

# Tantric Thelema



*⌘ The Invocation of Ra-Hoor-Khuit  
in the manner of the Buddhist Mahayoga Tantras*

Sam Webster

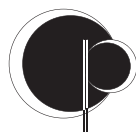


*All-Beneficent Ra-Hoor-Khuit*  
by Kat Lunoe  
see explanation page x

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in the manner of  
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Sam Webster, M.Div., Mage



Con crescent Press

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Section XII “The Three Refuges” from *The Collected Works of Aleister Crowley, Volume II*, (© Ordo Templi Orientis, 1906, 2009), the first verse of *Liber Cordis Cincti Serpente vel ADNI* (© Ordo Templi Orientis, 1909, 2009) and quotes from the *Book of the Law* used with permission.

*It is said by Lochen Dharamsari,*

*In Mahayoga one realizes all phenomena  
as the magical display of ultimate mind,  
the indivisibility of appearance and emptiness.*

*In Anuyoga, one realizes all phenomena  
as manifestive power of the ultimate mind,  
the indivisibility of the ultimate sphere and wisdom.*

*In Atiyoga, one realizes that all phenomena  
are self appearances of the ultimate mind,  
the spontaneously arisen wisdom,  
which is primordially free from arising and cessation.*

### *Acknowledgments*

My thanks go to the early readers of this book: Barbara Cormack, Anodea Judith, and Denny Sargent. Your insight and advice was invaluable. To Kat Lunoe who produced the gorgeous cover art. To Lena Strayhorn for her sharp proofing eye. Any errors remaining, of fact or form, are mine. Finally, to Amy Hale, my last reader, who gave me the confidence that this book really did make sense.

I also wish to gratefully acknowledge the many dozens of practitioners who have learned the rituals in this book from me, especially the early ones who had to tolerate my learning how to teach them, particularly Michael Sanborn, who experimented with it in new contexts, and the members of the Open Source Order of the Golden Dawn who regularly use them. I learned as much from them as they from me.

*This work is dedicated  
to my Wife*

**Mary Margaret Tara Ashilana Whittaker Webster-Mayers  
January 8, 1963 to October 8, 2008**

*In Memoriam*





## Confession

*I am not a Lama. I am nobody's Guru.*

The work herein is composed on the basis of my best knowledge and most was practiced for many years before teaching. I think it worthwhile but your mileage may vary.

I don't teach Buddhism, but I do see this work as a implementation of the Buddhadharma. If you want to learn Vajrayana, go find a competent teacher and do the work. I have nothing but the greatest respect for the Lamas and nothing in this book should be construed otherwise.

What is offered here is an enhancement of Thelema and a support for the practice of Magick.

Magick without Bodhicitta is Death.

Magick devoted to the benefit of all beings makes the world whole.

We need to get better at this, and that is the purpose of this body of work.

If there is any harm herein,  
may it fall upon me.  
If there is any good herein,  
may its benefit be dedicated to  
the complete liberation and supreme enlightenment  
of all beings, everywhere, pervading space and time.

*Sam Webster*

## The All-Beneficent Ra-Hoor-Khuit

*I ask you to sacrifice nothing at mine altar;  
I am the God who giveth all.  
Liber Tzaddi v20*

The cover art is a specific form of the principal godform of this body of practice. It was developed through dialogue and inspiration with the artist, Kat Lunoe, who executed the original in oils.

*Ra-Hoor-Khuit has the head of a hawk and a human body with blue-black skin. His head shows His consummate perspicacity and His skin shows His source in the Ground of Being. He is crowned with the solar disk in which arises the emerald Uraeus. The disk shows His compassionate, provident, and wrathful power and the Uraeus, His relentless drive. His human body shows He has taken up the Middle Way, free from the extremes of monism, dualism, eternalism or nihilism. He wears the collar of seven metals and twelve gems for the planets and the Zodiac and shows that His horizon is the Universe. He wears a white kilt belted with gold, gold ornaments, and His nemmes is sky blue barred with gold. The kilt shows His innate purity, the gold belt and ornaments, the fullness of His capabilities, and the nemmes, that His view is as wide as the sky. He is seated on a 49-petaled red rose entwined with white jasmine, showing the female and male potentials that give rise to His being. He is in the lotus posture to show His absolute stability. In His right hand is the wast, the double scepter, while His left is empty. The scepter is His rulership of form while His empty hand shows His rulership of the formless. He is winged to show His beneficent protection and all-pervading generosity. He is surrounded by flames to show His limitless energy. He is seated between the papyrus and lily of the Two Lands of Egypt to show His dominion over the whole world. Over His head are Hadit and Nuit, of Whose union He is a manifestation.*

*Before Him are His working tools: a dorje, a phurba, a chopper, a skull-bowl and hand-bell. His wast is pinning a serpent representing all obstacles, looking up at Him in gratitude for its liberation.*

*Offerings are placed before Him. A bowl of twelve gems to represent the Zodiac, six bars of metal to represent six of the seven planets, eight bowls to represent the four elements, ether and the three alchemical principles. With the sistrum, an offering of music and the mirror, representing both the planet Mercury and mind, all of the senses are likewise offered. The roses are there because He likes them. The two Trees of Life, aright and averse, complete the offering to Him of the entire Cosmos.*

*This particular form of Ra-Hoor-Khuit, called the All-Beneficent, is specifically an embodiment of His enriching and increasing powers.*

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# Preface

Postmodern critical theory teaches us that all texts are read through a frame or world view which highly conditions the interpretation of the text. Texts that admit of interpretations from multiple points of view, or frames, demonstrate therein their own richness, depth, and sometimes sanctity.

Liber AL vel Legis, also called the Book of the Law, or Liber AL (AL) as well as the other Crowleyan and non-Crowleyan Thelemic Holy Books evince these properties. There are roughly tens of thousands of Thelemites the world over, and of those I've met across the U.S., as well as the significant number of international visitors, their views of Thelema and its texts are at least as numerous as the number of persons. There are clusters of opinion, but we can hardly expect anything other than a rich ecology of ideas from this highly individualistic tradition.

Another important factor in the interpretation or understanding of a text is knowing its genera, especially with texts of spiritual import. Galileo fell afoul of this when the verse from Psalm 19v6 saying the sun moved, "its going forth is from the end of the heavens, his circuit to its ends," was taken as a scientific statement by the Catholic Church, and not as poetry.

In Western terms Liber AL is clearly some kind of apocalypse, as it makes a claim of revelation. However, it also has many elements congruent with the Indian genre of text called 'Tantra', which are sacred to the tradition of the same name. In particular, the Buddhist Tantras tend to have the characteristics of presenting a theory and goal of practice, a means or vehicle of practice and a divine form that embodies the practice and its successful outcome.

For the purpose of this work we will adopt the view of the Book of the Law as a Tantra, all the while knowing many other ‘readings’ co-exist. From this viewpoint will be drawn a body of practice to enable the user to attain to the realization Thelema promises.

