The Benefits of Turning the Prayer Wheel
The First Karma Chakme Rinpoche

Om Svasti!
Vajradhara Guru Who is the Essential Nature of the Five Kayas
Emanation of the Lords of the Three Families and the 6 Shakayas
Lama of the Teaching Lineage, Assembly of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities
In front of the Holder of the Teachings of the Hidden Treasures of the Dakinis and Protectors
After prostrating and supplicating respectfully to you with my three doors
The emanation of the hosts of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the three times,
in order to lead all sentient beings with fortunate karmic connection,
display many kinds of appearances through skilful means;
manifest different phenomenon in order to accomplish the four enlightened activities.
So that sentient beings can cleanse the two obscurations and complete the two accumulations
accomplishing the two benefits easily, with little effort or explanations
is the spontaneous, self-accomplishing of four activities through the turning of prayer wheels.
All such indescribable, vast qualities
have been spoken by the Buddha in many scriptures and commentaries.
These teachings were concise and yet complete in meaning.
To bring all these limitless sentient beings to liberation,
I will compile these teachings here and present it briefly.

In general, the prayer wheel\(^1\) can be divided into several types, namely, the
practice wheel; protection wheel; wheel of destruction; attacking wheel; wheel of
samsara; severing wheel; shooting wheel; auspicious wheel; longevity wheel; the
“spontaneously accomplishing four activities of peaceful, increasing, magnetizing
and subduing and other activities” wheel and the turning prayer wheel. There are a
total of 11 types of prayer wheels. Among these, the turning prayer wheel consists
of the five types of prayer wheels turned by water, wind, fire, earth and hand. Of
these, the hand-turned prayer wheel is extremely important.

Concerning the the method of writing the mantra, the foremost way is to use gold,
silver or vermilion\(^2\). The mediocre method is to use turquoise or conch-shell, the
inferior method is to use (only) ink. If one uses 108 Avalokiteshvara heart-mantras
to make a prayer wheel and consecrate it with auspicious verses, frequent turning
of the wheel by hand will result in the attainment of the peaceful, increasing,
magnetizing or subduing siddhis. This is like a wish-fulfilling gem in one’s hands. As
turning the prayer wheel is simple and easy to practise, it is a short-cut practice
with great results and merit. Furthermore, it has the special quality of granting
accomplishments swiftly. That is why, if the body, speech and mind (three doors) is
spurred to diligence (in turning the prayer wheel), one need not make
extraordinarily great efforts at praying but will naturally receive the sublime
protection and blessings of the Deities and Protectors, averting all possible loss or
harm.

People who turn a prayer wheel containing the secret mantra’s pith instruction in
the ordinary course of their daily lives would have the equivalent result of practising
and meditating on the lama, yidam and dakini (three roots) practices and reciting
all heart mantras. This essential (prayer wheel) treasury contains the dharma
treasury of the sutras and tantras, the essence of the four elements, the life, merit

\(^1\) The word ‘Wheel’ in Tibetan is ‘Khorlo’ (‘Chakra’ in Sanskrit) which can be interpreted as ‘Wheel’, or ‘Circle’
or ‘Cycle’. Since the same word carries multiple meanings, this translation uses ‘Wheel’ as a standard for all.
\(^2\) These precious substances are mixed with ink, as will be apparent later in the text.
and fortune of all sentient beings in the three realms. You will accomplish great 
blessings and rapid accomplishment of whatever practice you do and your activities 
will be vast and wide. Turning the prayer wheel by hand once has inconceivable 
merit which one cannot finish describing. The smoke from a prayer wheel turned by 
fire plants the seed of liberation in all sentient beings who contact it. If one uses 
the wind or water-turned prayer wheel, then the wind or water will enable all 
sentient beings who contact it to attain the stage of Buddhahood eventually.

If this hand-turned prayer wheel or the person who is turning it is seen, heard, 
recalled, or touched by anyone, they will be led on the virtuous paths. Ordinarily 
speaking, the hand-turned prayer wheel confers the merit of a wheel-turning 
emperor, with magnificence, fame, wealth and the glow of good health as well as 
long life with all being perfect with great power and blessings.

