

A DAILY PRACTICE OF CHÖ



As taught by
KYABJE TENGA RINPOCHE

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Translated by Lama Yeshe Gyamtso

Practice text translated by Michele Martin

Excerpts from the commentary translated by Sarah Harding

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A DAILY PRACTICE OF CHÖ

Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche

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CHÖ LÜJIN PRACTICE PERFORMED BY KYABJE
TENGA RINPOCHE

Audio recording

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May this supreme, peerless teaching,
The precious treasure of the Victorious Ones,
Spread and extend throughout the world
Like the sun shining in the sky.

PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

This is a new revised edition of the book published in 2008 by KTD Publications and Zhyisil Chokyi Ghatsal Charitable Trust titled *Chō: The Garden of All Joy & Generosity of the Body* that contained an edited transcript of the teachings offered earlier by Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche at Karma Triyana Dharmachakra, translated by Lama Yeshe Gyamtso.

The instructions featured in the book are rare and extremely precious. Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche — following a well-known commentary on Chō practice by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye — created a very practical guide to the daily Chō ritual, generously explaining all the details of the liturgy, its intentions, manner of practicing and the results. This kind of step-by-step instruction by a very experienced Buddhist master is hard to find and is of great value to modern dharma practitioners.

With that in mind, and since the printed copies have run out, we have decided to prepare a new edition of the book, specifically for publication as an eBook on dharmaebooks.org. As it turned out, the texts required further revisions. First of all, the practice text originally attached at the end of the printed edition has been freshly retranslated

by Michele Martin, who carefully followed Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche's explanations. Also, Sarah Harding generously offered her translation of Lodrö Thaye's commentary. Thanks to them we were able to replace relevant sections of the book (including its title) with newer renditions and also publish those two texts on our website.

It is worth mentioning here that Chö liturgies are famously recycled, and variations of the daily practice text exist now in Kagyu monasteries, which uphold their own monastic traditions and follow slightly different ways of practicing. Some of them first perform the White Feast and follow with the Red Feast, while others reverse the order. Similarly, there are a few text variations for the Tsok Offering. Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche, however — as explained in this book — followed the exact practice order described by Jamgön Lodrö Thaye and considered the latter's commentary as mandatory reading for all Chö practitioners.

We would like to thank Lama Rinchen from the Polish Benchen Karma Kamtsang center, a close student of the late Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche, who gave much factual assistance and, consequently, we were able to review the main parts of the texts and correct the illustrations, which are now featured in color. Benchen Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal, also helped to update the biography of Tenga Rinpoche included in the original book. The final and most difficult questions were clarified by His Holiness the Karmapa to whom I am extremely grateful.

Heartfelt gratitude goes to all the people involved in the project, especially the flexible, open-minded publishers and the hard-working

translators, to Khenpo David Karma Choephel for support and advice, and to Jo Gibson for putting so much effort into the final proof-reading.

Please keep in mind that although this kind of publication creates a very useful support for those who actually practice Chö, it cannot in any way replace the real Secret Mantra transmissions required to do so. We sincerely hope that the teachings of Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche will inspire everyone to approach all the Chö practices with respect, to engage in them wholeheartedly and to experience their true benefits.

Beata Tashi Drolkar
Dharma Ebooks



FOREWORD

Venerable Chöje Lama Karma Shedrup

Lord Buddha turned the wheel of dharma three times, with the second turning revealing the true nature of all things, Prajnaparamita, of which Chö is a means to practice and realize this.

The teachings on true nature were what the great siddhas of India practiced and passed on through their different traditions. The supreme Tibetan female master and saint Machik Lapdrön, prophesized by the Buddha as an emanation of the Great Mother Prajnaparamita, received these transmissions from many siddhas and formulated them into what we know as Chö, which means to “cut” or “sever.” What is cut is ego grasping, the root of our suffering, through the realization of our true nature, which is the essence of all the Buddha’s teachings.

Testament to Machik Lapdrön and the profound benefits of these teachings is how widely they spread; in addition to being practiced

by all schools of Tibetan Buddhism Chö also became the only dharma tradition transmitted from Tibet to India. The unbroken lineage of these teachings has continued and been practiced by many Kagyu masters, including Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche. Tenga Rinpoche is one of the few living meditation masters who hold the unbroken lineage of the Karma Kagyu Tradition and therefore we are extremely fortunate to receive this precious commentary from him.

It is my prayer that through making these teachings available all beings will come to realize the profound meaning of Lord Buddha's teachings for the benefit of all beings. With this in mind, and as Chö is a tantric practice, I caution anyone wanting to study this book and perform the practice to receive the initiation and permission from a qualified teacher before doing so.

Further, I wish to dedicate the merit from this to the long life of our precious teacher Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche.

*Palpung Thubten Chokyi Ghatsal
Tibetan Buddhist Institute
Auckland, New Zealand*

20 September 2008



BIOGRAPHY OF KYABJE TENGA RINPOCHE

The story of the Tenga Tulkus starts at the time of the Seventh Sangye Nyenpa Rinpoche. One of his students was the highly realized Lama Samten. He was also known as “Gönkhen Samten,” signifying that he was a specialist of protector practices (*Gönpo* means *Protector*). He spent most of his life in retreat, meditating on his yidam Karma Pakshi and on the main Kagyu protectors. He practiced mostly Dorje Bernakchen and Shing Kyong. The power of his blessing was such that he could cure all kinds of sickness instantly and he was widely known throughout the region. Many people came to receive his blessing.

At the time of the Eighth Sangye Nyenpa, Tenzin Drupchok, Lama Samten had grown old and sometimes displayed physical unease and sickness. However, one day he seemed to be very well and happy. On

that day, he told Sangye Nyenpa that he felt very happy because soon he would be going away to a beautiful land, a wonderful, peaceful garden. Among other things, he gave his thigh bone trumpet to Sangye Nyenpa and asked him to take good care of it until he came back. Soon afterwards he passed away.

Some years later, Tenzin Drupchok went on a pilgrimage to Lhasa and Central Tibet. As was customary at that time in Tibet, a high Lama could not just travel quickly from one point to another, but had to accept invitations to monasteries and villages on his way in order to give empowerments, teachings and blessings. On one such occasion, Tenzin Drupchok was invited by a local government official called Drungpa. He spent some days in Drungpa's house and met a small boy, who was the youngest son of the family. The boy was very alert and inclined towards the dharma and liked him very much. One day when Tenzin Drupchok was alone, the child came to him and asked him whether or not he still had his thigh bone trumpet as he would like to have it back soon.

Tenzin Drupchok was amazed and overjoyed as he realized that this boy must be the incarnation of his former teacher Lama Samten. He talked to the family about it and they readily agreed to give the boy to him after some time when the boy would be older. A few years later, when he was on his return journey to Kham, he went to see the family again and took the boy with him to Benchen Monastery. Back in Benchen, the boy was enthroned as the incarnation of Lama Samten and Tenzin Drupchok gave him the name Karma Tendzin Chögyal.

He soon started the traditional monastic education and also practiced extensively. After some years, Tenzin Drupchok told him that it was time to do the traditional three-year retreat and advised him to go to Palpung Monastery in Derge — the seat of the Situ Rinpoches and of Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye, also known as Jamgön Kongtrul the Great. Tendzin Chögyal went there and eventually was admitted to the retreat center, Tsandra Rinchen Drag, which was situated a few miles away from Palpung Monastery. It was here that the great Jamgön Kongtrul spent most of his time, away from the distractions of the huge Palpung Monastery.

Tendzin Chögyal did his retreat under the guidance of Jamgön Kongtrul himself and was very successful. Having reawakened his former propensity for practice, he did a second three-year retreat. He completely realized all the practices and after the completion of the retreat, Jomgön Kongtrul declared: “Now you are equal to me in realization.” He told Tendzin Chögyal, that he was planning to go on a pilgrimage to central Tibet and asked him to take charge of the retreat center during his absence. Jamgön Kongtrul being one of his Lamas, he could not refuse and so he became the retreat master for a number of years. When Jamgön Kongtrul returned to Palpung some years later, he told Tendzin Chögyal that now was the time to return to Benchen. The Eighth Sangye Nyenpa Rinpoche had passed away and the monastery needed a capable Lama to look after the affairs and take over the administration. Tendzin Chögyal, by now a very realized and well respected Lama, returned to Benchen and spent most of his time teaching and giving empowerments to those who requested it.

The later part of his life was devoted mostly to the education of the incarnation of the Ninth Sangye Nyenpa Rinpoche.