What that realization is, each must determine for themselves. For me, it is a non-climaxing process whereby I integrate my actions with the All [cosmos, god] through contemplating the conundrum that my will is a manifestation of and inalienably united with the Divine Will of the Totality of Being, achieving harmony with the world while in life, and freedom in death. With the tools of Theurgy and Tantra, the Thelemic Mage advances upon the path.

This work builds on the Pagan Dharma articles published in *Gnosis* and *Pangaia* magazines in the 1990s and kept on-line at [www.OSOGD.org](http://www.OSOGD.org). They give an introduction to my view and some preliminary practices. Both have been updated and included herein. What those articles did not cover are the forms of Deity Yoga of which those preliminary techniques are parts. What follows is a method of Deity Yoga used in the Vajrayana composed in a manner useful to Pagan magick-users. It also assumes significant knowledge and skill in magick. It is not a beginner text, but an intermediate or advanced one.

All of the methods below have been ‘beta-tested’ through my own psyche and have proven efficacious, although some of the later practices in this book not as much as the earlier. Since I am not a Lama, nevermind a Buddha, I cannot guarantee that this is a correct interpretation of the Tibetan methodology, but I believe this will be of help to us all.

So as to not encroach on Tibetan Buddhism’s proprietary domain, and although their methods are long published, a design constraint was accepted to apply the formulae of invocation without using their words and letters. This would be a theft of identity and culture and thus unjustifiable. But using the principles as published and duly translated is righteous as a recovery or a replacement of our own lost technology. Further, it is justified because we need the medicine these practices provide. Also, no Lamas’ names have been mentioned as they have no responsibility for this work.

For the sake of exposition, the ancient and traditional mode of dialogue is adopted. Early in writing this work it became an epistle written to my wife and magical partner of eighteen years. She at times offered her own viewpoint on the teachings, illuminating them. I am forever in her debt for improving my writing down these years and for listening while this work was being crafted. This way is rooted in relationship. It is hoped that relationship will illuminate its character.

*Ancora Imparo*

[I am still learning]

Before the Western Gate of the World at San Francisco Bay

Autumn 2009

## 1

# Entering the Buddhadharma

*Thus I have made up...*

Beloved, you have accompanied me on this long journey to find the depth and meaning of Thelema, the Dharma and Tantra, experiencing the travails, failures and successes of this path with me. So, it is mete and proper, since I have been asked to write this small book, to write it to you. I know no one more receptive or properly curious about this subject so I will attempt to put in text the ways and means whereby you, I, and all others who walk this way may be able to read the Thelemic Holy Books as Tantras.

This is mostly a manual of practice, but as *Praxis* can not stand without *Theoria*, I will lightly explain the hows and whys. Certainly when it comes to the Dharma and Tantra, there are older, wiser and better informed sources than I. I would counsel their study as that will deepen and enrich your practice. Thelema is a more difficult issue in that much has been written but in that writing is much confusion. However, this text as a whole can be seen as an interpretation of the Thelemic Holy Books in general and the Book of the Law, Liber AL, in particular. I hope this will be sufficient and helpful.

I have written snippets about this subject in various fora so I will include some of that herein. Mostly, after some preliminary explanations to set our symbols and harmonize our conceptions, this text will explore practices that demonstrate the principles of Thelema and Tantra directly, since these paths lie beyond reason in the stubborn and irreducible empyric.

Dear One, let us start with Thelema it is as the less public and lesser known side of our path. At base, Thelema is a body of practice and thought rooted in a text of two hundred and twenty verses written in 1904 by Aleister Crowley called the Book of the Law. A number of years later under inspiration he

wrote a set of companion texts that further illuminate this path. Over the many years since a number of individuals upon reaching a certain phase in their practice have also written inspired texts rooted in the same source and with similar symbolism. Depending on the predilections of the reader these latter texts may or may not be considered along with Crowley's writings as part of the body of literature called collectively the Holy Books of Thelema.

Like many spiritual paths, Thelema concentrates on a single focus as the vehicle or impetus along the way. 'Thelema,' the word itself, is Greek meaning 'will.' Thelema is thus a path that engages primarily with the core ethical question, "What am I to do?" Thelema posits an 'answer' that is not an answer but a focus for attention and practice: "Do your will." This 'will' is seen as the innate presence of the Absolute Divine incarnate within every individual entity. The practice is to continually center our behavior upon this divine presence and let that be the guide to our actions. This strips away the lists of rules and regulations and demands of us the highest integrity in all we do. I know of no other ethical system that reaches this lofty plane. No thelemite, as we are called, can ever say that we did some evil because the rules said we could or should. The responsibility for our actions rests squarely on our own shoulders, and nowhere else.

This practice is especially difficult in the beginning. The neophyte must pass through many ordeals in coming to know what his or her will is and what are the right actions to be derived of it. Many have read the Book of the Law with mammalian eyes and seen in it an excuse to abuse those around them. These, the text itself warns, have fallen into the pit called Because and surely shall perish with the dogs of Reason for preying upon their neighbors. But more importantly, what value would there be in a text that tells us to return to a dog-eat-dog world? No! Only the foolish would read the text thus and they deserve the consequences.

But one who perseveres through the ordeals of this knowledge comes to a deep understanding of their integrity with the Living World and takes up their own part in ever-unfolding Cosmogony. It is for these, like yourself, My Love, that this book is writ. These participate in the great Law that is Love, knowing that Relationship is ordained and inextricable. In that fundamental unity, they find the right way of doing that relationship by manifesting forth the divinely given desire that is our individual will. Thus Love is the Law, Love under Will.

To this high and holy end we are given in the sundry texts methods and means whereby we can attain to and pass through the ordeals that lead unto this knowledge and thus eventually to the fullest articulation and accomplishment of our wills. After one hundred years the range of known practice is vast. We will take up the Tantric view in approaching this text as it illuminates many valuable elements.

We have no choice in the interpretation of our core text. Even though some claim that this is forbidden or that the discussion of our interpretations are forbidden, without discussion how can others benefit from our experi-



ence, our successes or our failures? No, this view is both false and hypocritical since it is *itself* an interpretation, and a restrictive one. If those who hold to this view would come out of their cave into the light of thousands of years of scriptural study they would know where that art stands today: every reader reads the text uniquely, none can tell another what the text would mean to that other, but each in sharing what they have seen enriches the other. This present writing is an offering to that end, that others may benefit from what I have seen and go yet farther.

Dearest, we also need to speak somewhat of Tantra. This Sanskrit word derived of ‘to weave,’ refers to the continuum of being and of mind. It arises when liturgical and magickal practices are placed in the service of attaining to enlightenment. While arising in India, it is close kin if not of the same flesh as the Classical Western practice of Theurgy and so easily understood by Western magickal users. Tech is Tech, and the tantrikas use the same tech we do but with the overlay of Indo-Tibetan culture. The particular variety that I work with is the Buddhist form of Tantra, which is both cosmopolitan (open to outsiders) and exquisitely focused on the attainment of enlightenment now.

