



THE COMMENTARY ON THE
GURU YOGA PRACTICE OF JETSUN REPA

— *Illuminating Primordial Awareness* —

Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye



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————— *Illuminating Primordial Awareness* —————

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Translated by Sherab Drime



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This publication is dedicated to the Secret Mantra practitioners.

The guru yoga as well as it's commentary should be practiced
and studied only by people who have received the appropriate
empowerment, transmission, and instruction from a qualified guru.



The light of the blessing of Milarepa spreads everywhere and has the ability to clear away the darkness of ignorance in the hearts of all living beings. If one prays to Milarepa one is able to fully develop primordial awareness which is free from all impurities. This commentary is short and precise but it is also authentic.

The practice is divided into three parts. First of all the preliminaries, then the main practice, and finally the phases of the conclusion.

THE PRELIMINARIES

One begins with the blessing of the nectar, then one puts out the offering tormas to the various negative forces and then one meditates upon the protection circle. This is followed by the refuge prayer and the prayer for developing the enlightened attitude.

Following this there is a section for gathering the two accumulations, wisdom awareness and merit. These four sections form the first part of the practice.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE NECTAR

In general, once one enters the gate of the teaching of the highest class of tantra, the Anuttarayoga tantra, the yogi must at all times avoid considering his or her body in its ordinary form. Everything is considered to be in a completely pure form. If the yogi thinks of himself or herself as an ordinary

individual it will not be possible to carry out the activities or the practices of the Mantrayana, the tantric practices. As an ordinary being one would not be able to consecrate the nectar and to expel negative forces which is what is to be accomplished at the beginning of the practice.

In the first phrases of the practice one recites and imagines oneself instantaneously as Vajrayogini (Tib. *Dorje Naljorma*). She has one face which is half smiling and half wrathful. In her right hand she holds a curved knife with a vajra handle which she brandishes in the air. With her left hand she holds at the level of her heart a skull cup filled with blood. She is red in colour and she wears the five symbolic bone ornaments. At the elbow of her left arm she holds an ornamental staff, a Kathvanga, which is tipped with a vajra. One leg is stretched out and her other leg is bent in a dancing posture. She stands upon a lotus, sun disc and corpse all within a mass of fire which represents primordial awareness. Considering oneself to be Vajrayogini one should develop this as an aspect of one's being.

VISUALISATION OF THE KAPALA

Next one goes on to purify the small metal kapala in front of oneself using the mantras given in the text.

Consider that the whole universe and all the beings within it dissolve into emptiness. Out of the sphere of emptiness appears a syllable YAM in front of oneself and the green half circle of the wind mandala arises from this. The wind mandala is also marked with the syllable YAM. From the syllable RAM appears the fire mandala in the form of a red triangle which is marked with a syllable RAM. On top of these appear three syllables KHAM. From these arise three skulls which form a triangular hearth. Above this appears the syllable AH from which arises a kapala which is vast and open.

Within this arises in the centre the syllable NA from which arises human flesh, in the southeast from the syllable GO arises ox flesh, in the southwest from the syllable KU arises dog flesh, in the northwest from the syllable DA arises elephant flesh, and in the northeast from the syllable HA arises horse flesh. These form the **five meats**.

On top of these, in the centre from syllable MU arises urine, in the east from syllable BI arises faeces, in the south from the syllable RA arises blood, in the west from the syllable SHU appears semen and in the northern direction from syllable MA appears brain. These are the **five nectars**. Both the five meats and the five nectars are marked with their respective seed syllables.

From one's own heart, as Vajrayogini, a ray of light radiates, striking the wind mandala which begins to generate wind. The fire mandala then bursts into flame and it heats the contents of the kapala, which melt together and come to the boil. As the substances boil the impurities rise to the surface and flow over the edge. The steam from the liquid condenses to form the three syllables OM ĀḤ HŪḤ from the bottom upwards, OM nearest to the liquid.

The three syllables radiate light to all the Buddhas in their respective Buddha fields. It stirs them into action and they return all their wisdom awareness and qualities in the form of nectar which dissolves into the three syllables. These then melt down into the nectar, one by one transforming it into an ocean of awareness nectar. This nectar has all the excellent qualities, aroma, colour, all abilities, and all essences.

Having done this visualisation when doing the practice for the first time, one dips the ring finger of one's left hand into the nectar and tastes it. One considers that this purifies all the impurities of one's speech and blesses one's inner subtle channels and essences.

With this nectar in the small metal kapala, which is now wisdom awareness nectar, one uses the ring finger of one's left hand to sprinkle the nectar all around the place where one is practicing and also the various objects and offerings on one's shrine. One considers that all obstacles and impurities are expelled and all negative influences to one's practice are removed.

THE OFFERING OF THE PRELIMINARY TORMA

First of all one recites the verses to consecrate the torma in exactly the same way that one has blessed the kapala using the same recitations and visualisations. There are a variety of tormas which can be used. In the Karma Kagyu tradition one uses a preliminary torma which is identical to the one used in the practice of Vajrayogini. This is red in colour and has a triangular shape. One can also use a torma shape from any other tradition if one is not practising Karma Kagyu traditions.

Once the torma has been consecrated in this way one invites the guests. With the mantra and mudra one imagines that from one's own heart as Vajrayogini rays of light radiate. They instantly attract into the sky in front all of the various spirits such as the thirty two guardians of the land and so forth. All these spirits appear in front of oneself and dissolve into clear light transforming into the body of Vajrayogini. From their tongues come out a tube of light through which they suck up the nectar of the torma from the skull cup.

Having tasted the nectar they are pleased and content and they promise to accomplish the four kinds of activity. Having made this promise they go back to their own places becoming one's helpers in the accomplishment of the practice.

All the evil or dark forces, all those who are not authorised to participate in the secret tantric practices, in particular all those with negative attitudes who would attempt to destroy one's practice and create obstacles for one-self, then concerning these, from one's heart emanate many tiny wrathful deities and also all kinds of weapons such as khatvangas and spears and so forth like falling rain and expel all of these obstacles. They are cast out into space well away from one's area of practice. All these emanations of weapons and deities return and form below one the vajra ground made from interlocking vajras, above that, a vajra fence and above this they form a vajra tent with a canopy of vajras. These are all very thick and solid and unmoving and impenetrable.

On the outside of this structure gather hosts of wrathful deities and different weapons and masses of wisdom awareness fire. They form layers of protection outside the tent and there is no possibility that negative forces can enter. This visualisation is very well known and respected in the mantrayana and tantric practice rituals. It therefore forms one of the methods of the profound quick path towards enlightenment. On this short tantric path there are more obstacles and one needs practices that provide protection more than on the slower paths. Such protection circles and visualisations are therefore very important.

This then was the description for the visualisation for the preliminary phase of the practice, the first section of these.

REFUGE AND ENGENDERING THE ENLIGHTENED ATTITUDE

The visualisation to be carried out during the refuge and development of the enlightened attitude is as follows.

In the sky in front is a lotus with a disc of the full moon lying flat on top of it. Milarepa is seated on this and one should imagine this to be very clear. Also consider that Milarepa symbolises the union of the Three Roots and the Three Jewels and he is inseparable from one's own Lama. By imagining this single figure one is imagining all the sources of refuge. There are many ways of imagining the sources of refuge in the different meditation practices. The method described here is called "The Jewel that Includes Everything". It is a particularly profound method with great blessing attached to it. It also makes the visualisation less complex to do.

Oneself and all living beings filling space go for refuge to Milarepa. One considers deeply that one takes refuge in him right up to the moment of one's own enlightenment. As one recites the refuge prayer one should develop great respect and confidence in Milarepa.

With an attitude of total self surrender and considering that Milarepa knows exactly what is to be done one can trust in him completely. Having taken refuge in this way one reflects on the fact that all living beings without exception have in the past been one's parents. At that time they showed us great thought and kindness and thought only of us as their children. One should consider that because of ignorance one has forgotten this fact and consequently all living beings continue to accumulate the karma which keeps them wandering endlessly in the ocean of suffering, the cycle of existence. In this way one develops compassion for all living

beings because one sees that their actions inevitably cause the continuity of their existence and suffering.

One develops the wish and motivation to establish all these living beings in the state of Milarepa, a state of non-duality and pure wisdom awareness. One goes on to say that in order to do this one will devote one's body speech and mind completely to virtuous actions and in particular one will carry out this practice of this profound path of the Guru Yoga of Milarepa. One will practice it one pointedly and apply all one's efforts to its accomplishment. The refuge is the basis for all the different vehicles, Mahayana and Hinayana, one always goes for refuge in all of these. It is something that distinguishes buddhists from non-buddhists.

The development of bodhichitta, this is like a seed which enables one to reach perfect enlightenment. It's presence or absence is what distinguishes the Mahayana and the Hinayana paths.

THE SEVEN-BRANCH PRAYER

This is the relative or non-ultimate seven-branch prayer. **The first branch** is that of prostrations. One considers that Milarepa is the union of all the Buddhas. All living beings as vast as space and oneself make prostrations to Milarepa with bodies that are as countless as the number of atoms in space.

The second branch is that of making offerings. We should consider that we offer to Milarepa our body, possessions, wealth, and all the merit that we have already accumulated. As we make this offering we multiply it mentally so that the whole universe is filled with clouds of offerings like the offerings made by the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. By making these vast offerings to Milarepa one accumulates a vast amount of merit.