The third incarnation of Tenga Tulku was born in 1932 in Kham (Eastern Tibet). At the request of the Ninth Sangye Nyenpa Rinpoche, Situ Pema Wangchuk Gyalpo (the Eleventh Situpa) prophesied the name of the parents, his birthdate and birthplace. He was found at the age of seven, whereupon he began his studies. He was given the name Karma Tenzin Thrinle Pal Sangpo at the age of nineteen, when he received his full ordination vows. He received extensive and thorough Buddhist training and education in Benchen Monastery and Palpung Monastery from the Ninth Sangye Nyenpa Rinpoche, Gelek Drubpe Nyima, and the former Situ and Jamgön Rinpoches respectively.

He studied all the tantric rituals and philosophy with many different masters and from his uncle he learned traditional Tibetan medicine. He completed his studies with a three-year retreat. In 1959, after the Communist Chinese invasion, he left Tibet and — after spending one and a half years in Kalimpong — he settled in Rumtek Monastery (Sikkim), the main seat of the Sixteenth Gyalwang Karmapa. There he served His Holiness for seventeen years, the last nine years of which he acted as Dorje Lopön (Vajra Master). In 1974 he accompanied His Holiness on his first tour to America and Europe.

After 1976, Tenga Rinpoche lived in Swayambhu, Nepal, where he founded Benchen Phuntsok Dargyeling Monastery and a retreat center in Pharping. From H.H. the Sakya Tridzin, Tenga Rinpoche received the transmission of the *Drubthab Küntu*, a collection of the sadha-

nas of the eight practice lineages of Tibet. From the great Sakyapa master Chöbgye Tri Rinpoche, Tenga Rinpoche received Kalachakra. He received other lineages of the Kalachakra transmission from H.H. the Dalai Lama, H.H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche. Having already received the transmission of various of the rediscovered termas of Chökgur Lingpa from Kyabje Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, Tenga Rinpoche hosted the transmission of the entire *Chökling Tersar*, or *Collected Termas* of Terchen Chökgur Lingpa, by Tsike Chökling Rinpoche, in Swayambunath in 1996. Thus Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche received countless transmissions from masters of all traditions. Like his predecessor Tendzin Chögyal, Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche was also an important holder of the Shangpa Kagyu teachings and practices, having received the lineage's full transmission of empowerments and readings from Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche during his early years in Rumtek Monastery.

Rinpoche had many students in Nepal and India but following the wishes of the Sixteenth Gyalwang Karmapa, from 1978 up till the time of his passing, he was also extensively touring Europe, South Asia and North America. He was lovingly looking after many of his foreign disciples in Denmark, Germany, Poland, Italy, Greece, Austria and Norway, and teaching in innumerate other Kagyu centers mainly in UK, Spain, Portugal, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Hong Kong, USA and Canada. Also, following a specific instruction left earlier by the Sixteenth Karmapa, in 1999 Rinpoche established Benchen Phüntso Ling in Belgium as his main European seat.

Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche was one of the few living meditation masters who held the unbroken lineage of the Karma Kagyu tantric tradition. After the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa escaped from Tibet to India, Rinpoche was one of the senior lamas, who assisted in his education. In particular, at the request of Tsurphu Labrang, Rinpoche came a few times to Gyuto Monastery in Dharamsala to offer some unique tantric rituals to His Holiness. Later, in December 2010, during the 28th Kagyu Monlam in Bodhgaya, the Karmapa performed a special long life puja in honor of Thrangu Rinpoche, Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche and Tenga Rinpoche and published their biographies in three separate volumes. The one titled *Transmission by Seeing* now serves as a precious resource on Tenga Rinpoche's life, and is available for download on dharmaebooks.org.

After a prolonged illness, which did not at all prevent him constantly acting for the benefit of others to the very last, Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche passed away at the age of 81, in the early hours of the 30th of March, 2012. He remained in the state called *tukdam*, the deep meditative composure that some realized masters enter into after their physical bodies have expired, for three and a half days. As H.E. Tai Situ Rinpoche put it, “He passed away in the way of all great Kagyu masters, in deep meditation, sitting in the upright position, his body remaining like that even after it had expired.”

After all the traditional rituals had been performed according to the advice of the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa, Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche's precious *Kudung* was cremated on the 23rd of May 2012. His

precious relics were enshrined in a statue and stupa constructed in the monastery's Tara shrine room, as well as in another stupa in Pharping, between the two three-year-retreat centers.

Answering wholehearted requests from Benchen Monastery community, His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa agreed to recognize Tenga Rinpoche's reincarnation. After months of guided search, on the 21st of March 2017 the Karmapa introduced Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche Yangsi in Tergar Monastery, Bodhgaya. Rinpoche was born on the 14th of December 2014 and is now growing up and studying under the watchful gaze of the Gyalwang Karmapa and Benchen Monastery lamas.

The biography published originally in this book was updated in September 2022. For more up to date information please visit: benchen.org

A PRAYER TO THE LINEAGE OF CHÖ

The Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje

I pray to the Father Lineage of skillful means;
I pray to the Mother Lineage of wisdom;
I pray to the Nondual Lineage of Definitive Meaning;
I pray to the fortunate lineage of meditative realization;
I pray to the lineage of mahasidhis of Chö;
I pray to the lineage of powerful dharma protectors.

Confused appearances and wordly activity,
Bless me that I abandon attachment to them.
Towards this illusory body, gathered up from the four elements,
Bless me that I am freed from attachment and clinging.
Negative conditions, sickness, demons and obstacles,
Grant your blessings that I am able to experience them as of one
taste.
Phenomenal existence, manifesting like a magical illusion,
Grant your blessing that I understand it as my own face [reflection].

May I know my own awareness as the spontaneously arising three
buddha bodies.

Grant your blessings that I obtain self-mastery.

In order to do so, may I and the six classes of sentient beings

Abandon all stains of fixation on dualistic thinking.

May we attain unsurpassable enlightenment. Phet. Phet. Phet.

Written by Rangjung Dorje.

A DAILY PRACTICE OF CHÖ

Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche

THREE LINEAGES OF CHÖ

THE SUTRA LINEAGE

Buddha Shakyamuni
Manjushri
Nagarjuna
Aryadeva
Padampa Sangye
Machik Lapdrön

THE TANTRA LINEAGE

Dharmakaya, Great Mother Prajnaparamita
Sambhogakaya, Vajrayogini
Nirmanakaya, Arya Tara
Machik Lapdrön

UNIFIED SUTRA AND TANTRA LINEAGE

Manjushri
Arya Tara
Sukhasiddhi
Aryadeva
Padampa Sangye
Machik Lapdrön

INTRODUCTION

The subject for this teaching is the practice of Chö. In order for you to receive these teachings, it is very important from the beginning that you generate bodhichitta, the right intention or motivation. As was taught by the bodhisattva Shantideva, the merit of any virtuous action that is performed through the motivation of bodhichitta will never be diminished — it will continue to flourish or increase until your attainment of buddhahood. Virtue that is performed in the absence of bodhichitta motivation is like the fruit of the banana tree, which ripens once and is then exhausted. That virtue can also be destroyed by a moment of ferocious anger or another klesha. Therefore the generation of this motivation from the beginning is extremely important. Please begin by generating the following motivation, that all beings must be brought to the attainment of buddhahood, and in order to bring that about I will listen to and put into practice this instruction.

To understand what is called *Chö* or *severance*, you need to remember that the Buddha's teaching consisted of the three turnings of the Dharmachakra. The first of these is called the Dharmachakra of the Four Noble Truths, the second is called the Dharmachakra of the Absence of Inherent Characteristics, and the third is called the Dharmachakra

of Full and Thorough Distinction. The second of these three dharmachakras was the proclamation of the absence of true or inherent characteristics of all things, starting with form all the way up to omniscience itself. Therefore the primary message of the second dharmachakra was emptiness. What we call *Chō* is a way of practicing the essence of meaning of this second dharmachakra.

The meaning of this second dharmachakra was put into practice by the great siddhas of India. In each of the traditions of these great siddhas, the same fundamental teaching and practice bore different names. For example, in the tradition of mahapandita Naropa, it is called the Equal Taste Teachings of Naropa. In the tradition of Guru Rinpoche it is called the Secret Conduct or Secret Practice of Guru Rinpoche. In the tradition of Padampa Sangye, it is called the Pacification of Suffering. In the tradition of Aryadeva it is called the Concise Text or Teaching of Aryadeva.

The essence of all of these teachings was formulated in Tibet by the great teacher Machik Lapdrön (1031–1129). The name she gave to her formulation of these same teachings was *Chō* or *severance*, because, as she saw, the essence of these teachings was to cut through the four maras, to sever the four maras into space.

As for Machik Lapdrön herself, she was first predicted by the Buddha in the sutra called *The Sutra Which Separates the Dregs from the Pure Essence*. In that sutra the Buddha predicted that at the end of the time of five-fold degeneration, an emanation of the Great Mother Prajnaparamita would arise in the North, near the town of Lap. She

would bear the name Drolma and she would achieve a great wisdom, which fully realizes the meaning of the generation and completion stages. The tradition she expounded would be found throughout all the towns and villages and spread widely.