One of my teachers taught that Vajrayana, one name for Tantric Buddhism, is not culturally bound. One of the goals of this work is to begin formulating a Western Tantric tradition. I have talked a bit about this on-line in the past so I will include here what I called “Entering the Buddhadharmā” on the Chthonic Ouranian Order’s listserv, August 2002.

*I find when exploring a new current the guardians of the current tend to take an interest in me until I resolve my relationship to that current. This is rarely a comfortable thing.*

*So, my exploration of things ‘Buddhist’ has not been easy or gentle, but it has been very fruitful. It began simply by taking a class in seminary on “Tibetan Contemplative Tradition” along with other classes on various other religions as a way of broadening my knowledge.*

*It was in this class that I met a Lama and was given the explanation of refuge, “We all need help, Refuge is asking for help.” For a variety of reasons this really worked for me. While important, this understanding of refuge was not the most impactful thing I got from him at the time. It was a practice called “Benefit for Beings Pervading Space” and the reason was because I could do it. This practice invokes Chenrezig, a.k.a. Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and wields that compassion through the mantra “Om Mani Peme Hung” to remediate the suffering of the six classes of beings caught in samsara.*

*Samsara, sometimes translated as “cyclical existence,” is called ‘Kor-wa’ in Tibetan, meaning “running in circles.” The idea is that these are beings who have no control as to how they incarnate or the condition of their lives. They are entirely enmeshed in their karma and this is unsatisfactory to them. The six classes of beings benefited by this practice are Gods, Jealous Gods (called by the Greeks ‘Titans’), Humans, Animals, Hungry Ghosts and Hell Beings.*

There is a lot in here that I have to gloss over but suffice it to say that the purpose of the rite is to remove some of the suffering of each of these kinds of beings in turn through the power of the mantra. Where this gets interesting is that while driving home from practice I kept finding myself filled with anger and other unpleasant emotions. And I could not get them to stop.

They became overwhelming. I was curled up in bed screaming, overloaded with all kinds of anguish and could not get my grounding. Through roundabout means I got a question to the Lama describing my condition and asking for advice. His reply was that I should rejoice.

Apparently it usually takes years of practice before one learns how to tie into the ground of suffering. I had done so in just a few sessions. The ground of suffering is the space or energy of the suffering of all beings. Those who can wield compassion to drain that domain and transform it into pleasure or power or wisdom, or whatever.

I was tying into the ground of suffering but I was not performing the transformation because I did not realize that the mantra was the tool with which to do the transform. Once this was explained to me, I knew exactly what to do. I wielded the mantra, fed it the suffering I was being overwhelmed with, and instantly the feelings were transformed into intense pleasure and energy.

None of this was because I am in any way special. It is because I am a mage and I can work magick, like any of you.

So, I continued to study. The next big piece for me was Steven Beyer's *The Cult of Tara*. This work is a highly detailed study of a set of Tibetan rituals. Interestingly to me, in order to explain Tibetan ritual magick, Beyer had to turn to the Western tradition, in fact to all of those names we know and love: Ficino, Agrippa, Levi, Crowley, etc.. This work is for me a Rosetta stone, one that showed me that the techniques of so-called 'oriental' ritual magick are no different than those of the Western tradition. It is just that their culture dedicated the same energy to ritual the West dedicated to music, so when it comes to ritual, while we are playing three chord rock & roll, they are playing symphonies.

But, tech is tech. The same principals used there are used here. In fact I found in this book the very method described in the *Asclepius*, the brief description in the *Hermetic Corpus* of drawing the daemon of a star into a statue to animate it. In *The Cult of Tara*, the statue was one of Tara, but here the full method and its theory were spelled out. I can attest to the fact that it works.

Now to *Thelema*. Uncle Al [as we fondly refer to Aleister Crowley], considered the *Book of the Law* as a sort of third testament. Appealing as that is, as a student of Western religion I've studied the genres of the scriptures and it doesn't quite fit. The closest thing to it is an apocalypse since it reveals something, but those usually involve someone being taken up to heaven or having a vision revealed in the temple. This one is different.

However there is a genre that very nicely matches *Liber AL*. In this genre a cosmology is often expressed, a specific view to practice is given and a godform is presented for the practitioner to wear. This genre is the kind of text called a *tantra*.

When I got exposed to the *Buddhadharma* I began to see *Thelema* in the stream of those working for the greater evolutionary purpose. It, and the rest of the Western

stream, the Hermetic, Rosicrucian, Alchymical, and others, I saw as part of one large process going on on this world, transcendent to any particular culture. (There have also been hints of this going on on other worlds). As I discovered the unity of Western and Eastern tech and so began to press on my understanding of the split, I came to realize that there was none save a historical division caused by the rise of Christianity and Islam.

In the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism there is a peculiar version of continuous revelation. Texts, called 'termas' or treasures, would be delivered to individuals who would be given the task of writing them down or figuring out how to apply them.

Pick your mythology as you will, in essence all such texts come from the fundamental Ground of Being out of which we all arise which is compassionate, intelligent and provident. The evidence for this is the Cosmos itself. In its continual process of trying to help us, it creates things like tantric texts. I think Liber AL is one of these.

Crowley had a hard time accepting "existence is pure joy" being a rationalist Buddhist at the time, but that was mostly due to a lack of education. From the fact that in the Thoth Deck, one of the last products of his life, we see in the Two of Wands and the Ten of Wands that he does not know the difference between a dorje and a phurba we can tell he never made contact with the Tantric or Vajrayana stream of Buddhism. This is the magick-using part of Buddhism. This is also the part of Buddhism that would very well understand what is going on in the Book of the Law, if they could only get through the code and Golden Dawn symbolism.

I'm not going to do a complete analysis here but for instance many people have trouble with the presentation of the Ra-Hoor-Khuit in the third chapter. However anyone who has read the practice of a wrathful Buddha would consider Ra-Hoor-Khuit only mildly wrathful. Stamping down on the wretched and the weak is a gentle approach to correcting suffering compared to some of the actions of the dakinis.

However, this I will point out: Thelema is the first current in the West that roots itself in the Not. This is what the Buddhists call 'shunyata,' poorly translated as 'the void.' H.V. Guenther, the Tibetologist, translates the term as "the sphere whose center is everywhere and its circumference is nowhere." Also, the 'Dharma', translated 'Law', is based on the awareness of this shunyata and is its fundamental key, i.e., 61, 8, 80, 418, if you take my meaning.

So these are the parallels I make: Nuit is Prajñāparamita, the perfection of wisdom embodied, shunyata given a face and form, the mother of all the Buddhas (Buddha means awakened one), and the basis for all refuge. Hadit is the inherent buddha-nature within each of us, already enlightened or 'perfect.' Ra-Hoor-Khuit is the union of entitative being (Hadit) and world (Nuit) and is the godform or Yi-dam for Thelemites to take in their practice as a way of articulating their will. (Not necessarily all the time but as an archetype).