The third branch is the prayer of confession. We recognise that in previous lives since beginningless time we have accumulated negative actions with our body, speech and mind. We therefore have accumulated a lot of negative karma which we need to purify. If this is not done it will be a cause of rebirth in the hells at the moment of our death. By developing this sense of fear concerning our past negative actions we develop a sense of urgency to find a means of purifying them. This act of confession is a means to do this, it is by sincerely regretting these negative acts that they are purified and we develop a confidence in the power of Milarepa to enable us to do this.

The fourth branch is where we rejoice in the merit accumulated by others. All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who have followed the path towards enlightenment and all other beings, have accumulated a great deal of merit. We rejoice that this has been created in this way. In this way we purify our own previous karma which has been accumulated by not rejoicing in the merit of others.

The fifth branch is where we recognise that Milarepa is the essence of all the Buddhas of the past, present and future and also all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions. We request that Milarepa turn the wheel of the Dharma of the profound nature of emptiness and compassion. We thereby purify all the negative karma of our past where we considered our own views to be greater than the view of the teaching of the Buddha.

The sixth branch is where we recognise that Milarepa is the wisdom awareness body of all the Buddhas. We think of him as surrounded by countless Bodhisattvas and we request them not to pass into nirvana but to remain as long as the sky, for as long as there are beings who continue

to turn within the cycle of existence. We request them to remain out of compassion for the sake of other beings.

In the seventh branch we recognise all the merit that has been accumulated by the other six branches, we increase this to include all the merit we have ever accumulated by all our previous virtuous activities, and we dedicate this so that we attain complete enlightenment, the state of Milarepa.

This seven-branch prayer is the very heart of the methods for accumulation and purification, both of the sutra and the tantra paths.

Generally, if one attempts to practice without having purified all one's impurities and veils, without having gathered the two accumulations, one will never develop authentic realisation. Also it will be very difficult to receive the blessing of the Lama and of the deity which one practices. The seven-branch prayer is a necessary and indispensable preliminary to every practice one does.

This completes the explanation of the seven-branch prayer on the ordinary level where there are still reference points in one's practice.

NON-ORDINARY EXPLANATION OF THE SEVEN-BRANCH PRAYER

The first branch which is prostrations. Here one recognises that all phenomena and appearances in the cycle of existence are the emanation of one's own mind. There is no difference to be made between the Lama and the essence of one's own mind. There is in fact nothing else but this essence of one's own mind and the mind of the Lama. One lets one's mind rest in this natural self aware state. By doing this one is therefore spontaneously making prostrations to the Lama.

For the second branch, offerings, everything that appears as an object for the six senses such as forms that appear as an object for sight and so on, all of these one will have no clinging to whatsoever. One's mind is free from any idea of clinging to anything or rejecting anything. One allows the mind to rest in this state of non-attachment which is a state of openness and release. This is the ultimate offering.

For the third branch, confession, one allows one's mind to rest in a state which is free of expression in the ultimate reality of mind. There is no longer any clinging to thoughts and concepts, there is no longer subject and object and actions. In this state one's mind is self aware and free from clinging and attachment. Ego clinging cannot continue as the attachments to good and bad are no longer operating, one's mind is free from ideas of right and wrong. One recognises that all labelling is attachment. Since beginningless time both good and bad have never existed in the ultimate state and this understanding is the perfect confession.

The fourth branch, that of rejoicing. Here one recognises that since beginningless time all phenomena have been in essence empty with the nature of clarity. From this clarity arises a constant unobstructed flow of compassion. This flow of manifestation, is the play of self awareness and recognising this, one rejoices.

The fifth branch, urging the turning of the wheel of the Dharma. In the ultimate sense one is urging the indestructible reality, the sound of the Nada. This sound has pervaded samsara and nirvana since beginningless time. It is the nature of all encompassing primordial awareness. It is inexpressible yet the basis for all expression.

The sixth branch, the request to remain. Here one's request is to remain in the continual and indestructible Dharmakaya which is ultimate reality.

This is the supreme aspect or ultimate reality of all phenomena. It is the essence of suchness, existing in the expression of life throughout the universe and all beings, animate and inanimate.

The seventh branch, considering the merit accumulated. On this ultimate level one recognises that this merit has no reality whatsoever. There are no virtuous activities existing in the ultimate sense. One leaves one's mind in a state free from reference points, free from concepts of subject, object and action. One dedicates this ultimate aspect of merit in order that oneself and all living beings come to recognise their own true nature, and to recognise this as the natural reality where the three kayas are to be realised.

This completes the section of the preliminaries with the great accumulation of merit through the seven-branch prayer.

THE MAIN PRACTICE

This is divided into two sections, the self generation and the front generation. One's self generation is a method used to bless one's own being. If one is not blessed by visualising in this way then it will not be possible to completely receive the blessing of the Lama.

One begins by saying the three syllables which are the seed syllables of the indestructible body, speech and mind belonging to all the Buddha: OM ĀḤ HŪḤ. One considers that this has the effect of causing the entire universe to become the pure realm of Kachö, the place of Ogyen. This is the pure land of Vajrayogini. In the centre of this, the inanimate universe is completely purified and takes on the form of the *chöjung* [which comprises a flat triangle interlinked with an upside down three sided pyramid]. This palace is white on the outside representing compassion and red on the

inside representing wisdom awareness. The point of the pyramid pokes down through the flat triangle. The upper end of the pyramid is open and vast. The point downwards symbolises that one does not fall into the extreme of nirvana and abandon the cycle of existence and the open vast top symbolises that one does not fall into the extreme of samsara.

In the six corners are spirals of joy which are white and spinning round. In the very centre is a lotus on top of which lies a plump healthy looking male corpse which still has some blood at his nostrils representing the fact that it is only recently dead. Its head is pointing towards the right of Vajrayogini. [Note: usually to the left.] At the heart of the corpse lying flat is a sun disc. On top of this, arising instantly, is oneself as Vajrayogini who is red in colour, the colour of vermilion, and she is considered to be the mother of all the Buddhas. She is half smiling and half wrathful and radiating masses of light. She has three eyes and her yellowish hair is standing on end. She wears a crown of five skulls.

Around her neck she wears a necklace of fifty freshly severed human heads symbolising that she has cut through the fifty different kinds of conceptual thought. She also wears a necklace of red flowers which symbolises impermanence. In her right hand she brandishes in the air a curved knife with a half vajra handle and in her left hand at her heart she holds a blood filled skull bowl. In the crook of her left arm she leans upon a khatvanga which is tipped with a half vajra. This symbolises her consort, the Heruka with whom she is constantly in union. On the crown of her head is a bone wheel the centre of which is hollow and her hair pokes through this. The spokes of the wheel are lying flat on her head and linked with a network of bone. On top of this rests the crown made of five skulls and on top of each there is a jewel tip.

She wears earrings and necklaces of different lengths and armlets, bracelets and anklets. She wears a belt from which hangs a network of interlinked bones and hanging from this, lots of tiny silver bells. The ornaments are made of bone because of her wrathful nature.

She is in a dancing posture with her right leg bent and her heel pointing towards her secret centre. Her left leg is outstretched. One should consider the visualisation not to be solid in any way, it has never been created, it is an expression of primordial awareness, a body of light, like a rainbow, clear and distinct yet translucent and insubstantial.

Vajrayogini stands within a mass of blazing fire. One's own body is like the commitment being and one's mind is the awareness being. The coexistence of the body and mind in this way is the expression of the fact that since beginningless time the nature of one's body and mind has been that of ultimate reality. As one does the visualisation then the visualisation should be very clear, very visible, and one's pride in the visualisation, one's self confidence in one's own being as that of the Vajrayogini, should be perfect.

Within one's own body, at the level of the navel, is a red *chöjung*. In the center of this is a lotus with four petals. The colours of the petals of the lotus correspond to the colours of the four directions. In the center of the lotus stands a red syllable $HRĪḤ$, and in the east on the front petal stands the blue syllable HA , and on the south petal, the one which is on one's own right, is the yellow syllable RI . On the west petal, the petal behind, is the red syllable NI , and on the northern petal, to one's own left, is a green syllable SA . All of these syllables are facing inwards towards the $HRĪḤ$, which is in the center.

Around the syllable $HRĪḤ$ are arranged all the syllables of the mantra, and all these mantra syllables are facing inwards. The mantra starts from the

edge of the HRĪḤ in front of oneself, and the mantra itself is OM VAJRA VAIROCANĪYE HA RI NI SA HŪṂ HŪṂ PHAṬ SVĀHĀ. The syllables of the mantra are about a third of the size of the central HRĪḤ and one should imagine each syllable very clearly, very distinctly.

The mantra rotates faster and faster and gradually the light is so strong that it radiates out of the HRĪḤ, and from the mantra garland and reaches out into the whole universe, where it makes offerings to all of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in their pure Buddha fields. This light acts as an offering, and they send back in return, all of their blessings and inspiration of body, speech, and mind in the form of rays of light, which come back and dissolve into the central syllable HRĪḤ. The HRĪḤ gives off more light, which penetrates the entire universe and purifies all the veils, obscurations and negative karma of all sentient beings. And in addition it penetrates the universe and transforms the universe itself into the pure land of Vajrayogini. All beings within it become part of the mandala of Vajrayogini, blessed, and they become Vajrayogini herself. This is what one should think whilst one is repeating the mantra, which one should repeat in a very low voice, just whispering.