Turning this prayer wheel frequently will give one the benefit of meeting and seeing 
all the Buddhas, Sangha, Gurus, Deities, Dakinis and Protectors in every life, with 
the karmic condition to enjoy the Buddhadharma, and the chance to turn the wheel 
of dharma for oneself and others. Apart from this, turning the prayer wheel is 
equivalent to enacting the magnetizing activity, doing the wealth gods practices or 
longevity practices, resulting in long life and no sickness, with one’s wealth and 
provisions in life increasing.

It can also dispel all enemies, robbers, dangers from the four elements of earth, 
fire, water and wind, dangers from asteroids, stars, planets etc, dangers from hail 
and all such calamities. It can also liberate one from the fear of wars, poisoning, 
famine, disease, epidemics, sufferings and negative karma. The prayer wheel can 
also solve the problems coming from others such as punishment by the ruler, being 
controlled or enslaved by people with broken samayas, or receiving harm from ghost 
kings, weird essences, demons, female ghosts, celestial beings, meat-eating ghosts, 
Rakshasas, Gandharvas, single-legged ghosts, kashor ghost and all harms from the 
eight sections of gods and dragons.

Turning this prayer wheel can remove obstacles and accomplish perfectly all worldly 
and dharma-related activities. Turning this prayer wheel can bring the enjoyments 
of precious stones and gems, pearls, lapis-lazuli, carnelian, crystal, gold, silver, the 
seven precious stones etc, including tiger or leopard-skinned garments and silk, 
cloth, pulu wool\(^3\) etc, barley, rice, wheat, and other bean-varieties in the 9 types of 
foodstuff. In addition, one enjoys the use of horses, buffaloes, elephants, ox, 
cattle, donkey, mountain goats, sheeps and other domestic animals with perfect 
ornaments and wealth.

Buddha mentioned in the sutras that turning this prayer wheel is equivalent to 
making offerings incessantly to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Gurus, Deities, Dakinis 
and Protectors in the ten directions. It is the practice of generosity to sentient 
beings by giving them wealth and dharma, it will purify all of one’s broken samayas 
to the Guru or Dharma friends, peaceful and wrathful Deities, Dakinis and 
Protectors, as well as all conflicts, bearing of grudges, fierce competition (among 
the dharma friends) and all negativities of body, speech and mind. If, while turning 
the prayer wheel, one makes confession with strong regret, then, even the 5 
uninterrupted karmas, the four heavy, the eight deviant, and ten non-virtuous

\(^3\) A kind of Tibetan handicraft made from sheep’s wool.
karmas and all kinds of negativities can be completely purified with any remainder. It overcomes the three realms, the three bardos and all celestial beings, ghosts and humans. It accumulates all dharma, wealth and food. Turning this prayer wheel makes the gods and humans rejoice. All the Triple Gems, compassionate exalted lords, Gurus and holy beings will also rejoice. This person will spread the dharma and benefit beings in every direction, his fame will fill the entire three thousand-fold universe.

Guru Padmasambhava has also said, “By turning the prayer wheel, one can spontaneously accomplish all positive conditions for practising the dharma, remove all negative circumstances, obstacles, sickness or harm, 360 types of diseases, 800,000 types of demonic obstacles, 21,000 types of sudden demonic obstacles, 360 types of Ben demons, curses, suppression, control from others, inauspicious divinatory symbols, nightmares, ominous portents, foreshadowings of serious calamities, and other such obstacle-related negative circumstances.” The Vajra Lord of Secrets also said, “Turning this prayer wheel is more powerful than performing the long life rituals 100 times, visualising the protective circle 100 times, and making 100 protection chakra amulets.”

Turning this prayer wheel, one will become a person endowed with qualities and merits, meditative stability, fame, fortune, power, influence and courage. It can avert all unlucky sufferings and unfortunate accidents. Turning this prayer wheel is like presenting Samantabhadra clouds of offerings to Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Gurus, Deities, Dakinis, Protectors and Wealth Gods filling all of the sky before one. By pleasing them in this way, they will bestow the siddhis.

