



BELOVED GARDEN

Brief Notes on the Offering and Gift of the Body

JAMGÖN KONGTRUL LODRÖ THAYE

Translated by Sarah Harding



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NOTE:

The practice of Chö or Severance presented in this text is a deep, transformative method used in Vajrayana Buddhism. It should not be practised without the appropriate empowerment, transmission and oral instructions, and one-to-one guidance from a qualified Lama

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Sarah Harding

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[CLARIFICATION]

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Sarah Harding

This is Jamgön Kongtrul's well-known and probably most useful instruction on the daily practice of Severance, written at the behest of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo. It has been translated several times, with the title rendered variously as "Grove of Delights," "Garden of All Joy," "Garden of Pleasures," and so forth. It is also the basis of many oral commentaries by great contemporary masters such as Venerable Tenga Rinpoche, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, and so on. Perhaps because it is so loved by practitioners, I have chosen "beloved" as the translation of *kunga* (*kun dga'*), which is in fact the short form of *kungyi gawa* (*kun gyis dga' ba*), "loved by all."

Indeed, the text is concise and yet thoroughly informative; one might almost call it user-friendly. Each stage is laid out clearly, particularly the famous "feasts" or distributions of the body to the guests. By Kongtrul's time, many variations on the body-offering visualizations had developed. In this text, Kongtrul recommends a method to practice all of them by pairing up white (peaceful) and red (wrathful) visualizations and doing a few pairs at a time, thus cycling through all of them in a few evenings.

(Nighttime is the recommended time for a daily practice.) These coupled sets and the rest of the commentary here have informed practitioners in their daily practice of Severance and provided the necessary references for its implementation.

*The Beloved Garden: Brief Notes on the Offering and Gift of the Body*¹ comes from Jamgön Kongtrul's *The Treasury of Precious Instructions*, Volume 14, Chod.

1. *Lus mchod sbyin gyi zin bris mdor bsdus kun dga'i skyed tshal* in *gDams ngag mdzod*, Shechen printing, (1999), vol. 14 (*pha*), pp. 387–405; Kundeling printing, vol. 9, pp. 829–47. Second source: *Dingri Volumes*, vol. *ja*, pp. 731–55. Translated by Sarah Harding.

BELOVED GARDEN

Brief Notes on the Offering and Gift of the Body

Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye

Homage to the guru and Great Mother.

The practice called Object Severance Mahāmudrā presents the perspective and intention of the middle turning of the Dharma wheel in conjunction with the mantrayāna's vanquishing conduct for training in awareness. It is a radical method for cutting through the inflation of self-fixation through the willingness to accept what is undesirable, the direct subjugation of adverse circumstances, the realization that gods and demons are in your own mind, and the knowledge that you and everybody else are utterly equal.

Without such an understanding, [some people go around] repeating HŪṢ HŪṢ PHAṬ PHAṬ while seeing the enemy in their own deluded projections and engaging in all kinds of outrageous behavior in the hopes of defeating demons and bad spirits, or to gain fame, fortune, and food. This is known as perverted Severance (*gcod log*) and is an egregious distortion of this approach. So from the outset focus your mind in the right direction without confusion.

There are a great many systems [for the practice of Severance], as it is well known in all the Old and New [schools of Tibetan Buddhism]. However, in this Zurmang system it is considered a special legacy (*bka' babs*). This means that there have been continual and extensive profound instructions that have never diminished and that the authority of realization, familiarization, assurance, and blessing has remained intact. Therefore it is especially elevated.

The cycle of visualizations for the feast activities and so forth in this tradition are elucidated elsewhere. Here the daily practice of donating the body is roughly contained in a thirteen-point outline:

I. PRELIMINARIES

- A. Arousing the awakening mind
- B. Going for refuge
- C. Gathering the accumulations
- D. Purifying the obscurations
- E. Presenting offerings

II. MAIN PRACTICE

- A. Transference of consciousness
- B. Body mandala
- C. Three cycles of white distributions
- D. Cycle of three red distributions together
- E. Feast activities

III. CONCLUDING PRACTICE

- A. Dedication and aspiration
- B. Dissolution phase
- C. Integration

I • PRELIMINARIES

A • AROUSING THE AWAKENING MIND

First, in the section for arousing the mind of awakening, you determine that you will practice Object Severance Mahāmudrā because you, by yourself, must establish in the state of the Great Mother, dharmakāya, all mother and father sentient beings that fill the reaches of space. Those beings are primarily represented by

- hateful enemies that have physical form;
- harmful obstructors that are without form;
- interfering conditions that are those who pervert your intentions;
- karmic spirits that are the four devils arising due to coemergent ignorance;
- the devil of death, which robs you of life force;
- the spirits of place, which are gods and demons that live in those sites and haunted grounds [where you practice];
- the body spirits, which are the embodiments of the three poisons in equal measure that have been with you since the formation of this body from the confluence of sperm, egg, and vital winds.