In accordance with that prediction, Machik Lapdrön was born in the region of Lap. Her father's name was Chökyi Dawa and her mother's name was Bumcham. And at the time of her birth there were a number of auspicious signs and miracles. Her first teacher was called Kyoten Sonam Lama and he was a disciple of Padampa Sangye. It was initially from Kyoten Sonam Lama that Machik Lapdrön received the various empowerments and transmissions of Chö. Later she met Padampa Sangye from whom she received numerous instructions on Chö and the great empowerment of Chö.

THREE LINEAGES OF CHÖ

She practiced Chö and when it came time to propagate it she did so in three ways, which became what are called the three traditions of Chö: the Sutra tradition, the Tantra tradition, and the Unified tradition. **The lineage of Chö according to the Sutras** is the lineage that came down from the Buddha. It was then passed by the Buddha to the Bodhisattva Manjushri, by him to Arya Nagarjuna, by him to Aryadeva, and by him to Padampa Sangye, from whom Machik Lapdrön received it.

The lineage of Tantra came from the dharmakaya, the Great Mother Prajnaparamita, who bestowed it upon the samboghakaya Vajrayo-

gini, who bestowed it upon the nirmanakaya Arya Tara, from whom Machik Lapdrön received it in a series of visions.

The lineage of Unified Sutra and Tantra came from Manjushri who bestowed it upon Arya Tara, who bestowed it upon the dakini Sukhasiddhi, who bestowed it upon Aryadeva, who bestowed it upon Padampa Sangye, from whom Machik Lapdrön received it.

Padampa Sangye was an Indian mahasiddha, who himself had relied upon fifty-four teachers, all of whom had attained supreme siddhi. He received all of their empowerments and instructions, and then, practicing these, himself attained siddhi. Thereafter, he went to Tibet and taught what he had received.

THE FOUR MARAS

The definition of Chö is cutting through the four maras, cutting them off into space. **The first** of the four maras is called the **Substantial Mara**, which refers to how you relate to perceived external objects. In general, what is called the Substantial Mara refers to the grasping at the existence of objects, and at the existence of the experiencing cognition as a subject. What this means is that when we encounter or experience pleasant external objects, we generate attachment and craving. This attachment and craving guides or controls our actions so that we engage in negative or afflictive actions, which cause us to experience further birth in samsara and to experience suffering. Sometimes we encounter objects that we experience as unpleasant, and we react to those with aversion, aggression, dislike, and jealousy.

Through the presence of these in our mind, we engage in other types of afflicted actions, which also cause us to experience birth in samsara — in particular in the lower realms — and to experience a variety of forms of suffering. This process is what is called the Substantial Mara.

Why do we call external objects the Substantial Mara? We call external objects that simply because they are the condition for our generation of afflicted thought or conceptuality, which causes us to accumulate karma and to experience suffering. Because external objects are the contributing cause to this experience of suffering, in this context they are called the Substantial Mara.

In one of the liturgies for Chö practice composed by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye he says, “The generation of grasping at externally existent objects and an internally existent subject based upon contact with external objects is the substantial mara.” It is the Substantial Mara because it is taking these things to be real.

The second of the four maras is the **Insubstantial Mara**. This mara is independent of the presence or absence of external conditions. It is not concerned particularly with reactions to something external. It is the arising of kleshas — attachment, aversion, bewilderment, pride and jealousy — in your mind. Through the arising of those kleshas comes the accumulation of karma and the experience of suffering. We always have these kleshas present within us ready to arise. These kleshas are referred to as the Insubstantial Mara. The difference between the first and the second of these maras is that in the case of the first, the generation of kleshas within your mind is produced by reaction to

an external object of some kind, while in the case of the second, this is referring to what happens when, for no apparent external reason, kleshas simply arise within your mind, as they do for us sometimes extremely strongly. These kleshas can arise apparently spontaneously within us because they are present all of the time. This apparently spontaneous arising of the kleshas within our minds independent of external conditions is what is called the Insubstantial Mara.

Why is this second mara called insubstantial? It is called that because thoughts themselves are insubstantial. They have no color, no shape, no size, and no substantial characteristics of any kind. Nevertheless, thoughts can be maras because thoughts impede one's practice of the path, one's attainment of liberation, and one's attainment of buddhahood. Because thoughts impede these things and because they cause suffering they are called the Insubstantial Mara.

The third mara is called the **Mara of Intoxicating Joy** or Intoxicating Excitement of Joy. Intoxicating Joy occurs when conditions are conducive to what you want, that is to say, when things are going well, as when, for example, because of your previous accumulation of merit you become extremely wealthy, or you acquire a good reputation. If, as a result of this kind of affluence and prosperity, you think, "Well I have great merit; I must be really something special," and you become arrogant and intoxicated by prosperity or success, that is this third mara, the Mara of Intoxicating Joy.

This Mara of Intoxicating Joy is called a mara because if you possess this kind of craving, and the mistaken idea that your situation is su-

preme, that things could never be better, and that you could never be better, then you will naturally have no inspiration to practice. Indirectly this Intoxicating Joy itself will cause you to be born again and again in samsara, and will cause you directly to be more attached to things in general.

If, due to your having great merit, you find yourself in a situation of tremendous prosperity and affluence with everything going very well, and if you have no fixation, being content with whatever happens, using your prosperity for virtuous endeavors such as making offerings to the Three Jewels and giving generously to those in need, then, in spite of the prosperity, this mara will not arise.

The fourth mara is called the **Mara That is the Root of All**, which means the root of the other three, the root of all four maras, or the Mara of Grasping. In essence it is the thought or concept of grasping at a self. It is like making a big deal out of something, and also being proud. The meaning of the Tibetan word *snyems*, which has the connotation of intense grasping and arrogance, points to the meaning of grasping at a self. Nevertheless, while grasping at a self is the root of all the maras, we need to make a distinction between necessary or healthy grasping at a self and unnecessary or unhealthy grasping at a self. The first of these we do not need to abandon and in fact should not attempt to abandon. The second of these we do need to abandon. Examples of the healthy or necessary grasping at a self are the thoughts: “I must attain buddhahood, and having done so I must be of vast benefit for countless sentient beings,” or “I must through

practice come to see the face of my yidam.” These kinds of healthy or virtuous aspirations involve the concept of a self, and therefore strictly speaking are grasping at a self. Nevertheless they are necessary on the path and you should not attempt to abandon them.

Although those thoughts are involved with grasping at a self, we would not call those thoughts the Mara of Grasping because these thoughts do not cast us into samsara and they do not increase our suffering. These thoughts actually produce more diligence. They come from and also produce more faith and more devotion. These thoughts are actually inspired by compassion, which sees that all beings of samsara have been our parents. These thoughts, which are not leading to suffering but rather leading to success on the path, are not regarded as mara.

Furthermore, you should not be afraid of the concept or word “I” itself. It was used even by the Buddha in such statements, “I have taught the methods which lead to liberation. Your actual attainment of it depends on your individual diligence.” In that way we see that the Buddha used the term “I” which was necessary in order to express what he was trying to say. But this does not mean that he had a grasping at a self.

THE ILLUSION OF A SELF

The grasping at a self, the true mara that needs to be relinquished, is that fundamental attitude or assumption of “I” that has been with us throughout beginningless samsara. That needs to be transcended.

This kind of grasping at a self is in evidence when, having the basic thought or concept of “I,” you hope that things will go the way you want for that “I.” In your hope that you acquire a certain prosperity and fame, you react with aggression towards anyone who you perceive is interfering with your acquisition of prosperity and fame. You react with jealousy to anyone you perceive as possessing the prosperity and fame that you wish for yourself. You react with arrogance and despise those who possess nothing whatsoever of those things you wish to possess for yourself and value. These are instances of the unhealthy grasping at a self, which does need to be relinquished.

In the same way, as extensions of the concept “I,” we generate the concepts of “mine,” so therefore we have “my” parents, “my” friends, those whom “I” love and so on. Based upon that identification with these others, we generate the same aversion, aggression, and jealousy when we perceive threats to their welfare.

When we perceive that what we want for them is interfered with, that they are being harmed or might be harmed, or their prosperity and fame are at risk, we react with aggression and jealousy in those situations as well.

When, as a result of this, you have identified those whom you find threatening as enemies, you further dislike it when things go well for them, such as when they become prosperous or famous. Or, you actually like it when things go poorly for them, or when they become ill or afflicted in some other way. Then that is also an extension of this fundamental unhealthy concept of “I.”

As a result of this, you engage in different actions in order either to eliminate, or to create disaster for, those whom you regard as enemies. You perform actions in order to bring happiness, prosperity, and success to those you regard under your protection or those you love. All of this creates a great deal of negative karma, which will lead to further rebirth in samsara and suffering. All of this is produced by this fundamental concept, the grasping at a self.