I've shared with you a refuge verse I composed on the spot previously:

In the ground of being, from which all things arise,  
 In the inherently enlightened nature within each and everyone,  
 In the inexorable causation the magi know,  
 I take refuge.

## 6 Tantric Thelema

*If I were to spin this back around to Thelemic terminology it would be:*

Nu is my refuge  
as Hadit my light  
and Ra-Hoor-Khu  
is the strength, force,  
vigor of my arms.

*For me the proof of the pudding is in the tasting. I used the methodology mentioned above and many of its components to build a set of rituals using the Thelemic godforms and symbolism and used the View, the insight gained from the Buddhadharma to focus it. In one of these Ra-Hoor-Khuit is the deity-form the practitioner takes on in exactly the same 'Buddhist' manner. Yet the ritual is entirely Thelemic.*

*For me there is that which lies beyond all of our cultural view points that drives all sentient beings towards their complete happiness. The Buddhadharma and Thelema are two manifestations of this same source and as such have harmonious union.*

*I eventually took refuge with a Lama to make peace with the guardians of the Buddhadharma, to further commit myself to the great work of bringing happiness to all beings, and to unite within myself two approaches to the same goal.*

*For me, I have one life, thus one path, and I find value in uniting in that path the truth however and wherever I find it."*

My Dearest, for the amusement of those so concerned, if I were challenged by someone about the origins of Liber AL or its author and the possibility of reading it as a tantra, in a playful mood I would say that Aiwaz is one of the secret names of Padmasambhava.

*Om Ah Hung Vajra Guru Pame Aiwaz Hung!*

After all, who can say that it is not?

Having laid out the elements of what we have to work with, let's get to the work.

**Table of Relationships**

Thelema	Buddha-Dharma	Translation & Referent
Nuit	<i>Prajñāparamita or Shunyata</i>	Void or Nun
Hadit	<i>Tathagatagarba</i>	<i>Buddha-Nature</i>
<i>Ra-Hoor-Khuit</i>	<i>Yi-dam</i>	<i>Mind-Protector &amp; Godform</i>



## 2

# Taking Refuge, Dedicating Merit

My Love, we have a long road ahead of us to explore Tantric Thelema. Both knowledge and skill must be acquired before we can approach understanding. Since this work is focused on practice we'll let practice drive the explanation.

*Husband, before we go so deep, give me again the Pagan Dharma teachings. I want them refreshed in my mind before we go on...*

As you will, My Love. They begin with a call for help. . .

*Hail to the Tathagatagarba in all beings!*

Our era of profound spiritual crisis is equally an era of spiritual foment rivaled only by that time two thousand years ago that saw the emergence of Gnosticism, Christianity, and the Hermetic Tradition in the West and Mahayana Buddhism and Vedanta in the East. Today, as then, this transformative crisis is being fueled by the confluence of cultures, none of which will remain the same for that contact. Two such cultures, contemporary Paganism and Tibetan or Vajrayana Buddhism, have the potential to deeply revitalize each other and positively effect our world.

Paganism has survived awful abuse for seventeen hundred years. It is a testimony to the vitality and resilience of the culture that it survives in any form today. Outside of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, possibly Masonry and perhaps the Jews, contemporary Paganism preserves the only remaining living ritual tradition in the West. Protestantism has vestiges of ritual in baptism and such rites but mostly is a preaching tradition. Even the High

Churches have preserved only a narrow range of ritual practice. The Pagans however still create rituals from generative grammars as needed to supplement the more established forms. Yet due to the abuse the tradition has experienced the degree of self-critical reflection and refinement of that ritual tradition is very thin. At most we have only a generation or two's examination of our process, which, while helpful, is no match for a thousand years of sustained attention.

Over the years of practicing Pagan magickal ritual I have noticed a variety of consistent problems with our practice. Many solutions for these have been attempted with varying success. When I was introduced to the Tibetan contemplative tradition (read Vajrayana), one of the points my teacher made was how the practitioners noted problems with their practices and with insight (and I suspect lots of trial and error and sharing results) they were able to solve them. Indeed, he noted, most books of Tibetan ritual practice were structured with the first chapter or so giving the practice itself and the remaining many chapters delineating all the ways the practice could go wrong and how to fix them. He also shared some of the more general techniques and what they were remedies for. Perhaps because ritual is ritual and it is humans doing it regardless of where on the world they are, the same problems he mentioned among the Buddhists I had seen among Pagans. Shamelessly, and in true Hermetic manner, I began applying some of the remedies in my own ritual practice and with my community. Needless to say they helped.

One of these that was very easy to adopt was the dedication of the benefit of the ritual to all beings (this of course includes the ritual practitioners). Either by verbally dedicating the benefit in this manner or by 'sweeping' the good that we have done into an energy ball in the center of the ritual space and tossing it up into the sky to rain down on all beings, we were easily able to incorporate this ritual element. However effective as this sharing might be, the most immediate benefit to the group was the complete absence of the post-ritual blues, ungroundedness and general irritability that I and many other practitioners have experienced. Instead a calm sense of satisfaction tends to pervades the space.

Another more pervasive issue among magickal practitioners is the problem of magick going awry or causing harm, which it can easily do since it is refracted through our subconscious (thus not wholly under our conscious control) and since it is simply a power of nature. With our practice of magick comes an interaction with the world that requires, due to its power, a deeper level of responsibility and accountability in life than for non-practitioners. Instead, we regularly cause trouble for ourselves, but this is more due to a lack of skill than necessity.

Looking back over our history, I wonder if, in the frightful need to transmit the *how*, the Western Magical Tradition lost the *why*. In the face of oppression and ridicule the practice of magick was nearly, but not successfully, exterminated. But those who transmitted the core of our way forward in time did not include as inherent the process of rooting our work in compassion.



Its absence today, this lack of high intention, cripples us. Though we value the Earth and root to it when we do our work, this is not enough to place the momentum of the greatest good for all behind our magickal efforts, our spells and rites. Yet by generating compassion we can invoke the inherent power of the entire Universe driving us all toward our eventual enlightenment to strengthen and fulfill our magick.

The Buddhists call this 'Bodhicitta' and make a particular point of generating it at the beginning of every ritual. This is also what the Mahayana Buddhadharmas brought to the magick users of India and Tibet, giving rise to Buddhist Tantra and the Vajrayana. This name means Diamond or Lightning Vehicle, and is the ritual magic using part of Buddhism.

Vajrayana is what happens when a magickal culture becomes Buddhist and decides on Compassion. And is not compassion needed by every person, organization, business, government, etc.? Thus a practice that makes a virtue of compassion/Bodhicitta would be helpful to and for all. But, when done by magick users it is particularly powerful. Is it not our responsibility, since we have the power, to invoke compassionate action? In a deep sense this is a means of casting a vote in the ultimate franchise by determining what kind of world we live in.