Thinking along those lines counts as the awakening mind and should be upheld throughout the practice from beginning to end.

B • GOING FOR REFUGE

First summon the guests. While striking the open end of the thigh-bone [on the palm of your hand] three times, say, “fear not,” “be not afraid,” “verily be not afraid.” Then when blowing it three times, say, “listen” after the first blow, “gather here” with the second, and “gather quickly” with the third. Meditate that the sounds and words are heard from the peak of existence down to the deepest hell of incessant torment, and [the invited guests] gather densely like mists shrouding the great mountains.

On this occasion, the objects of refuge are visualized in the concise style. The Great Mother sits upon a lion throne and lotus-moon seat in the space in front of you. She is golden with four arms; her first two hands rest in an equipoise earth-touching gesture². The lower right hand holds a vajra and the left a volume of scripture. She is adorned by ornaments of *saṃbhogakāya* and surrounded by

2. The text here (and in all copies) says *sa gnon mnyam bzhags*, which would appear to mean “earth-touching [and] equipoise [mudras].” Generally, all depictions of the Great Mother show her two hands either in equipoise mudra or dharma-teaching mudra. However, several of the other texts in this collection also describe this unusual position, so apparently it was once an alternative that never made it into the *tangka* iconography.

an entourage of all the victors and their heirs. In front of them, all sentient beings — predominantly the hateful enemies, harmful obstructors, and so forth — stand with their hands folded in respect, devotedly uttering the refuge formula with their speech, and with their minds in a state of one-pointed faith and devotion. Imagine them going for refuge, saying, “From now until I reach awakening, I place my complete trust and surrender in you. You know whatever I do.” Repeat the refuge formula and so forth three times.

Continue with the aspiration prayer for virtue, offering the five branches, and taking the vows of awakening mind. For the [latter], inspired by their previous promises and in the manner of learning from them, earnestly think, “The victorious ones of the past all gave rise to the heart of awakening and trained in the three kinds of ethical discipline. Similarly, I too shall arouse the awakening mind and train in the trainings.”

C • VISUALIZING THE FIELD OF ACCUMULATION AND GATHERING THE ACCUMULATIONS

In this case, meditate on the middle-length version of the five-tiered objects of refuge. Meditate that the syllable TRĀṂ appears in the space in front and becomes a palatial jeweled [throne]. In its center is the lotus from PAṂ, the sun from MA, and the moon from A. On that four-layered seat, the white syllable HŪṂ dissolves into light and becomes Machik. Pa Dampa is on a lotus-moon seat to

her right at the level of her ear. The Five Deities of Vārāhī are on a lotus-sun-corpse seat to her left at the level of her ear. Shāk-yamuni is above Machik's head. The buddhas are to his right, the holy Dharma in back of him, and the sangha to his left. Vairochana is above his head, with the buddhas of the four families in the four directions around him. In front of them is Green Tārā and in back is Vairochana Immense Ocean³. This is the Zurmang tradition. In the oral tradition of the previous great omniscient lords, you meditate on the Great Mother in place of Vairochana.

They are all seated on lotus-moon seats on lion thrones, surrounded by their respective retinues of the father lineage, mother lineage, nondual lineage, and so on. The heroes and heroines are all around them, with the dharma protectors of male and female tantras in the spaces between. Below Machik's seat are the protector guests of qualities, such as the seventy[-five] glorious lords of the pure abodes⁴ and the worldly protectors; the guests of debt and liability

3. Immense Ocean (*Gangs chen mtsho*) is an epithet for Vairochana and refers to the Buddhist cosmological presentation of existence as issuing forth from the scented water that flows from the bodies of these buddhas, manifesting the pure realms and all universes.

4. One version consists of ten guardians of the directions (*phyogs skyong cu*), eight great gods (*lha chen po brgyad*), eight great nāgas (*glu chen po brgyad*), eight great planets (*gza' chen po brgyad*), four worldly guardians (*'jig rten skyong ba bzhi*), twenty-eight constellations (*rgyu skar gnyis shu tsa brgyad*), and nine great *bhairavas* (*'jigs byed chen po dgu*).

of the obstructing type, such as the eight classes of gods and spirits, and the holders of debt and blood grudges; and the guests of compassion, the six classes of beings, such as gods and demigods. Meditate on them showing great respect in body, speech, and mind. Then meditate that light radiates from the three seed syllables in the three places of all the deities and instantly invokes the guests, who each dissolve into their [visualized forms], while you recite, “I and all sentient beings emanate as many bodies as there are atoms in the realm and pay homage...”. Thus offer the seven branches as usual, connecting the liturgy with the meditation.