Another method which one can use as one is repeating the mantra is to practice the flask breathing, or one does the intermediate flask breathing. These special kinds of breathing practices one does whilst repeating the mantra. As one does this the mind concentrates one pointedly on the mantra garland itself and on the seed syllable HRĪḤ in the center. One repeats the mantra just mentally, one does not speak the mantra at all, and this is called **the cessation repetition**.

The third kind of practice to do during the mantra repetition is called the vajra repetition. For this one allows one's mind to rest in a state of profound

meditation. As one inhales, one turns one's attention to, and one thinks of the beginning of the mantra, OM VAJRA, and then after that, when, as the breath is remaining in the body, one has not started exhaling yet, one concentrates on the syllables VAIROCANĪYE, and so on. And when exhaling one concentrates the mind on the syllables HŪṂ HŪṂ PHAT SVĀHA. This is then called **the vajra repetition**.

That makes a total of three types of repetition one can practice while performing the mantra repetition and one should carry out whichever one is appropriate for one's own particular case.

The special instructions, which come from the Tantra or the transmission of Naropa, concerning the practice of Vajrayogini, these instructions contain special ways in which to meditate in such a way that the *lung* and the mind are inseparable. However, these instructions are not appropriate for this practice of Milarepa. One should not apply them, one should simply carry out the instructions, which have been given in this commentary.

Through this section on imagining oneself as Vajrayogini one is blessing one's body, speech and mind, which start out as being impure, by the blessing of the body, speech and mind of Vajrayogini. In this way one is transforming oneself so that one becomes a fit vessel for the compassion which one will receive through doing the Guru Yoga practice itself.

THE SECOND SECTION OF THE MAIN PRACTICE

This is the description of the practice, which is based on the front generation, which is to be developed in front of oneself, and which becomes the support or the focus for all the different sections of the practice which follow.

In the main practice then, there are all kinds of methods to gather the accumulations, and to receive blessings, and to stir the Lama into activity,

and so on, and these different sections can be divided into seven main sections.

First of all one blesses the place where one is, and the objects which one will use and those which one is offering. Then one will develop, or imagine the support, or the focal point of one's meditation, that is, Milarepa, and invite the deities of primordial wisdom. Then one makes offerings, and prostrations, and so on and one makes praises.

Then there is a section with very special **means for gathering the accumulations**. Then there are different prayers, and the repetition of the mantra, which are designed to stir the mind of Milarepa, and finally there is a section during which one asks for one's wishes to be fulfilled.

First of all, rays of light are radiated from one's own heart, and these have the effect of transforming the whole area, where one is doing the practice, into the natural radiance of the clear light. This means that everything becomes emptiness, free of any projections whatsoever, and all materiality, all clinging to characteristics, all of this is totally purified. The outer vessel, the universe itself, becomes the pure world, the pure land of Akanistha (Tib. *Okmin*), and it is totally without limit, vast in extent, and there are a countless number and variety of different forms and shapes and ornaments and so on in this very rich world of Akanistha.

In the midst of this great universe of Akanistha is to be found the place where one is doing the practice, and one should think this is transformed by the light into the pure palace which is completely without limit, the palace of great liberation, very wide in extent, and with all the different characteristics of a perfect palace. The whole of the inside and outside of the palace is filled with a great ocean, a great extent of clouds of offerings, which are just like the offering given out, or emanated by the aspiration prayers of

Samanthabadra. These aspiration prayers and his deep meditation mean that he is able to emanate offerings of a countless variety simultaneously. So one should think that the whole place is filled with them.

These offerings consist of **outer offerings**, of the five pleasing offerings, and the different auspicious symbols, the eight auspicious symbols, and so on. There are also the eight substances which are very precious, and the seven signs of royalty, and these are then the outer offerings. One should imagine that the whole sky is filled with these. In addition there are **inner offerings**, which are the five qualities searched for by the senses, the five perfect sense offerings. There are also the **secret offerings**, which consist of the sixteen vajra consorts, and the whole of space is filled with these different offerings, the whole of samsara and nirvana, with offerings which create great bliss.

One should imagine that all the offerings are included, there is not one offering which is missing, or nothing which is impure. Thinking like this one blesses the area with the sound of the music one is making, and with the sound of the mantra one is reciting, and also with the mudra one is performing at that point, which is the mudra of the sky treasury.

The next stage is to develop the **visualisation of the deity**, here as the Guru Milarepa, and to dissolve into him the aspects of primordial wisdom. This means that for the visualisation one imagines that one is purifying the whole universe and it's content, recognising that since the very beginning of time they have been perfectly pure, and that the universe is just like the very wonderful and excellent places in the Buddha fields such as the Buddha fields of the Buddhas of Padma Dampa and Akszobhya.

In the midst of this in front of the sky one sees many rainbows, many clouds, and the whole sky is filled with offering goddesses who have dif-

ferent kinds of ornaments, and are holding different kinds of offerings. In the very center of this scene is to be found a throne which is held up by eight snow lions. The throne is made of precious substances and is covered by various silks and materials of divine quality. This throne one should think of as actually representing the purity of the five basic *lung* in the body, such as the life force wind and so on, these five main subtle energies in the body. On top of the throne there is a lotus with a thousand petals, and this lotus actually represents all of the different channels in the body, the subtle energy channels, in their pure form, basically those of the five main chakras, but also the subsidiary channels which run off from those chakras as well.

In the very center of the lotus one imagines a sun and a moon disc, and one should imagine that these represent the indestructible aspects of the body, those to be found in the five centers, which represent the vital energy of one's subtle energies and one's mind. Seated on this is Milarepa, who represents one's own mind, which is emptiness, it is empty of all emanations, all complications, and represents the reality of all things, of all phenomena. One's mind is the clear light, and this purity of mind appears or manifests itself as the body of the Lama.

The Lama Milarepa himself is symbolic of all of the Lamas of the Kagyu lineage, he contains within him all of the different Lamas of the lineage previous to Milarepa, and also represents the essence of all of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the three times and ten directions. He also represents the essence of the Three Roots. This figure of the Lama is the figure of Milarepa, whose body is giving off the five lights which represent the five primordial wisdoms, so that he is in a blaze of light that penetrates

the whole universe. His body is giving off this great brilliance of wisdom light of the five colours.

His speech one should imagine is constantly singing the melodies of the indestructible nature of the universe, the sound of the Nada. His mind is in a state of total wisdom and love, a state of great primordial wisdom, and he is focusing his mind on the prayers and wishes of all of those who pray to him with devotion and respect. One should imagine that around him in a circle, above, around his head, are gathered all the Lamas of the Kagyu lineage. Around his middle are gathered all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and the different Yidam deities, and below him are gathered all the Dakas and Dakinis, the Dharma Protectors and those who are under oath to protect the Dharma. This whole collection of beings completely fills space, just like clouds which are massed in the openness of the sky.

On the forehead of the principal figure, that is, of Milarepa, there is the essence of his body in the form of a white syllable OM, at his throat, the essence of his speech, a red syllable AH, and in his heart the essence of his mind, the blue syllable HŪM. Rays of light of the respective colours are radiating from these syllables, and also rays of light come from one's own heart. Continue to visualise oneself as Vajrayogini. These countless rays of light reach all of the Buddhas in their Buddha fields, and there these rays of light act as offerings to them, which stirs them into activity for the benefit of all sentient beings. They send back all of their blessings of body, speech and mind, all their primordial wisdom, which takes on the form of the deities who are invited, particularly Milarepa.

These awareness beings are invited in the sky in front of oneself through the music one is playing, through the incense one is burning, and particularly through the powerful devotion that is in one's mind at that moment.

These elements stir the invitation, or contribute to the effectiveness of the invitation. This is what one imagines as one recites the appropriate words in the ritual.

One imagines that through this, from the pure Buddha fields such as the Buddha field of genuine happiness, and the Buddha field of Vajrayogini and so on, all of these Buddha fields, which are in fact one's own manifestation in its pure form, they are all invited instantly. All of these different aspects, that is, the Three Roots of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and so on, all of them are invited in the sky in front, invited by immeasurable compassion, to act for the benefit of others. They gather around the figures which one has already imagined, and produce a feeling of great joy. Then one recites: E ĀRALLI PHEM.

As one recites this mantra one imagines one is stirring the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas into activity. As a symbol of this one sits in a crouched posture, one's right big toe crosses over and treads on the big toe of one's left foot. One's two hands form the blazing mudra, which means that the thumbs and the first fingers are crossed, and the other fingers spread out widely, and this mudra one turns around above one's forehead in front. One recites VAJRASAMĀJAḤ. One does the mudra of vajra summoning, where one gathers all these deities.

The next section is where one makes prostrations and offerings and the offering of the mandala.

First the prostrations: One imagines that from one's own body and that of all living beings emanate countless bodies, which are as numerous as the atoms in the whole universe. Each of these forms has their hands folded together in respect, which they then place at the three places, the forehead, the throat and the heart. They all bow down and place the five

points of the body on the ground and make a prostration. At the same time one recites the verses of praise to Milarepa, and one should imagine that these verses of praise have a hundred thousand verses to them, so that the praises multiply in this way. In one's mind one should have an attitude of total confidence and respect in Milarepa, recognising that it is not necessary to seek another place of refuge, that one will find all the protection one needs within him.

