

# PRAYERS FOR THE PANDEMIC TO SUBSIDE

Transcript of HH 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, April 2020

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## Gyalwang Karmapa Leads Recitations of the Heart Sutra for the Pandemic to Subside: Day One

Hello everyone! Tashi Delek! I am very happy to be able to say these prayers with all of you for the reduction of the pandemic. We are going to recite these prayers for 7 days, and today, on the first day, we start with the Sutra of the heart and the Repulsion of the Maras.

As you all know, the Sutra of the heart is an important sutra of Mahayana; it teaches emptiness and interdependence. Right now, with the coronavirus spreading around the world, we can see clearly what interdependence means; we see that we depend on each other and that there is not as much distance between us and each other as we thought so. If we had a deep understanding of interdependence, maybe the coronavirus would not grow as widely in the world; but, we naturally have a strong attachment to the ego. We believe that every family, community, every country is different and separate; we only care about what touches us and don't take the rest seriously.

And yet, every one of our breaths connects us to everyone. This pandemic shows us how much we have an impact on each other, how connected we are. This is a situation we will never forget. Also, I think it would be very useful to think about both the experience of our lives and the sense of the heart, together. The less distance between dharma and our life, the more we will be able to see that there is no difference between the person who practices the dharma and the dharma they practice. dharma and individual become one, and we will become what is called a dharma practice.

Now we're going to recite the Sutra of the heart together. I'm going to recite it slow, if you can recite it at the same time as I do, that's good, otherwise it's how you want. The most important thing is not to be distracted and keep meaning in mind. "

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## Gyalwang Karmapa Leads Recitations of Sutras for the Pandemic to Subside: Day Two

Tashi delek to everyone. Today is the second day of our prayers for the pandemic to subside. The prayers we will recite today are the Noble Aspiration for Excellent Conduct and the Sutra in Three Sections. These teach the two main points of the bodhisattva path: gathering the accumulation of merit and purifying obscurations. So these two are crucial for bodhisattvas.

This current pandemic has brought great changes we never imagined before. Already, in only a few months, there have been over two million confirmed cases, and more than a hundred and sixty thousand people have died.

There have also been major changes in our way of life. We can no longer move freely. We are not able to meet the people we love. Losses to the economy and jobs are huge. We hardly dare to think about all the details. When we face such challenges, they can be a wake-up call that makes us examine ourselves much more deeply.

This pandemic didn't just fall out of the sky. The way it started and the way it spread are strongly connected to human actions. According to many sources, the origin of the virus was connected to wet markets. In any case, we humans have not cared about the freedom or life of animals, and the negative consequences of that now envelop us.

The current bans on travel have actually been good for the natural environment. We are creating less impact on the environment, and the atmosphere is less polluted. Many animals have been seen coming into cities without fear.

These are facts that we can't ignore. We now have the experience of seeing how much violence and destruction we have caused the environment and wildlife.

The point of gathering the accumulations and purifying the obscurations is to see what good qualities we have and what our weaknesses are, in order to increase our good qualities and decrease our weaknesses. But if our prostrations and confessions are just a ritual or for show, then we have missed the point.

Now we will recite the Noble Aspiration for Excellent Conduct and the Sutra in Three Sections together.

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## Gyawang Karmapa Recites the Akshobhya Sutras for the Pandemic to Subside: Day Three

Tashi Delek. Today is the third day of our prayers for the pandemic to subside.

Today we will recite the sutras of the dharani of [Akshobhya](#). There are two such sutras. The first is the one in the Tibetan Kangyur, and the second is one that I translated from Chinese into Tibetan. It is said that Akshobhya is the most effective for purifying karmic obscurations. This is connected to his own particular aspirations. When he first roused bodhichitta, he made the commitment, "Until I awaken to buddhahood, I will never feel malice or hatred toward any sentient being." This is the reason he was named Akshobhya, the Unshakeable One.

These days the word karma is well-known throughout the world, but merely understanding the word does not mean that we understand karma. This is because karmic cause and effect is connected to even the tiniest thoughts we have and actions we do in our daily lives. If we never examine our thoughts and actions and their effects, through our experiences, there is no way we can understand how karma works.

The current pandemic sends a clear message that karma is not just theoretical. Instead, it is related to what we have chosen to do and what we have chosen not to do in our daily lives. We always pay a lot of attention to the result, but we don't pay the same attention to the causes, conditions, and motivations that led to the situation.