D • PURIFYING THE OBSCURATIONS WITH A STREAM OF TIMELESS AWARENESS

In Machik’s heart is a white HŪṂ on a lotus and moon. The string of letters of the GATE mantra⁵ is situated around it, starting from in front with the letters facing inward. Light radiates from it and strikes all those in the field of accumulation, inducing their compassionate blessings in the form of a stream, which dissolves back into the mantra string. A stream of light rays and white elixir falls from it. It fills Machik’s body and pours out of her left big toe, flowing into the top of your head and that of all sentient beings. It washes away sins, obscurations, faults, and downfalls accumulated

5. The mantra of the prajñāpāramitā sutras: TADYATHĀ OM GATE GATE PĀRAGATE PĀRASAMGATE BODHI SVĀHĀ.

since beginningless cyclic existence, as well as all current sickness, bad spirits, and obstacles. Think that the washing water in the form of liquid soot or coal sludge emerges from your bodies through the pores and lower orifices and dissolves into the mighty golden ground.

When pressuring a major spirit with a wrathful visualization, meditate on the lord of life and death with the head of a *makara* and gaping jaws right below you. The washing water changes into a substance with abundant color, smell, taste, ability, and power and disappears into his mouth, satisfying him. Debts are canceled and death is cheated. The mind of awakening is aroused in him and he disappears under the golden ground. This is known as the Black Poison Distribution (*ha la nag 'gyed*).

E • PRESENTING OFFERINGS

The whole extent of form appearing in the universe is appearance-emptiness; the action seal of Body (*karmamudrā*). The extent of sound resounding is sound-emptiness, the dharma seal of Speech (*dharmamudrā*). All mental thoughts and memories are awareness-emptiness, the great seal of Mind (*mahāmudrā*). All happiness and suffering are the seal of auspicious signs. That is how it has always been.

Maintain awareness of that and offer symbolically to all those in the field of accumulation by visualizing many goddesses emanating from the three places of your bright, crystal-like body — white goddesses of form carrying mirrors, red goddesses of sound carrying lutes, blue goddesses of mind carrying phenomena sources, and goddesses of indefinite colors carrying the seals of the five desirables and auspicious signs — and make the offerings. Imagine that the recipients are extremely delighted and satisfied. Afterward, rest in the equipoise of the total purity of the three spheres [of agent, act, and recipient].

Dedicate your happiness and virtue to all sentient beings throughout space, and take upon yourself alone their negativities, obscurations, and sufferings. When this visualization of giving and taking (*gtong len*) is done sincerely, it becomes an excellent offering that pleases the four guests, and the supreme accumulation of merit. Through these methods, you accomplish the process of accumulation and purification that accords with the approach of the Common Vehicle.

II • MAIN PRACTICE

A • TRANSFERENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS: OPENING THE SKY DOOR

The first part of the main practice, the transference of consciousness called Opening the Sky Door, has three parts: (1) transference with attributes and a support, for those of lesser capability; (2) transference with attributes but with no support, for those of average capability; and (3) transference without attributes or support, for those of superior capability. The first also has three versions: extensive, intermediate, and concise.

I. TRANSFERENCE WITH ATTRIBUTES AND A SUPPORT, FOR THOSE OF LESSER CAPABILITY

a. Extensive Version

In the center of your body is the central channel. It is white and clear and possesses four characteristics.⁶ The upper end reaches the cranial aperture and the lower end reaches the perineum. Both

6. Traditionally these are (1) straight as an arrow; (2) white colored with a red tinge; (3) glistening or oily; and (4) hollow.

ends are open. There is a white vital drop that was received from your father [at conception] in the sole of your right foot, and a red vital drop received from your mother in the left sole. They are the size of peas. On top of each of them is the seed syllable of the hell realms: black DU. A yellow syllable PRE of the hungry ghosts is at the perineum; gray DA of the animals at the navel; green NRĪ of humans at the heart; red A of the demigods at the throat; and white OM, seed syllable of the gods, is at the crown of the head. Light radiates from all the seed syllables and gathers all the karmic seeds for birth in each of the six realms that you and others have in your streams of consciousness. They dissolve into each [respective seed syllable].

Then say PHAṬ. The white and red drops in the feet dissolve into the DU syllables and they become two black drops. The causes and results of hell, including the places and sufferings, are all gathered up and dissolve [into the drops]. Say PHAṬ — the two drops rise up and combine into one drop, the size of a new hen's egg, and then dissolve into the PRE at the perineum. Then with PHAṬ it moves to the navel; PHAṬ to the heart; PHAṬ to the throat; and PHAṬ to the head. With each successive utterance of PHAṬ, the drop flies up into [the next syllable] and the causes and results of the sufferings and places of each of those realms — animal, human, demigod, and god — are absorbed. The drop becomes bigger and brighter with each ascent. Finally it becomes a vital drop with the nature

of five-colored light, the size of a mature hen's egg, whereupon it ascends and dissolves into Machik's heart. Rest in equipoise.

b. Intermediate Version

Visualize the central channel in your hollow body and the vital drops in the soles of your feet as before. When you say PHAT, the two drops merge at the perineum. As the combined essence of vital drops, winds, and mind, it hovers there, ready to take off. With each utterance of PHAT it flies up to the next place — the navel and so on — as before and finally dissolves into Machik's heart. Do this version for the daily practice of giving the body.

c. Concise Version

The lower end of the central channel touches an eight-petaled lotus at the heart. In its center the essence of consciousness is a white drop with a red radiance. As you say PHAT it shoots up into Machik's heart like an arrow and dissolves into it. Do this version in the subsequent distributions.