According to the Buddha, when you actually look at the ultimate truth of things, that is, when you scrutinize or examine whatever it is that you are calling a “self,” or an “I,” then you discover there is no fit basis for this imputation. There is no “self,” in spite of your mistaken belief that there is a “self.” There is no “I,” in spite of your delusion or mistaken belief that there is an “I.”

When you examine the basis on which you designate the “self” or “I” then you will probably find first of all that what you consider to be this “I” is your body. That is what you identify with the concept “I,” but when you look at the body, you see that it does not possess the most fundamental characteristic of the designated “I,” which is that it is a unit. The body is in fact not a unit, it is compounded, consisting of the five elements. The flesh of our body arises from the element of earth, the blood from the element of water, the breath from the element of air, the warmth from the element of fire, and all the apertures and spaces within and without the body from the element of space. The body, first of all, is not one thing fit to be designated as an inherent unit.

Beyond that, the body has innumerable parts into which it can be subdivided. First of all, we could say that the body consists of a head, four limbs, a chest and an abdomen and each of these parts can be subdivided endlessly. Although you regard the body as one thing, really it is a composite of many different things. There is no body except as a concept, which we apply to a set of things that together form a composite: it is not a unit. For example, while all of these things are together, in apparently one piece, we would call that someone's body. If you separated all of it, laid it all out in bits and pieces all over the place, no one would call that a body, yet all the same parts are there. Therefore this concept of "my" form or "my" body, which seems to be the basis for the designation of "I" or the "self," has no true or inherent existence.

Since your body does not truly exist, therefore the self that you impute on the basis of the body does not truly exist. Through failing to understand this, we and all sentient beings continue to misperceive the body as a unit and therefore as a basis for the designation of the self. Through that misconstruing, we wander endlessly in samsara.

How does this bewilderment start in the first place? It starts because we fail to recognize that our mind is actually a unity of cognitive lucidity and emptiness. Failing to recognize the mind as what it is, we mistake the emptiness of the mind to be a self, and mistake the cognitive lucidity of the mind to be other than self. Having generated these thoughts of self and other, we react with aversion or aggression to that other which appears to be threatening to the self.

METHODS TO REALIZE SELFLESSNESS

All of the bewilderment within our mind starts with this mistaken identification of a self. The fundamental remedy for all of our bewilderment is the cultivation of the recognition of selflessness. For that reason, it is taught that meditation on the mind's true nature is the essence of all dharma. Therefore those traditions that expound this sort of meditation, such as mahamudra and dzogchen, are extolled as the supreme methods for attaining buddhahood in one life.

All of the Dharmas taught by Lord Buddha are fundamentally concerned with cutting through or eradicating this mistaken belief in a self and thereby revealing the true nature of the mind, which is selflessness or, otherwise put, mahamudra. This practice of Chö taught by Machik Lapdrön is one such method for doing this. This specific practice of cutting through the four maras or liberating them into space is therefore called the Chö Mahamudra.

With regard to the practice of Chö, there are a vast number of styles of Chö practice, some of which are very extensive, some of which are of intermediate length, and some of which are quite concise. There are a lot of commentaries or textbooks on how to practice Chö. The texts that I am going to be using to explain this practice are two. The liturgy, which is the basic handbook for the practice, will be the one that is commonly known as *Lüjin* or *Offering One's Body*,¹ and is the

1. This practice text is available in many translations and for this publication we are using the one by Michele Martin: *A Concise Daily Practice of Offering One's Body*.

most common Chö practice done in the Karma Kagyu tradition. The commentary on this that I will be using to present the practice to you is called *Beloved Garden*, and was composed by Jamgön Lodrö Thaye.²

If you have any questions about what I have said, such as the four maras and so forth, you are welcome to ask.

QUESTIONS

STUDENT: Rinpoche, would it be possible to say a few words about the history of the composition of this *Lüjin* text, about who composed it?

RINPOCHE: Well the liturgy that is known as *Lüjin* was edited by Jamgön Lodrö Thaye. It is actually a summary or abbreviation of a lot of material that is found in more extensive forms of Chö practice. Most of what is in the *Lüjin* text was actually composed in the first instance by the Third Gyalwang Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, and then edited by other masters like Jamgön Lodrö Thaye.³

2. This revised edition of the book quotes the translation of the commentary by Sarah Harding, titled *Beloved Garden: Brief Notes on the Offering and Gift of the Body*. However, the commentary was also translated under other titles, such as *A Garden of All Joy* among a few.

3. The Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa added that the authorship of this text is a complex issue — it cannot be attributed to one person. It may have been based on the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje's long Chö ritual called *Rinchen Trengwa* (*Precious Garland*) or even composed by Rangjung Dorje himself, but it has been edited so many times by various masters that it is impossible to say with certainty how much of Rangjung Dorje's original work remains.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, those of us who have attended these teachings and received the empowerment, if we do not do the practice of Chö is this a negative thing or is it beneficial despite not pursuing the practice on a regular basis?

RINPOCHE: No, nothing bad will happen from not doing the practice. There is no commitment on your part simply through being here to do the practice. It is somewhat unlike other aspects of Dharma. For example, in the case of a profound yidam empowerment and instruction, or the presentation of a dharmapala and its intended empowerment, in those cases there may be such a definite commitment, but not in this case. The reason specifically why there is no great commitment associated with this is that the empowerment is essentially the empowerment of Machik Lapdrön, and is like any other guru yoga empowerment. As for the practice itself, it is really a profound form of mandala offering. Therefore, in a sense the essence of it is included in any kind of Guru Yoga and any kind of mandala offering. For example, in the Nyingma tradition, particularly in the Longchen Nyingthik tradition as found presented in *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*,⁴ the custom is to begin Chö practice after a mandala offering, in which context it is called the Yogic Accumulation of Merit.

4. A famous guidebook of common and uncommon preliminary practices (ngöndro) of the Nyingma tradition, composed by Dza Patrul Rinpoche.

CHÖ PRACTICE

As I have mentioned already, there are a number of different commentaries on the Chö practice, some of which are long, and some of which are quite abbreviated. Here the commentary we will be using is specifically designed to explain the visualizations for this concise form of Chö practice. This commentary, which was composed by Jamgön Lodrö Thaye, is called *Beloved Garden. Brief Notes on the Offering and Gift of the Body*. The commentary begins with the sentence:

| Homage to the guru and Great Mother.

Here Jamgön Lodrö Thaye, at the beginning of writing his text, pays homage to his root guru inseparable from the Great Mother, Prajñāparamita. The next sentence of the commentary reads:

| The practice called Object Severance Mahāmudrā presents the perspective and intention of the middle turning of the Dharma wheel [...]

First of all, Chö, as discussed previously, refers to the severance or cutting through of the four maras, liberating them into space.

As this is done primarily by resting your mind without alteration in its nature, which is the practice of mahāmudra, this is called Chö Ma-

hamudra. This was initially taught by the Buddha in the intermediate dharmachakra.

DISCIPLINE OF AWARENESS

The commentary continues:

[...] in conjunction with the mantrayāna's vanquishing conduct for training in awareness.

This means that, while the view of Chö is the intermediate dharma-chakra, the style of practice has some connection with Vajrayana (Mantrayana, Secret Mantra) or Tantra. In the practice of Vajrayana, there are three modes of conduct that are prescribed for individuals at different stages of the path. The first is called All Good Conduct, the second is called the Conduct That is the Discipline of Awareness, and the third is called the Conduct That is Completely Victorious in All Directions. These are to be implemented by an individual as appropriate to their particular level of maturity. Here, the practice of Chö is concordant with or similar in function to the second conduct, the Conduct that is the Discipline of Awareness.

With regard to these modes of conduct, **the first** of them, the **All Good Conduct** is essentially the type of conduct taught in the sutras, for example, the conduct appropriate to a bhikshu, a fully ordained monk. **The second** of these, the **Conduct that is the Discipline of Awareness**, is implemented at a point where, having practiced in solitude and looked at and recognized the nature of your mind, you come

to test the stability of this rest and recognition. One tests this stability by going to habitations such as a town or village and having contact with other people. This can take the form of verbal and even physical abuse and also conversely respect, and affection. You test to see to what extent you can undergo these experiences without wavering from immersion in the recognition of your mind's nature. If through pursuing this mode of conduct you discover that you are impervious to the influence of positive and negative conditions, that whatever arises can be brought to the path and does not cause you to stray from immersion in your mind's nature, then that is the achievement of proper conduct, which is the Discipline of Awareness. If however, through testing yourself in that way, you discover that you are adversely affected by these various conditions, then that is an indication that it is necessary for you to return to solitude and further practice cultivation of the mind's nature. Fundamentally, the conduct, which is the Discipline of Awareness, is a way of testing your realization or confidence.

