



Mandala Offering

The so-called mandala offering is given at the beginning of teachings, or when starting a practice. The concept is to understand the huge benefit and value of the teachings or the practice, and the practitioner does the biggest offering one could imagine, the whole universe.

Translation by Geshe Michael Roach:

མཚན་ལ།

MANDAL

Mandala Offering

1: །ས་གཞི་སྒོས་ཀྱིས་བྱགས་ཤིང་མེ་ཏོག་བཟམ།

SA SHI PÖ KYI JUK SHING METOK TRAM

2: །རི་རབ་སྒྲིང་བཞི་ཉི་ལྷས་བརྒྱན་པ་འདི།

RI RAB LING SHI NYINDE GYEN PA DI

3: །སངས་རྒྱས་ཞིང་དུ་དམིགས་ཏེ་དབུལ་བར་བསྐྱེ།

SANG GYE SHING DU MIK TE ULWAR GYI

4: །འགྲོ་ཀུན་རྣམ་དག་ཞིང་ལ་སྦྱོད་པར་ཤོག །།

DRO KUN NAM DAK SHING LA CHÖ PAR SHOK

ཨི་དེ་གུ་རུ་རྣམ་མཚན་ཀའི་རྣེ་ཏུ་ཡུ་མི།

idam guru ratna mandalakam niryatayami

*Here is the great Earth, filled with the smell of incense,
Covered with a blanket of flowers.*

*The Great Mountain, The Four Continents,
Wearing a jewel, Of the Sun, and Moon.*

*In my mind I make them, The Paradise of a Buddha,
And offer it all to You.*

*By this deed, May every living being
Experience The Pure World*

Idam guru ratna mandalakam niryatayami.

First Line

ས SA means *earth*, and ས་གཞི means the *foundation of the earth*, as གཞི means *foundation*. ལྷོས PÖ means *incense*.

ཀྱིས is an important particle, it binds together an agent doing something, the means by which something occurs. So we are curious to see the next word to see the binding happening.

བྱུགས JUK is short for བྱུགས་པ JUKPA, *to anoint*. So the agent was implying something was anointing the ground (with incense).

གིང SHING means *and*, it's a so called coordinating particle. མེ་ཉོག is *flower*. བཏམ is the ending verb in this first line, means *to arrange* or *to strew*.

Exercise: Do a rough translation of the first line.

Second Line

རི RI means *mountain*, a very common word for an area such as Tibet. རབ RAB means *highest, most supreme*. So རི་རབ RI RAB is the most supreme mountain there is, in other words the so called *Mount Meru* that is in the center of the universe in the Abhidharma-kosha presentation of this world.

གླིང LING means *island, continent*. བཞི SHI is *number four*, so གླིང་བཞི means *the four continents*, in other words the four big continents that are in the outermost sea around Mount Meru.

ཉི NYI is short for ཉི་མ NYI MA, the *sun*. ལྷ DA is short for the word ལྷ་བ DAWA, the *moon*. It's very common to combine these two into the shorter form of ཉི་ལྷ NYI DA. Note however that this word here ends with a ས SA, or ཉི་ལྷས. There's another particle hiding in here, or the ས is another agent particle, operating. A common way to quickly, initially translate this particle is to think of it as *by* and see what happens next. Also, another important thing to notice here is that the ས changes the pronunciation so that the DA becomes DE, and there's also a more silent N sound between the two parts, hence NYINDE.

བརྒྱན་པ GYENPA means *to adorn*. འདི DI is a very common word, *this*.

Exercise: Do a rough translation of the second line.

Third Line

སངས་རྒྱལ་ SANG GYE means *Buddha*. ཞིང་ SHING means *field*, in this case, it's the *field of a Buddha*, or another word for the *Buddha paradise*.

དུ DU is another particle, indicating action or manner, or state. In this specific case, we are dealing with an action related to the Buddha paradise.

དམིགས་ MIK means *object*, for example an object visualized in the mind.

ཏི is yet another particle, a so-called semi-final particle, it binds together one part of the sentence with another part of the sentence. One quick, initial way to translate this particle is *and then*, or a colon (:). You could also translate it as *thus*, or *so that*.

དབུལ་བ་ is *to offer*, or another way is to say *to remove the poverty*. This word ends with a ་ར་ RA, or དབུལ་བར་ ULWAR, where the RA is the agent particle again, meaning *by something*, or in this case *by offering*.

The last verb དགི་ GYI means *about to do*, the future tense of *to do*.

Exercise: Do a rough translation of the third line.

Fourth Line

འགྲོ་ DRO is short for འགྲོ་བ་ DROWA, *sentient/migrating beings*, where འགྲོ་ DRO means *to walk*, walk in the cyclic existence, migrate from one realm to the next.

གུན་ KUN means *all*, and རྣམ་ NAM is a *the attribute*. In many cases this last one does not need to be translated, a catch-for-all that defines the attribute we are talking about, in this case all sentient beings.

དག་ DAK means *pure*, and then we have ཞིང་ again, so we are talking about a *pure field*, or a Buddha paradise that is a pure field. ལ་ LA is another particle, indicates for what, to what. In this case, the best translation is *to*. Then check out the next words that this particle binds together with the previous words.

ལྷོ་པ། CHÖ PA mean *to engage in, to experience*, or in this case the best word is *to enjoy*. As the earlier word was a particle, it's now clear that the sentient beings are experiencing the pure land, or enjoying it. However, this word again ends as ལྷོ་པར། CHÖ PAR, so it has a built-in agent that binds the means by which this happens.

The last word is ལོག་ཀ། SHOK, *may it be so*. As the previous word has the agent, it means that *by may it be so the sentient beings will enjoy the pure land*, but as you are read this, it does not sound that fluent. So in this case it's quite Ok to leave out the *by* word.

Exercise: Do a rough translation of the fourth line.

Final Sanskrit Sentence

This is a good example of how Tibetans used their letters to spell out Sanskrit sentences. It is noted that the Tibetan alphabet is a version of the Sanskrit alphabet, however not all the Sanskrit letters were used, and there was a need to indicate long vowels and other sounds not common in Tibetan, so the way the Sanskrit was spelled indicates long words, and so forth.

For example, དཱ་ is DAM with the round thing on top of DA indicating the m-sound. རྩ་ RATNA is the whole word written together with the TA and NA stacked on top of each other. རྩ་ལ་ RYA has a long A sound indicated by the bottom ལ་. The same is true of ལ་ YA.

ཨིའོ་ཏཱ་མ་ idam means *this*, ལྷུ་རུ་ guru means LAMA, *root teacher*, རྩ་ ratna means *precious jewel*, མཎྜཱལ་ཀཾ་ mandalakam means *mandala*, and འོ་རྩ་ཏཱ་མ་ niryatayami means *I offer*. In other words: *Root teacher, I present this precious mandala*.

This was a short breakdown of the མཎྜཱལ་ mandala offering.