2. TRANSFERENCE WITH ATTRIBUTES BUT WITH NO SUPPORT, FOR THOSE OF AVERAGE CAPABILITY

With attention to basic space and intrinsic awareness, blend them as follows: Say PHAT and project consciousness into the sky. Wherever the sky pervades, awareness pervades. Wherever awareness per-

vades, dharmakāya pervades. Rest in great equanimity and the enlightened intention of dharmakāya, the absolute Machik. This is the regular practice, which has a continuous tradition of oral guidance.

3. TRANSFERENCE WITHOUT ATTRIBUTES OR SUPPORT, FOR THOSE OF SUPERIOR CAPABILITY

All phenomena subsumed in samsara and nirvana are none other than your own awareness, the awakening mind — forever inexpressible, unimaginable, and ineffable. It never went beyond the open expanse of the Great Mother, nor does it, nor will it ever. Those who are utterly convinced of that do not need transference or change from their perspective of emptiness-clarity endowed with essential awareness; they rest in that equipoise at all times. This great Opening the Sky Door is the sovereign of all transferences. It is the main practice of the intended meaning of the Mother. It is the ultimate sense of the doctrine of the Holy Dharma Severance of Evil Object. This resting in equipoise is concordant with the uncommon vehicle and is the breakthrough into the realm of reality.

B • OFFERING THE BODY MANDALA

The practices from the offering of the body as a mandala through the branches of the conduct to enhance subsequent attainment are concordant with the vanquishing conduct to [enhance] awareness and so on found in the mantrayāna.

Your mind, in the form of the red letter HRĪḤ in Machik's heart, projects out and becomes Vajravārāhī. You gesture toward your corpse with the curved knife in your right hand. The skin of the corpse is flayed whole and spread out, and the corpse is piled on top of it. The skin is the golden foundation of the ground; the blood and pus are an ocean of scented water; the fingers and toes are the iron mountain rings; the torso is Supreme Mountain; the four limbs are the four continents and islands; the head is the gods' abode; the eyes are the sun and moon; the heart is the wish-fulfilling gem; and the inner organs are the eight auspicious signs, the seven emblems of royalty, the precious treasure, the five desirable qualities, and so forth. All of this is arranged in great abundance with nothing left out, like Samantabhadra's offering cloud. In extent, it totally fills the sky. In terms of time, it lasts as long as cyclic existence. It transcends number and measure. When you offer it, meditate on all sentient beings perfecting the accumulations and purifying obscurations. Afterward, rest within the state of the total purity of the three spheres.

C • WHITE DISTRIBUTION

Of the many types of white distribution, for this occasion do what is known as the White Feast in Three Cycles of Integration or [White Distribution for] Four Guests. After you have done the appropriate extensive or concise Opening the Sky Door, proceed through to the awareness projecting outside as Vajrayoginī as before.

Then, visualize that the syllable YAM from your heart emanates in front of you and becomes wind, and RAM becomes fire. In the midst of that, three human-skull hearthstones as big as three Supreme Mountains appear spontaneously. By a mere gesture to the corpse with the curved knife, the top of the skull is separated and lifted up.⁷ It becomes equal to the billionfold universe and is placed on the hearthstones. The corpse is lifted up by the point of the curved knife, and with a mere gesture the flesh and bones are chopped into pieces and poured into the skull.

The syllables KHAM⁸ and OM ĀḤ HŪM emanate from Vajravārāhī's heart and stack up above the open end of the skull. Again light emanates and the wind stirs, the fire blazes, and the flesh and bones in the skull melt into elixir and boil. Elixir streams out from KHAM and washes away all its flaws and defects. Light emanates from the three syllables and invokes the blessings of the Body, Speech, and Mind of the victors as awareness elixir, which absorbs [back into them]. The three letters then melt into light and dissolve [into the contents of the skull], becoming an ocean of blended white, red, and blue elixir. Various offering substances manifest from the steam and fill the realm of space. The liquid becomes an elixir of

7. *thod bskar gyis 'phar ba*: This spelling is from the Kundeling edition. I believe it has been miscopied everywhere, even in the Shechen printing from the same woodblocks, as *thod pa sgar gyis 'phar ba*.

8. The seed syllable of water.

one hundred flavors and the dregs become an unimaginable wealth of whatever is needed.