The relationship between the practice of Chö and the Conduct that is the Discipline of Awareness, is that, from time to time, practitioners will go to a place that is renowned as being haunted by various spirits or ghosts. Alternatively, they go to a charnel ground where there will be lots of different sorts of non-human beings prowling about. Practicing Chö in those places at night, they come into contact with the presence of these various beings. This will cause these various spirits to exhibit different kinds of magical performances and miracles and they test their realization by seeing whether or not they become

afraid in the face of all this non-human activity. The practice of Chō is sometimes said to be similar to the Conduct that is the Discipline of Awareness because of this test of one's confidence or realization.

It says further that the style in the practice of Chō is to accept the undesirable. Now *undesirable* refers to all the things we do not want to happen to us, such as sickness, slander, adverse conditions, and upheavals of all kinds. The reason why these need to be accepted in the practice of Chō is that fundamentally the cause of all of these is our grasping at a self. It is because we grasp at a self that we experience these things as undesirable. As part of the remedy to grasping at a self, one has to learn to accept these things and no longer to view them as undesirable.

The commentary says you must stamp on disaster and the causes of disaster. *To stamp on disaster* means to stamp on the tendency to view adverse conditions as disasters, which means to learn to accept undesirable and adverse conditions.

PROJECTIONS OF MIND

The commentary continues by stating:

It is a radical method for cutting through the inflation of self-fixation through the willingness to accept what is undesirable, the direct subjugation of adverse circumstances, the realization that gods and demons are in your own mind [...]

This refers to the fact that normally in the world sentient beings tend to look for some kind of external protector, so that they seek some kind of temporary or sometimes ultimate benefit from the assistance of powerful gods in the world, mundane gods. What goes along with that is that we tend to fear the presence and activities of spirits or demons. Having the concept of god, we also have the concept of spirits or demons. A practitioner of Chö learns to externalize these things no longer, but to recognize that they are nothing other than the display or appearance of one's own mind.

Further the commentary says that in this practice we gain

| [...] the knowledge that you and everybody else are utterly equal.

All sentient beings have this dualistic concept of self and others. Based upon this, we generate the further attitudes of attachment, joy, liking, and craving for all that we regard as our self, and also all that we regard as pertaining to the self, such as those for whom we have affection, those we wish to protect, and all those things that seem to promote our aims and ambitions. Because of that, we have aversion, jealousy, and competitiveness for all that we regard as other in general, and especially all that we regard as threatening to ourselves or to those we wish to protect. A practitioner of Chö transcends this by coming to regard all beings without exception as one's parents, and by transcending the fundamental dichotomy of self and others. In that way, a practitioner of Chö is essentially concerned with suddenly or forcefully cutting through the bond of grasping at a self. Cutting through the bond of grasping at a self is Chö. That approach to Chö practice

is the actual intention of Machik Lapdrön. It is the true essence of the practice, and why it is called Chö Mahamudra.

PERVERTED CHÖ

Some people misunderstand the practice of Chö and view it as a way to manipulate other beings. In particular, they practice it with the hope that they can subdue spirits or demons. For example, thinking that they wish to protect certain patrons, friends, or family, they will attempt to subdue or eliminate those spirits whom they regard as threatening to their aim.

What usually goes along with the attempt of using the practice of Chö as a magical means of subduing spirits towards which you feel enmity is the hope that by doing all of this, you will acquire all kinds of good things, such as fame, magical power, all kinds of prosperity, and service. The fundamental mistake that person is making in distorting or perverting the Chö practice is that they are ignoring the basic point, which is that what we externalize as enemies are just the display of our mind. They use the Chö practice to reinforce that externalization and, through causing their own display to arise as enemies in their experience with the practice, they then experience more and more spirits who are troublesome. They therefore attempt to control and if possible destroy these spirits, engaging in all kinds of violence and coarse conduct in order to do so, practicing wrathful rituals involving lots of HUNG HUNG and PHET PHET. All of this sort of mistaken

approach to the practice is called perverted, incorrect, or upside down Chö. This is a mistake.

The point of mentioning this is that from the very inception of your practice of Chö, you need to get the basic point of it. If you mistake the purpose of the practice from the beginning, then all of the Chö practice that you do on the basis of that incorrect misunderstanding will naturally not be a genuine path but will lead in the wrong direction.

OUR TRADITION OF CHÖ

The commentary continues:

There are a great many systems [for the practice of Severance], as it is well known in all the Old and New [schools of Tibetan Buddhism]. However, in this Zurmang system it is considered a special legacy.

There are almost an innumerable number of Chö traditions. The particular tradition that is emphasized by us is the **tradition of Zurmang monastery**. The reason for this is that it has the best or most noble origin, has the most complete system of Chö practice, the greatest number of instructions, and the most profound and complete style of explanations of Chö. Therefore the blessings of the Chö lineage through Zurmang monastery is considered especially fine and unimpaired. We have received it through the special dispensation and lineage of the Third Gyalwang Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje. From him, it passed down through the Karma Kagyu tradition and eventually came to and was emphasized by the Fifth Trungpa Rinpoche of Zurmang, whose

name was Kunga Namgyal. It passed down from him in the monastery and area of Zurmang and next came to be held and emphasized by Kangpa Lhundrup and later by Karma Chakme Rinpoche, who was very active in propagating Chö. Since that time it has basically been the Zurmang tradition that has been emphasized.

With regard to these terms old and new or Nyingma and Sarma, the term *Nyingma* or *old tradition* refers to a period of translation. It is sometimes called the period of the early translation that began with the initial introduction of Vajrayana Buddhism to Tibet by the Khenpo Shantarakshita and the Vajracharya Padmasambhava. The translations into Tibetan from Sanskrit done or supervised by them and other masters (such as the Tibetan translators Vairochana and Kalapaltek) during the period up to the end of the tenth century are called old. It does not mean they are outdated or musty, it means that they were done during that earlier period of the propagation of the teachings. The beginning of what is called the new period was the advent of the great translator Rinchen Zangpo. He went to India and lived there for twenty-five years. He translated a vast number of tantras and associated texts, most notably the Kalachakra cycles. He began the period of new translations, which was also the activity of other great Tibetan translators such as Lord Marpa the translator of Lodrak, the learned and accomplished Tungpo Naljor and so on. Both of these two traditions, which really refer to periods of the derivation of the doctrine in Tibet, have distinct traditions of Chö practice.

Regarding the contribution of mahasiddha Karma Chakme, his best known contribution to the Chö practice of the Zurmang tradition is creating a new edition of a long or elaborate Chö feast practice, called *Precious Garland* or *Rinchen Trengwa*. It was originally composed by the Third Gyalwang Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje. If you look at the two texts, you will see that essentially they are the same, but Karma Chakme made a lot of additions. What Karma Chakme Rinpoche did was he took the basic format and text of Rangjung Dorje's *Rinchen Trengwa* and he added liturgical descriptions of all the visualizations, such as the mandala offering, the White Feast, the Red Feast, all the particular visualizations which are part of every Chö practice. This is one of the two long forms of Chö practice that are emphasized in our tradition.⁵

5. This paragraph differs from the first printed edition of the book, which contained a mistake. The Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa explained that *Rinchen Trengwa* was composed by the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje. Rangjung Dorje was regarded by all the Tibetan schools as a very important lineage holder of the Chö traditions, having received one of them from his father and practiced it since childhood. As a consequence, his *Rinchen Trengwa* quickly spread all over Tibet and is practiced by many Kagyu, Nyingma and also some Sakya monasteries until now. This text has sometimes been mistakenly attributed to Karma Chakme who later edited it and added a colophon with his name, but as mentioned above, Karma Chakme's version is simply a new edition of the same text.

His Holiness provided further information. He explained that the second long Chö practice mentioned here is *Yönten Kunjung*, or *The Origin of All Virtue*, composed by the Ninth Karmapa Wangchuk Dorje. The Ninth Karmapa himself said that he had based it on Rangjung Dorje's *Rinchen Trengwa* but unlike that text, his liturgy remains unique to the Karma Kamtsang and for that reason Tsurphu and Rumtek monasteries have a duty of performing it at least once a year.

The commentary continues:

The cycle of visualizations for the feast activities and so forth in this tradition are elucidated elsewhere.

“Elucidated elsewhere” refers to the commentary, *Mirror of White Crystal*, which is the standard commentary on the long form of the Chö practice. What will be presented here, on the other hand, are the visualizations to be done for the daily or concise Chö practice.

STRUCTURE OF THE PRACTICE TEXT

This practice of the offering or generosity of one’s body has three sections to it: the preliminary, the main practice, and the conclusion. The preliminary has five sections: generation of bodhichitta; gathering guests and going for refuge; gathering accumulations; purification of obscurations; and making offerings.

The main practice also has five sections: the transference of consciousness, known as “Opening the Door to Space”; the offering of one’s body as a mandala; the white feast or feeding; the red feast or feeding; and the *tsok* feast practice.

