

Namo Valokiteshvara

Legato

D (C) A (G) -

Na- mo Va- lo- ki- tesh- va- ra - - - ya Na-

D (C) Bm (Am) D (C) A (G) -

mo Va- lo- ki- tesh- va- ra - - - ya Na-

F#m (Em) Bm (Am) D (C)

mo Va- lo- ki- tesh- va- ra - - - ya - - -

Music and words	traditional
Dance	W. & A. van der Zwan
Chords in brackets	guitar with capo on II

Avalokiteshvara (the Lord who looks down), the Bodhisattva of Compassion, holds the compassion of all Buddhas and in the Buddhist tradition is seen as the universal manifestation of compassion. He renounced his well-earned place in heaven, escaping *samsara* – the perpetual circle of birth and rebirth – and vowed to stay on earth as long as there are sentient beings who suffer. In this traditional chant, his name is sung as Valokiteshvara.



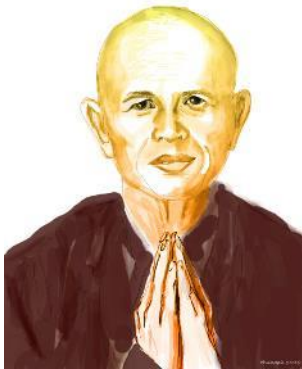
With the *Buddha Amitabha* (*Amida* in Japan), he plays an important role in Zen Buddhism and the Pure Land Buddhism, as he works towards bringing the deceased to the Pure Land (equivalent to the Christian concept of Heaven), thus helping them to escape *samsara*. With this, Avalokiteshvara is the true embodiment of the Mahayana Buddhist ideal of the wellness of all beings (*Loka Samasta Sukhino Bhavantu*: May all beings be well and happy), which is derived from the Four Noble Truths of Lord Buddha, stating the cause of all suffering and the means to end suffering. Mythology tells us that Amitabha gave Avalokiteshvara eleven heads, so he could hear the cries of people better, and thousand arms, so he could reach out better.

In Tibet, he is honored as *Chenrezig* and seen as the protector of Tibet. The Dalai Lama is believed to be his emanation or reincarnation. The Tibetan bodhisattva *Tara* is born from a tear from Chenrezig (or from his heart, following a different mythology).

His name was originally *Avalokiteshvara* (he who looks down upon sound, i.e. he who hears all cries and laments). Leaving out *-VARA* (from the Sanskrit *Ishvara*, Lord, the address for the supreme God) this translates into Chinese as *Guanyin*. In China, Guanyin (in Eastern Asia also known as *Quan Yin*, *Quan Zeon* or *Kanon*) is honored in a female form (often not very different from Mother Mary, so in a way as the Mother Goddess), in Tibet, India and Sri Lanka in a male form.

The worship of Avalokiteshvara/Guanyin is widespread in Mahayana Buddhism and even in Theravada Buddhism (Sri Lanka).

He plays an important role in the Heart Sutra. The so-called Avalokiteshvara Sutra, chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra, enumerates the merits of honoring this best known of all bodhisattvas. His mantra is the well-known *OM Mane Padme Hung* (in Tibet: *OM Mane Pemme Hum*, Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus).



We learned this chant in EIAB (European Institute for Applied Buddhism), the monastery and European university of Thich Nhat Hanh (*Thay*, Vietnamese for 'teacher'), the Vietnamese Zen monk who spread the message of compassion and tolerance worldwide and originated mindfulness. They see the 'bell of mindfulness' (stopping your activities when a bell, phone or clock is heard in order to check how aware you were at the moment of ringing) as his contribution to humankind.

November 2014, news came of Thay's stroke and consequent coma. With the news came the request to chant this song, so we did with the group who joined us for our annual sesshin *Zen & Zikr*. Soon after, inspiration came for this simple walking meditation, which we dedicate to Thay.

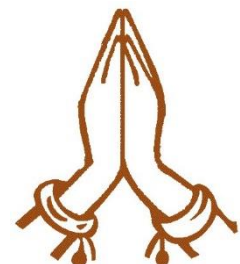
Summer 2015, we shared this walking meditation in EIAB and fortunately, they love it.

Dance description



Honoring Thich Nhat Hanh and the monks and nuns at EIAB, this dance is more a walking meditation, vipassana style, drawing upon well-known mudras like the Namaste (Sanskrit: I bow to you), the common greeting form also in Buddhism. The monks and nuns sing this chant in a very Saturn way (the tempo of a very slow vipassana walk, another of their practices). Our tempo is slow, but considerably faster than their chanting.

1. Namō Valokithesvara-
2. -ya
3. Namō Valokiteshvara-
4. ya
5. Namō Valokiteshvara-
6. ya



All face line of direction, hands in *Namaste* for the heart (see picture).

1. Take four steps, starting with left on –MO.

2. Make a ¼ turn to the center, left foot closes by, and bow to the center, contemplating compassion within.
3. Make a full turn anti-clockwise, starting with the left foot, meanwhile opening the hands from Namaste and reaching the arms out on heart level, palms up, bringing compassion into the world.
4. Bring the hands back in Namaste and bow.
5. Holding hands in the circle, feeling the support and inspiration of the sangha (spiritual community), walking as a sangha clockwise.
6. Let go of hands, turn to the center and bow in Namaste.

