

Tsa-tsa Practice



according to the instructions of Lama Zopa Rinpoche

compiled by Kendall Magnussen

What you will need:

- ◆ Tsa-tsa moulds (available from Nalanda Monastery or the Enlightenment Project for Purification and Merit)
- ◆ A large table or flat surface
- ◆ List of prayers to do while making tsa-tsas in a protected plastic slipcover
- ◆ Windex (an ammonia based window-cleaning agent) to prepare the moulds
- ◆ Hydrostone (Hydrocal), plaster of paris, or clay
- ◆ Water
- ◆ Mixing bucket
- ◆ Implement for mixing water/hydrostone mixture
- ◆ Pitcher for pouring mix into moulds
- ◆ Implement for agitating mixture once poured into the moulds
- ◆ Glass beads or rice
- ◆ Shelves on which to put the tsa-tsas once they are removed from the moulds
- ◆ Gold spray-paint (optional)
- ◆ Tsa-tsa house or some other way to honor the tsa-tsas when you are finished

Tsa-tsa Practice

Benefits of doing the practice and having a right attitude

From Lama Zopa Rinpoche

The existence of holy objects is to transform the mind and to be able to realize the path to enlightenment. In the present moment we cannot see the Buddha...therefore, the Buddha manifests in the body, speech and mind of statues, enabling one to collect merit, which leads to realizations along the path.

This is a most powerful way to purify obstacles and to collect extensive merits. The motivation should be for people to have these holy objects more than as a decoration, then it is extremely beneficial. Just by seeing one thangka, one statue of Buddha, even if one has negative thoughts, this still becomes the cause to see 10 millions of buddhas. Even one look at a buddha out of anger causes one to gradually see the Buddha; it purifies the mind and brings total liberation from all sufferings. Even if one looks with a negative mind, gradually it purifies the mind; purifies defilements; obscurations; creates the cause to see buddhas and receive teachings; and leads one to enlightenment.

One must see them (tsa-tsas) as holy objects. This creates positive imprints. Every time you see buddhas in different rooms (as holy objects) you get all this incredible benefit for the mind; the more holy objects you have, that much more benefit you will receive. With so many, one must make many offerings and one must make respect with the hands in the prostration mudra, doing pure prostration from the heart. With one statue, putting the palms together is the cause for a good rebirth; leading to liberation from samsara and eventual enlightenment. With one thousand tsa-tsas, putting the palms together in prostration one gets one thousand times the causes of liberation. With one hundred thousand tsa-tsas, one gets one hundred thousand benefits. Any offering done to holy objects is the same as how many holy objects there are in the house; how many times one circumambulates creates that many causes. Even with light offerings, offering one to so many objects creates so many causes.

Ten specific benefits of making tsa-tsas:

1. One achieves a perfect rebirth – with perfect body, senses, limbs, and so on.
2. One achieves perfect surroundings – able to fulfill all wishes in benefiting other beings. The surroundings are harmonious with your mind and you are surrounded by people who support your practice. Otherwise, one cannot practice Dharma.
3. One actualizes pure morality (moral conduct). Without this one cannot achieve the path.
4. One generates devotion towards one’s teachers and the buddhas.
5. One generates courage (perseverance) – supreme courage to do things in public to benefit others.
6. One is reborn in the human or deva realm to benefit others. Otherwise, one is born in the lower realms.
7. One achieves the bodhisattva’s path of accumulation.
8. One achieves the bodhisattva arya’s path of seeing, where delusions; defilements cease. On this path, one stops creating karma, is freed from delusion and karma, and thus freed from cyclic existence and rebirth. In tantra the arya’s path means one has attained the wisdom of direct perception of emptiness.
9. One achieves the path of meditation.
10. One achieves the path of no more learning, where one is totally freed from rebirth, old age, sickness, and death and attains a spiritual body. One will achieve the actualization of the body, speech, and mind of enlightenment.