The great hope that we can integrate Vajrayana practice in Pagan ritual is made clear by Stephen Beyer's work *The Cult of Tara*. There he shows that the only way to interpret Tibetan ritual practice is to take seriously their view of the reality of magick. To do this Beyer had to turn to the Western magickal tradition to find useful categories of analysis. When he returned with these tools to the Tibetan culture, he found that the same (not merely similar) methods were being used in both traditions. I note in my study that the principal difference, besides the presence of the Buddhist view, is that the Tibetan techniques are much more thorough.

The structural identity of the two systems permits us to conclude that should the Pagans adopt the practice of generating Bodhicitta they will (potentially) achieve the same result, a compassion-based practice that is both effective and helpful to self and others.

The contemporary Pagan and Magickal communities share an oddly interconnected history with the Buddhadharmas. While some scholars have suggested connections between classical Paganism and the classical Far East, and some connections may be found during the Renaissance, it is with the first translations of the Eastern holy texts into European languages that the initial and most obvious effect appears and that in reaction. Christopher McIntosh, in his biography of Eliphas Levi, determined that one of Levi's motivations was a sense that it is all well and good that the Eastern traditions have all these esoteric spiritual practices, but so has the West—we just have to dig harder. And so while the Transcendentalists and German Romantics were enraptured by the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita, and the Pali Canon, Levi was fusing Hebraic Kabbalah with the Tarot and goetic conjurations and Paracelsian elemental work with Agrippa's redaction of classical theurgy.

Within a generation Madame Blavatsky would be in contact with “the Tibetan” and other teachers from the orient and claimed that her Secret Doctrine was rooted in Buddhist teachings. While this last was debatable due to the doctrine of the soul she presented being contrary to fundamental Buddhist teachings, both the text and her teachings show evidence of Buddhist philosophy intertwined with Western ‘occult’ thought. Joscelyn Godwin tracks this process in his *Theosophical Enlightenment*.

In the next generation, Aleister Crowley takes up the same attraction to Buddhism in its Sri Lankan form partly under the tutelage of Alan Bennett, his principal teacher of magick. Crowley later integrated the yogic techniques they learned from their mutual native teacher with magickal practice, and further blended some Buddhist principles into the Thelemic Holy Books, notably Liber B vel Magus. Bennett went even farther by abandoning magick and becoming a Buddhist monk, the second Westerner to do so. He formed the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland, an organization to bring Buddhism to the West, but the severe monastic tradition he brought was not readily accepted by Europeans. Godwin, at the end of his book, wonders what it would have been like if Bennett and Crowley had discovered Tantric Buddhism, the Vajrayana or Tibetan Buddhism. What would have happened then?

One of the key features of Buddhism is its thrust towards enlightenment. The classical Pagan tradition had similar goals. Plato had his aspiration towards Beauty through philosophy, Plotinus towards the One through contemplation. The Mystery traditions were said to free the aspirant from the fear of death and secure a pleasant afterlife. Christianity itself holds out the hope of heaven. Yet, while in each of these systems the ultimate aim was clearly formulated, in contemporary Paganism the goal is vague. Some speak of enlightenment, or of attaining unity with the Godhead (Goddess-head?) or perhaps some particular deity. Ceremonialists have inherited the Renaissance goal of the divinization of the Mage, Prospero’s attainment of becoming one with the Cosmos and being able to wield its power. However, the methods of attainment are unclear.

Even this being the case, I would still contend that the strongest notions about our goal in Pagan practice are deeply influenced by the impact of Eastern religions on our society. Any ideas we have about enlightenment are qualified by our apprehension of Buddhist concepts of Nirvana and the Vedanta Hindu Moksha or Liberation. Some of this comes from the historical intertwining of Buddhism with the Magical tradition. Some of this comes from the efflorescence of the Sixties, formative years for the current Pagan revival, and some far older, such as the Jain influence in pre-Alexandrian times.

Nonetheless there is a certain alien quality to these views with respect to the contemporary Pagan view of the divineness of the Earth. Each of them postulates that there is some place else, some place better, where we would rather be. This is Gnostic dualism, and leads, as amply demonstrated by our current ecological crisis, to the denigration of the here and now, of the world

on which we live, even of our bodies and the pleasure available in the immediate moment.

But when we push past the initial understandings of Buddhism, past the Theravada/Hinayana, past the Mahayana, we can find in the most exalted forms of Buddhism a view that corresponds directly to the Pagan view of the sanctity of the immediate. It is in the Vajrayana of Tantric Buddhism and in Dzog-Chen, “the Great Perfection” that we find an explicit positive valuation of the world and the body.

In Vajrayana, the challenging aspects of the world are not avoided, like the Theravadin, or antidoted as in Mahayana, but embraced and transformed into pristine and purified ‘wisdoms.’ The Vajrayana practitioner strives to experience all sound as mantra (divine speech), all vision as mandala (divine image) as well as all the senses pure and holy, and all beings as Goddesses and Gods, something H.V. Guenther calls the “symbolic recreation of the world.”

In a sense, Pagans strive to do no less. One less than ultimate goal of Paganism is to live in a world that is loved and respected and cared for by all the people in it. To do this most Pagans strive to see the very Earth as divine. Many of our rituals embody the value of a sacred world and many of them seek to “heal the Earth” (however this is understood). Many Pagan rituals also focus on experiencing and calling forth the innate divine nature in the participants. There, of course, remains the question of the efficacy of these rites.

In the school of Buddhism called the Great Perfection or Dzog-Chen, this process is taken to its ultimate conclusion, foregoing the transformational quality of Vajrayana. Rather, the Dzog-Chen practitioner seeks the inherent purity in all things, and integrates with the experience while not seeking to change anything about it. This is in accord with the Pagan contra-gnostic view of the immediate goodness of the here and now. In Dzog-Chen this process is said to liberate the practitioner from creating any more karma and eventually lead to the Great Transference in which the body is transformed into pure awareness and light upon death, or in advanced practitioners even before then. Certain deep teachings of the Ceremonialist path speak to this realization, yet it is the distinct failing of the Western path that we have not produced anyone of the caliber of a Tibetan Tulku.

Fortunately we are not finished. If we examine the history of Vajrayana’s creation and development as outlined by Miranda Shaw in *Passionate Enlightenment* we can see that the contemporary Pagan movement is in a state very similar to that of the cultural stratum out of which Tantric Buddhism arose and also similar to pre-Buddhist Tibet when Padmasambhava arrived to spread the Dharma.

Unfortunately, the Pagan tradition is floundering and needs a deeper, richer, taproot by which to develop itself beyond mere spellcraft and seasonal celebrations. [See Greer, York, and others for emergent efforts.] When Buddhism escaped the hands of the monastics and attained to the greater

view of the Mahayana it began to spread outside the Buddhist philosophical colleges to the villages and craftsfolk. There, among the native magick-using folk of India who were used to honoring the seasons and their many deities, some heard the call of the greater view. They embraced the understanding of the void nature at the ground of things (Shunyata) and saw that compassion (Bodhicitta) was the necessary corollary and result. Rather than give up the magick and methods of worship they had known for countless generations, they brought them to bear on the task of attaining to the complete realization of this View. Thus was born Tantric, Vajrayana Buddhism.