A variety of offering goddesses emanated from your heart fill the space and offer all of this to the root and lineage gurus as offering clouds of pleasing delights; to the yidams of the four tantra classes as outer, inner, and secret offerings; to the heroes and *ḍākinīs* as the feast supplies; to the oath-bound guardians as offering substances of support and fulfillment; to the glorious protectors of the pure abodes as objects of delight; to the obstructors and creditors as desirable sense pleasures; to the ground masters of the billionfold universe as smoke offerings and rewarding substances; to the virtuous types of *nāgas* as *nāga* medicine⁹ and the three white substances; to the negative *nāga* spirits as oceans of flesh and blood; and to the six kinds of migrators as whatever they each desire. The four kinds of guests are extremely pleased and satisfied by the gift of these offerings. It repays the debts and liabilities to the creditors, and the mind of awakening arises in their mindstreams. The sufferings of each of the six realms are quelled, and those beings develop an interest in liberation and the practice of the holy Dharma. Repeat PHAT [during this visualization].

9. An extensive list of *nāga* “medicines,” including their scientific names and the diseases they cure, can be found in “The Splendor of Generosity: An Elaborate Torma Offering to the *Nāgas*” (*klu gtor rgyas pa sbyin pe (sic) lang tsho Nāga Menaka*), available from www.drikung.org/texts (accessed 5/5/15).

D • RED DISTRIBUTION

The leftover elixir instantly becomes mountains of flesh, oceans of blood, and stacks of bones — bloody, greasy, and steaming. In essence it is undissipating elixir and in form it is like the flesh of a seven-times-born Brahmin that has the power to pacify physical and mental afflictions when seen, heard, or tasted. Then blow the thighbone three times. Imagine that all kinds of obstructors gather around — primarily the eight kinds of malicious spirits, such as spirits of place and body spirits — to whom you owe karmic debts of life, merit, and power. Recite, “NAMO, [gods and demons] living in this haunted place...” (*namo/gnas gnyan sa 'dir gnas...*) and, as the words suggest, think that those gods and demons, experiencing each moment as an aeon, enjoy the flesh and blood. They relish it and are satisfied. Flesh debts are cleared away, debts canceled, and the trajectory of karmic ripening is interrupted.

These two — the white distribution and the red distribution — are the root of all the distributions. The pairs of white and red distributions from here on have no definite order; they can be applied however you like. For instance, by rotating through them in the daily practice of the body donation, you will complete them in a few evenings.

All the versions [of white and red pairs of distributions] that follow should be added on to the previous visualizations up through

the consciousness flying up and your awareness transforming into Yoginī.

THE FACE SKULL CUP

Once the corpse is flayed and the skin spread out, the three limbs¹⁰ are severed and stuck on top of it. They become the three human-head hearthstones. Place the skull bowl upon them and cut up your body inside of that. Stir the contents three times with the curved knife, transforming it into pure elixir. The blessings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions are gathered into the elixir in the skull cup in your (Vajrayoginī's) left hand. It pours out of the cranial aperture into the skull bowl in front and melts into it. The contents become an ocean of inseparable pledge and awareness elixir. Imagine that numerous white ḍākinīs emanate from your heart carrying skull cups, scoop it up, and serve it to the four kinds of guests, pleasing them. This is the Face Skull Cup (*thod zhal ma*), [a white distribution].

THE EXCELLENT STAKEOUT

Cut off the four limbs with the curved knife and stake them in the four directions. Flay the skin and impale it on them. The flesh and blood are contained within it. Imagine that ḍākinīs of four

10. *rkang lag gsum*. Other translations, apparently benefiting from oral commentaries, specify two arms and a leg.

colors — white, yellow, red, and green — emanate from your heart and grasp the flayed skin by the four corners and present it to the guests. This is the Excellent Stakeout (*mchog phur ma*), [a red distribution].

THE VASE OF ELIXIR DISTRIBUTION

Your consciousness projects out from Machik's heart as the letter HA and becomes a white ḍākinī carrying a curved knife in the right hand and a vase filled with elixir in the left. She pours the elixir from the vase into the corpse's cranial aperture, and the corpse becomes like a belly bag full of milk. With a gesture of the curved knife, it suddenly bursts open and spills on the ground, which is pure as crystal, and the ocean of elixir pervades everywhere from the peak of existence down to the deepest hell. You invoke the awareness elixir and dissolve it into the ocean of elixir. Then numerous white goddesses carrying vases emanate from your heart and serve the elixir to the four kinds of guests. Imagine that the dharma protectors are offered fresh skulls full of flesh. This is the Vase of Elixir Distribution (*bdud rtsi bum 'gyed ma*), [a white distribution].

THE FLAYED SKIN DISTRIBUTION

Again, your awareness as Yoginī spreads the skin on the ground and piles up the flesh, blood, and bones upon it. Four worker ḍākinīs

raise it up and feed it to the guests. This is the Flayed Skin (*g.yang gzhi ma*), [a red distribution].

