

Abbreviated preliminary practices for Mahamudra

Adapted from *The Chariot for Traveling the Exalted Path* by the Ninth Karmapa, Wangchuk Dorje

The Four Common Preliminaries

Prose version on page 2; use whichever you prefer

The precious human existence

First, I must appreciate / the eight freedoms that I possess,
With ten resources that together / make this human life precious.
The situation I have now / is hard to gain, easy to lose.
Starting from this present moment, / I will put my life to use.

Impermanence and death

Secondly, all things will end, / this world and all that it contains.
Life is fragile as a bubble; / death will come, I don't know when.
When I am dead and just a corpse, / there's nothing that can help me then,
Except the dharma I have practiced, / the only true, unfailing thing.

Karmic cause and result

Third, when I pass from this life, / I won't have any freedom then,
Because my fate will be determined / by the actions I have done.
I must avoid all harmful acts / and do as much good as I can,
While taking care throughout each day / to monitor my stream of being.

What's wrong with samsara

Fourth, all places, friends, and pleasures, / things I own and all the rest
Continually cause me suffering / through pain, change, and conditioning.
They're like the last meal I am offered / before the executioner comes.
Therefore I must cut all attachment / and focus on awakening.

The Four Common Preliminaries

Verse version on page 1; use whichever you prefer.

The precious human existence

First, I must meditate on this precious human existence with its freedoms and resources, difficult to attain, easily destroyed. From now on, I must make it meaningful.

Impermanence and death

Secondly, everything is impermanent, the world and all it contains. In particular, the life of beings is as fragile as a bubble of water. The time of death is uncertain, and when I die, I will be nothing but a corpse. At that time, only the dharma can help me. I must practice diligently.

Karmic cause and result

Thirdly, at the time of death, I will not be free. My fate will depend upon my previous actions. I must therefore refrain from negative actions, always engage in positive actions, and each day, monitor my stream of being.

What's wrong with samsara

Fourthly, all places, friends, pleasures, possessions, and everything else in the cycle of existence continually torment me through the three types of suffering. They are like the last meal before my execution. I must sever all attachment and diligently accomplish awakening.