For instance, if we do not consider it important to wash our hands, practice social distancing, and so forth, to prevent transmission of the virus, just wanting not to get sick won't help us at all. In the same way if someone does catch this virus they can spread it to others. So, we must take responsibility but not only for our own health and happiness. We must also take responsibility for everyone else's health and happiness. This is a crucial point.

Some people use karma as an excuse, they just blame everything on karma as if it were fate. Karma does not mean that we are unable to improve ourselves or move forward. Actually, the meaning of karmic cause and effect is that we can be even more confident and even more enthusiastic about taking on the responsibility of benefiting ourselves and others.

Now we will recite the two sutras.

Those of you who do not speak Tibetan may recite them in your own language. It's not necessary to keep up with me. If I recite too slowly, Tibetans and people who can read Tibetan, will fall asleep.

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## Gyalwang Karmapa Recites Tara Prayers for the Pandemic to Subside: Day Four

Tashi delek. Today is the fourth day of our prayers for the pandemic to subside. Today we will recite the Prostrations and Praises of the 21 Taras.

This practice is extremely widespread in Tibet. For centuries, all Tibetans, whether male or female, young or old, have recited it either in the morning or the evening. We have a strong belief that Tara will help us. My mother, even though she cannot read, learned Tara orally and recites it daily.

Tara is an emanation of Chenrezig — a manifestation of his compassionate activity. Chenrezig is the embodiment of the love of all the buddhas. When he appears in the form of a goddess, we feel even more strongly how his nature is like a mother's love.

At this time when the entire world is faced with suffering, thinking of others with love is even more necessary than at any other time. We need to counter corona with karuna.

If all our countries and peoples come together and bear the responsibility together, it is certain that we will soon be freed from this ordeal. Every day we hear in the news and social media of

many situations that move us. Our heroes on the front line, the doctors and nurses, are making great sacrifices to battle the epidemic.

Likewise delivery workers, police, soldiers, volunteers, and many others are working hard for our sake.

Because of this, I have the feeling that our problem is not that there aren't enough loving people in the world nor that we lack compassion. It's just that many people don't have enough courage and lack someone to inspire them. They need to know someone like Tara is there to support them and has got their back. Thus, we all need to do our bit to inspire each other and to comfort each other. That is the basis for the happiness of humanity.

Sadly, in a few places, this pandemic is being used as a way to discriminate against certain groups of people. A group of people is not a single entity; it's made up of individual human beings. No one—no matter who they are—wants to be infected with the virus. No one wants these hardships. At such times as these, it's important to put ourselves in other people's shoes and reflect.

Now we will recite the Prostrations to Tara together. So that everyone can follow me, I will use the melody that I composed.

Thank you.

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## Karmapa Recites Prayers to Guru Rinpoche for the Pandemic to Subside: Day Five

Tashi delek. Today is the fifth day of our prayers for the pandemic to subside. Today we will recite two well-known prayers to Guru Rinpoche.

Guru Rinpoche or Padmasambhava was a scholar and siddha from the land of Uddiyana, who came to Tibet at the end of the eighth century.

While in Tibet, he dispelled all the obstacles that prevented the dharma from flourishing. He's one of the main figures in the early establishment of the dharma in Tibet and this is why he is like a second Buddha to Tibetan people. People admire and respect him because he is like a superhero: he has incredible powers and great majesty. No obstacle can stop him; no adversity can set him back.

Since I was a child, I have had great faith in Guru Rinpoche. Until I was eight years old, the only prayer I knew was the Seven-Line Prayer to Guru Rinpoche. Whenever my family members or neighbours asked me to recite prayers, I used to recite the Seven-Line Prayer for them.

Now, during this pandemic, many people have great fear and anxiety. It's natural to feel anxious in a situation like this, which we have never experienced in our lives before, when it's hard to know what's going to happen next.

But when big disasters happen, it is even more important for us to calm our minds, so that we can think clearly and make the right decisions, because in a great crisis such as this one, many of the decisions we make can be a matter of life or death.

A pandemic is different than a war. In war, we have the choice to surrender to the enemy but in a pandemic you don't have that choice, because we must win.

And in order to achieve victory over the pandemic, we must have strong resolve, conviction and faith. We should be like Guru Rinpoche; we shouldn't try to wiggle our way out of obstacles. We have to face up to them; we mustn't be afraid.