Even in this life, you will have less disease, your enjoyments will increase, and you will achieve a long life and good reputation. It is the best method to betray death. Making tsa-tsas pacifies obstacles, bad conditions, accidents, and sudden diseases like heart attacks and paralysis. By making tsa-tsas you pacify enemies, interferers, and harms. You accumulate all merit, purify all obscurations, and achieve the resultant three kayas in future life.

Know the benefits of making tsa-tsas and tell others how to use them, what they are for. Then, the attitude will be more to use them to purify the mind and accumulate merit, with a deeper benefit to sentient beings, purifying what you don’t like, collecting what you do like.

From Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s talk to Tsa-tsa Studio staff in Spring of 2000, and Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s “Tsa-tsa Commentary,” 1988.

Tsa-tsa Practice

The following is a brief summary for how to do the preliminary practice of tsa-tsas. For simplicity, the practice described here is written using the material of Hydrostone with silicone moulds. For more detailed information on the various materials that can be used together with commentary on their respective production “techniques,” see the “Tsa-tsa Making Instructions” booklet available through FPMT Education Department.

The Actual Practice

Wash your hands and make sure everything is very clean.

Namo Guru, I prostrate to the gurus who are the glorified saviours of sentient beings, the lords of omniscience and compassion, the refuge object of the transmigratory beings, and the step towards liberation, and who have completely conquered all opposing conditions. Please grant the sublime and general realizations to me and all other transmigratory beings. In order to accumulate the causes of enlightenment, I am going to do this tsa-tsa practice.

Take refuge and generate bodhichitta.

Generate yourself as the deity. [Students without highest yoga tantra should visualize Shakyamuni Buddha, Medicine Buddha, Tara, or Chenrezig at the crown of their head or at their heart and repeat the mantra associated with that deity.]

If you are making the tsa-tsas for a person who is sick or has a life obstacle, before actually making the tsa-tsas, recite mantras of long life buddhas and request these buddhas to increase the life of that person.

If you are making the tsa-tsas so that a person who has died finds a good rebirth in the body of a happy transmigratory being, recite the mantra of Mitrugpa:

NAMO RATNA TRAYAYA OM KAMKANI KAMKANI ROCHANI
ROCHANI TROTANI TROTANI TRASANI TRASANI PRATIHANA
PRATIHANA SARVA KARMA PARAM PARANI ME SARVA SATVA
NANCHA SVAHA

Recite the Vajrasattva mantra also, and the mantras of other deities powerful in purifying obscurations.

With the pure attitude of taking the complete responsibility for liberating the person from the lower realms by yourself alone, and for leading them to the perfect body of a happy transmigratory being, begin to make the tsa-tsas.

Purify the materials you are using (Hydrostone, plaster, clay, etc.). Do the mudra for blessing the material: Place thumbs over the pinky fingernails. Point fingertips down, with left hand up; right hand down. Hold this mudra over the substance.

Purify the material in emptiness with the mantra:

OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO
HAM

Here, one can perform either of the following two visualizations:

Visualization One

Your wisdom understanding emptiness then manifests as the five syllables:

OM HUM TRAM HRI AH (3x)

The syllables transform into mountains of jewels.

Then bless the material by reciting:

OM AH HUM (3x or as many times as possible)

Or:

Visualization Two

The following visualization is optional:

From emptiness, a lotus and moon disk appear. The white standing syllable, BHRUM, transforms into enormous piles of jewels, like mountains. From syllable HUM at my own heart (myself clarified as the deity), limitless light rays radiate out to Buddha Vairochana, who is in the pure realm of Akanishtha. They persuade his holy mind. Then, from Vairochana's

heart center radiate limitless rays of light. These absorb into the tsa-tsa material, transform into the nature of all the tathagatas, that is, the nature of the non-dual transcendental wisdom holy mind.

