

108 Bows
of
Great
Repentance



ABOUT BOWING MEDITATION

Most Buddhist paths include some form of bowing, or prostrations, in daily practice. Bowing is more than a show of respect for the Triple Gems (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha); they are an effective means to clear and purify the mind. Eliminating our dependence on the ego is an important step toward helping us understand the wisdom of Śūnyatā; bowing practice helps us to understand the Zen aspiration of “*how may I help you?*”.

For the westerner, bowing can at first seem superstitious or even irrational. While the concept of “being rid of the ego” may be understood as a means to eliminate suffering, some consider bowing practice to be demeaning or subservient. In an ego-centered society, like the one we live in today, how can we relate to such an archaic practice? It can be difficult for a western practitioner to demonstrate such a humble and devoted act as bowing (especially in the presence of others).

After a regular bowing practice, however, most come to experience its effectiveness. Bowing, through its physical motions, connects the body and the mind and can be especially useful when struggling with a difficult situation—as the practice can burn off restless energy and quiet the mind more efficiently than sitting meditation. At first, practitioners may wonder why we repent. We are not offering repentance to the Buddha, but to ourselves, and to all living beings. In essence, our small “I” is bowing to our big “I”. After some time, the small “I” disappears and we rely upon the big “I”. When this happens, we call this true bowing.

— Zen Master Seung Sahn

CLOSING PRAYER

Great Compassionate One, thus we repent and vow from moment to moment.

Embrace us with your compassion and plant the seed of awakening in our minds, so that our true nature may be manifested brightly in this moment.

May our sincere vows be heard as we pray before all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and all the eminent teachers of the past, present, and future, throughout the ten directions.

Namo Śākyamuni Buddha

Namo Śākyamuni Buddha

Namo Śākyamuni Buddha

We go for refuge with our Root Teacher, Śākyamuni Buddha.

88. I vow to speak honestly.
89. I vow to only offer complements when speaking of others.
90. I vow to view others as equals.
91. I vow to do my best in all my endeavors.
92. I vow to be helpful in all that I do.
93. I vow to be humble in all that I do.
94. I vow to be honest in everything I do.
95. I vow to be positive in everything I do.
96. I vow to be loving toward others.
97. I vow to live with a compassionate heart.
98. I vow to cultivate a bright and patient heart.
99. I bow as a prayer so that all beings may live in peace.
100. I bow as a prayer for an end to all wars.
101. I bow as a prayer for an end to poverty.
102. I bow as a prayer for an end to all diseases.
103. I vow to practice the disciplines of the Bodhisattva.
104. I vow to cultivate spiritual wisdom.
105. I vow to be diligent in practice.
106. I vow to respect all of my teachers.
107. I vow to meet the Buddhas who appear in this world, from moment to moment.
108. I vow to transfer all merits accumulated through compassionate action to all beings throughout the ten directions.

REPENTANCE PRAYER

May all misdeeds accumulated during hundreds of aeons now be totally consumed in an instant — as fire burns dry grass extinguishing all things until nothing remains.

Our misdeeds have no self-nature, but arise only from our minds. If our minds are made clear, then our misdeeds will be destroyed. When both our minds and our misdeeds are seen as empty, this is called the true repentance.

We go for guidance, to the Buddha, who guides all creatures from the three painful states of dukkha, impermanence, and no-self; we aspire that all creatures may enter into the bliss of the uncreated.

We who suffer in the three realms of past, present and future, and who are not yet freed from our obligations and involvements, may we cast these off and enter into the uncreated, and by so doing fulfill our greatest obligation.

May this time spent bowing offer peace, wisdom and equanimity.

108 BOWS OF GREAT REPENTANCE

1. With sincere devotion, I go for refuge in the Buddha.
2. With sincere devotion, I go for refuge in the Dharma.
3. With sincere devotion, I go for refuge in the Sangha.
4. I bow in repentance for being ignorant of where I came from and unmindful of where I am headed.
5. I bow in repentance for being ignorant of correct situation, relationship, and function.
6. I bow in repentance for having neglected my original nature.
7. I bow in repentance for having taken this body for granted.
8. I bow in repentance for having taken my ancestors for granted.
9. I bow in repentance for having taken my parents for granted.
10. I bow in repentance for having taken my relatives for granted.
11. I bow in repentance for being unmindful of all those who have contributed to my learning and education.
12. I bow in repentance for being unmindful of all those who have grown, prepared, and provided my nutrition.
13. I bow in repentance for being unmindful of all those who have made and provided my clothing.
14. I bow in repentance for being unmindful of all those who have built and provided my shelter.
72. I bow in gratitude for hearing the bubbling music of the streams.
73. I bow in gratitude for feeling the energy of the changing seasons.
 - *I bow in gratitude for feeling the vitality of Spring.*
 - *I bow in gratitude for feeling the heat of Summer.*
 - *I bow in gratitude for feeling the chill of Autumn*
 - *I bow in gratitude for feeling the stillness of Winter.*
74. I bow in gratitude for seeing the beauty of a shimmering rainbow.
75. I bow in gratitude for realizing that true peace of mind comes from being in harmony with Nature.
76. I bow in gratitude for realizing that Nature is Universal Law.
77. I bow in gratitude for realizing that Nature is our Great Teacher.
78. I bow in gratitude for realizing that compassion is the greatest blessing of all.
79. I bow in gratitude for realizing that a heart filled with hatred and resentment is the greatest misfortune of all.
80. I bow in gratitude for realizing that selfless love is the greatest power of all.
81. I vow to live in the embrace of the Buddha.
82. I vow to follow the teachings of the Dharma.
83. I vow to live in harmony with the Sangha.
84. I vow to be generous in all that I do.
85. I vow to act with a calm mind.
86. I vow to cultivate contentment.
87. I vow to speak only that which is kind, true and useful.

