

The Benefits of Erecting Stūpas and of Making Prostrations, Offerings, Circumambulations and Pure Aspirations

By Chatral Sangye Dorje

Homage to the Three Jewels!

I explain here, using genuine scriptural references, the benefits of constructing Buddhist stūpas,

and for the faithful, the benefits of making prostrations and offerings to them,

and the benefits of circumambulating them as well.

Fortunate ones inspired by these words will greet my efforts with joy.

In the *Karmavibhaṅga Sūtra*¹ it says:

The Buddha told the young brahmin Śuka:

There are eighteen benefits resulting from building Buddhist stūpas. What are they? To be born as a child in a noble lineage; to have a majestic form; to be beautiful or very attractive; to have sharp sense faculties; to have a vast entourage; to be sane; to be renowned in the ten directions; to be able to expound poetry and prose; to receive divine offerings; to become rich; to become a universal monarch; to enjoy longevity; to

¹ *The Classification of Acts; las mam par 'byed pa'i mdo.*

have a vajra-body; to be endowed with the major and minor marks of a buddha; to take rebirth in the three higher realms; and to swiftly attain complete nirvāṇa. These eighteen qualities are the benefits that come from building Buddhist stūpas.

In the *Mañjuśrī Mūla Tantra*² it says:

When a stūpa is made by hand after cleansing the body, [purification] can be accomplished even by someone who has committed the five heinous crimes!³ Building one hundred thousand stūpas results in becoming the sovereign of all awareness-holders – one who completely understands all scriptures and is endowed with skills and wisdom. During an abiding aeon, such a person will always be reborn as a ruler after death and will never go to the three lower realms. Like Sauryodayika from the central region, he or she will possess perfect sense faculties, retaining what has been learned and remembering former lives.

² *Mañjuśrī's Root Tantra*; *jam dpal rtsa rgyud*.

³ Patricide; matricide; killing an arhat; maliciously causing blood to flow from a tathāgata; and causing a schism in the saṅgha.

In the *Guhyadhātukaraṇḍa*⁴ sūtra it says:

The Bhagavān spoke:

Vajrapāṇi! Whenever Dharma teaching is written down and placed inside a stūpa, that stūpa will become a quintessential vajra relic of all buddhas. It will become a stūpa blessed with the secret dhāraṇī essence of all buddhas. It will become a stūpa of ninety-nine buddhas, heaped up like sesame seeds. It will be blessed as a stūpa containing the eyes and *uṣṇīṣa* of all buddhas. Whoever places images of the Buddha inside it will be blessed with the nature of the seven precious facets of a tathāgata's likeness. Whoever pays reverence and respect to this stūpa will definitely become a non-returner and will completely awaken to unsurpassed and utterly perfect enlightenment. Offering only one prostration or one single circumambulation will liberate that person from going to evil places like the Avīci hell. Such a person will never fall away from the (path leading to) unexcelled and completely perfect enlightenment. Also, the area and images surrounding this stūpa will be blessed by all the buddhas.

In the *Saddharma Pundārika Sūtra*⁵ it says:

⁴ *Casket of Secret Relics; gsang ba ring bsrel gyi za ma tog.*

⁵ *Sūtra of the White Lotus of True Dharma; dam chos padma dkar po'i mdo.*

When Buddhist stūpas
are built from mud and stone, from bricks,
from mounds of earth,
in remote places that are desolate and destitute,
or by children playing games,
if they are made for the triumphant buddhas,
even those fashioned from piles of sand,
become the cause for the builders to awaken.

The benefits of presenting offerings (to a stūpa) are
stated in the *Prasenajidparipṛcchāsūtra*⁶:

Painting a Buddhist stūpa white,
brings longevity in the worlds of gods and men
and freedom from mental and physical illness.
All suffering will be overcome,
and permanent happiness and wealth will be
attained.

Ringing a bell in front of a victor's stūpa
leads to being endowed with certain, charismatic
speech,
such as the mellifluous and charming speech of
Brahma with the remembrance of past lives,
and with the acquisition of various ornaments.
Whoever among the learned places a garland
upon a Buddhist stūpa with devotion
will excellently obtain precious golden rosaries,
and will become foremost among the supremely
fortunate.

⁶ *Sūtra of Prasenajit's Questions; gsal rgyal gyis zhus pa'i mdo.*
[*Prasenajidgāthā; Verses on Prasenajit; gsal rgyal gyi tshigs su bcad pa.*]

The same text continues:

Whoever offers music to a victor's stūpa
will gain utterly profound and awakened
confidence.

Such a person will have a perfect physical form
and pure mind and speech,
and the sound of his words will fill the world.

And it continues:

Whoever beautifully decorates a reliquary (stūpa),
which is the source of immaculate merit
because it is an offering field for the three realms,
will receive offerings.

Whoever decorates the top of a Buddhist stūpa,
will become a glorious ruler of men,
a powerful ruler of gods,
and will experience supreme bliss.
He or she will attain the crown of complete
liberation.

And it continues:

The one who cleans a bhagavān stūpa,
will become beautiful or attractive to behold,
with a noble face and a lotus-like complexion
completely devoid of worldly faults.

And it continues:

Whoever cleans the dust around a stūpa

in the springtime with clean water
will be pleasantly fanned by ladies
holding golden-handled fans.

Concerning the benefits of prostrating to and
circumambulating stūpas it is said in the
Avalokiteśvara Sūtra:

Whoever kneels before a Buddhist stūpa in
respect
will become a heroic and powerful universal
monarch.
He will have armor with golden emblems,
become a powerful teacher, and delight the
buddhas.

In the *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra* it is said:

Whoever joins his palms in devotion before a
stūpa – either two hands or even just raises one
palm –
or just momentarily nods or bow down even once,
and whoever prostrates, even while distracted,
or even says the single word, "buddha," a few
times,
before places where Buddhist relics are kept –
all of these people will attain supreme
enlightenment.

In the *Caitya Pradakṣiṇa Gāthā*⁷ it is said:

The qualities of circumambulating a stūpa
of the Protector of the World,
cannot be described properly with mere words.

Having generated confidence and vast joy in these
and other quotations from the sūtras and tantras, I
urge all those who wish for happiness and good
fortune to use their human existence in a meaningful
way. They should do this by endeavoring as much as
possible to gather the accumulations (of merit and
wisdom) and purify obscurations. With the sublime
and noble motivation of bodhichitta, prostrate, make
offerings, circumambulate, and make aspirations
before these special supreme supports, which bestow
genuine benefit through being seen, heard or
recollected.

*This was written by the renunciant Buddha Vajra
(Chatral Sangye Dorje),*

*Who in this day and age of the fivefold degeneration
Gives the appearance of guiding beings*

*Through representations of Buddha's awakened body,
speech and mind.*

*By this merit, may all beings reach the level that
transcends the limitations of samsāra and nirvāṇa.*

*Defeating the armies of the māras, may they hold the
power of the great kingdom of Samantabhadra.*

⁷ *Verses on Circumambulating Reliquaries; Mchod rten bskor ba'i tshigs su
bcad pa.*

*May the dual benefit spontaneously manifest and may
auspiciousness and splendor blaze forth.*

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