All virtuous men and faithful women, relying on the merits of this prayer wheel, will have offsprings, have better enjoyments, increase their wealth and possessions etc, soaked in wealth obtained virtuously according to the dharma like the rain pouring down, and ultimately attaining Buddhahood. A person who turns the prayer wheel will attain accomplishment in the mandalas of all the Buddhas, Deities, Gurus and will thereafter benefit all sentient beings. He or she will become the field of offering by kings, ministers, queens, citizens and all sentient beings in a spirit of rejoicing. The great Shakya (Buddha) said to Dakini Ah-Bliss, “Those ordained monastics who break the pratimoksha, bodhisattva or vajrayana vows should, with deep regret, make confession while turning the prayer wheel. This will purify the broken vows.”

Those people who turn this prayer wheel will not take rebirth in a family with wrong views, or in a family with blind, deaf, dumb or crippled people, or in a poor family, or in a high-born family that has been contaminated by negative deeds or karma. They will have long life, no sickness, pleasant good looks, abundant wealth, obtain a precious human body, meet with all teachers possessing the 3 qualities of wisdom, strict discipline and kind-heartedness. They will have the karmic tendency to uphold the proper dharma. Those who turn this prayer wheel can obtain all white dharmas such as receiving protection, aid in dangers, shelter and shielding from the gods, removing all kinds of untimely deaths or sufferings. If a woman wishes to have a child, she will have it. If a businessman wishes for wealth and property, he will receive help from the gods, with all circumstances being smooth-going and

4 This is a translation of “本魔” from the Chinese translation. Without recourse to the Tibetan text, it remains uncertain if this is a literal translation or a translation based on sound. In the English translation, a sound interpretation from the Chinese has been made.
Life will be extended and after death, one will not be reborn in the three lower realms, removing all possibilities of taking rebirth in an inferior place. They will not be reborn in a barbaric fringe land without any dharma, they will attain a precious human body and uphold the proper dharma. Even if they take rebirth among the hells, pretas, meat-eating ghosts, Rakshasas, Yakshas and Gandharvas, it will only be for the sake of teaching the dharma to those beings due to their great vow (to save sentient beings).

One who turns the prayer wheel by hand can perfect the accumulations, and purify the two obscurations, after which he will attain an unchanging body, unfading speech, unconfused wisdom, displaying the aspect of realisation, and effortlessly accomplish all activities as he wishes, becoming the Lord of all dharmas, mastering all dharmas with the dharani of perfect memory, being able to teach, debate and compose. People who turn the prayer wheel by hand will enjoy deathless lifespans, inexhaustible treasuries, wealth free from poverty, unsurpassable merits, all kinds of food and clothings with vast retinues.

If one turns the prayer wheel, after completely accomplishing his great vows, he will benefit impartially all sentient beings through all kinds of methods. No one can compare to him. His meditation will be open and vast like space, free from all attachments. Others who rejoice in this will also have their wishes fulfilled.

Relying on this hand-turned prayer wheel, all wishes beyond ordinary conception can be fulfilled, and there will be an endless flow of enjoyments and possessions. By turning this prayer wheel, in the next life and bardo, one will make offerings to the Buddhas and their purelands with the eight auspicious signs, substances, the five wheels, the seven precious things, the five sense pleasures, the five offerings and the eight goddesses. After that, they will take rebirth in the pure-lands in the east, south, west and north, in the presence of Vairochana, Vajrasattva, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha and Amoghasiddhi, listening to the proper dharma, respectfully serving the Buddhas and continuing to benefit countless sentient beings for as long as samsara is not emptied.

People who turn the prayer wheel will have power, wisdom and compassion equal to Lords of the Three Families. The merit of making offerings with all the worlds filled with seven jewels can be measured but the merit of turning the prayer wheel once with great motivation cannot be measured. The atoms of the dust on the ground of all the worlds can be counted one by one and reach an end but the merit of turning the prayer wheel containing the six syllables mantra is inestimable. The merit of making charity to every sentient being in the three realms can be measured but the merit of turning the prayer wheel once for the sake of benefitting all sentient beings cannot be measured. The combined merit of all conditioned positive deeds can be measured but even the Buddhas in the three times cannot measure the merit of turning the prayer wheel once while abiding in the unconditioned state. The merit of turning the prayer wheel by hand is equivalent to making offerings to as many Buddhas as the sand particles of the Ganges river.