Then recite:

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE / VAIROCHANAYA / PRABHARAJAYA /
TATHAGATAYA / ARHATE SAMYAK SAMBUDDHAYA / TADYATHA /
OM SUKSHAME SUKSHAME / SA ME SA ME / SHANTE DANTE /
ASAMA ROVAI / ANA LAMBHE / TARARSHA / MAHA TEJA / NIRA
KUME / NIRIVANE / SARVA BUDDHA ADHIKSHTHANA
ADHIKSHTHITE SVAHA. (3x)

In this way the substance is blessed.

Blessing the beads or rice

With my body clarified as the mind-bound deity, with my speech I recite the Essence of Dependent Arising mantra:

Recite this over the glass beads, rice, or whatever you are using to represent mantras to be placed inside each tsa-tsa.

OM YE DHARMA HETU PRABHAVA HETUN TESHAN TATHAGATO
HYAVADAT TESHAN CHA YO NIRODHA EVAM VADI MAHA
SHRAMANA YE SVAHA

and

OM AH HUM (3x or as many times as possible)

Preparing the moulds

Prepare the moulds (wash, pour windex into the moulds, etc.) while reciting the following mantra.

OM AH RAJE BIRAJE SVAHA

Taking hold of the material

Pour the Hydrostone into the water or take the clay in your hand while reciting:

OM NAMO SAMANTA BUDDHANAN / OM VAJRA AYU KSHE SVAHA

Kneading the clay or mixing the ingredients

As you mix the ingredients or as you knead and soften the clay recite:

OM VAJRODDHA VAYE SVAHA

Preparing the clay with oil

If you are making tsa-tsas out of clay, recite this mantra at this point while preparing the clay with oil.

OM AH RAJE BIRAJE SVAHA

At least five tsa-tsas are cast in any session and are offered as follows:

Filling the moulds

Think about those for whom you are making each tsa-tsa (see the list below together with the corresponding prayers for each person). As you recite the following mantras, pour the mixture into the mold (put the clay into the mould) while visualizing that you are offering jewels to the buddhas:

OM DHARMADHATU GARBHE SVAHA

Then recite the appropriate prayer (see below).

If you are doing many tsa-tsas at once and it is difficult to recite the prayer after each tsa-tsa, then finish the total number of tsa-tsas you will make during your session and recite the appropriate prayers when you have finished.

1.

Think:

I am making this tsa-tsa for the Triple Gem.

Recite OM DHARMADHATU GARBHE SVAHA while pouring the mixture into the mould or putting the clay in the mould.

Pray:

May the teachings of the Buddha spread and be developed. May the holy Dharma last a long time. May the Sangha achieve the holy Dharma, and may the highest enlightenment be accomplished.

2.

Think:

I am making this tsa-tsa for my direct and indirect holy gurus to have long lives, for their holy actions to be developed and the wishes within their holy minds to be fulfilled.

Recite OM DHARMADHATU GARBHE SVAHA while pouring the mixture into the mould or putting the clay in the mould.

Pray:

May the lives and holy actions of the direct and indirect holy gurus be developed and the experiences of realizations in their holy minds be increased. May the field of objects to be subdued be increased.

3.

Think:

I am making this tsa-tsa for my parents (past, present and future), to all sentient beings who have been my mother and father, to those who are now my mother and father and to all who will be my mother and father in the future.

Recite OM DHARMADHATU GARBHE SVAHA while pouring the mixture into the mould or putting the clay in the mould.

Pray:

May all the wishes of fathers and mothers, the transmigratory beings of the six realms, be accomplished. May all the sufferings of each individual be completely purified and may they achieve the state of omniscience.

4.

Think:

I am making this tsa-tsa to sentient beings who have died and not yet taken another body.

Recite OM DHARMADHATU GARBHE SVAHA while pouring the mixture into the mould or putting the clay in the mould.

Pray:

Due to the good karma of making offerings to the Sangha and of making statues of the holy bodies of arya beings, may the hallucinated minds of all intermediate state beings be eliminated completely. May they achieve the three kayas of enlightenment.

5.

Think:

I am making this tsa-tsa for myself and other sentient beings.

Recite OM DHARMADHATU GARBHE SVAHA while pouring the mixture into the mould or putting the clay in the mould.

