



REFLECTIONS ON THE PRAYER TO BECOME ALL GOOD QUALITIES¹

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“Seeing that the kind, holy guru is the foundation of all good qualities, and that proper reliance on one is the root of the path, I ask blessing to rely on them with great respect (born) of constant effort.

Understanding the rarity and great significance of this (*human body*) that is the wonderful basis of an opportunity obtained just once, I ask blessing to generate uninterruptedly, all day and night, the mind that takes up what is essential (*to attain Buddhahood*).

Remembering that death will swiftly destroy my wavering body and life, which are like bubbles on a stream, and gaining firm recognition that the effects of my white and black actions will follow me after death like my body's shadow, I ask blessing to take care always to avoid even the subtlest fault and to accomplish all that is virtuous.

Aware of the disadvantages of worldly goods - (*for they are*) unsatisfying when consumed, untrustworthy, and the door to all suffering - I ask blessing to generate the great striving: for the bliss of liberation.

I ask blessing to take as my essential practice the guidelines of individual liberation (*Pratimoksha vows*), which are the root of the Dharma, (*and to do so*) with the great care of mindfulness and introspection induced by that pure thought (*renouncing cyclic existence and striving for liberation*).

Seeing that, just as I have fallen into the ocean of cyclic existence, so too have all transmigrating beings who have been my mothers, I ask blessing to develop the supreme thought of enlightenment which takes on the burden of liberating transmigrating beings.

Seeing that if I generate just the thought (*of enlightenment*) and do not cultivate the three types of (*Bodhisattva*) morality, I will not attain enlightenment, I ask blessing to train assiduously in the vows of the Conquerors' children (*Bodhisattvas*).

I ask blessing to generate quickly in my mind-stream the union of calm abiding and insight, through pacifying (*a mind*) that strays toward false objects, and investigating properly the ultimate object (*Emptiness*).

When I have become a (*suitable spiritual*) vessel, trained in the common (Perfection Vehicle) path, I ask blessing happily to enter the highest of all vehicles, the Vajrayana, the holy crossing-boat for fortunate beings.

Gaining then genuine certainty (*that I must guard*) the pure (*tantric*) vows that are the foundation of accomplishing (*worldly and transcendent*) attainments, I ask blessing to guard (*these vows*) at the risk of my life.

Understanding then the essentials of the (*generation and completion*) stages that are the heart of the (*four*) classes of tantra, I ask blessing to practise according to the teachings of the Holy Ones, without neglecting to practise yoga in four sessions (*daily*).

May virtuous (*teachers*) who show the good path and friends who practise it properly have a long life. I ask blessing swiftly to pacify all outer and inner hindrances.

In all my lives, may I never be apart from the perfect Master, and may I enjoy the splendor of the Dharma. Having perfected the good qualities of the (*ten Bodhisattva*) levels and the (*five*) Paths, may I quickly obtain the rank of Vajradhara.”

On first reading, the above prayer would appear to have no relation to astrology. It is a prayer that is found in esoteric Buddhist (Vajrayana) practices, and it describes the stages of the path to full enlightenment from the perspective of esoteric Buddhism. But, on closer examination we find certain peculiarities and begin to notice a pattern: This prayer does have undertones that relate it to the stages of the twelve signs of Western astrology, especially with regard to the spiritual evolutionary process through the twelve signs. What follows is meant to be suggestive only. This little article relates esoteric astrology² to esoteric Buddhism only in a very broad sense. The stanzas of the prayer are taken each separately and compared to the twelve signs of the zodiac as we now have them in the West, with key phrases and ideas, taken as reflective/meditative seeds. The stanzas that relate to astrology are those which contain the words, “I ask blessing...”, of which there are twelve. The shamatha diagram, below, is also related to the twelve signs, which can also be taken as seed into meditation. *Esoteric Astrology*, from Alice A. Bailey, was transmitted from a Buddhist lama, and in the following we can perhaps see how Buddhist principles infuse the main concepts in esoteric astrology. To try to keep esoteric astrology as somehow distinct from Buddhist or universal principles, and especially meditative practices, is a mistake, and needs to be investigated fully if we seek to gain a true understanding of the basis of esoteric astrology.