Turning the prayer wheel by hand can perfect the six paramitas, bringing about the ceaseless activities of the form kayas. Orgyan Padmasambhava said, “Among all the Buddhist teachings that has been translated in Tibetan from India, there is no

---

5 Vajrapani, Manjushri and Avalokiteshvara
virtuous act of body or speech that can exceed the merit of turning the six-syllables mantra prayer wheel.”

The great teacher, Pham Ozer said, “The number of six syllables mantra in the prayer wheel should at best be 1,000, at middling be 700, at the minimum be 108. If a qualified teacher recites auspicious verses and consecrates such a prayer wheel, then all wishes can be accomplished. If one turns this prayer wheel ceaselessly day and night, the merit is equivalent to that of making vegetarian food offerings to Bhikshus as numerous as the number of pages of mantras in the prayer wheel. If one decorates this prayer wheel, this merit is equivalent to that of making offerings of clothings to as many teachers as the number of mantras in the prayer wheel. If one turns this prayer wheel by hand during the six sessions of day and night, this merit is equal to the virtue of practising the dharma with body and speech for six sessions. Besides this, ordinary worldly people who practise long-life rituals, wealth god rituals and protection chakra amulets and so forth can simply rely on the prayer wheel (for the same effect)."

Furthermore, if inauspicious divinatory signs appear portenting imminent death, if one can, with vigorous diligence and perseverance, spin the prayer wheel, this will undoubtedly avert the omens and signs of death. If one can, with remarkable faith and understanding in how the mantra generates merit, turn the prayer wheel, then it is possible to remove harm from enemies, thieves and robbers, diseases from wind, bile and phlegm, attacks from soldiers, bandits, wild animals etc and all negative circumstances.

If the mantras in the prayer wheel are hand-written, it is possible that there may be some extra or omission of syllables or words, therefore it is best to print the mantras. Using a fire-turned prayer wheel is fast to finish; a water-turned prayer wheel is long-lasting and auspicious; as for a wind-turned prayer wheel, if the wind is too strong then it becomes an obstacle; while the earth-turned prayer wheel is hard to construct. During (printing), use the five kinds of precious stones and mix them into the ink, after that use a suitable amount to make the prayer wheel, followed by the consecration by a qualified master with auspicious verses. For the exterior, use various types of ornaments to decorate it beautifully.

On an auspicious day, while one is turning the prayer wheel, one can set up various types of offerings and conduct a tsok puja, whatever wish is made will be fulfilled. Turning the prayer wheel by hand has 100,000 benefits and qualities and it can realize all auspicious activities. If the hand-turned prayer wheel lets out a ‘Zi Zi’ sound, it signifies harm to one’s life; if it lets out a ‘Zha Zha’ sound, there is harm to one’s wealth and property; if it lets out a ‘Sha Sha’ sound then one’s retinue or family will receive harm. Therefore it is important to spin the prayer wheel silently like the flow of water.

If someone has murdered his Guru or parents, broken precepts, killed Arhats, create divisions in the Sangha and any of the five uninterruptable negativities or even the 10 non-virtuous karmas, heaping up faults and bad karma like the Mount Meru, this person can use the hand-turned prayer wheel while making strong confession to obtain complete purification. Relying on this prayer wheel, one can purify all

---

6 This is done in some monasteries in Tibet where large prayer wheels containing millions of mantras are kept rotating non-stop for years on end by monks/nuns who take shifts to carry out this very virtuous practice.
7 Ganachakra or feast-offering
wrongdoings such as stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, deception, cunning and hypocrisy.

On the stone, rock walls, head or precious stones, inscribing the six-syllables mantra and placing it on the peaks of mountains, at junctions, at the foot of mountains or at the bottom of hills or slopes is equivalent to having a Bodhisattva staying there benefitting sentient beings with enlightened activities. Besides that, if one wrote (or printed) on cloth the six-syllables mantra, and after consecrating it, placed it in clean places, between mountains, in temples or prayer halls, in rivers (or by their banks), on the peaks of mountains etc, any wind that blows on these clothes carries its blessings to all sentient beings, and these beings who contact the wind will eventually attain Buddhahood. This lineage is passed down from Dharmakaya Amitabha to Sambhogakaya Avalokiteshvara to Nirmanakaya Padmasambhava to Dharma King Trisong Detsen until this day.