THE FIVE DESIRABLES OFFERING

The basis of this visualization is the Face Skull Cup. Then, variously colored worker *ḍākinīs* carry a variety of offering articles that include form, sound, smell, taste, and texture and offer them to the guests. This is the Five Desirables Offering (*'dod yon lnga mchod ma*), [a white distribution].

THE FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Yoginī chops up the corpse and it becomes an ocean of flesh and blood within the vast and wide *kapāla*. *Ḍākinīs* emanate from your (Yoginī's) form in numbers equal to the atoms of Supreme Mountain. They give it to the eight great malicious spirits, and so forth. Imagine the spirits satisfied — laughing in delight and singing songs of joy. This is the Food Distribution (*gzan 'gyed ma*), [a red distribution].

EMPTYING THE SIX REALMS

This is similar to the Vase Distribution, but then the offering goddesses go to the individual abodes of the six classes of beings and give them [the elixir]. It eases their specific sufferings. Light shines on them and the six realms become empty. Meditate that the hell

realm transforms into the pure land of Abhirati (“Manifest Joy”); the hungry ghost realm becomes Sukhāvātī (“Blissful”); the animal realm becomes Gaṇḍavyūha (“Richly Adorned”); the human realm becomes Shrīmat (“Glorious”); the demigod realm becomes Karmaṣiddhi (“Consummate Activity”); and the god realm becomes the pure land of Akaniṣṭha Dharmadhātu (“Unexcelled Realm of Reality”). This is Emptying the Six Realms (*rigs drug gnas stong ma*), [a white distribution].¹¹

CASTING OUT THE CORPSE

The corpse becomes huge, lustrous, attractive, and alluring, with excellent color, smell, flavor, ability, and power filling the billion-fold universe. Imagine that the gods and demons all gobble it up noisily with satisfied sounds of HA. This is Casting Out the Corpse (*bem bskyur ma*), [a red distribution].

ASSORTED DISTRIBUTION

Yoginī flays the skin of the corpse and spreads it out. She draws a checkered pattern on it with the curved knife. Each square contains whatever pleases the particular types of guests, such as the five meats and the five elixirs; the five desirable sense pleasures; the auspicious articles and signs; the substances of support, fulfillment, and accomplishment; the three whites and three sweets;

11. These are the buddha fields of the five buddha families plus Gaṇḍavyūha.

elixir, flesh, blood, human wealth, lands, dwellings, and so forth. Imagine that each of them enjoys their particular favorites and are delighted. This is the Assorted Distribution (*khra 'gyed*), [counted as a white distribution].

THE BANNERS

As Jetsunma, you chop up the corpse with the curved knife. The blood collects in a huge lake and the bones are stuck in it like stakes. The flesh is raised on the tips [of the bones] like standards. A waterfall of flesh, blood, and bones falls continuously from them. Imagine that the malicious spirits and obstructors enjoy it for aeons. This is the Banners (*ba dan ma*), [a red distribution].

That completes the white distributions and red distributions presented as pairs.

ADDITIONAL RED DISTRIBUTIONS

The Four Continents

Vajravārāhī cuts off the corpse's limbs and throws them in the four directions. Imagine that all the spirits — primarily the scent-eaters, death lords, nāgas, and harm-doers — greedily gobble them up. This is the Four Continents (*gling bzhi ma*).

The Corpse Distribution

The corpse turns into dry, fresh, and putrid corpses in the shapes of children, elders, youths, and so forth, as numerous as atoms. Imagine that the gods and demons partake of them according to their individual desires. This is the Corpse Distribution (*ro 'gyed ma*).

These two may be joined with any of the white distributions described above.

The Bone Shaker

Visualize your mind as *Krodhī*. She grabs the corpse by the feet and swings it around, scattering little pieces of flesh, blood, and bones, which fall into the spirits' wide-open mouths in an uninterrupted flow. Imagine that they are thus satisfied. This is the Bone Shaker (*rus sprugs ma*), a slightly wrathful visualization.

The Slapping

Krodhī grabs the corpse's two feet with her two hands and carries it up into the sky. Imagine the gods and demons below holding up their red mouths, opening and closing them. She gives them the corpse by slapping it [on their mouths].

Alternatively, the severed head of the corpse in front becomes a huge boulder of molten lead and [the remaining corpse] is slapped upon that, whereupon the red flesh and blood scatters and is consumed by the gods and demons. These visualizations are the Slapping (*rdeb pa ma*). They are intense wrathful visualizations customarily done during the Ninefold Spirit Feast.¹²

In between the visualizations, pray to the lineage gurus with intense devotion from the bottom of your heart. Make the aspiration to stop self-fixation and hopes and fears. Rest for a while without thought in the purity of the three spheres.