After that there is a sequence of offerings. For these one imagines that from one's own heart stream out countless offering goddesses who are very useful and very beautiful, and very pleasing to look at. As they stream out from one's heart they are carrying all the offerings which one has previously blessed at the beginning of the practice, and they are also singing and dancing. These offering goddesses carry **outer offerings**, such as umbrellas and different attributes, the auspicious attributes and so on. There are also offerings of houses and palaces, the pleasing offerings such as flowers and incense and so on.

There are also **inner offerings**, which are carried by the special goddesses of those kind of offerings, the vajra form goddesses for instance, who go and dissolve into the eyes of all the deities and all the Lamas and so on. These produce by the contact with the different sense organs a feeling of great bliss and the great offering of the perfection of that particular sense. One imagines also that these offering goddesses, as they dissolve into the beings who receive the offerings, the beings develop a great feeling of enjoyment and of great bliss.

Not only that, this goes for all the other sense organs, the special goddesses then dissolve into the appropriate sense organs with the appropriate offering, and then there is a series of **secret offerings**, which consist of

the vajra consorts, each embracing and coming into union with the Lamas and with the deities and the Dharma protectors and so on. By the play of their union they are demonstrating the indestructible union of wisdom and skilful means. They satisfy the deities by the great play of bliss, which is produced in the mind of the deity at this recollection of wisdom and skilful means.

Finally one allows the mind rest in a state wherein there is no longer any clinging to an idea of someone who is making an offering, the offering itself and someone who is on the receiving end of the offering. Instead, the mind rests in its natural state, aware that these distinctions of subject, object, and instrument, are of no value whatsoever, that they have no reality at all. The mind is therefore resting in a state of inborn Mahamudra, ultimate Mahamudra, wherein one is simply looking at the natural face, or the natural reality of the Lama. Remaining in that state of meditation is termed the **ultimate offering**.

MANDALA OFFERING

First of all an explanation of **the outer mandala offering**: This is where we consider a symbolic representation of the universe, made of worlds, each of which contains a central mountain, the four main continents, and the minor continents, a sun and a moon. There are different traditional collections of these worlds. The first one is called the three thousand ordinary worlds, and this is a way of representing a multiplication of a hundred million of such worlds. This worldly three thousand, if one multiplies that by a hundred million, then one gets a vast three thousand. And if one multiplies a vast three thousand by a hundred million, then one gets a continual,

or a connected three thousand. If one multiplies that connected three thousand by a hundred million, one gets the limits of the three thousand. If one multiplies these limits of the three thousand by a hundred million, then one gets a vast ocean of worlds. It is all of these different levels, or these different multiplications of worlds, of symbolic representations of worlds that we offer.

We therefore consider all of the possessions, which could be contained in such a great vast collection of worlds, possessions of worldly nature, and of nirvanic nature, a nature of things which have transcended the worlds. All of these we think of as totally filling the whole of the universe, and we offer all of this as a mandala offering. We imagine that this great offering fills the whole of space, and then, as Milarepa and the beings surrounding him receive this offering and accept it, we gather a great accumulation of merit. This is what we should think when we are doing the first few verses, which concern this outer mandala offering.

This is followed by **the inner mandala offering**. There are two ways of considering this, the first of which is quite simply to develop the awareness, let the mind rest in the awareness that one's own body has as it's own nature the vajra body, the indestructible body with all of it's qualities. The second way is to do a visualisation where the different parts of one's body represent the mandala objects, so that one's head is like the palace of the gods, with one's two eyes being the sun and the moon, one's backbone is the central mountain, one's heart is the wish-fulfilling jewel and so on. Each part of the body corresponds to one of the elements in the mandala, and having clearly imagined this, then one imagines that one offers all substances, which one normally considers to be part of oneself, one's own

body, one's own wealth and possessions, one's own sensory fields, one's own sense organs, and so on, one's own intellectual mind.

In addition one offers at the same time all of the roots of virtue accumulated in the three times by oneself or by other living beings. All of these one offers without hesitation, without caring at all whether they belong to oneself or not, one simply offers them. After the offering one again thinks that this offering totally satisfies Milarepa and all of those deities and beings around him, and they therefore allow us to accumulate an incalculable amount of merit.

Then **the secret and ultimate mandala offering** where one recognises that one's own mind is without birth, and death, and without existence. It is simply the great mandala of emptiness, which is the Dharmadhatu, or the sphere of phenomena. Within this mandala of emptiness is the self aware clear light, which is the best of all possessions, and this is spontaneous, a state which is without any idea of subject, object, or offering, or thing to be offered, without any name or characteristic, because this sphere of reality transcends all such clinging. Letting one's mind rest in it's natural state, aware of this ultimate reality, is the secret and ultimate mandala offering.

The commentary then goes on to say that at the time of making the offerings in the previous section, if one wishes to add other collections of offering verses from other practises, other rituals, then one can do so, and also at the time of the mandala offering, one can precede the verses of the mandala offering in the Milarepa ritual by recitation of the general mandala offering [that is found in the ngondro or preliminary practice], where one recites the verses corresponding to the thirty-seven heaps, or different offerings of piles of rice. It is also possible to accumulate mandala offerings several times over, reciting the verses and making the actual mandala offering, accumulating them many times.

PRAISES

The next section is a section devoted to praises of Milarepa. This does not mean that we should recite these with an idea that there really is an externally existing Milarepa, who needs to be praised, and who would be satisfied by the praises which we make. Instead we should recognise that the reason we do such a practice is in order to purify all of our previous negative karma, accumulated because of thinking of ourselves as the most important, thinking of our own qualities. If we praise the qualities of Milarepa, we are accumulating good karma, and purifying our negative karma.

The praises themselves open with a phrase in Sanskrit: GURU NAMO HŪṂ. This is in order to form a connection with the stainless speech of the Indian text, coming from the profound path. The meaning of this is simply: I prostrate to the Lama, and one imagines that oneself and all living beings prostrate to the Lama Milarepa, and the HŪṂ at the end is in order to stir the mind of Milarepa, so that he grant us the accomplishments.

Whilst reciting the praise one should imagine that all of the previously emanated offering goddesses as well as oneself and all other living beings, all recite these praises in a hundred thousand verses, all with the melody of Brahma, a very sweet and attractive melody, and that each living being has in his or her mind a feeling of great respect and devotion, calling to mind each quality of Milarepa, as it appears in the praise.

The sections, or the verses of homage, are divided into seven parts, each of which has its own theme. **The first one** is the section which deals with the supreme and excellent qualities concerning the compassion of Milarepa, and this is like a cause of his enlightenment.

The second section talks about the conditions, or situations for his development. Here it talks about the great qualities of his energy when he worked under the guidance of Marpa.

The third section is talking about the accompanying qualities, these excellent qualities, which are wisdom and skilful means.

After that there is **the fourth section** on the qualities he developed when he crossed the different levels and paths. **The fifth section** on the great qualities of the results that he attained through his accomplishments. **The sixth section** on the nature of the ultimate three kayas. Finally, **the seventh section**, which shows the great quality of the praise which is accorded to Milarepa, who is the one to whom one pays homage.

The first section of the praise talks about the great compassion of Milarepa, and this helps us to remember that right from the beginning Milarepa was someone in whom the awareness of the importance of the Mahayana attitude was awakened. Therefore he recognised immediately that all living beings in the whole universe had been his parents in the past, and because of this certainty he developed a great compassion, unbearable compassion, so that he decided to do whatever he could to liberate all of these living beings, caught up constantly in the ocean of the cycle of existence.

He developed the desire through developing the correct attitude, the vast open attitude of Bodhicitta, he developed the desire to establish all of these living beings without exception in the ultimate state of Vajradhara, which is the state of union. This being the most beneficial thing he could do for living beings, he decided to do this on his own if necessary. He therefore thought constantly about living beings and developed compassion through that. He first developed an intention to save them, and after that he acted so as to save them, and whatever he could not do at the moment, he always

wished that he could do in the future. These praises of the quality of great compassion, the great attitude, refer to this excellent attitude of Milarepa.

The praise goes on to talk about the great reference point of Milarepa. This refers to what his mind is thinking of, and what he is thinking of is the fact that the nature of all phenomena since the very origin of time have been without birth. They are unborn, and that everything which is part of dualistic manifestation is simply confusion, just as if one were dreaming.

Aware of this Milarepa developed within his mind an attitude which is without distinction between near and far. He does not reject certain phenomena and he does not feel attached to other phenomena. This is the great idea in his mind. Having understood the nature of the universe in this way he developed great compassion for all of those living beings who have not also had realisation and who are therefore caught up in the cycle of existence. He developed a great wish to liberate them from this state by all kinds of profound methods and in that way he perfects the accumulations.

The accumulations contain within them a great ocean of different methods to purify and to accumulate wisdom and merit. It is for this reason, his knowledge of methods, that he is called someone of great intelligence. These two qualities, great idea and great intelligence both relate to compassion which is developed by thinking about the nature of phenomena.