56. I bow in repentance for my lack of compassion for those suffering from depression, anxiety or mental illness.
57. I bow in repentance for my lack of compassion for the poor and impoverished.
58. I bow in repentance for my lack of compassion for those who are stubborn or difficult to work with.
59. I bow in repentance for my lack of compassion for the lonely or grieving.
60. I bow in repentance for my lack of compassion for those in trouble with the law.
61. I bow in gratitude for going for refuge in the Buddha.
62. I bow in gratitude for going for refuge in the Dharma.
63. I bow in gratitude for going for refuge in the Sangha.
64. I bow in gratitude for realizing that all beings are interconnected.
65. I bow in gratitude for realizing that all beings can communicate and sympathize with one another.
66. I bow in gratitude for realizing that all beings live in accordance with Universal Law.
67. I bow in gratitude for realizing that all beings have the same True Nature.
68. I bow in gratitude for realizing the wonders of all life forms.
69. I bow in gratitude for witnessing the beauty of this world.
70. I bow in gratitude for hearing the pure beauty of the birds' singing.
71. I bow in gratitude for hearing the spiritual sound of the wind.

15. I bow in repentance for manipulating people for my own selfish needs.
16. I bow in repentance for ignoring the effects of my misdeeds on others.
17. I bow in repentance to eradicate karma accumulated in the past, present, and future.
18. I bow in repentance to all those I have harmed through anger or rage.
19. I bow in repentance to all those I have harmed with words.
20. I bow in repentance to all those I have harmed through arrogance.
21. I bow in repentance to all those I have harmed through greed.
22. I bow in repentance to all those I have harmed through jealousy.
23. I bow in repentance to all those I have harmed through violence.
24. I bow in repentance to all those I have harmed through attachment to possessions.
25. I bow in repentance to all those I have harmed through attachment to likes-and-dislikes.
26. I bow in repentance to all those I have alienated through thought, word, and deed.
27. I bow in repentance to all those I have harmed through gossip, slander, and unmindful speech.
28. I bow in repentance to all those I have looked down upon.
29. I bow in repentance for my fearful thoughts, words, and deeds.

30. I bow in repentance for conceiving of this world through the lens of my ego.

31. I bow in repentance to all sentient beings that I have harmed or killed for entertainment and pleasure

32. I bow in repentance to those I have harmed through attachment to my thinking.

33. I bow in repentance to those I have harmed through foolish or unnecessary speech.

34. I bow in repentance to those I have harmed by engaging in relationships based on self-gratification.

35. I bow in repentance for harming other beings through unmindfulness, materialism and overconsumption.

36. I bow in repentance for my hypocritical thoughts, words and deeds.

37. I bow in repentance for all thoughts, words, and deeds that create attachment.

38. I bow in repentance for having believed that only what I saw was correct.

39. I bow in repentance for having believed that only what I heard was correct.

40. I bow in repentance for having believed that only what I smelled was correct.

41. I bow in repentance for having believed that only what I tasted was correct.

42. I bow in repentance for having believed that only what I touched was correct.

43. I bow in repentance for every action born from I-my-me mind.

44. I bow in repentance for not seeing clearly the interconnectedness of all life forms.

45. I bow in repentance for having disregarded the Earth—our only home.

46. I bow in repentance for unmindfully polluting the air.

47. I bow in repentance for unmindfully polluting the rivers, lakes and oceans.

48. I bow in repentance for unmindfully polluting the meadows, hills and mountains.

49. I bow in repentance for unmindfully destroying the plants and trees

50. I bow in repentance for a lifestyle built on the suffering of other forms of life

51. I bow in repentance for discriminating between the rich and poor in my choice of relations.

52. I bow in repentance for discriminating between high and low, the superior and the inferior.

53. I bow in repentance for discriminating between "good" and "bad."

54. I bow in repentance for seeing this world based on absolute "right" or "wrong."

55. I bow in repentance for my lack of compassion for the sick, injured or those trapped by addiction.