I find it striking that, according to Shaw, it was circles of women seeking buddhahood in feminine form (contrary to the prevailing opinion) that led to this development. They were usually common folk and craftswomen and are accompanied by tales of their enterprising and accomplished skillfulness. They welcomed men into these circles but always with the requirement of the adoration of the feminine as the embodiment of the goal. This is little different from contemporary Pagan circles, whether Gardnerian, Thelemic, Eclectic or Dianic. The automatic authority available to women on the Pagan path is a powerful attraction to women (and men) and one of its deepest strengths.

By understanding that Pagans and Buddhists both cultivate the Bodhisattvic path and share a world view that makes such practice meaningful we can understand how they both can find happiness in innumerable lives in cyclic existence.

Buddhism, like Paganism, has many flavors. In Buddhism they are layered developmentally and any attempt to understand or answer any question depends on which view of Buddhism one is operating from. Interestingly, any particular Buddhist practitioner might choose to speak from any of the three major levels depending of the nature of the question and the querent.

In Hinayana, the first layer, practitioners focus on eliminating the causes of suffering in themselves personally. They withdraw from the world and practice meditation and good behavior until they are enlightened. Mahayana was in part a reaction to the isolation of the monastic life. Its practitioners chose a 'Greater View' that rooted all actions in the dedication to help all beings attain enlightenment, not just the practitioner. This arose from the view prevalent on the Indian subcontinent that all beings incarnate ceaselessly on this world or on others in every variety of form, whether human, animal, spirit or deity. Thus any being you meet, ant, human, or Goddess, may have been formerly your mother (or choose your own preferred relationship), or will be in the future. Being that we are all thus related we should use the care and love that we would have for family and friends to relate to all beings and seek to aid them accordingly.

In Mahayana Buddhism, one who has a thought that has the goal of helping more than the one thinking is having a Bodhisattvic thought. One who dedicates their life, however imperfectly, to the benefit of beings beside one's self, has become a Bodhisattva. The Mahayanists say that this one has truly

entered the path towards enlightenment and every act dedicated to the benefit of others helps move the practitioner and all other beings towards enlightenment. When this aspiration becomes an unshakable part of one's being a transformation occurs on the part of the practitioner: they no longer seek enlightenment as a way to escape cyclic existence. They give up the intention to leave behind cyclic existence because in cyclic existence there remain those who still suffer. The Bodhisattva seeks enlightenment in order to be more helpful to beings since the attainment of enlightenment brings with it greater power and skill. The Bodhisattva also chooses to stay in the realm of cyclic existence in order to be where the help is needed.

Tell me, is this not true of every great magick-user we know of in the West, whether as legendary as Merlin or as concrete as the late Scott Cunningham? And do not many of us have this as some measure of our intention as we live our lives and when we work our magicks?

*Thank you, my Husband, but you are being too theoretical. How is this done?*

Very well, My Love, the first step along our journey begins, as you know, with asking for help. Learning to ask for and receive that help is one of the greatest supports on this long road. This practice is similar to a grounding in that it calms and clears us before getting to work. However here we do not simply ground to the planet, rather we ground to what the planet grounds to, the Ground of Being.

The Buddhists call this kind of practice 'Taking Refuge'. Originally I had a problem with this idea. It seemed to be asking me to leave the field of struggle and go hide somewhere. This seemed wrong to me, even if the hiding place was the lap of the Buddha. But as I mentioned before, a Lama once explained it to me: "Everyone needs help. Refuge is asking for help." So, at the beginning of every practice, we take a moment to ask for help.

We ask for help from three kinds of sources. The most obvious source is the host of enlightened beings like the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. This includes beings of all classes, Gods, humans, animals and even demons that have attained to enlightenment. Part of this group is also every other being that has vowed to work for the benefit of beings. Some Gods and other spirits have taken this vow and although they have not attained to the supreme enlightenment stand ready to help when asked. They are sometimes called "Those Who Promised." My understanding is that none of these beings will ever force help upon us, although they may wish us well. Instead we must ask for it.

The ultimate source of refuge is the Ground of Being. This 'Ground' is a word-symbol or metaphor that refers to that source out of which all things and all beings arise in the same way as plants arise from the soil. This source is profound, in that there is nothing deeper, powerful, in that everything arises from it, and provident, in that it provides for and supports all things. The Ground of Being is inherently enlightened otherwise enlightenment

would not be possible or even a concept. From this ultimate source, the very Ground of Being, we may draw all the resources and help we need. We will be exploring the nature of this 'Ground' along our journey.

The last source of refuge is nearest to home. Even though it is covered up by the muck of our karmas, within us is our already enlightened nature, which through practice we can expose and learn to live in. Regardless of how obscured it is it is always present in us and everyone around us. When we ask for help from this we are asking for help from our own innate enlightenment and that of those we work with and in doing so invite that part of us all to become more manifest. In life it comes flickering through because it is irrepressible. Our challenge is to cultivate it and make it present more and more over time. This practice draws on this awareness and begins the process of cultivation. The method itself is simple:

### **Taking Refuge by the 3 Ahs—**

#### 1) Asking for Help

- a) With your eyes open visualize a white capital letter 'A' at your heart.
- b) Take a deep breath and sound a long 'ah'. (Not 'a', and do this whenever you see an 'A' in a practice. We will be doing this often).
- c) Let the vibration center on the letter at your heart and let it radiate light out in all directions. Let the light and sound carry your sincere desire to be helped along the Path.
- d) While sounding and visualizing, imagine the Host of Enlightened Beings and all beings that have vowed to help, your favorite Gods and Spirits, in the space all around you.
- e) Imagine that they hear your 'ah' and turn to face you, as does the enlightened part of you and everyone present, as does the attention of the Ground of Being.

#### 2) Receiving Help

- a) Close your eyes and take another deep breath.
- b) Sound 'ah' and imagine all of those beings lighting up a white letter 'A' at their hearts and as they join you in sounding 'ah', they radiate white light at you (and anyone you are working with). This light fills up your body with 'all good things' and pushes out 'all bad things'. Traditionally this is visualized as white nectar poured into your body through the crown of your head filling it like a vase. All of the 'bad stuff' is pushed out of your body like a black tar or oily smoke, or if you want to be creative (and traditional) poisonous insects, snakes and the like, corresponding to the obstructions in your heart and life.

#### 3) Sharing Help

- a) Having been purified and empowered by the blessing of these beings take a deep breath and open your eyes.

- b) Sound ‘ah’ and visualize the ‘A’ at your heart again. This time the Host of Beings sound ‘ah’ with you and you all radiate white light in all directions helping all beings that will accept it and wishing all beings well. You can imagine a wave of white light pouring over everyone you can imagine suffering and being liberated from their hurt and troubles. The news is a good source of images for this.