This section of the prayer deals with the great qualities of the Bodhicitta of Milarepa, both the intentional and actual application, the two aspects of Bodhicitta.

The next section deals with the compassion which Milarepa developed on an ultimate level, that is, compassion without a reference point. He understood that since beginningless time he had within his mind the great

strength which enabled him to reach the perfection of and the fruition of the enlightened attitude itself, and also to perfect the great ocean of activity for the benefit of others. On account of his strength he will never be turned away from this activity, and it can be said that he is dressed in great armour.

Having seen the truth of ultimate reality itself, he is able to look at himself and all sentient beings and to see that the distinction between self and others has no reality at all. Having seen through the illusion of this he is able to let appear in his mind the spontaneous natural compassion which arises from the understanding that there is no distinction between self and others. This is like a great weapon of compassion which he is able to wield and to use. With this weapon he is able to completely cut through the network of clinging and attachment to ideas of samsara and nirvana. He therefore has a great armour of loving kindness combined with compassion. These qualities are associated with compassion which has no reference point, which is non-dual.

The praise therefore points out that Milarepa developed both relative Bodhicitta and also ultimate Bodhicitta to their perfection. Through his knowledge of the results of the Bodhicitta and the effects of such an attitude he is able to avoid falling into the extremes of samsara and nirvana. In particular, through his compassion he does not run the risk of passing away into nirvana but he is always there, a great brave person who is constantly active for the benefit of beings and who will be acting exclusively for the benefit of beings until the very end of samsara.

The next verse of the praise itself talks about the great qualities of the devotion of Milarepa. He took as his Lama the great translator Marpa who was the fourth member of the golden rosary of the Kagyu lineage who have

attained the supreme accomplishment direct from Vajradhara through the transmission lineage. For Milarepa, Marpa was his only Lama whom he found totally satisfying so he did not need to search for any others. In his devotion to Marpa he demonstrated great faith, great devotion, great aspiration, great willingness and great confidence. Because of these qualities his devotion was very strong, just like a blazing fire. His devotion was constant, there were not times when his devotion wavered or became diminished or lost.

Under Marpa, Milarepa underwent many trials and difficulties which he accepted with respect, without for an instant refusing to perform these tasks. He reached the end of the eight great trials and because of this he pleased his Lama and he was therefore able to attain all instructions he had asked for. These instructions he attained without exception so that all the contents of the flask which contains the teachings of the Kagyu lineage, all of these were poured into Milarepa without exception. He was thus able to receive the blessing and inspiration of the lineage of the Lamas and to maintain the continuity of the transmission of the Kagyu lineage.

He kept all of the different levels of vows, from the most inferior vows up to and including the special samaya commitment associated with the practices of the Vajrayana. He never damaged or broke these vows, always keeping them even at the risk of his life which is why we praise him for his great samaya. He wiped the dust of samsara from his feet, he threw away the eight worldly attitudes, he trod underfoot all kinds of confused manifestation, he retired to the snow mountains and there he practiced the special discipline of the fearless lion, so that he was without fear of anything whatsoever and we praise him for this.

In the snow mountains he completely abandoned all attachment to his own life and instead he devoted all his energies and courage to the practice of the Kagyu teachings. He practiced the two levels of meditation, planting the great banner of victory of someone who practices without fail. He devoted his energies to practice both day and night without stopping and we therefore praise him for his great courage, his great power of practice, which enabled him within one lifetime to attain the peak of the ultimate state, the royal state of Vajradhara, which is the state of union.

Within the world he is without rival and he is famous for being the best of human beings, one therefore praises him as a lion among men, someone supreme.

In the third verse we praise Milarepa for being someone who has pacified completely all the conceptual thought processes through the three types of solitude. This means the body is in solitude, it is isolated and unmoving, the speech is in solitude, it is not talking about anything or clinging to concepts of formulae, and the mind is in solitude because it rests in the sphere of ultimate reality where no conceptual clinging takes place.

Having pacified conceptual thought in this way Milarepa went beyond the three stages of one-pointedness, the inferior stages of Mahamudra practice and through his great strength, and profound respect and devotion, he created a great force which enabled him to develop within him the indestructible primordial awareness. This indestructible primordial awareness belongs to the state of freedom from projection and this brought him to the realisation of Mahamudra. This deep insight practice enabled him to transcend the world and therefore we praise him for his great wisdom, the perfection of wisdom in transcending the world.

Milarepa continued to progress and he abandoned all of the things that had to be abandoned on the path of seeing and on the path of meditation. He realised through his practice the two types of non-ego, the non-ego of individuality and the non-ego of phenomena. Ideas of samsara and nirvana dissolved together so that they had one taste. He therefore reached the yoga of non-meditation. In addition to this he practiced the advanced stages of the Anuttarayoga tantra, and thereby followed the profound path of the Six Doctrines of Naropa. Through his great energy and application of the practice and through his great realisations of the different stages of the practice, the *lung* and the mind gathered in his central channel where they were purified. We therefore praise him for being someone of great skilful means.

In addition, he practiced the non-ordinary or special kind of meditation which consists of melting together the elements of the body to produce great bliss which is inexhaustible, which cannot be diminished or destroyed, which does not escape to become defiled. His mind remains always in the clear light, both day and night, and this is why we praise him for his great clarity. We also praise him for his great emptiness which is the emptiness belonging to the special yogic practice of dissolving the three stages, or the three subtle energies in the body, the mind going through the stages of manifestation, clarity and emptiness. It is this great emptiness which is found at the end of this dissolution.

Through this kind of practice he was able to experience the ten signs and the eight qualities, and even go beyond them to attain the great, vast qualities, both ordinary and extraordinary. We therefore praise his great vastness in this respect, the vastness of his qualities. He overcame the four maras, the four demons which are difficult to overcome. We praise his

success in this by referring to him as someone who has great attainment, a great achievement, great resistance to these demons.

The fourth verse talks about how Milarepa followed the profound path of the Vajrayana. He first of all used the ordinary methods and perfected them, and he went on to the very special methods belonging to the man-trayana on the tantric path. He particularly practiced the very heart of the mother tantras at the Anuttarayoga tantra level, and here he practiced the yidam Chakrasamvara and so on. Through his excellent practice he was able to receive the blessing of the deity which he practiced. He was able to go on to the practices using the different energy channels and the *lung* circulating within them. In these practices he brought to a stop the movements of the one hundred and eighteen *lung* in the body and he freed all the different knots and tensions in the energy channels.

Through this he was able to attain the thirteenth level, the Vajra level. He stabilised the red and white elements in his body and he was quickly able to follow the five inner paths to their completion and to reach the ultimate state where there is nothing more to learn. In this state his body was able to become the great body, possessed of the five wisdoms, free from everything and therefore possessing the Dharmakaya. This Dharmakaya realisation is the realization of ultimate reality which expresses the different ripened qualities which are used to tame others, to take others as his disciples, and in order to do this he manifests himself as the body of Milarepa.

His songs are special because they talk of ultimate reality in such a way that anyone who hears them is immediately liberated. These songs penetrate the whole of reality and this is why it is said that Milarepa has a great reputation, the sound of his name is heard everywhere. We therefore talk

of him and praise him as being the great being. This is because his being penetrates the whole of phenomena, all the Buddha fields.

The fifth verse. Milarepa did not search for Buddhahood outside of himself, he recognised and found Buddhahood within his own mind by himself. He was therefore able to recognise the equality, the equanimity of samsara and nirvana. Due to this realisation he purified totally the world of appearances, the world of manifestation, so that everything becomes a vast range of pure worlds.

It is in these pure worlds of the universe that Milarepa resides, spontaneous pure worlds, which are just like the Dharmadhatu, which is the world of dense array, or dense display of different aspects. From this pure land his manifestations issue forth, the light from his mind creates manifestations, which are again totally pure. This is the Sambhogakaya with its five certainties. This realisation is without distraction, he is never disturbed from it, there is nothing better than it and it is a display of pure lands in the Sambhogakaya, which is not interrupted by other impure ideas. In addition to these Sambhogakaya lands there is also the activity of the Nirmanakaya, so that whatever is appropriate for each disciple, Milarepa is able through his great miraculous power to emanate or display a great variety of Buddha fields, which are so numerous that there is one Buddha field for each pore in his body. This is not the only quality or ability he has, he has many others, and it is these kinds of qualities, which we are praising in this particular verse.

The blessings of the body, speech, and mind of Milarepa, these great blessings penetrate the whole of the cycle of existence and beyond it to nirvana, not only the inanimate, but also the animate universe. This means that simply by the sound of the name of Milarepa, Milarepa performs the

activity of a Buddha. His life story and his activity have the capacity to liberate all living beings, and anyone who has a connection with Milarepa by this simple fact will be able to be helped by him to complete and perfect liberation. This is why he is someone who is of great benefit and we praise this and we make prostrations to this great place of refuge, Milarepa, who is the ultimate refuge and the best amongst all sources of refuge.

The sixth verse explains how Milarepa has purified completely the channels in the body, and therefore has obtained the vajra body of the great Nirmanakaya, and this means that his body possesses the different marks and major and minor signs of a Buddha, which blaze with light and we praise this. It is in this body that he is able to display great miracles which help to overcome and discipline disciples in four different ways.

