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Notes

BUDDHIST SHRINES

The shrine is a focal point of meditation and provides a means of accumulating merit through the generosity of making offerings. There are many profound teachings on the nature of offerings, but the essential point is to make offerings with supreme generosity. Such generosity creates a foundation of nonattachment and open awareness that increases the accumulations of both merit and pristine awareness. When making an offering, it is essential to be immersed in the action and to maintain a sense of the presence of the buddhas, bodhisattvas, enlightened masters of the lineage, and deities of practice.

Shrines sometimes contain elaborate offerings representing all beautiful and precious objects worthy of being offered. A home shrine can be simple but should be as well made and dignified as possible. There are no requirements for its width or depth, but it should be tall enough so that the surface is no lower than the level of your heart when you are seated in meditation. If your shrine is in your bedroom, it should not be placed at the foot of your bed or lower than your bed.

The shrine should have an image of Buddha Shakyamuni (a statue, photograph, or painting) and seven water-offering bowls set out in front in a straight line and spaced evenly. It can include a copy of a dharma text wrapped in a nice cloth, also placed in the center. Images of deities should not be placed on top of this text. Other items, such as photographs and statues of deities and lineage teachers, as well as fresh flowers, may also be placed on the shrine. There should be a pair of candles, either wax or battery operated. You may also offer incense to the shrine. Traditionally an incense container is placed that has a base and is filled with sand, placed in front of the shrine, either on the

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