Pray:

May I and all sentient beings accumulate merit and purify the two obscurations. May we pacify all disease and suffering and increase life, merit, wealth, and reputation. May I have whatever control I wish over the three realms, human beings, possessions, and food. I am requesting to dispel the bad conditions of enemies, interferers, obstacles, and untimely death.

Beating the clay or mixing the material in the moulds

Agitate the mix inside the moulds (beat the clay into the mould) and recite:
OM VAJRA MUNGARA AH KOTTAYA AH KOTTAYA HUM

Also recite the Essence of Dependent Arising mantra:

OM YE DHARMA HETU PRABHAVA HETUN TESHAN
TATHAGATO HYAVADAT TESHANĀ CHA YO NIRODHA EVAM VADI
MAHA SHRAMANA YE SVAHA

Placing the mantras in each tsa-tsa

Recite the following mantra as you place the blessed mantra (or blessed grain of rice or bead to represent the mantra) in each tsa-tsa, like putting mantras into a statue:

OM VAJRADHATU GARBHE SVAHA

OR

OM AH HUM

If you are making tsa-tsas out of plaster or Hydrostone, you will need to pause here while the material is setting. Recite the seven-limbed prayer to the buddhas whose images you have just made and dedicate the merits in an abbreviated or extensive way, making sure to include the special dedication prayers listed above.

When the tsa-tsas are ready to be removed from the moulds, continue with the practice.

Cutting the excess clay and removing the tsa-tsas from the moulds

As you remove the tsa-tsas from the moulds (cut off the extra clay) recite:

OM GHAYUTE SVAHA

Recite the seven-limbed prayer:

Reverently, I prostrate with my body, speech, and mind;
I present clouds of every type of offering, actual and imagined;
I declare all my negative actions accumulated since beginningless time,
And rejoice in the merit of all holy and ordinary beings.
Please remain until the end of cyclic existence
And turn the wheel of Dharma for living beings.
I dedicate my own and all others' merits to the great enlightenment.

Before consecrating the tsa-tsas, if you want to paint them, you need to wait until they are dry.

Painting the images

When offering paint (or when polishing, buffing, or sealing) recite:

OM VAJRA AH RAJE BIRAJE SVAHA]

Blessing the tsa-tsas

To consecrate the tsa-tsas recite:

OM SUPRATISHTHA VAJRA YE SVAHA

Dedicate the merits. Remember the benefits of making tsa-tsas and dedicate the merits for the sake of all sentient beings.

Taking Care of Your Tsa-tsas

It is important to consider how you will take care of your tsa-tsas as part of your tsa-tsa practice. You have just created a number of holy objects and should treat them as such. Keep your tsa-tsas in a clean place where they will not be disrespected. You can give them away as gifts, display them in your home, or put them in a tsa-tsa house. Wherever they end up, make sure that they are in a safe, clean place and in such a way that they can benefit others through making it possible to circumambulate them, make prostrations to them, make offerings, etc.

For more information on production tips, options in materials for making tsa-tsas, and how to take care of your tsa-tsas, please see the "Tsa-tsa Making Instructions" booklet available from the FPMT Education Department.

Tsa-tsa Practice at a Glance

The following pages are for creating a quick “at-a-glance” sheet for reciting mantras and prayers as you make your tsa-tsas. At least five tsa-tsas are cast in any session and are offered as follows:

1. Think:

I am making this tsa-tsa for the Triple Gem.

Recite OM DHARMADHATU GARBHE SVAHA while pouring the mixture into the mould or putting the clay in the mould.

Pray:

May the teachings of the Buddha spread and be developed. May the holy Dharma last a long time. May the Sangha achieve the holy Dharma, and may the highest enlightenment be accomplished.

2. Think:

I am making this tsa-tsa for my direct and indirect holy gurus to have long lives, for their holy actions to be developed and the wishes within their holy minds to be fulfilled.