Take a week to learn this practice. Do it when you first awake or over coffee or whatever is your morning routine and before you start your day. Do it again in the middle of your day or when you first come home from work or school. Do it a third time before going to bed. Do it as slowly as you can. Later, when you combine this with other practices the investment of time will pay off. You will have this imbedded deeply enough into your psyche to make a more rapid pass through it effective. This practice or one like it will open all ritual and meditative sessions. As you well know, My Love, we also use it to start all meetings and gatherings. Like the Freemasons say, it is wise to begin all important undertakings by first invoking the blessing of heaven.

Before we leave the subject of Refuge, My Dear, allow me to quote from our own Aleister Crowley on the Three Refuges. In his inimitable way Uncle Al shines a special wisdom on this practice. Please note he spells things differently, drawing from the Pali and not the Sanskrit.

The Three Refuges by Aleister Crowley  
(Chapter XII from “Science and Buddhism,”  
reprinted in *The Collected Works of Aleister Crowley, vol. II, 1906*)

Buddham Saranangachami.  
Dhammam Saranangachami.  
Sangham Saranangachami.  
I take my refuge in the Buddha.  
I take my refuge in the Dhamma.  
I take my refuge in the Sangha.

*This formula of adhesion to Buddhism is daily repeated by countless millions of humanity; what does it mean? It is no vain profession of reliance on others; no cowardly shirking of burdens—burdens which cannot be shirked. It is a plain estimate of our auxiliaries in the battle; the cosmic facts on which we may rely, just as a scientist “relies” on the conservation of energy in making an experiment. Were that principle of uncertain application, the simplest quantitative experiment would break hopelessly down. So for the Buddhist.*

I take my refuge in the Buddha.  
*That there was once a man who found the Way is my encouragement.*

I take my refuge in the Dhamma.

*The Law underlying phenomena and its unchanging certainty; the Law given by the Buddha to show us the Way, the inevitable tendency to Persistence in Motion or Rest—and Persistence, even in Motion, negates change in consciousness—these observed orders of fact are our bases.*

I take my refuge in the Sangha.

*These are not isolated efforts on my part; although in one sense isolation is eternally perfect and can never be overcome (i.e. on normal planes), in another sense associates are possible and desirable. One third of humanity are Buddhists; add men of Science and we form an absolute majority; among Buddhists a very large proportion have deliberately gone out from social life of any kind to tread these paths of Research.*

*Is the Way very hard? Is the brain tired? The results slow to come? Others are working, failing, struggling, crowned here and there with rare garlands of success. Success for ourselves, success for others; is it not Compassion that binds us closer than all earthlier ties? Aye, in joy and in sorrow, in weakness and in strength, do I take my refuge in the Sangha.*

## §

*Distributing or Dedicating the Merit—*

The next practice is to be combined with the first as soon as you are comfortable with Taking Refuge by the 3 Ahs. It will conclude every practice we do and at first will seem counter-intuitive. Yet experience has shown it to be essential if we do not want to be deflected from our goal. It is called 'Dedicating the Merit'.

One of the negative side effects of magickal practice is an inflated ego. Conjuring the powers of the world, conversing with Gods and Angels, transforming ourselves into vast and cosmic beings takes its toll on that part of our psyche that has to moderate the vagaries of our lives in the world. It tends to identify itself with the forces we work with and gets attached to the exalted states we achieve. It starts to think it really is those things and should be treated as such by those around it. To some extent this is true, but the problem is that we get bitchy or giddy or depressed after our practices and this destroys their benefit and generates conflicts with those around us. The Buddhists, having the opportunity to study the effects of their practices for hundreds of years and through many psyches, hit upon an elegant technique for preventing this: giving it all away.

I know it sounds strange, Dear One, to give away the benefit of your hard work, but stay with me on this. When we give it away we dedicate the benefit of our actions to all beings. In the set of all beings is included ourselves. So, in this sense, we are giving away the benefit to ourselves, but not in a generic way. We explicitly dedicate the benefit to help all beings on the path to their release from hurt and their attainment to enlightenment. We are adding to the general thrust of evolution that affects all beings and in so doing align ourselves with that thrust and stand to benefit all the more from it.



The alternative is to try to hang on to the benefit or energy of the work we have done. The problem is that once our attention wavers the energy will collapse into our old patterns and habits that we are trying to change with the practice just completed. If this happens the habit or bad karma will only be ground into us more intensely. It is like trying to hang on to a drop of water by putting it on a plate. Given time, it will evaporate. However, if we put that drop into the ocean of the evolutionary thrust it will be saved and add to that great and beneficent power, so that it has the maximum impact in the world.

It also clears the energy of the practitioners in a manner similar to how we Pagans may touch the Earth at the end of our rites but in a way that preserves the effect and purpose of the rite, not simply discharging excess energy. Some avoid these deleterious effects of ritual by other means. They discharge the energy of the ritual in a “cone of power” or similar technique. If it is discharged there is less or none to cause difficulty. Unfortunately, the energy is rarely put into anything other than the focus of the spell. It could do so much more.

If the energy has been discharged or formed into such a conviviality that extremes of egotistical or self-absorbed emotional discharge are avoided, there remains the subtle after-effect on the ego for having been such a vast and powerful being as a deity. Even when all is said and done, the sense of self importance brought about in our invocations dulls our compassionate acceptance of others and leads us into the errors of judgment that cause harm and dissension; it makes flaming egoists out of us.

What has been presented thus far is only the negative reasons for distributing the benefit of actions. There is a carrot to match this stick. Along with the Buddha-nature present and guiding all beings there is in all of them the desire for happiness and satisfaction. As such this drive has a ubiquitous momentum that can be worked with or against, but can not be ignored. By dedicating the benefit of our actions, particularly our rituals and magick, to the benefit of all beings that they attain to that ultimate happiness and satisfaction called enlightenment, we are tying our magicks into the great stream of evolution, the predominant thrust and momentum in the Universe which, however slowly, moves steadily onward. Our magicks when dedicated to this noble end will be carried along with it to their successful conclusion. Or if they are not actually helpful to the process of benefiting beings they, our magicks, will be simply nullified with a minimum of repercussions.

There is also the added effect that by placing the benefit of actions into the evolutionary stream it is like placing money in a bank where it can not be lost, harmed or destroyed. Once that benefit is given to all beings it will continually have effect on everyone including ourselves. It can not be destroyed by any later negative actions we might perform. It simply adds to the thrust in Being towards the eventual enlightenment of all beings.

**Dedication of Merit—****Say:**

May the benefit of this act and all acts be dedicated  
 Unto the Complete Liberation and Supreme Enlightenment  
 Of all Beings everywhere pervading Space and Time, So Mote It Be.

May the benefits of practice, ours and others'  
 Come to fruition, Ultimately and Immediately  
 And we remain in the State of Presence—Ah!

The first verse is the general dedication of the merit of our actions. 'Complete Liberation' is a way of referring to the end of suffering. 'Supreme Enlightenment' is a name for that state wherein all of our potentials have been realized. The last line states the focus of our dedication: all beings. In the Buddhist tradition they are referred to as all 'sentient beings' those that possess 'minds'. This is the largest and most all embracing concept of 'mind'. It is everything that feels or reacts to its environment, so perhaps they might use the word 'alive'. This raises the question as to what is alive? Since I have had some very interesting conversations with rocks, machinery, and forces of Nature, I drop the qualifiers and say 'Beings'. In order to point to all of them, the verse invokes the two interpenetrating realms in which all beings dwell, Space and Time, thus covering all places in the past, present and future. It may read like legalese but it is thorough.