The teachings on mind training tell us that sickness and adversity are spiritual teachers. We must dare to face hardship and overcome obstacles. If we understand that all our problems and suffering can teach us something, then obstacles can become our friends.

Right now we don't have sufficient power ourselves so that's why we need to pray to Guru Rinpoche because in this time of degeneration, Guru Rinpoche's blessings and his power to clear obstacles are beyond compare.

Now we will recite the prayers to Guru Rinpoche. Thank you.

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## Gyalwang Karmapa Chants the Aspiration for Rebirth in Sukhavati: Day Six

Tashi delek. Today is the sixth day of our prayers for the pandemic to subside. Today we will recite Karma Chakme's Aspiration for Birth in Sukhavati.

In Tibet, there are many different prayers for rebirth in Sukhavati. Some long and some short, but the one that people know best is this one by Karma Chakme.

The Mahayana tradition teaches that there are pure and impure world realms. But we shouldn't understand pure and impure as referring to the outer form. Instead, we should think that they refer to the subtle causes and conditions that create that world. It is said that an impure realm, such as this earth, is created by the shared karma and afflictions of the sentient beings in it, and a pure realm is created by the aspirations of a buddha. Among all the many pure realms, Sukhavati is the easiest to take birth in, and has the greatest benefits, so it is the most well-known.

Modern scientists have done a lot of research into our solar system, our galaxy, and the rest of this infinite universe. They are searching for other planets that might be habitable, just as the earth is. But we are neglecting our own precious planet, this beautiful earth that sustains us and is bursting with the energy of life.

Although since the industrial revolution, our lives have become easier and facilities more developed, we have achieved this by plundering the earth for resources, and we have covered more of it with buildings and roads, causing great destruction in the process. We have triggered global warming, and caused deforestation, the melting of glaciers, and the pollution of rivers and oceans.

Every day hundreds of species go extinct because of human actions.

Our greed knows no limits. It is so strong that even swallowing the entire earth could not satisfy it. We hear about all of this on the news. We hear about the research, but we have no actual experience, especially those of us who live in cities. When it gets hot, we turn up the AC, and when it gets cold, we turn on the heating. We always try to make ourselves more comfortable, and life more enjoyable. For the individual, it seems such a small thing, but we never consider how great a burden we are placing on the earth or the cost to the environment. If we feel slightly uncomfortable, we get upset and want to change things. But all the other beings are enduring a thousand times more suffering and pain due to the environmental destruction that we have wrought. And they can do nothing but suffer and die. Therefore, we need to see things from their perspective and think hard. Then we can finally become more motivated and more sincere in taking care of the home we share together.

We must recognize how dense our ignorance is. We must cherish this planet that provides the foundation for us to live, and treasure the natural environment. The survival of our own and future generations depends on this.

Yesterday was Earth Day. Actually, every minute that we are alive, every breath we take is intimately connected with our planet, so every day should be Earth Day for us. Perhaps it's even a little sad that we need to have an Earth Day to remind us to celebrate it. It's a sign that we human beings are forgetting who we are.

Now we will recite Karma Chakme's Aspiration for Birth in Sukhavati together. Thank you.

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## Karmapa Recites Mantras and Makes Concluding Aspirations for the World: Day Seven

Tashi delek. Today is the seventh and final day of our prayers for the pandemic to subside. Today we will recite Tangtong Gyalpo's Prayer that Saved Sakya from Disease along with the Six Syllable Mantra and other mantras, and Appeasing the Discord of the Mamos. There are many different mantras, but today we will recite ones that will help with the current pandemic.

Tangtong Gyalpo was a well-known 14th century Tibetan siddha. Once there was a large epidemic at the great Sakya monastery, and none of the medical treatments, offerings, or rituals they tried could help. When everyone was close to dying, they asked Tangtong Gyalpo for help. He wrote this prayer and the epidemic subsided, as the histories related.

Regarding Amending the Discord of the Mamos, in Sanskrit mamos are called māṭrik, a type of spirit. But here, it could be understood as the natural environment arising in the form of inner goddesses. Basically, it is like we are making amends for our faults in order to remedy our imbalances and disharmony with the natural environment.

