

Five Contemplations

We reflect on the effort that brought us this food and consider how it comes to us.

We consider ecological and economic webs of interdependence; consider everything from the life of the animal and the life of the farmer to how food is transported and sold, how waste is handled, whether food is distributed fairly, and how we serve others.

We reflect on our virtue and practice, and whether we are worthy of this offering.

We are prompted to deep consideration of our behavior; have we used our food to good ends? are we "wasting" food by wasting our lives?

We regard it as essential to keep the mind free from excesses such as greed.

We are asked to consider the body itself, its needs and desires. We examine our thoughts for greed. We try to take an objective view of the food and not be driven by appetite alone. We should also consider whether we act from shame. Excessive self-indulgence and excessive dieting and deprivation are both mistakes. We grasp the will and control appetite, while caring for this body and living full in it. There are other excesses: boredom, pride, and so on.

We regard this food as good medicine to sustain our life.

We consider the balance between health and pleasure, but also the need to sacrifice life to sustain life. We consider our desires for things beside food: do we sacrifice the quality of the food to other values such as convenience or cost? Do we take in food that is bad medicine? We consider our illness - karma and delusion and the vagaries of human form - and the medicine we need, which is shelter and food, and Dharma. At the same time, we try to avoid judging others for their choices.

For the sake of enlightenment, we now receive this food.

In the Absolute view, there is nothing to kill and nothing can die. There is nothing outside us. Eating is not separate from meditation; like breath, food is the world entering the body. We strive for a middle position in which the extremes are acknowledged, and we partake of food in a rational, calm, aware state.

| Bath Verses (senmen no ge) | |
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| <p><i>When picking up the toothbrush:</i> Holding the toothbrush, may all living beings attain the true dharma, and be naturally pure and clean.</p> <p><i>When using the toothbrush:</i> Brushing the teeth in the morning, I vow with all beings, to care for the eyeteeth that bite through all afflictions.</p> <p><i>When rinsing the mouth:</i> Rinsing the mouth, may all living beings approach the pure dharma gate and accomplish liberation.</p> | <p><i>When washing the face:</i> Washing the face, I vow with all beings to attain the pure dharma gate and be forever undefiled.</p> <p><i>When bathing the body:</i> Bathing the body, may all living beings be clean in body and mind, pure and shining within and without.</p> |