 and a measureless array of wonderfully inspiring qualities,
I make offerings to these beings dwelling in the realm of spontaneous liberation.

Giftings, incomparable and vast,
 continuously arising in the spacious play of my own knowing,
 I joyfully offer to all Awakening Ones.
By the power of my faith in wholesome activity
 I bow to and pay respects to all these Victorious Ones.

3 – Acknowledging One's Own Unwholesome Actions

Whatever unwholesome actions I have done, driven by compulsions
 such as desire, hatred, delusion and fear,
 whether by body, speech or mind, each one of these
I thoroughly and openly acknowledge.

4 – Rejoicing in All Wholesome Actions

Contemplating the inconceivable merit of the Awakened Ones in the ten directions,
 along with the merit of all Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, Sravakas,
 and all sentient beings, wherever they appear,
In this vast ocean of wholesome activity I rejoice.

5 – Entreaty to Turn the Wheel of Dharma

They who illumine all worlds of experience,
 solid in their realization of love and awareness in every situation and circumstance,
 protectors of life in all its abundance and mystery,
I entreat you to turn the incomparable wheel of Dharma.

6 – Request to Stay

To those who would pass from sorrow,
 retreating from active engagement into a nirvana of inner peace,
I fervently pray that for as many eons as there are atoms in all Buddha fields
 you continue to inspire and teach in myriads ways
 supporting the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings.

7 – Sharing the Merit

May any virtue generated through this practice of
 reverencing, offering, acknowledging, rejoicing, entreating, and requesting,
 support the awakening of wisdom and compassion in all sentient beings.



Yoga of Effortless Naturalness

Buoyant with these seven trainings,
deepening in faith and trust and wonderment,
realising that this immeasurable space of wisdom and compassion in action
is the fundamental ground and path of awakening;
luminous understanding – mirror-like, utterly serene, clearly discerning, and
all accomplishing – is increasingly suffusing the entire field of existence,
revealing the truly ungraspable, inter-being/inter-knowing nature
of everything and everyone.

Such is the awesome expanse of Samantabhadra;
 worlds within worlds, interpenetrating worlds, without obstruction.

This radiant lightness of understanding is continuously broadening in scope and refinement,
until all manifestations: physical and mental, collective and individual, self and other, inner
and outer, appear as a presentation of seamlessly integrated wholeness, utterly effortless and
natural. Thus one abides;

Smiling . . .
breathing . . .
present . . .
appreciating . . .
offering . . .
blessing!



Final Aspiration

Recognising that there are still uncountable numbers of beings who have yet to know this natural way of abiding, aspiration continues to blossom in your heart:

May I become at all times, both now and forever
A protector for those without protection
A guide for those who have lost their way
A ship for those with oceans to cross
A bridge for those with rivers to cross
A sanctuary for those in danger
A lamp for those without light
A place of refuge for those who lack shelter
And a servant to all in need.



Sharing the Merit

Through the power of these wholesome activities,
 may my life be rich with awakening.
Living thus,
 may I abandon all unwholesomeness.
Through the endless weavings of birth, growth, maturation,
 occasional illness, ageing and inevitable death,
May I help all beings to realise their true inter-being nature.

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Colophon

Encouraged by my gurus, graced by the blessings of Namgyal, and supported by an oceanic river of ancestral bodhisattva-talents; over the course of many years of contemplating the mystery of life and living, the words of this sadhana gradually assembled in my mind. May they serve as a fountain of

inspiration for beings who feel warmed by such an approach. Together may we meet the communal challenges of this 21st century, with unending wisdom and compassion. May all beings come to realise their true inter-being nature, and experience the ultimate blessing of universal love.

This sadhana was mid-wifed into a semblance of completion through the winter of 2018, in the supportive embrace of Orgyen Hermitage, Aotearoa, by the dancing of the universe appearing as the body/brain/mind/community known by some as Karma Yeshe Gyamtso Tsultrim Tharchin.

*May all be auspicious!
Sarvamangalam!*