E • THE COMMUNAL FEAST OFFERING OF THE BODIES OF SELF AND OTHERS

First perform the three cycles of blending: the blending of your own and others' awareness, the blending of awareness and the realm of phenomena, and the blending of your own and others' corpses in the feast. The container is the *padma bhañja* (lotus skull cup): white outside, the nature of the moon, and red inside, the nature of the sun. In its center, the essence of the corpses is the feast substance. In appearance, it is a vertical golden vajra marked with $\bar{A}H$ at the hub, OM on the upper tip, and $H\bar{U}M$ on the lower end. Above it is the lid of the moon and below it the seat of the sun.

12. *gDon tshogs dgu ma*, usually attributed to Rangjung Dorje, but in Pearl Rosary it is attributed to his disciple Yakde Pañchen

Light radiates from the OM in your forehead and strikes the OM in Machik's forehead. Light then radiates from that and gathers all the Body blessings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas in all directions and times in the form of white light rays, which dissolve into Machik's forehead and immediately emanate as white light rays from the OM and strike the OM of the marked vajra. The moon lid along with the upper part of the vajra and the OM dissolve into light, filling the *kapāla* with white elixir. Follow the same pattern with the red ĀḤ and the gathering of the Speech blessings, which dissolves the middle part of the vajra and fills the skull with red elixir, and the dark blue HŪM and the gathering of the Mind blessings, which dissolves the lower part of the vajra and fills the skull with blue elixir. The white, red, and blue mixture of elixir becomes an abundance of excellent color, scent, taste, ability, and power. In essence it is the elixir of timeless awareness and in appearance it becomes immeasurable, inexhaustible outer, inner, and secret feast offerings.

Unimaginably numerous offering goddesses emanate from your (Vajrayoginī's) heart and offer it to all who are included in the four kinds of guests, from the gracious root and lineage gurus down to the sentient beings of the six realms. It is offered as an outer feast of all the glory and wealth there is in all existence that belongs to no one. It is offered as an inner feast of personal possessions such as life force, merit, good fortune, and dominion. It is offered

as a secret feast of the pleasure of male and female union. And it is offered as a suchness feast of mahāmudrā's lucid clarity without referencing the three spheres. Meditate that the guests are extremely pleased by this exquisite offering and they each grant their particular spiritual powers.

You may perform the Ninefold Spirit Feast for the occasion of a particular malicious spirit or sick person and so forth. Certainly there are some traditions of the daily practice in which this is done. However, since this is merely a particularly wrathful visualization of the red distribution, it does not warrant separate mention in the outline. There are a variety of special visualization procedures that can be found in the major manuals.

The Leftovers is a branch of the communal feast activities. All the leftovers from the offering and giving of the body in this way become mountains of flesh, lakes of blood, and banks of bones inside a kapāla that extends throughout the three existences. A skeleton dākinī emanates from you and distributes it to the powerful mover dākinīs who partake of leftovers, the eight classes of gods and spirits who have power to take [only] leftovers, those who did not come before and just arrived, and the humble and meek ones who have dominion over nothing but leftovers. Meditate that they are satisfied and rejoice, promising to accomplish activities for you.

III • CONCLUDING PRACTICES

A • DEDICATION AND ASPIRATION

Following the example of the dedications by the previous victors and their heirs, dedicate all the virtue that you and others have accumulated in the three times, and especially the virtuous roots of making this donation of your body on this occasion, in order that all sentient beings realize the intention of the unborn Mother once they have totally severed the inflation of self-fixation.

B • DISSOLUTION PHASE

The entire field of refuge gradually dissolves into light, clockwise and downward, melting into Machik.¹³ Machik's form becomes a thumb-sized figure radiating five-colored lights. She enters through your cranial aperture and descends, coming to rest in vajra posture in the center of the eight-petaled lotus in your heart. Imagine that the petals of the heart lotus close around her. However, there is also a customary practice when doing the daily body

13. For the exact sequence, see Harding, *Machik's Complete Explanation*, p. 182.

donation of meditating that Machik becomes [an orb of] light the size of a duck's egg and melts into the top of your head.

C • INTEGRATION

Visualize that you instantly become four-armed Avalokiteshvara, Tamer of Beings. The gods, demons, and six classes of beings make prostrations, circumambulate, and pay homage to you. Light rays emanate from your heart and turn all males into Avalokiteshvara and all females into Venerable Tārā. Meditate on them reciting the six syllables with a great humming sound. After you repeat the six syllables, meditate that all the guests joyfully return whence they came. Then maintain the view and intention of the uncontrived, native state of mahāmudrā.

[CLARIFICATION]

This is a very rough presentation of the preliminaries, main part, and concluding practices just in the context of the body donation. In terms of the general Holy Dharma Severance of Evil Object, in the preliminaries one would develop definite resolution, the heart pangs of impermanence, the utter certitude in infallible karmic cause and effect, and a sense of urgency and focused attention. Then one goes for refuge, develops the awakening mind, purifies obscurations, accumulates merit, and cultivates guru yoga. Once those general practices are done, the main practice is the introduction to the meaning of the Mother and severing the four devils in basic space. The concluding practice is to integrate vanquishing conduct into one's life through peaceful severance, wrathful severance, and half-peaceful, half-wrathful severance in order to maintain the experience.