<p>Seeing that the kind, holy guru is the foundation of all good qualities, and that proper reliance on one is the root of the path, I ask blessing to rely on one with great respect (born) of constant effort.</p>		<p>Foundation: the beginning of the Path, commencement of efforts, the start of a new path Proper reliance, good mental qualities: Mercury, mars, Uranus Constant effort: Mars</p>
<p>Understanding the rarity and great significance of this (<i>human body</i>) that is the wonderful basis of an opportunity obtained just once, I ask blessing to generate uninterruptedly, all day and night, the mind that takes up what is essential (<i>to attain Buddhahood</i>).</p>		<p>Human body: Taurus/Venus To generate uninterruptedly: Vulcan, generating the vision of, or lighting the Path, working uninterruptedly The mind that takes up what is essential to attain Buddhahood: Venus, Vulcan</p>
<p>Remembering that death will swiftly destroy my wavering body and life, which are like bubbles on a stream, and gaining firm recognition that the effects of my white and black actions will follow me after death like my body's shadow, I ask blessing to take care always to avoid even the subtlest fault and to accomplish all that is virtuous.</p>		<p>Wavering body and life: Mercury White and black: the pairs of opposites Swiftness: Gemini and Mercury Avoiding even the subtlest fault: Mercury Accomplishing all that is virtuous: examining carefully the pairs of opposites</p>
<p>Aware of the disadvantages of worldly goods - (<i>for they are</i>) unsatisfying when consumed, untrustworthy, and the door to all suffering - I ask blessing to generate the great striving: for the bliss of liberation.</p>		<p>Seeking security in material objects and temporal affairs: the trap for Cancer The door to all suffering: Cancer as the entry into human existence The great striving for the bliss of liberation: Neptune, the planet that embodies bliss and the planet that leads to liberation</p>
<p>I ask blessing to take as my essential practice the guidelines of individual liberation (<i>Pratimoksha vows</i>), which are the root of the Dharma, (<i>and to do so</i>) with the great care of mindfulness and introspection induced by that pure thought (<i>renouncing cyclic existence and striving for liberation</i>).</p>		<p>Guidelines of individual liberation: self-discipline and <i>individual</i> liberation, the keynote of Leo Introspection: another Leo keynote</p>
<p>Seeing that, just as I have fallen into the ocean of cyclic existence, so too have all transmigrating beings who have been my mothers, I ask blessing to develop the supreme thought of enlightenment which takes on the burden of liberating transmigrating beings.</p>		<p>Who have been my mothers: Virgo is the sign of the Great Mother Taking on the burden: a typical note of Virgo Liberating transmigrating beings: Liberation, whether through death or other means, is ultimately healing. Virgo is known for its keynote of healing</p>

<p>Seeing that if I generate just the thought (<i>of enlightenment</i>) and do not cultivate the three types of (<i>Bodhisattva</i>) morality, I will not attain enlightenment, I ask blessing to train assiduously in the vows of the Conquerors' children (<i>Bodhisattvas</i>).</p>		<p>The three types of bodhisattva mentality: These relate to the Libran keynotes of the law, sex and money. The three types of bodhisattva mentality liberate one from anger, desire and ignorance, which in turn have correspondences with law, sex and money.</p>
<p>I ask blessing to generate quickly in my mind-stream the union of calm abiding and insight, through pacifying (<i>a mind</i>) that strays toward false objects, and investigating properly the ultimate object (<i>Emptiness</i>).</p>		<p>Generating quickly the union of calm abiding and insight: Relates both to Mars and Mercury, and these in turn lead to pacification of the mind through the mental conflict engendered by focusing on emptiness instead of the myriad factors upon which the mind loves to focus instead.</p>
<p>When I have become a (<i>suitable spiritual</i>) vessel, trained in the common (Perfection Vehicle) path, I ask blessing happily to enter the highest of all vehicles, the Vajrayana, the holy crossing-boat for fortunate beings.</p>		<p>Becoming a suitable vessel: the idealism of Sagittarius. Training in the Common Path relates to the previous signs.</p> <p>Happily entering the highest of all vehicles: the joy of Sagittarius, striving for the highest</p> <p>The holy crossing boat: the arrow of Sagittarius, which launches one toward full enlightenment</p>
<p>Gaining then genuine certainty (<i>that I must guard</i>) the pure (<i>tantric</i>) vows that are the foundation of accomplishing (<i>worldly and transcendent</i>) attainments, I ask blessing to guard (<i>these vows</i>) at the risk of my life.</p>		<p>Gaining genuine certainty: the first attainment of the full experience of emptiness (Capricorn) combined with great bliss. All doubt is thus removed as to the path and the way forward.</p> <p>Tantric vows: foundation, as a reference to Saturn, and the seriousness of those vows. Saturn also reveals the risk of making bad decisions, and the necessity of guarding one's motivation assiduously</p> <p>Worldly and transcendent attainments: Capricorn, as the sign that most represents attainment and success, either material or spiritual.</p>
<p>Understanding then the essentials of the (<i>generation and completion</i>) stages that are the heart of the (<i>four</i>) classes of tantra, I ask blessing to practise according to the teachings of the Holy Ones, without neglecting to practise yoga in four sessions (<i>daily</i>).</p>		<p>Essentials of the generation and completion stages: These relate to the careful building of the forms as represented in the generation stage, and then taking the winds into the heart and dissolving them. Aquarius represents this stage of taking the winds into the heart, being an air sign. This is at the heart of the four classes of tantra. This is also the opposite pole of Leo, with its emphasis on self-discipline.</p>