In Acharya Padmasambhava’s prophecy, it is written, “After I have gone to the South-West, a future sign that I have tamed the Rakshasas is that the six-syllables mantra prayer wheel will become widely utilised in the fringe regions. At that time, anyone who turns the prayer wheel, or sees, hears, recalls and touches the prayer wheel, or even people in the places where the wind which has contacted the prayer wheel blows to; all such people, being endowed with limitless merit, will accomplish all auspicious matters, purify obscurations, and finally attain Buddhahood. Therefore, everyone should reflect on the great significance and benefits of this prayer wheel and by all means, rely on it to accomplish the immeasurable benefit for oneself and all sentient beings.”

I myself (Karma Chakme) have read and consulted the above-mentioned scriptures and commentaries, their related prophecies on the benefit of the prayer wheel and compiled all that I have seen in the teachings into this present text. My main aim is to write something which is easy to understand for those who are weak in intelligence and that will dispel the wrong views and doubts of others, giving them faith and confidence (in the benefits of the prayer wheel). In this age, it is a common occurrence that people perform negative or mediocre deeds under the
guise of a beautiful name like ‘proper dharma’. In the name of making Buddha statues, printing Buddhist sutras or constructing stupas, one organises events like horse-racing, talks or huge parties. Some even kill many sentient beings in their locality for the sake of writing out the Tengyur, Kangyur or Prajnaparamita and think that this is a “proper dharma”. This is like writing books with an ocean of blood or pus, while one is not actually destroying the scriptures but because you are misleading others, this is a negative deed of enormous proportions, its direct ripening result would be dire.

(In contrast,) the person who turns the prayer wheel will not create even the (slightest) karma such as quarrelling with others while he is drunk\(^8\) but will instead create great benefit for the matter of great importance -- his future lives beyond death. There is nothing that such a person cannot accomplish because an arrogant person cannot possibly rely on such a practice to enter the proper path. The dharma king Trisong Detsen said, “Under the pretext of “proper dharma”, one is bursting with arrogance on account of his negative deeds\(^9\), such a person does not benefit his future lives at all, and his acts are a mixture of good and bad karma, not amounting to anything significantly meritorious.” Therefore, what is (truly) beneficial to one’s future lives is releasing lives (such as releasing fishes or prawns), reciting once the Diamond (Vajra Cutter) Sutra, turning the prayer wheel once, reciting 100,000 mani mantras, followed by dedication of merits and making aspirations. Such a practice can also purify negative obscurations. Those who have wasted and diminished a great amount of wealth (on so-called ‘proper dharma’ activities) have created a huge negative karma but are yet unwilling to listen to others when they are told, throwing all care to the wind. This prayer wheel is pure in nature with vast merits, will not accumulate bad results, does not interrupt one’s recitations (of mantras or texts), does not obstruct one’s contemplation of the definitive meaning and is easy to carry out. Anyone can use it. Whether one is moving or staying at one place, one can hold it in the hand and turn it conveniently, thereby accumulating great merits (with the above-mentioned attributes).

The main method that naturally and easily accomplishes benefit for future lives can only be turning the prayer wheel. I hope that everyone will be able to practise this and spread this practice. This poor monk here has written this for future generations and with the thought that it can benefit others. Besides this, I have no intention to make up anything or distort the teachings in the Buddha’s sutras, and there are no illogical fabricated opinions of mine. If I had any mixed selfish motives (in writing this) such as seeking fame or profit, may the Dakinis and Protectors enjoy drinking the blood from my heart. I pray that all sentient beings in the three realms will see this prayer wheel universally, and may its use spread through the entire world, defeating all deviant teachings and proliferate in the mundane realms. Increased auspiciousness!

Moreover, the above-mentioned sutras and tantras all state that “anyone who discriminates against or disparages the prayer wheels, or suspects its efficacy, thinking that it has no merit, all such disbelievers, or those who generate anger, those who overturn the prayer wheels, those who overturn the mantras of the

---

\(^8\) This is an analogy to emphasize that the person who turns the prayer wheel doesn’t even create the slightest negativity, the connotation being that the practice of turning the prayer wheel is truly a ‘proper dharma’.

