

Kopan Monastery Prayers and Practices

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Lama Zopa Rinpoche's advice on what to when going for an operation

Here is some recent advice given by Rinpoche to a student who was about to have a serious operation. It is also extremely helpful for anytime, any sickness and so on.

I remember a long time ago the first time Lama Yeshe had to go to hospital, I am not sure what for but it was some kind of operation inside the heart, one where you had to give a signature in order to have the operation. What Lama did was he lit one stick of incense and did Guru puja very sincerely, with devotion, in a very peaceful way. I am not sure whether he did short Lama Chopa or Heruka Lama Chopa, maybe it was short Lama Chopa (Guru Puja). Then Lama went to hospital. Lama said that after he did Lama Chopa his mind was very happy, very peaceful and he had no regrets (which also includes no fear) he had no regrets at all in his mind.

My suggestion for you, even though the treatment came out good in the observation, is that it is better anyway to prepare for death, even when we are not sick, we still have to prepare to die. That's the way to practice dharma, to prepare to die every day, every hour, every minute. This is the way to practice pure dharma, real dharma. In this way it does not become 'like' practicing dharma (looking like practicing Dharma, but in reality not dharma).

My advice is if you can recite the 35 Buddhas' names a few times, including the 8 Medicine Buddhas' names. If you are not able to actually prostrate then you can put your palms together at your heart in the mudra of prostration. By doing this you still get the same amount of merit, also if you see yourself as tall as a mountain and visualize yourself lying down in all directions, prostrating to the merit field or the holy objects at the altar or in the room.

Even if it is just a visualization you get the same amount of merit as having done the prostrations with that many actual bodies. You can also do the Medicine Buddha practice (the actual Medicine Buddha practice/sadhana). This is the short Medicine Buddha practice that I translated years ago which is very good for daily practice.

At the end make strong prayers to Medicine Buddha that the treatment be most beneficial, successful, and in any case as death has to happen then pray to be born in a pure land, whichever one wishes - Amitabha, Vajrayogini or any one where one can become enlightened in that life and be able to quickly liberate all sentient beings from suffering samsara and bring them to enlightenment; or pray to receive a precious human rebirth and to achieve enlightenment by meeting the perfect Mahayana Guru and actualize the common path and uncommon Vajrayana path.

If possible, if you have done a highest tantric retreat (or even if you haven't) then do the short self initiation within the Guru Puja with the deity that you did retreat on. This is to purify all degenerate samaya vows, any negative karmas, 10 non virtuous actions and heavy negative karmas collected against the Guru. That is negative karma collected in this and past lives. By doing the short self initiation think that everything is purified, generate strong faith, think that you are now very clear, pure with no regret. By doing the short self initiation the samaya vows become pure by taking them again within the practice.

Then generate bodichitta motivation for the operation. In your case think the Guru and Vajrayogini are oneness - totally rely on that with one pointed mind. With this in your mind you can begin the operation, thinking like this until you become unconscious, keeping this awareness. Another way is you can do the operation with Tong Len, taking suffering and its causes onto oneself, and giving one's merit and happiness to others.

This way we take the essence of the operation and it becomes a very wise, skilful way of having the operation. Making your life meaningful whether one is alive or passes away.

Scribe; Ven.Chosang (Chu Min Lai), lightly edited by Claire Isitt.