I think that our current prayers have gone very well. They have reached more than a million people, and at least two hundred thousand people have watched the sessions live and prayed together. Many Rinpoches, nunneries and monasteries in India, Nepal, and Bhutan have joined in, too. Everyone is participating in these prayers voluntarily, without being asked, and this gives me renewed hope and confidence that the world will turn out well. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

This time I have taken on a new task, which is to speak in three languages. Normally, when I have a translator, I can relax. But this time there is no translator, and it has been a bit difficult. But I do hope that my communication directly in several languages has given you a better understanding and a feeling of personal connection with me. In particular, this is the first time I have spoken so much in English, and even though my English is not fluent, I hope you can feel that I care. Right now I am physically in Europe, so the difficulties that everyone is experiencing are not just mere words for me. I'm experiencing them together with you, and I feel that this is a special opportunity for me. Still, I'm not sure I'd like to catch the coronavirus.

Europe is now beginning to get some control over the epidemic, and I hope that this happens soon in America as well. But I have greater concern for Africa, South America, Asia and other continents. I'm especially worried about India, which is like my second home. The Indian central and state governments are doing their utmost, but the population of India is extremely large, and there are many difficulties such as providing sufficient testing and so forth. Even though there has to be a strict quarantine and curfew to limit the spread of the illness, many workers who depend upon a daily wage live hand to mouth and are experiencing terrible hardships. So please pray for India and do whatever you can to help.

Also, I would like to ask all of you who live in the Himalayan regions not to downplay the illness. It is crucially important to follow scientific advice on methods to prevent its spread. I am also greatly concerned about the Tibetan communities in India, Nepal, and Bhutan as well as the Tibetans living abroad in Europe, America, and other countries. Although Western medicine does not yet have a treatment for this disease, some experienced Tibetan doctors can treat it effectively. But the main thing is to prevent infection. A protection cord around your neck or a blessing pill won't be any help if you then rush off to a large gathering of people. You have a responsibility to protect yourself that you can't pass off onto medicine and protection cords. In particular, at this time when people are afraid and anxious, if you are able to do a bit of dharma practice, it will help you find comfort of mind and develop conviction.

Next we will recite the prayers and mantras together. Thank you so much.

This completes our prayers for the pandemic to subside. Now I would like to recite a concluding prayer, the Great Aspiration by the Seventh Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso. It is a long prayer, so I can only read it in Tibetan. But before I read it, I would like to tell you about some of the main points of the dedications and aspirations we will now make.

We combine all our virtues from the past, present and future with the power of the love and virtue of all buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, and then dedicate it.

We make the aspiration that our virtue and all the strength of our whole-hearted love may pervade every corner of this great universe.

We make the aspiration that our virtue and all the strength of our whole-hearted love may dissolve into each atom of the earth, restoring all that has been depleted so that it may become even more powerful and beautiful than it was before.

We make the aspiration that our virtue and all the strength of our whole-hearted love may suffuse all animals with whom we share this earth, our home, from the tiniest ant on up, so that all their sufferings of weakness or lack of freedom may be pacified.

We make the aspiration that the power of our sincerity and whole-hearted love may suffuse all human beings, our brothers and sisters, so that they may feel mutual love and enjoy the glory of virtue and happiness.

We make the aspiration that due to the power of our sincerity and whole-hearted love, this terrifying pandemic may swiftly subside, and that all those who have been stricken by this disease may be cured and soon enjoy even better health and greater vigor than before.

We make the aspiration that we may give the power of our sincerity and whole-hearted love to the courageous doctors and medical workers so that they may be relieved of all mental and physical exhaustion and have renewed courage and bodily strength.

We make the aspiration that through the power of our sincerity and whole-hearted love, the consciousnesses of all those who have passed away in this epidemic may move on to ever happier births, and all those they leave behind may soon find solace for their grief and suffering. We make the aspiration that through the power of our sincerity and whole-hearted love, all the billions of living creatures who have perished in natural disasters such as the bushfires in Australia may find their path to happiness.

We make the aspiration that through the power of our sincerity and whole-hearted love, our parents, spiritual teachers, friends, and loved ones may live long and healthy lives and accomplish all their wishes spontaneously.

We pray that we may completely fulfill the aspirations of the bodhisattvas—aspirations that we could not think to make or would be unable to fulfill ourselves—just as they have made them. Now I will read the prayer, so I ask you all please keep those points in mind as you listen. Thank you.