Through the purification of the *lung* in the body, this subtle energy, he has achieved vajra speech, and the Sambhogakaya. This means that he is constantly and without interruption singing songs which are indestructible and without fear. The great melody of these songs fills the whole universe. In addition, this purification of the *lung* enables his mind with great light to penetrate the whole of the universe, all the great ocean of worlds which exist there. Through the purification of the vital energy in the body, the *thigle*, he has achieved the vajra mind, and has realised the Dharmakaya. This means that he has developed great understanding which is the understanding of the natural reality of his mind, without any veils or obscurations in this understanding.

The energy coming from that understanding means that he has great strength, great ability, which expresses itself in an activity to benefit others, which penetrates the whole universe, and which is permanent. He

is constantly and without interruption performing the benefit of all living beings throughout the cycle of existence. He has therefore these many great qualities, all the good qualities, which belong to samsara and nirvana, and so we think about these qualities with great care as we recite these praises, always with a mind filled with respect and devotion, as we offer these praises and prostration to Milarepa.

Concerning **the last four phrases** of the praise, these are very easy to understand as far as the meaning is concerned. The circumstance of the pronunciation of this last praise is that on Marpa's last visit to India, he arrived in India at a time where Naropa had already gone off to practise on his own. It was a long time since he had left, and nobody knew where he was, so Marpa had to pray very sincerely to Naropa. After his sincere prayers he finally found Naropa in the isolated place in the north, known as Pullahari, and there, having met Naropa, Naropa gave Marpa the instructions on Khorlo Demchok, and on the oral transmission of the Dakinis. At this time Marpa made a special request to Naropa, asking him to give him the complete cycle of teachings on the Dakini. Naropa was amazed at this, because he said he had never talked to other people about the fact that there existed other teachings which he had not yet given to Marpa and so Naropa asked Marpa how did he find out that extra teachings existed. Marpa then said that in Tibet he had a disciple with the name of Mila Thopaga, and he said that this disciple had had a prophecy from a Dakini in a dream, and Marpa was acting on the instructions received in this prophecy.

At this point **Naropa** was extremely impressed and **recited these verses of praise to Milarepa** which are to be found in the Milarepa ritual, saying that in the dark womb of the northern lands there is a disciple, and he prostrates and makes homage to this person known as Thopaga, who is just like the

rising of the sun over the snow mountains. As Naropa pronounced this praise he made prostrations towards Tibet, and it is said that as he did this, all the mountains and the trees and the grass prostrated at the same time, and that ever after the mountains and trees all leaned towards Tibet as a sign of respect for Milarepa. This shows the great blessing of these four verses and it is therefore a very special occasion, a very valuable occasion, to recite them in the Milarepa ritual.

SEVEN-BRANCH PRAYER

The next section in the ritual is the further accumulation and purification done through a seven-branch prayer. The visualisation and what to have in mind whilst reciting this prayer has already been explained at the beginning of the text, when we had the description of another seven-branch prayer, and so the same applies here. This particular seven-branch prayer is something very important because it is the one which was **recited by the first Karmapa Düsum Khyenpa when he first met Gampopa**. This is therefore a spontaneous prayer which carries with it a very great blessing, and so when we recite it we should be very full of devotion, just as the original Karmapa, towards Gampopa. This particular prayer one should recite several times. Not only that, but it is also possible to add at this point in the practice other seven-branch prayers.

The next section is where, through the recitation of prayers, one stirs the mind of Milarepa into activity in order to receive his blessing. One begins therefore by developing great faith and confidence in Milarepa, great devotion towards him, through remembering his qualities and his life story. They should be so strong that the tiny hairs on one's body are standing on end, and one's eyes should be filled with tears. One should be therefore

totally overcome by the devotion one feels towards Milarepa, so that one's body, speech, and mind are completely penetrated by this devotion. It is with the body, speech and mind in this state that one recites very sincerely the recitation which is designed to stimulate the blessing of Milarepa.

If one manages to develop this kind of unbearable force of devotion, something which is natural and spontaneous, then one is able to have one's mind resting in it's own natural state. If one does this, then one comes to experience the inseparability of one's own mind and the mind of the Lama. This means that the mind of the Lama will come and mix with one's own, and one should let the mind remain in that state as one recites the mantra of Milarepa, which comes at this point in the practice. The mantra itself is made up of the name of Milarepa to which are added the three syllables of reality, that is OM ĀḤ and HŪṢ.

After the mantra, one starts reciting the མ་ནལ་མཁའ་དང་..., and so on, and this is a prayer where one imagines that oneself and all living beings at one and the same time with great respect are making prayers to Milarepa. Not only living beings are reciting the prayers, but one should imagine that all the different aspects of earth, water, fire, and wind, so that the whole, all of the atoms of matter in the universe are also vibrating with the sound of the prayer, causing the whole universe to pray at the same time. This recitation should be the main part of the session.

At the end of the session, as you start to bring the session to a close, you should continue with what comes after that, with ལྷོ་ཚེས་ལུ་གྲོ་བར་བྱིང་གྱིས་རྒྱུ་
རྟོག་མེད་... and so on.

This last prayer is one which carries a particular blessing because it is a **prayer which was spoken by Gampopa**. Therefore it is a prayer which is very famous and very pure in the ideas it is expressing. This is followed

by another prayer to Milarepa, and this particular **prayer was composed by Chökyi Wangchuk**, the Great Omniscient One, the sixth Shamarpa. It is a prayer which contains within it an account of the life story of the practice of Milarepa. It is possible in fact to give a very detailed explanation of this prayer, because it is a prayer which is very profound. In fact there has been a commentary, a brief commentary on it, written by Mikyö Dorje, the eighth Karmapa. The prayer itself can be explained in many different ways depending on the approach one makes towards it. But certainly the different verses of the prayer are vajra words, they all have a very profound and indestructible meaning.

According to the commentary of Mikyö Dorje, the prayer itself can be divided into four sections, and in these four sections there are very secret and hidden meanings, which are often very difficult to grasp. However, this particular commentator will try to explain the prayer very briefly, in such a way that the meaning is easy to understand. These are the four sections, the four topics, which are covered in the prayer:

First of all, the excellent cause, then the excellent method, thirdly the excellent result, all of these talk about the life story, praise the life story, of Milarepa, and then finally the last section of the prayer, the fourth section, talks about the ultimate reality of the achievement, or the practice of Milarepa during his lifetime.

The first verse begins བྱང་ཕྱོག་རྒྱུད་དྲུག་... and so on. In this first verse we are referring to the fact that Milarepa is someone who attained perfect enlightenment within the mandala of the emanation of Guhyasamāja (Tib. Sangwa Düpa), through his perfection of the realisation coming from the five stages of the bringing about of enlightenment through the practice, particularly the practice of Guhyasamāja. It is a practice which was largely

accomplished in the land of India, and there was one individual in particular called Lobpön Jampa, who through his accomplishment of this practice made very special wishes, and through these wishes there came from his mind a great display of emanations, countless emanations, all of whom performed the benefit of all living beings. Through the wishes of this individual, and also many other practitioners in India at that time, their wishes were fulfilled through the appearance in the northern land of Tibet of Milarepa. Through their wishes, the special teaching of the Vajrayana was able to be demonstrated in Tibet, and practised in a way which is without failure and without error. There such practitioners were able to continue the lineage of the Vajrayana and transfer these practises into Tibet. Milarepa was one of those who were able to receive such practises, and through his ability to please and satisfy his Lama, Marpa, he was able to practice all the instructions he had received without exception, so that all these instructions were poured into him just like water from a flask. Milarepa was someone who paid no attention to his life or to any kind of worldly values at all, but practised sincerely from the depth of his heart and through that got right to the end of the practice.

He purified himself of all worldly faults so that his mind was no longer stained by any worldliness whatsoever. For the sake of the Dharma he went through many difficulties always applying great effort in getting rid of all obstacles. He was therefore able to practice this profound quick path which led him to attain enlightenment in the space of a single lifetime. This meant that he was able to reach enlightenment, the perfect accomplishment of completely irreversible enlightenment, completely treading under foot and eliminating all passing experiences, not becoming attached to them. We praise Milarepa for this reason.

The second section has two aspects, the first being a praise to Milarepa for his success in reaching the end of the path as taught in the Mother Tantras, and the second section praises Milarepa for reaching the end of the path as taught by the Father Tantras. In the Mother Tantras it begins by explaining that this refers to the verse beginning: བདེ་ཆེན་བརྗོད་མེད་... and so on, in the Prajnaparamita teaching where one talks of the authentic bliss or “going to bliss” and so on, many terms are used. In tantric teaching it is termed *great bliss*. On a relative level this means reaching the end, the complete development of love and compassion, but on the ultimate level when we talk of great bliss we are talking about something which is indestructible, which is the union of manifestation and emptiness. Manifestation being skilful means and emptiness being wisdom. This is associated with ultimate, true, authentic emptiness which is inexpressible and inconceivable. When these two manifestations of emptiness are in perfect union then one can experience inborn bliss. It is at this point that one tastes primordial awareness.