The conclusion has three sections: the dedication and aspiration liturgy; the dissolution or withdrawal of the visualization; and taking the practice onto the path in post-meditation. Altogether there are thirteen sections to the text and practice.

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

THE PRELIMINARIES:

- Part One: Generation of Bodhichitta
- Part Two: Refuge
- Part Three: Accumulation of Merit
 - A. Visualization
 - B. Accumulation of Merit through the Seven Branch Prayer
- Part Four: Purification of Obscurations
- Part Five: Offering the Desirable Qualities

THE MAIN PRACTICE:

- Part One: Transference of Consciousness
 - A. Beginner Capacity (elaborate, concise, extremely concise)
 - B. Intermediate Capacity
 - C. Highest Capacity
- Part Two: Offering the Body as a Mandala
- Part Three: White Feast
- Part Four: Red Feast
- Part Five: Tsok Offering

THE CONCLUSION:

- Part One: Dedication
- Part Two: Dissolution
- Part Three: Taking the Practice on the Path in Postmeditation

THE PRELIMINARIES

The first of the five preliminary sections is the generation of bodhi-chitta. Before this, one supplicates either the root guru or the lineage. Examples of supplications that may be done are, for example, the supplication beginning with:

དཔལ་ལྷན་ཙ་བའི་སྤྲུལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

Glorious, precious root guru,

which you probably are not familiar with; or a somewhat longer alternative is the usual lineage supplication:

རྫོགས་འཆང་ཆེན་ཉི་ལོ་རྒྱ་རོ་དང་།

Great Vajradhara, Telopa, Nāropa,

and so on. Either one of these or any similar supplication may be chanted at the beginning.

PART ONE • GENERATION OF BODHICHITTA

The essence of all the Buddha's teachings is two aspects of bodhichitta, which are aspiration and implementation.

Aspiration bodhichitta is the generation or clarification of the very motivation I have just explained, and through the generation of this motivation, the transformation of your attitude.

Implementation bodhichitta means that, having generated aspiration bodhichitta as your motivation for listening to teachings, you then actually are diligent in listening to them as well as you can, in order to bring about the result to which you aspire.

In the *Bodhisattva-charya-avatara* we can read, for instance, that the difference between them is like the difference between wishing to go somewhere and actually going there. Before going somewhere you first generate the intention to go there. For example, you think, "Tomorrow I must go to such and such place," and you make all the necessary preparations. In that same way, you generate aspiration bodhichitta. Aspiration bodhichitta is like intending to go somewhere. Then having generated the intention to go somewhere, on the next day you actually make your journey. That is like implementation bodhichitta. These two aspects of precious bodhichitta are of the utmost importance. Whether you are listening to dharma, practicing dharma, or engaging in any virtuous action whatsoever, it is essential that the motivation for doing the action be this consciously generated aspiration bodhichitta, and that the actual implementation of the action be based upon

that motivation and therefore be embraced by implementation bodhichitta.

The teachings of the Buddha are commonly divided into the Hinayana and the Mahayana. However, the true distinction between the Hinayana practice and the Mahayana practice lies in the motivation of the practitioner. If someone is doing practice motivated by bodhichitta, that practice is Mahayana. If someone is doing practice not motivated by bodhichitta, then his or her practice is not Mahayana practice. However, even beyond that, although we have all entered the gate of dharma, we could say that to some extent, all our minds have gone to the dharma. However, whether or not our dharma goes to the path or becomes a path, depends upon whether or not we generate bodhichitta.

The presence of this motivation of bodhichitta indeed makes a tremendous difference. If any practice, or any dharmic endeavor you engage in, is conducted with bodhichitta as the motivation, then the virtue you generate through that practice will not be destroyed; it will continue to grow of itself forever until you attain buddhahood. It is therefore this motivation that brings about the vast accumulation that leads — at the culmination of the path — to incalculably great benefit for other beings. Therefore the presence or absence of bodhichitta as the motivation makes a tremendous amount of difference.

The actual liturgy of the generation of bodhichitta begins with the words:

བདག་ཅག་རྣམས་ལ་སྤང་བར་བྱེད་པའི་དགྲ། གཞོད་པར་བྱེད་པའི་བགོགས། ཁར་དུ་གཙོད་པའི་རྒྱུན། འཆི་
བདག་གི་བདུད། གནས་གདོན་ལུས་གདོན་རིན་ཅན་མ་མས་ཐོག་དངས་ནམ་མཁའ་དང་མཉམ་པའི་སེམས་
ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་སླ་ན་མེད་པ་ཡུམ་ཆེན་མོའི་གོ་འཕང་ཐོབ་པར་བྱ། འདི་ཆེད་དུ་དམ་པ་བདུད་ཀྱི་གཙོད་ཡུལ་ཟུབ་
མོ་ཉམས་སུ་སྤང་བར་བྱའོ།

For enemies hostile to us, negative spirits who harm, conditions that disturb, the Mara of the Lord of Death, harmful spirits of the land or body, and for all living beings equal to the reach of space with our kind parents in the lead, we take up the genuine, profound practice of cutting though maras, so that all beings may attain the unsurpassed level of the Great Mother.

CLASSES OF BEINGS

The different classes of beings are called **the eight duns or eight spirits**.

The first type of being whom you specifically generate the intention to establish in awakening is called the enemy who out of spite actually harms us. This refers to conventional beings such as human beings, who have bodies. These enemies actually dislike you, and do something to harm you, such as beating you up, stealing your things, or abusing you in various ways.

The second is harmful obstructors. This refers to spirits who have no visible form, who nevertheless do various things that are harmful to you.

The third class of beings is called impeding conditions. This refers to beings that bring about impeding or disruptive conditions. The

difference between this and the second is that obstructors actually do something to you. Those who bring about impeding conditions are spirits that actually prevent you from doing virtuous things that you wish to do. For example, you may have generated the resolve, “I will remain in retreat for so many months,” but through the actions of those spirits that becomes impossible.

The fourth is the mara who is the Lord of Death. This mara is the being who accomplishes the proximate or direct cause of your death through previous negative karmic connections.

The fifth is the spirits of place. Wherever you are living or practicing, there are loads of spirits all around you.

The sixth type is the spirits of your body. These are spirits that just simply inhabit your body from the beginning of your body onward and who you are never separate from. They are always there.

The last two are your kind parents.

These two, together with the previous six, are the foremost or primary focus of your generation of bodhichitta. You think, “These eight types of beings, plus all other beings who fill space, must be brought to the attainment of the state of the unsurpassable Great Mother, perfect awakening. In order to bring that about, I will practice Chö.” That is the generation of bodhichitta, which is accomplished by reciting these words in the liturgy while reflecting on their meaning.

THE DEMONS PRESENT IN THE BODY AS THREE CONSTITUENTS

In the commentary, Jamgön Lodrö Thaye gives some additional information about **the spirits of the body** [the sixth dun]. He says that these are present from the moment of the creation of the body at the time of conception, and that they abide as the embodiment of the three poisons. What this means is that as a result of the habit of aversion or aggression, you have — as a constituent of the body — what is called the white constituent or juice. As a result of the habit of attachment or desire, you have as another constituent of the body, the red constituent or literally dust. As a result of the habit of ignorance, you have that which maintains life force, the fundamental wind or the great life wind. The causes of these three constituents, the white, red and wind aspect of your body are the presence of the three poisons, attachment, aversion and bewilderment or ignorance in your mind.

The condition for your acquiring these constituents occurred at the time of conception, during or after the union of your parents, the white constituent being the sperm of the father, and the red constituent being the ovum of the mother. When the sperm entered the ovum, your consciousness, riding on what would become in an incorporated state the great life wind, was mixed with these two. The mixture of these three, which is the actual accomplishment of conception, was the beginning of the presence of these spirits of the body.

Although the cause of your acquiring these constituents is the three poisons, the three constituents themselves maintain the three poisons.

For example, once your body starts to develop, the essence of the white constituent, which began as the sperm of your father, comes to reside inside your head, towards the top of the head. The essence of the red constituent, which began as the ovum of your mother, comes to reside below your navel. What is in between these two is what is called the avadhuti or central channel of your subtle body. What keeps you alive is held in your body by these two constituents, which block the top and bottom of the avadhuti. Flowing in-between these two is what is called the great life wind or prana wind, which is the fundamental life force that keeps you alive. These three constituents, the white, the red, and the life wind, are the support for your mind. Because these three constituents are what basically formed your physical body, all aspects of your body, speech, and mind, and the affect of your experience, such as the three poisons — aversion, attachment, and bewilderment — are the display of these three constituents.