Recite OM DHARMADHATU GARBHE SVAHA while pouring the mixture into the mould or putting the clay in the mould.

Pray:

May the lives and holy actions of the direct and indirect holy gurus be developed and the experiences of realizations in their holy minds be increased. May the field of objects to be subdued be increased.

3. Think:

I am making this tsa-tsa for my parents (past, present and future), to all sentient beings who have been my mother and father, to those who are now my mother and father and to all who will be my mother and father in the future.

Recite OM DHARMADHATU GARBHE SVAHA while pouring the mixture into the mould or putting the clay in the mould.

Pray:

May all the wishes of fathers and mothers, the transmigratory beings of the six realms, be accomplished. May all the sufferings of each individual be completely purified and may they achieve the state of omniscience.

4. Think:

I am making this tsa-tsa to sentient beings who have died and not yet taken another body.

Recite OM DHARMADHATU GARBHE SVAHA while pouring the mixture into the mould or putting the clay in the mould.

Pray:

Due to the good karma of making offerings to the Sangha and of making statues of the holy bodies of arya beings, may the hallucinated minds of all intermediate state beings be eliminated completely. May they achieve the three kayas of enlightenment.

5. Think:

I am making this tsa-tsa for myself and other sentient beings.

Recite OM DHARMADHATU GARBHE SVAHA while pouring the mixture into the mould or putting the clay in the mould.

Pray:

May I and all sentient beings accumulate merit and purify the two obscurations. May we pacify all disease and suffering and increase life, merit, wealth, and reputation. May I have whatever control I wish over the three realms, human beings, possessions, and food. I am requesting to dispel the bad conditions of enemies, interferers, obstacles, and untimely death.

Recite the seven-limbed prayer:

Reverently, I prostrate with my body, speech, and mind;
I present clouds of every type of offering, actual and imagined;
I declare all my negative actions accumulated since beginningless time,
And rejoice in the merit of all holy and ordinary beings.
Please remain until the end of cyclic existence
And turn the wheel of Dharma for living beings.
I dedicate my own and all others' merits to the great enlightenment.

Mantras to recite when making tsa-tsas

(adapted from Lama Zopa Rinpoche's "Tsa-tsa Commentary")

When preparing the moulds (washing, Windexing, conditioning):

OM AH RAJE BIRAJE SVAHA

Pouring the plaster or hydrostone into the water (taking the clay):

OM NAMA SAMANTA BUDDHANAN / OM VAJRA AYU KSHE SVAHA

Mixing the plaster (kneading and softening the clay):

OM VAJRODDHA VAYE SVAHA

If using clay, when putting oil on the clay:

OM AH RAJE BIRAJE SVAHA

Pouring plaster into mould (putting the clay into the mould):

OM DHARMADHATU GARBHE SVAHA

When putting the mantras (or the substitute rice grain or bead) into the clay:

OM VAJRADHATU GARBHE SVAHA

Brushing in the plaster, agitating the mixture, beating the mould, etc:

OM VAJRA MUNGARA AH KOTTAYA AH KOTTAYA HUM

and the Essence of Dependent Arising mantra:

OM YE DHARMA HETU PRABHAVA HETUN TESHAN
TATHAGATO HYAVADAT TESHAN CHA YO NIRODHA EVAM VADI
MAHA SHRAMANA YE SVAHA

Cutting off the extra clay and removing the tsa-tsa from the mould:

OM GHAYUTE SVAHA

When painting the tsa-tsa or stupa:

OM VAJRA AH RAJE BIRAJE SVAHA

To consecrate the tsa-tsas or stupas:

OM SUPRATISHTHA VAJRA YE SVAHA

Colophon:

This booklet was compiled from the notes of tsa-tsa practitioners and, primarily, from Lama Zopa Rinpoche's "Tsa-tsa Commentary" by Kendall Magnussen, FPMT Education Department, to help those who want to get started with their tsa-tsa practice do so in a timely manner. It has been checked against the Tibetan in April 2002 by Ven. Constance Miller, FPMT Education Department.



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