Milarepa received the capacity to be able to bind the three worlds outside and of the universe and also his body, speech and mind inside, including the energy channels, the *lung* which circulates within them and the vital energy or *thigle*. The means to accomplish this is the use of Karmamudra, the Jnanamudra and Mahamudra. These three methods have the effect of enabling one to experience the union of ultimate Mahamudra where one experiences a state where there is no longer any loss of vital energy at all. One’s being is bound by the nature of the three vajras, free of any kind of impurity or veil whatsoever. The method to produce this effect very quickly is the practice of the profound method of *tummo* and this is referred to as the Samayamudra.

Through the blazing of *tummo* one is able to burn away all the impurities in one's body and mind and bring out the radiance of one's vital energy which has the effect of allowing one to experience bliss which is unchanging, through the melting of Bodhicitta. The stabilisation of this experience produces the experience of inborn joy and this enables one to let the mind relax in this natural state through the recognition of primordial awareness. The body and mind are able to relax and expand into this natural reality.

Briefly, this means that all the dispersal, the release of *thigle*, of *lung* and of mind is brought under control by the yoga of blazing and melting which is the practice of *tummo*. Bringing under control these different aspects will allow one to develop in one's mind the primordial awareness which is unborn. This is the awareness of Mahamudra and through this one comes to taste the unchanging inseparability of bliss and emptiness.

The next part is an explanation of the verse which begins རྒྱལ་ལྷ་ལྷ་ལྷ་ལྷ་
... Here one is using what is known as the subtle yoga, a yoga which is based on the practice of the *thigle*, or bindu, in the body. Through this one is able to totally purify all impure confusion which is in one's mind and which gives rise to manifestation. Through the profound yoga in which there is no distinction between the profundity and the clarity, all of these impurities are cleansed in the mandala of total purity. The process of the subtle manifestations which appear at the dissolution of the *thigle*, the subtle manifestations, these subtle stages are cleared and purified in the clear light. Once in the clear light, from this appears the Vajra body which is made of very subtle *lung* and mind. This subtle Vajra Body can be either a very fine or a very subtle experience or it can be a direct experience, and through this one can completely purify one's clinging to ideas of self and others, all one's clinging to duality. Through this purification

one is able to bless all the phenomena in the cycle of existence and one is able, through this practice, to pacify all the projections of mind so that the mind rests in a state of ultimate emptiness. This emptiness manifests itself in an unhindered way. The manifestation which is produced from it has twelve symbolic aspects.

It is a manifestation which resembles an illusion or a rainbow, and so on. In that case the manifestation which appears at that time is called the secret mandala. Through controlling and mastering the emanation and dissolution of such an illusory body, we praise Milarepa for being someone who has accomplished and has become the essence of Vajradhara, the sixth Buddha, and therefore all penetrating or omnipresent.

What this means in brief is that through the perfect practice of the yoga where one no longer distinguishes deepness and clarity, one experiences the clear light, which is great primordial awareness. This is able to bless all manifestation, and all sounds, so that they become part of the mandala of the play of illusion, which is reality itself. Having done that, one becomes the lord of everything, of all families, all aspects.

The next section is an explanation of the verse, which begins: རྣམ་ཐོབ་པ་ལྟར་སྤོང་བ་... It is said that the best kind of abandoning is when one can abandon completely all of the different tendencies towards the two veils, which are impure. Therefore one should purify these by remaining in constant union with the consort, which is in fact emptiness itself, the Clear Light of Emptiness, the Perfection of Wisdom. When one is in union with her, one is able to manifest the seed of all of the Buddha fields, and Buddha's activity. This seed is compassion which is without reference point.

Through releasing this seed, through letting it manifest, these Buddha fields will manifest all through the universe. Buddha's activity is able to be

carried on without preference, without distinction, in a totally impartial way. In that way one completely cuts through the veils which cover reality, one purifies the universe and one abandons the extreme of clinging to the cycle of existence. One recognises however, that the nature of the cycle of existence is reality itself, but one knows this without thinking or conceptualising about it. Because of this, one is able to follow a path of worldliness out of great compassion, accepting to manifest within the world, but completely abandoning the idea of clinging to nirvana and personal bliss, personal happiness.

With this kind of realisation one is able, like Milarepa, to manifest all kinds of miraculous forms for the benefit of disciples. In this respect Milarepa is particularly skillful compared to other Buddhas. He has a particularly strong, very powerful compassion, because of these forms. Not only that, but he is able to even manifest himself as wrathful forms in order to discipline those who are extremely difficult to convert and to discipline.

The magical forms of this wrathful state are even more amazing than the peaceful aspects. In this way, with these wrathful forms, Milarepa is able to manifest in all kinds of worlds, even the most impure and teach and transform even very negative beings, and one praises him for this.

Briefly then, this verse is explaining that once one has perfected the union of emptiness and compassion, one no longer remains in the extreme either of samsara or that of nirvana. One has therefore a very powerful and special compassion, which is able to perform authentic and noble Buddha activity for the benefit of others.

The fourth section starts བདག་གུང་ཞོར་བ་... and here, through his great wisdom, Milarepa has recognised that the cycle of existence is without any true nature, without any true reality. Therefore one asks Milarepa to show

us, and all living beings, how to recognise this reality and not abandon samsara, but simply see through it. With great compassion, not to pass away, or enter on one's own the state of beyond suffering and therefore to ignore other living beings, but instead through compassion remain working for the benefit of others.

In this way, Milarepa is someone whose activity is like that of a Buddha, something which is all-pervading, and which avoids falling into the two extremes of existence or non-existence of samsara or nirvana. This understanding enables Milarepa to be active constantly and continually for the benefit of others until the very end of samsara, when samsara is empty of all living beings. Due to the possession of primordial wisdom, which is like the sky, without middle or extremes, Milarepa is someone who has become Lord of all of the Buddha's activity. As such he is someone who has attained the supreme accomplishment, which makes him like an ornamented mandala which contains within it the body, speech and mind of the Buddha Mandalas. Therefore we make a aspiration prayer at the end that we, too, may very quickly attain the same state and realise the same accomplishment.

Then one addresses the short prayer to Milarepa: རྗེ་མི་ལ་བཞད་པ་ནི་རྗེ་ལ་གསོལ་བ་
དེས་སོ།. As one recites this, one's mind should be filled with great concentration, great devotion and respect for Milarepa. The name by which one addresses Milarepa, Shepa Dorje, this is a name which carries with it a very great blessing. It is the name which Milarepa received directly from the Yidam and from the Dakinis at the time when Marpa was giving Milarepa the initiation of Chakrasamvara (Tib. *Khorlo Demchok*). It was at that time that Chakrasamvara himself and the dakinis prayed directly to Milarepa

and gave him this name and this is why it is such a very powerful way of calling or addressing a prayer to Milarepa.

The next section is the prayer where one asks for one's wishes to be granted, and one's wishes to be fulfilled. This is very easy to understand. What is important here is to concentrate the mind on the meaning of what one is saying one-pointedly, and pray very sincerely and with great confidence that one's wishes will be granted.

GANACHAKRA OFFERING

If one wants to do the offering of Ganachakra (Tib. *Tsok*), which accompanies the Guru Yoga of Milarepa, one prepares the samaya substances, which should be principally meat and alcohol. One imagines oneself clearly once again as Vajrayogini and one imagines that rays of light radiate from one's heart and strike the offering substances, which has the effect of transforming all the impurities and all of one's clinging to them as real material substances, and everything dissolves into emptiness. Out of this sphere of emptiness appears the skull of primordial wisdom, very wide and very vast, and inside that, the five meats and the five nectars, which melt together and come to the boil. Then the awareness nectar, which since beginningless time has been always indistinguishable from the samaya nectar, these two then come together, and form an ocean of nectar, the colour of the sky at dawn.

This nectar is extremely delicious, it has a very pleasant taste, it has the hundred different kinds of tastes, a very pleasant aroma, and a thousand different kinds of abilities. The steam rising from this condenses into clouds of different kinds of offerings, principally of the five kinds of

offerings. These offerings then fill the sky completely and through their emanation towards the figures in front of one they please the Lama, all the Buddhas and so on, all of the figures gathered in front of one in the sky. This is what one thinks while one recites the mantra, which is OM ĀḤ HŪṂ HA HO HRĪḤ.

Then the mudra and the mantra. The mudra one should perform three times and think of this as blessing the Ganachakra offering. You do the blazing mudra, that is the one that is done at the beginning of the ritual. When one is doing the session or the practice after that, which is technically called the “descent of blessings”, one imagines that the place where one is doing the ritual, becomes totally purified, so that it becomes the world, or the land of Akanistha, the pure land of sky activity.

Oneself and all the other people with whom one is doing the practice, all of one’s vajra brothers and sisters, one sees as Dakas and Dakinis. All the offering substances, the Ganachakra substances themselves, one perceives as being the nature of Primordial Awareness, which is inexhaustible. Everything is perceived as the nature of Dharmakaya: inborn, non-dual, or the non-duality of bliss and emptiness.

The blessing which comes from the gathering of the Lamas and Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the sky, this blessing is like a play of Primordial Awareness, inconceivable in its extent and profundity.

The arrival of the awareness beings. One prays first of all for them to come and remain. On their arrival they come and merge with the field of accumulation which is the Lamas, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas which you have been imagining since the beginning of the ritual. One then offers to them the first serving of the Ganachakra offerings and they rejoice in this and are very satisfied. This restores any broken or damaged samaya

vows, one's sacred commitment between oneself and them, and maintains it. This then is **the outer Ganachakra offering**.