\(^9\) But such a person perceives his deeds as positive and is therefore arrogant. According to Karma Chakme’s incisive comments, such a person is at the height of foolery.
Deities and their Consorts, those who do not prostrate respectfully, those who do not regard (the prayer wheels) as a field for making offerings and service, those who place it aside carelessly, those who step over it, those who belittle it, such people will have great demerit and become crazy, wild, faint to the ground, become crippled, blind, deaf or dumb, with great illnesses and sufferings, will receive harm from enemies, robbers, thieves, bandits continuously and all such misfortunes will befall them. They will frequently encounter poverty, death, obstacles and all sorts of inauspicious situations. In their future lives, they will fall into hell.

Therefore, I hope that everyone will, with confidence, belief, respect and irreversible faith and devotion, turn the prayer wheel. To give rise to genuine heart-felt respect while making prostrations or turning the prayer wheel is very important. Fearing the repercussions of bad karma in future lives, those with much bad karma and obscurations should instill this in their minds, and actually do this practice. This prayer wheel, which can defeat the 4 maras, can destroy the boundless wrong views and spontaneously accomplish the twin benefits, fulfilling all wishes and interests and completely eradicate the three bhavas\(^\text{10}\) and samsara.

My personal (Karma Chakme’s) prayer wheel has 108 pages. Among them, there are 7,200 mani mantras, 216 aspiration verses, 46 Deity and Consort secret mantras, this prayer wheel is the essence of the Buddha’s dharma, therefore I urge everyone to practise it. I have never seen a practice with such great benefits and merits, or a more powerful or profound practice. We practitioners will frequently receive obstructions from malevolent demons, (and when this happens), some ordained person will put up a show in front of some virtuous trusting layperson, claiming that he is only interested in working for sentient beings without the slightest craving for food, pack-animals or relatives, while his mind is filled with desire, aversion and ignorance, caught by the eight worldly dharmas, hankering after fame and profit.

Such a person has been blessed by the demons. He (might even) say, “Turning the prayer wheel has no benefits but has such-and-such harmful effects.” This is a powerful ghost, preta, vicious god or malignant deity pretending to be a ordained person to create obstacles. So it is important that everyone should be careful not to be led astray by such negative circumstances. When the great master Kesali travelled through the 18 hells, he realised that there is no positive merit created through body and speech that can be greater than that of turning the prayer wheel. He wrote this after he had considered whether this will benefit sentient beings in this world.

So do not follow those demons or externalist sects, you should do this practice for the benefit of sentient beings. Om Mani Padme Hung Hri. In Pema Lingpa’s “Ocean of Water Wheels”, there is the tantra called “Avalokiteshvara’s Ocean” which states “Anyone with bodhichitta and wisdom who constructs a container with mani mantras in it, after performing the generation stage, consecration and making praises, spins it by water, wind or hand, will destroy all of samsara, spontaneously accomplish the four enlightened activities, such a person’s merits can’t be described.” The “Wheel of Avalokiteshvara Tantra” states, “The great bodhisattva yogi who wishes for skilful means to benefit sentient beings (should construct) a container with mantras written with (ink mixed with) the five precious stones. The person who spins it

\(^{10}\) 三有, synonym for the ‘three realms’
incessantly will purify all negative obscurations swiftly. He will enter the higher realms and (ascend) the ladder of liberation.”

The “Avalokiteshvara Tantra of Lamp that Dispels the Darkness” states, “Any sentient being of pure motivation, having constructed many mani prayer wheels, if he relies on the four elements to rotate them, will quickly accomplish all desired activities, especially if the rotation is continuous without stopping, spinning the prayer wheel by hand is sure to bring accomplishment.” Orgyen Lotus-Born also said, “Fortunate men and women, those who wish to take rebirth in the Western Pureland of Amitabha, Land of Great Bliss, Dewachen should turn this prayer wheel assiduously and the five uninterrupted karmas will, through this practice, be purified. Sadhu! The Compassionate Avalokiteshvara is the Deity of Tibet and the mani mantra prayer wheel will flourish particularly the Khampa Kongpo regions. Those fortunate men and devoted women of Do Kham should propagate this six-syllable mantra teaching.” Mangalam!

Translated into Chinese by Khenpo Sudaji on 15th Oct 2000
Translated into English by Jigme Sherab on 31st July 2008
By this merit, may all sentient beings take rebirth in the purelands and attain Buddhahood swiftly.