PART TWO • REFUGE

SUMMONING THE GUESTS

The second of the five preliminaries is Going for Refuge, which begins with “summoning the guests.” The first part of “summoning the guests” is the generation of both yourself and the sources of refuge in front, as the deity. Some versions of the liturgy have this section and others do not. Some versions of this liturgy have a bit describing the visualization, which says:

ཕལ་མཆོད་སྒྲིབ་ཅིག་གིས་ཡུམ་ཆེན་མོ་གསེར་གྱི་མདོག་ཅན་རྒྱན་ཆ་ལུགས་ཡོངས་སུ་རྫོགས་པ། རྩལ་
བཞིའི་དང་པོས་རྫོང་རྒྱུགས་བཟ། །འོག་མ་གཉིས་གྱིས་མཉམ་གཞག་གི་ལྷག་རྒྱ་མཛད་པར་གྱུར། །

PHET! In an instant, we are the golden Great Mother complete in her ornaments and attire. Of her four hands, the first two hold a vajra and a Dharma text while the lower two are in the mudra of meditation.

In the commentary, it says that the initial visualization of the sources of refuge is the **visualization of the Great Mother** seated on a lion throne, lotus, and moon disc cushion. She is mentioned in the liturgy with one difference; she is golden in color and has four arms. According to the commentary, her first forward two arms are in two different gestures. The right hand is in the earth touching gesture and the left hand is in the gesture of even placement. Her second two arms are extended out to her sides. Standing upright on the palm of her right hand is a golden vajra and resting on the palm of her left hand is a book, a volume of the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*. She is adorned with all

the silken garments and other jewelry of the sambhogakaya. She is surrounded by all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and three times. Now whether or not you recite this description of yourself in that form, in order to summon the guests you do visualize yourself as the Great Mother. In order to go for refuge, you also visualize her, in the same form, surrounded by all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, in the sky in front of you.



Prajnaparamita in the Chö Practice

Following the visualization of yourself and the sources of refuge, you then summon the guests. This is done by first striking the mouth of the thighbone trumpet, called a *kangling*, which you use in this

practice. You strike it against the palm of your hand, making a kind of hollow sound, which you do three times. The first time you do it, think that the sound of the concussion of the mouth of the trumpet against your palm takes the sound of the words:

འབྱུང་པོ་ཕྱན་བྱ་ཉམ་རྩུང་བ་ནམས་མ་སྒྲག་ཅིག །

Timid spirits, do not be afraid.

The second time you strike it, you think it makes the sound of:

མ་སྐངས་ཤིག །

Do not be scared.

And the third time that you strike it, you think it forms the words:

ཤིན་རྒྱ་མ་སྐངས་ཤིག །

Have no fear at all.

Then, having struck the kangling against your palm three times, you are going to blow it or play it three times. The first time you do so; think that the sound pervades all three realms of samsara and that there is no sentient being anywhere that does not hear the sound of your trumpet. You then think that the sound of the trumpet takes the form of the following words:

གྱི་ཡ་གི་སྲིད་ཆེན་མནར་མེད་ཡན་ཆད་གྱི་སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་ཉོན་ཅིག །

Hey! All beings from the pinnacle of existence down to the pit of hell, listen!

Now the **pinnacle of existence** refers to the highest of the higher realms. For example, within the desire realm, there are six levels or realms of gods. There are two levels that are on top of Mt. Meru, the kingdom of the four great kings who live on the tops of the sides of Mt. Meru. Then there is the realm of the thirty-three gods, which is the god realm on top of the center of Mt. Meru. Next are four realms which are above Mt. Meru in the sky in the clouds, which are from the bottom up: Beyond Conflict, the Joyous, Delighting in Emanation, and Enjoying or Controlling the Emanations of Others, which is the highest realm within the desire realm and is the abode of the particular mara who is called the Lord of Delight and Desire, or Garub Wangchuk. That is what is referred to here as the peak of existence.

The sound of the kangling also reaches the **pit of the lowest hell**, which is called Avichi, meaning uninterrupted suffering. According to the Abhidharma, it is the lower most inhabited level of a world system. It is both literally and figuratively the lowest of the low.⁶ In other words, the first time you blow it, you should be thinking, “Wherever there are sentient beings, all of you listen!”

When you blow it the second time, you think it takes the sound:

འེ་ཐམས་ཅད་འདྲིར་འདུས་གྱི།

All beings gather here!

6. As explained in the *Treasury of Abhidharma* (Ch. 3 v. 58), the Avichi hell is twenty-thousand leagues below this continent, and the other seven hells are above it.

When you blow it the third time, you think it forms the sounds:

ཐམས་ཅད་ལྷུར་དུ་འདུས་གྱིག།

All beings gather swiftly.

In connection with summoning all sentient beings to assemble in this place, including all of the powerful spirits and various gods of this billion-world system, you visualize the Great Mother appearing in front of you. You are underneath her and therefore under her protection. You think that assembling in that way; all sentient beings take an attitude of visible and actual respect towards the Great Mother. By placing them under her protection, think that you and all sentient beings, even the spirits and enemies, all go for refuge. This is done with an attitude of physical respect, by placing your palms together in front of your heart. An action of verbal respect is demonstrated through the recitation of the refuge vow. The mental respect is veneration, intense devotion, and yearning that entrusts oneself entirely to the sources of refuge. Thinking that you and all beings go for refuge from this moment until the attainment of buddhahood, all of you entrust yourselves completely to the sources of refuge, vow three times and make the various aspirations which follow upon the refuge vow in this liturgy.

REFUGE VOW

The liturgy of the refuge vow in the Chö practice begins with the same words as the previous generation of bodhichitta:

བདག་ཅག་རྣམས་ལ་སྤང་བར་བྱེད་པའི་དགྲ།

For enemies hostile to us,

so it begins with the identification of the eight types of beings as the foremost focus of the refuge vow. Again you say:

གནོད་པར་བྱེད་པའི་བགེགས། ཁར་དུ་གཙོད་པའི་རྒྱན། །འཆི་བདག་གི་བདུད། །གནས་གདོན་ལུས་གདོན་
རིན་ཅན་ས་མས་ཐོག་དངས་ནམ་མཁའ་དང་མཉམ་པའི་སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་

negative spirits who harm, conditions that disturb, the Mara of the Lord of Death, harmful spirits of the land or body, and for all living beings equal to the reach of space with our kind parents in the lead,

Then you mention the sources of refuge. The part of the refuge vow that is actually repeated three times is:

སྤང་མ་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ། །ཁངས་རྒྱས་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ། །ཆོས་ལ་བས་སུ་མཆིའོ་སྟེ། །དགེ་འདུན་ལ་སྐྱབས་
སུ་མཆིའོ།

we take refuge in the Guru. We take refuge in the Buddha. We take refuge in the Dharma. We take refuge in the Sangha.

Once you get to “We take refuge in the Sangha,” then you go back to “we take refuge in the Guru” and repeat that three times. Then you continue with the rest of the refuge vow, which is quite long. Next you say:

བཀའ་བྱབ་ཐོབ་གཙོད་ཡུལ་རྒྱུད་པའི་དཔལ་ལྷན་སྤང་དམ་པ་རྣམས་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ།

We take refuge in the glorious, genuine gurus of the Chö lineage, the siddhas who follow the Buddha’s words.

This refers primarily — from among the father lineage, the mother lineage, and the nondual lineage of Chö that will be explained later — to the father lineage. Then we say:

མ་གནས་གསུམ་གྱི་མཁའ་འགྲོ་ནམས་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ།

We take refuge in the mother dakinis of the three places.

That refers primarily to the mother lineage. Then:

ཕྱགས་བརྩ་ན་བཞུགས་པའི་སངས་རྒྱས་དང་བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའ་ནམས་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ། འཇིགས་ལྗེ་བདེ་བར་གཤེགས་པ་ནམས་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ།

We take refuge in the buddhas and bodhisattvas residing the ten directions.

We take refuge in the Sugatas of the Five Families.

That is to say, the buddhas of the five families.

རིགས་གསུམ་གྱི་མགོན་པོ་ནམས་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ།

We take refuge in the Lords of the Three Families.

These are the bodhisattvas Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara, and Vajrapani.

སླ་མ་རྫོང་མཁའ་འགྲོ་འཁོར་དང་བཅས་པ་ནམས་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ།

We take refuge in the gurus with their retinues of vajra dakinis.

This, or “the guru, vajra dakinis and their retinue,” refers to gurus in general, and one’s root guru specifically, together with their retinue.

བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་པའི་སླ་མ་མཁའ་འགྲོ་འཁོར་དང་བཅས་པ་ནམས་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ། ཇིན་ཅན་ཙུ་བའི་སླ་མ་མཁའ་འགྲོ་འཁོར་དང་བཅས་པ་ནམས་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ།

We take refuge in the Kagyu gurus with their retinues of dakinis. We take refuge in the kind root gurus with their retinues of dakinis

Finally, you say:

རང་སེམས་སྟོང་པ་སྦྱི་བ་མེད་པ་ཆོས་ཀྱི་སྐུ་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ། །

We take refuge in our own mind, the dharmakaya, empty and unborn.