<p>May virtuous (<i>teachers</i>) who show the good path and friends who practise it properly have a long life. I ask blessing swiftly to pacify outer and inner hindrances.</p>		<p>Ask blessing to swiftly pacify all outer and inner hindrances: Pluto's action through Pisces, and the final dissolution of all hindrances to full enlightenment. This follows upon the stage of Aquarius.</p>
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The cardinal signs (The cross of commencement, or new efforts): the commencement of effort, the commencement of the great striving for liberation, the commencement of training in vows and bodhisattva principles, and the commencement of the Path of Seeing, or the third initiation – Aries, Cancer, Libra and Capricorn, respectively

The fixed signs (The cross of discipline and determined effort): generating (disciplining) the mind of enlightenment uninterruptedly, taking on self-discipline, thorough pacification of the mind through the discipline of the union of calm abiding and insight, the discipline of the practice of yogic retreat – Taurus, Leo, Scorpio and Aquarius, respectively

The mutable signs (The cross on the shoulders – seeing the true nature of suffering and the release from it): seeing the necessity of stilling the wavering mind and life, seeing the necessity of generating bodhichitta (which sees the suffering of all sentient beings and seeks to liberate them), seeing the necessity of becoming a suitable vessel for entry into the higher path, seeing the necessity of pacifying all outer and inner hindrances to enlightenment. Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius and Pisces, respectively.

The fire signs (the path of fiery reliance): reliance upon the guru (reliance upon a proper example as a way forward), reliance upon self-discipline as an ensured way forward, reliance upon the path of esoteric Buddhism – Aries, Leo and Sagittarius, respectively

The earth signs (the formation of the bases): Forming the basis for the path of enlightenment, forming the basis for the bodhisattva path, forming the basis for the path to Buddhahood (full enlightenment) – Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn, respectively

The air signs (recognition of the bases and the mental attitudes needed for enlightenment): the recognition of the pairs of opposites and the need for virtuous action, the recognition of the basis of the three obstructions to enlightenment and the need to assiduous training, the recognition of the basis for the final efforts toward enlightenment – Gemini, Libra and Aquarius, respectively

The water signs (release from suffering): recognition of the basis of suffering, recognition of the basis of distraction from the path, recognition of the final obstructions to omniscience – Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces, respectively

Aries/Libra (the axis of 'turning'): commencement of the path of aspiration (Aries), and commencement of the bodhisattva path (path of selfless service, Libra) Consideration of self and others as to direction on the path.

Taurus/Scorpio (the axis of determined effort): fixing the mind on the desired path (Taurus) and fixing the mind on the ultimate object/objective (Scorpio)

Gemini/Sagittarius (the axis of cultivation): cultivating the path of ethics by seeing the subtle faults in one's nature (Gemini) and cultivating the path of ultimate release (becoming a 'suitable vessel via the Common path) in Sagittarius

Cancer/Capricorn (the axis of liberation): cultivating the desire for the bliss of liberation (Cancer) and cultivating the desire for the blissful liberation of others (Capricorn). One rises

above the worldly path in Cancer as an ultimate attainment and then above samsara in Capricorn as an ultimate attainment.

Leo/Aquarius (the axis of disciplined effort): taking on the discipline of individual vows for the path (Leo) and taking on the discipline of the renunciation for others (Aquarius)

Virgo/Pisces (the axis of taking ultimate release): realizing the path of service for all beings (Virgo) and becoming the path of service to all beings (Pisces). The Piscean path, being the last stage, marks one's becoming the kind, holy guru, which becomes the basis for others to follow in Aries, beginning anew.

¹ Lozang Chokyi Gyaltzen, *Yon tan gzir gyur ma*. Lozang Chokyi Gyaltzen (ལྷོ་བཟང་ཚེས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་མཚན་) was the 4th Panchen Lama of the Gelugpa tradition in Tibet.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lobsang_Ch%C3%B6kyi_Gyaltzen,_4th_Panchen_Lama

² Bailey, Alice A, *Esoteric Astrology*, Lucis Publishing