For **the inner Ganachakra offering** one imagines that one's own body and all the different skandhas and constituents which make up the body in the physical and also the mental sense, all of this one recognises to be of divine nature. As one consumes the Ganachakra offering one considers that it is nectar and within one's body it becomes burnt by the digestive processes. This burning is seen as a burnt offering, an offering ritual to these deities which reside in one's own body and one imagines that they all become very satisfied by it.

For **the secret Ganachakra offering** which is a further aspect of the inner Tsok offering, a mixture of both, there is the following visualisation. One imagines that the pure aspect, the radiance of the wisdom nectar which one consumes and sets on fire causes to blaze the *tummo* fire within one's body. The light from this *tummo* fire reaches up to the crown of one's head and melts the Bodhicitta which is there. The melting and fall of the Bodhicitta creates bliss and the inner Deities within one's body become filled with this great bliss and become satisfied.

When one is performing the Ganachakra offering it is important that one completely abandons all ideas of ordinariness, all ordinary ideas about the Ganachakra substances and the people with whom one is practising with and oneself. When one is enjoying the Ganachakra one should abandon all inappropriate behaviour such as desiring the actual Ganachakra offerings considering them to be there simply to satisfy one's thirst and hunger. One should abandon any ideas of liking this portion or not liking that portion of the Ganachakra offerings. One should perform the entire offering with a state of mind which is completely without searching and

very relaxed. Having enjoyed the Ganachakra in this way, the remainder of the Ganachakra, the leftovers, are then blessed with the three syllables OM ĀḤ HŪṂ and this transforms them into nectar which is then offered to those who are authorised to eat them.

CONCLUDING RITUALS

At this point we reach the third main section of the ritual, which is the concluding sequence. This has three parts to it, first, receiving the four empowerments, second the dedication of merit and aspiration prayers and then the third part which is the recitation of verses of auspiciousness.

FOUR EMPOWERMENTS

So, for the first of these; one again develops a strong faith and devotion to Milarepa and one prays directly to him and one asks him to grant empowerments and blessing. The effect of this is to stir his mind into action. From the three seed syllables radiate rays of light, from his body there first radiate rays of light which cause all the surrounding retinue, the other Lamas, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Yidams and Protectors, to melt into light and come and merge into the central figure of Milarepa. The body of Milarepa now blazes with powerful light, like the light of a hundred thousand suns. There appear at the three points of his body the three seed syllables, a white syllable OM (ॐ) at his forehead, a red syllable ĀḤ (ॐ) at his throat and a blue syllable HŪṂ (ॐ) at his heart. These are the three seed syllables of the body, speech and mind of the Buddhas and they blaze with powerful light.

The white syllable OM at his forehead radiates rays of white light which are like the light of the moon and they dissolve into one's own forehead. You are still imagining yourself as Vajrayogini. Through this white light one receives the flask empowerment and the negative actions committed with one's body since beginningless time are purified and one is thereby authorised to meditate upon the path of the development process. The result or fruit [of such meditation] is to have the fortune of realising the Nirmanakaya.

From the throat of Milarepa, from the red syllable ĀḤ, rays of red light radiate, just like the sun's rays at sunrise. They dissolve into one's throat and grant the secret empowerment, purifying all negative actions performed by one's speech since beginningless time. This authorises one to meditate on the inner subtle channels and the *lung* circulating within them. The result or fruit [of such meditation] is to have the good fortune of the realisation of Sambhogakaya.

From the heart of Milarepa, from the blue syllable HŪṂ, rays of blue light radiate, just like the radiance or brilliance of thing shun [obscure, possibly a bluish copper sulphate]. They dissolve directly into one's heart and grant the wisdom awareness empowerment, purifying all negative actions performed by one's mind since beginningless time. This authorises one to meditate on the yoga which utilises the *thigle* within the body. The result or fruit [of such meditation] is to have the fortune of the realisation of Dharmakaya.

Once again one's faith and devotion increases and one requests once again that Milarepa bless the stream of one's being. In reply to this, Milarepa himself dissolves into light and this light then dissolves into oneself. This grants the fourth or word empowerment and purifies all the nega-

tive actions related to making one's inborn nature impure. One is then authorised to practice and meditate upon the path of Mahamudra. The result or fruit [of such meditation] is to have the fortune of the realisation of the Svabhavikakaya.

At this point one's body, speech and mind become inseparable with the body, speech and mind of Milarepa like water which is poured into water where no distinctions can be made. One lets the mind rest in this natural essence without fabrication, without trying to do anything special with one's mind, leaving the mind in it's natural state for as long as possible. When one arises from this meditation one should view the whole of the phenomenal world as being the body of Milarepa, the manifestation or play of his body. All sounds one should consider to be his speech, Vajra Speech, the nature of reality, and all thoughts and ideas arising within one's mind to be the nature of the unborn clear light which is the mind of Milarepa.

With one's behaviour, whatever one is doing, one should consider that one is working for the Lama, one is serving Milarepa. When walking, consider that Milarepa is at one's right hand side and that one is circumambulating him. Whatever one eats and drinks one should imagine that the substances melt into wisdom nectar and that one offers this to Milarepa. Whenever one is talking one should imagine that one is praying to Milarepa. There are many other ways of considering things in this vein, the idea being that one transforms one's ordinary ideas of the activity one is doing into something which is of benefit in that it causes one to be mindful, remembering Milarepa, at all times during the day without distraction.

One should not consider Milarepa to be a concrete human being who has a limited presence. One should not think that if one can actually see the body of Milarepa then one will be able to truly pray to him and receive

his blessing whereas there is no point if one cannot do this. This is not so. Milarepa is not an ordinary human being but he is someone whose body penetrates the whole of the phenomenal world, it is omnipresent. If one has faith and confidence in Milarepa he will be there to listen to one's prayers and to respond to them. It is said that the Lama is like the reflection of the moon in water, he is there wherever one visualises him wherever one thinks of him. If one thinks constantly of Milarepa then he is always with one and conversely, if one never thinks of him then he is far away.

DEDICATION

The next section is the dedication. Here one recognises that one has accumulated a great deal of virtuous action, a great deal of merit from accomplishing this particular practice of Milarepa in addition to the merit accumulated on previous occasions. One gathers all of this together in a single mass and just as the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas before, one makes a perfect dedication of all of this merit so that oneself and all living beings may be able to reach and realise the state of perfect enlightenment where there are no longer either of the two extremes. One then makes wishes that through the force of the dedication one may be able to attain the state of the great Vajradhara which is the ultimate state, where there is nothing left to learn, within this very lifetime. One also wishes that one's practice may equal that of Milarepa's and that one's activity and one's life may be just like his as well.

Furthermore, it is necessary never to be satisfied with the amount of virtue one has accumulated but to continue to accumulate more in an uninterrupted flow of virtuous activity so that it increases over and over

again. When one dedicates ones merit one should go on to do so by resting the mind in the ultimate state so that one no longer has fixed ideas related to someone who dedicates, someone to whom the merit is dedicated and the merit itself. In this way the dedication is purified by the truth of this ultimate reality.

VERSES OF AUSPICIOUSNESS

The third and final section is the recitation of the verses of auspiciousness or auspicious prayers. One imagines all of the Lamas and Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are in the sky in front of one.

One then recites the verses with a melodious sound. They send down a rain of flowers through the sky and one should consider that the effect of this is to completely pacify all kinds of negative and unwholesome, inharmonious conditions in all circumstances, at all times and in all directions. Their presence then increases the auspicious and beneficial conditions in the world. The influence of this blessing of Milarepa and the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is considered to be continuous and undamaged. The singing of the verses of auspiciousness in a melodious tune expresses this auspiciousness and the throwing of rice into the air represents the falling of flowers from the sky. At the very end one plays the musical instruments melodiously for a long time.

Milarepa is the “Great Accomplished One of the Snow Mountains”, the land of Tibet and there he was famous and uncontested and without rival. He completely turned the cycle of teachings in that land to such an extent that simply hearing the sound of his name means that one will not be born in the lower realms for seven lifetimes. If one can remember Milarepa and

have faith in him, then gradually one will attain enlightenment, this was promised by Milarepa himself.

Concerning Buddhas, it is not that there are some who are better than others, it depends entirely on one's faith and devotion. It is this that determines the speed at which their compassion can influence one's own being. Milarepa himself though, if one has a connection with him, this is a connection of great meaning for the following of this kind of profound path. Anyone with this kind of connection has very good fortune. It is also important to further develop this connection by increasing one's faith and confidence in Milarepa.

This is a very short commentary containing very few words but if it can be of use to others then may this help enable myself and other living beings attain the state of Milarepa. I have written this commentary having consulted the different texts of learned beings which exist already and I was urged to compose this by the authentic Lama Dampa Kunga Chökyi Wangpo for a very long time. In addition a request was put to me with very great insistence and effort by Jamyang Gyaltsen and others. It was composed and written down by Karma Ngawang Yonten Gyatso [which is one of the names of Lodrö Thaye]. Written in the isolated place of Devikoti, at the retreat place of Tsandra Rinchen Drak. I make a wish that the merit derived from this spread very far.

Translated by Thomas Roth [Sherab Drime] while in retreat in Yolmo Gangra, February 1998. Revised and edited in Pharping, January 2005.

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