The second part is a verse of well-wishing for all practitioners, including one's self. Here we specifically add our energy in support of all who are on the Path. With the last line we enter into the State of Presence, that state where we are in deep communion and contemplation with the world we are in as we sound 'Ah' one last time. While it may take a while to achieve this realization the steady use of it at the end of all practices is very effective. This final 'Ah' is in essence the same as the last 'Ah' in the Refuge practice and the same wave of benefit can be visualized here. Do this daily with Refuge for a week before going on.

*Generating Bodhicitta—*

The third practice to learn completes the set required to produce what the Buddhist ritual masters call "Good at the Beginning, Good in the Middle, Good at the End." We establish good at the beginning by taking refuge and good at the end by dedicating the Merit, but the key to success in practice is good in the middle. This is called Bodhicitta, literally 'Awakened Mind' and translatable as 'Wisdom Attitude.' It is the correct motivation one needs to take in practice to bring about true success.

My Love, Magick without Bodhicitta is Death. If we labor for enlightenment only for ourselves we become ego-bound and ultimately destroy ourselves, yet if we seek the Supreme Enlightenment for the benefit of all beings, attaining to Power so that we may aid those in need, then does the

entire Universe conspire to aid us. Please note the strong contrast this makes with Christianity's notion of self-sacrifice. Whereas Christians would expend themselves for others' benefit, the most extreme example being martyrdom, in the Buddhadharmā this is understood to reify the belief in a 'self' to offer and thus would lead the practitioner away from enlightenment. The alternative they propose can function regardless of your view of the 'self' existing or not. By simply seeking benefit for all beings, the set of which includes the practitioner, the aspiration helps everyone, and if not immediately then eventually.

The image here is of the practitioner, viewing the plight of innumerable sentient beings adrift in an ocean of suffering, who is moved to want to help them all. When contemplating how to do this, the practitioner realizes that without enlightenment and magickal power little can be done to help them. The practitioner therefore commits himself to assail the rigors of training in the Magickal and Meditative Arts so as to attain to Complete Liberation and the Supreme Enlightenment.

A traditional approach would be making a declaration at this point in the ritual or practice something like:

*There are innumerable beings trapped in suffering  
I vow to save them all  
From now until the realm of suffering is emptied  
I seek enlightenment*

There is a thread running through many Pagan rituals, often implicit, that the ritual serves to advance us spiritually. The Tibetan Buddhists make this explicit in all their rituals. They take it further by binding the motivation to seek ultimate spiritual attainment, called generically 'Enlightenment,' to the benefit of all beings. The practitioner seeks enlightenment not merely to be able to escape suffering themselves, but to be able to use the power gained by achieving enlightenment to help all other beings to the same state. This act of generosity is precious in that it benefits many as well as being the only way to attain the supreme realization. It has the added benefit of tying any act or ritual to the thrust of evolution while adding the energy of the ritual to the momentum driving the practitioner towards enlightenment.

But in Thelema and magick we approach a deeper level of practice that operates on not so much of an anthropocentric level but challenges our experience of the world ontologically. Nuit counsels us, "Let there be no difference made among you between any one thing & any other thing for thereby there cometh hurt." (AL1.22)

There is a specific form of Generating Bodhicitta used in the Dzog-Chen tradition of Tibetan Buddhism that is particularly suited for Pagans. It stresses the already-enlightened nature of all beings and makes a commitment to viewing all things in that light. This view was taken when composing a short verse that is said three or more times after Taking Refuge and before begin-

ning the main part of the rite. It is also an attitude to be carried through the entire ritual. As a commitment is being made this verse is sometimes called the ‘Vow of Purity’.

### **Generating Bodhicitta—**

#### **Say:**

All is pure and present,  
And has always been so.  
To this realization  
I commit myself—  
Pure and Total presence.

This method focuses on the fruit of practice, the realization of the purity and immediate presence of all beings, as the driving force of the practice. When said and intended, practitioners become instantly aware of the extent to which they do not actually perceive all phenomenon as pure and present. This contrast generates a powerful thrust towards the realization of that state which can then be used in the subsequent ritual practice. By recognizing that this state of purity and presence applies to all beings, the force that is generated includes the motivation to bring all beings to this same awareness.

Although you are learning it third, it is to be done between Refuge and the Dedication of Merit. Again, do this for a week before going on.

### *About Modalities—*

Before we go on, a word about ‘visualization’. There are many modalities through which we perceive and interact with the world: vision, hearing, touch, smell, taste and thought. Most of us process the world and remember our experiences primarily through one of these, though another may be a strong second. To figure this out in your case ask yourself how you remember experiences. Do you have an image in your mind, or do you remember what everyone said? The first would be a visual memory, the latter auditory. Also ask how you solve problems. Do you visualize a solution or talk it through, or do you ‘feel it out’? The first is visual again (this is the dominant mode in our culture), talk is aural, the last is tactile. Some folk sniff out problems, and I’m sure that somebody out there can taste the solution, though I’ve never met them. Pure cognition without sensory reference would be the thought modality, but this is the realm of the noetic and we will leave that for another discussion.

The reason for bringing this up is that ‘visualization’ in the sense of seeing the phases of a practice is not the only way to get the job done. Sound and touch are also just as effective. For instance, the Tibetans tend to focus on the visual while the Vedic tradition is auditory. I’m sure the other senses could be used as well. However, in writing this, I can’t always refer to all of the modalities. So when I say ‘visualize’ know that you should use the modality that works for you. As an example I don’t really visualize pentagrams when I draw

them. I feel them as a diamond-like density in space before me, invisible but functioning in exactly same way as a blazing image of one. Similarly in the Refuge practice, I feel the waves of energy passing into me and over the world with the vibration of the sound I'm making, more than see them.

When there is some special value in it I will refer to the variations in the practices that the modalities expose. Sometimes practices demand the use of a specific modality because the action is being done with one of them. In these cases do your best. It will strengthen your sub-dominant modality. The rest of the time, translate the practice into your strength, as you need to.



### *About the Author*

Sam Webster, M. Div., Mage, has taught magick publicly since 1984. He graduated from Starr King School for the Ministry at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley in 1993. He is an Adept of the Golden Dawn and a cofounder of the Chthonic-Ouranian Templar order, as well as an initiate of Wiccan, Buddhist, Hindu and Masonic traditions. His work has been published in a number of journals such as *Green Egg*, *Reclaiming Quarterly*, *Mezlim*, and *Gnosis*. He founded the Open Source Order of the Golden Dawn in 2001 ([www.OSOGD.org](http://www.OSOGD.org)), and serves the Pagan community principally as a priest of Hermes.

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