Therefore, in short, with regard to the two practices of the body donation and the feast activities, there are extensive explicit instructions on the preliminaries and concluding practices, while the main practice must be realized in an implicit manner. Nevertheless, nowadays it appears that those known as Severance prac-

tioners for the most part do not stick to the root but only chase after the branches.

INTRODUCING THE MEANING OF THE MOTHER

First, you need to turn your muddled concepts into bright clarity by implementing the instructions on focusing the mind. With your body in the sevenfold posture of Vairochana, speech in the natural state of breathing, and mind divested of past, present, and future thoughts, rest in wonder (*hed de*) directly upon ever-fresh consciousness. If you cannot remain within that, focus your attention in front of you on a golden vajra the size of a barley grain; the essence of the Mother. When that also cannot hold your attention, focus your mind on the figure of Shākyamuni. Adjust [your meditation] if dullness or agitation occurs so that faultless meditative stability is born in your being.

Then, with inward-facing consciousness, look at the essence of the one that abides and the one that moves. In essence, these three — external appearances, the movement of discursive thought, and the one who cognizes them — do not exist separately. Since nothing can be identified, anything at all may arise. The unimpeded experience of clarity-emptiness is beyond description and expression. Free of all conceptual elaboration, it is the very characteristic of space — the perfection of wisdom. Since it is the enlightened perspective of the victors of the three times, do not ever leave this meditative absorption.

SEVERING THE FOUR DEVILS IN BASIC SPACE

Insofar as external things, such as form and so forth, provide support [for perception], they are tangible. When thoughts of attachment or aversion arise toward them, it is a devil. When you fall under its power, it is an obstacle. Therefore, whenever those thoughts of attachment or aversion, or acceptance or rejection, arise, in that very instant utter PHAT̃ and convey them to basic space. That is the severance of the tangible devil. When you progress in the meditation without falling under the power of that thought, the evidence of success (*tshar tshad*) and degree of uprising (*lhongs tshad*) will be sufficient. This applies to other devils as well: when your mind is not under your control, the five toxic emotions, happiness, sadness, fear, and terror will arise. This is the intangible devil. Fixating on your own excellence, pride, or exuberance over the signs [of successful meditation] on the path and so forth is the devil of exaltation. The clinging of self-fixation is itself the devil of inflation.

Therefore, without letting the sentinel of mindful knowing deteriorate or knowing awareness leave its post, convey all that arises to basic space with PHAT̃. If you can utterly sever the ties of inflated thoughts and self-fixation, you will become the most sublime and superior practitioner of Severance.

[ENHANCEMENT]

For the sake of enhancing such a view and meditation, there are concluding activities such as the white distributions of peaceful severance, the red distributions of wrathful severance, and the assorted distributions of half-peaceful, half-wrathful severance. Those are what is known as elaborate severance. Alternating meditation on love and compassion with the blending of awareness and basic space is unelaborate severance. To rest in equipoise in the meaning of the Mother alone is highly unelaborate severance. When you put all three of those into practice, it will be complete from beginning to end.

In raising the spirits, if you become attached to visions of gods and demons or frightening dreams, you will not feel secret arisings in the mind. You must cut through [that fixation] by holding your seat in the haunted retreats. There is much that is not severed. Therefore, it is crucial to remain physically unmoving, verbally silent, and mentally unyielding to whatever perceptions occur by conveying them to basic space with PHAT.

Even though you understand that you must sever the three poisons and other negative thoughts in basic space, when you are bound

by the knots of fixation on the goodness of your good thoughts, gods will deteriorate into devils. This is very common. So if you also practice devotion, compassion, creation phase with characteristics, completion phase, and so forth, while conveying them into basic space with PHAṬ, your practice of virtue will increase and you will get very close to the supreme spiritual power. In short, the basis of Severance is to be without hope and fear.

Since discursive thought is conditioned,
we are bound by the bonds of four devils;
the Mother's meaning, severing in basic space,
and unifying view and conduct are supreme.

When the manifestation of virtue thus obtained
conquers the whole web of discursive thought,
may we quickly attain the state of the Mother,
unborn and free of inflation.

Merely in order not to disobey the command of Jampal Khyentse,¹⁴ who is the embodiment of the perfection of wisdom, Yönten Gyatso wrote this at the seat of Palpung. May virtue and goodness increase.

14. 'Jam dpal mkhyen brtse, this was Kongtrul's friend, teacher, and disciple Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (1820–1892). 'Jam dpal and 'Jam dbyangs are both Tibetan names for Mañjūśrī.

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