This is the ultimate refuge, which is resting in the nature of mind, recognizing the mind's nature — here expressing that as liturgy. Then:

བསྐྱབས་ཏུ་གསོལ། །

We supplicate you for refuge.

Here we are addressing all the sources of refuge.

སྐྱབས་འོག་དམ་པ་ན་རྒྱུད་པར་མཇེད་ཏུ་གསོལ། །

We pray to you, take us under your genuine protection.

The refuge section concludes with:

བདག་གཞན་སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་སངས་རྒྱལ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནོ། །ཆོས་ལ་བརྟེན་ནོ། །དགེ་འདུན་ལ་བརྟེན་ནོ། །
སེམས་ཅན་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ལུས་དགེ་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག ངག་དགེ་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག ཡིད་དགེ་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག རད་རིགས་
བཞི་བརྒྱ་ཙུང་བཞི་བྱང་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག

I and all living beings rely on the Buddha. We rely on the Dharma. We rely on the Sangha. May the bodies of all beings be virtuous. May their speech be virtuous. May their minds be virtuous. May the four hundred and four kinds of sickness be purified.

This means all sickness without exception.

མྱོ་བུར་དགུ་བརྒྱ་གོ་གཅིག་ལས་ཐར་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག ཡེ་འགྲོགས་སུམ་བརྒྱ་དྲུག་ཅུས་མི་ཚུགས་པར་གྱུར་ཅིག
May we escape the ninety-one types of accidents. May we not be harmed
by the three hundred and sixty co-emergent negative spirits.

This is essentially a list of all the different sorts of things that can go wrong. Your aspiration is that they not occur.

བགགས་རིགས་སྟོང་ཕྲག་བརྒྱད་ཅུ་རང་སར་ཞི་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག
May the 80,000 types of obstructors subside in their ground.

Obstructors in this case refers to beings whom you have harmed in previous lives, creating a karmic debt that causes, as a resolution or continuation of that karmic situation, those beings to harm you. There are eighty-four thousand different types of these karmic debts that can occur.

Finally you say:

རང་སར་དག་པར་གྱུར་ཅིག རང་སར་སྟོངས་པར་གྱུར་ཅིག
May they be purified in their ground. May they be emptied in their
ground.

The refuge section concludes with this aspiration.

Following the main section of the refuge, indicated both in the liturgy and commentary, is the offering of what is called the five branches, and finally a second or renewed generation of bodhichitta.

THE FIVE BRANCHES

The five branches here begin with the words:

དཀོན་མཆོག་གསུམ་ལ་བྱག་འཆའ་ལོ། དཀོན་མཆོག་གསུམ་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆི། དཀོན་མཆོག་གསུམ་ལ་
མཆོད་པ་འབུལ། །

I prostrate to the Three Jewels. I take refuge in the Three Jewels. I give offerings to the Three Jewels.

That refers to the offering of everything, your body, possessions, and so forth. Then:

སྤྲིག་པ་མི་དགེ་སོ་སོར་བཤགས། །

I fully acknowledge every negative and unvirtuous action.

This is to say, all the things you have done wrong throughout beginningless time.

Then you say:

འགྲོ་བའི་དགེ་ལ་རྗེས་ཡི་རང་། །

I rejoice in the virtue of all beings.

Finally, you chant:

སངས་རྒྱས་བྱང་ཆུབ་ཡིད་ཀྱིས་གཟུང་། །

I keep in mind the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

This means, that we generate bodhichitta through holding or recollecting in my mind perfect awakening and resolving to attain it.

In connection with the five branches, there is a further refuge vow and bodhichitta, which says:

སངས་རྒྱལ་ཆོས་དང་ཆོག་མཆོག་ལ། །བྱང་ཆུབ་བར་དུ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆི། །རང་གཞན་དོན་ནི་རབ་བསྐྱབ་
ཕྱིར། །

Until complete awakening, I take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and supreme Sangha. To fully accomplish the benefit for myself and others,

that is in order to liberate both others and myself from samsara,

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་ནི་བསྐྱེད་པར་བཟྱ། །

I give rise to bodhichitta.

Having generated that supreme bodhichitta, that intention to attain supreme awakening, “I therefore take responsibility for all beings.” Literally:

སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་བདག་གིས་མགྲོན་དུ་གཉེར། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སྤྱོད་མཆོག་ཡིད་འོང་སྤྱོད་པར་བཟྱ། །

I invite all beings to be my guests [or responsibility]. I will engage in the pleasing, supreme conduct of a bodhisattva.

Here you are generating both the aspiration and the implementation aspects of bodhichitta. Then:

འགྲོ་ལ་ཕན་ཕྱིར་སངས་རྒྱལ་འགྲུབ་པར་ཤོག །

For the benefit of all beings, I will attain buddhahood.

The last stanza in this section is a further generation of bodhichitta which says:

རི་ལྷ་རྒྱལ་གསུམ་མགོན་པོ་ནམས། ཡང་དག་བྱང་རྒྱལ་ངེས་མཛད་པའི། བྱང་རྒྱལ་སེམས་ནི་སྤྲན་མེད། ཏམ་
པ་བདག་གིས་བསྐྱེད་པར་བགྱི། བསྐྱེད་པ་ནམས་ནི་བྲན་པར་བགྱི། བྲན་པ་ནམས་ནི་རྒྱ་ཆེར་གཞུང་། །

Just as the protectors of the three times gave rise to genuine, unsurpassable bodhichitta that definitely brings true awakening, I will also give rise to it.

What I have generated, I will recollect, and all of this I will expand.

At the end of this section, refuge and bodhichitta, you think that the sources of refuge you have visualized in front of you dissolve into the Great Mother, who dissolves into yourself as the Great Mother, who then dissolves into emptiness, and you rest in emptiness.

We have now reached the point where you begin the main visualization of the five-fold field of accumulation. It would be a good point to stop here. If you have any questions about anything up to now, you are welcome to ask.

QUESTIONS

STUDENT: Rinpoche, in the modern world, a lot of us do not have great belief in beings like demons and so forth. How can we interpret these obstructions? How should we view them?

RINPOCHE: Well, looking at the eight types of beings mentioned in that section one-by-one, the first of all the enemies should not be a

problem. Anyone who harms you and whom you therefore regard as an enemy is in that first class.

The second are obstructors. What primarily obstructs you is the presence of the three poisons in your mind. You can think of the three poisons themselves as the obstructors.

Then there are the impeding conditions. The main impeding condition is hope and fear and the dualism produced by the fundamental grasping at a self. You can think of the grasping at a self, itself, as the main impeding condition.

With regard to the spirits of place, whether you believe in them or not, poltergeists I think we call them are a common experience. For example, doors open and close by themselves, furniture gets moved, you hear your name being called. All sorts of high jinks occur. Whether or not you have experienced this, it does occur in the experience of many people. There are these spirits around us all the time.

The spirits of body are the presence of the three poisons, which are rooted in the constituents of your physical body.

Then parents, you should be able to believe in those.

Have you not had the experience that you are in a house or place and you hear someone knocking on the door but there is nobody there? Or, the door opens for no apparent reason, or you hear someone walking but there is nobody there? Does that ever happen to you? If that happens to you, then that is evidence of the spirits of place.

Also it was taught by the Buddha and is specifically mentioned in texts such as this one on Chö practice, that many of these spirits are not particularly powerful and majestic, but are very timid, weak, and fearful. They can in fact be easily frightened by humans. For example, if we address them, or in general speak in a very, very loud tone of voice, it can really scare them. Some spirits are very, very strong and not fearful at all, so that, for example, when you are lying down on your bed sleeping they will sit on top of you and hold you down, or sometimes even grab you by the neck and strangle you or shake you a little bit.

We, as practitioners of Chö, have to take a specific attitude towards all of these spirits. We have to think that, from beginningless samsara, they have been our parents many times, and have been very kind to us. Therefore we should feel great compassion for them, especially since, due to their negative karma or actions, they have at this time taken an unpleasant body, in which they experience a great deal of suffering. You generate the aspiration to establish them first and foremost in the state of perfect awakening. In this practice you identify with the wisdom of the Great Mother and specifically with the wisdom of Machik Lapdrön. That is what is called bodhichitta. No matter how much spirits may want to disturb you or beat you up, they will not be able to harm you. It is much the same way as it works in the world in general. For example, if someone dislikes you to the point where they speak roughly to you and give you mean or dirty looks all the time, if no matter how rude they are, you respond with kindness and with a pleasant demeanor and pleasant words, then eventually

you will wear through their enmity and they will come to like you and eventually befriend you.

STUDENT: In regards to working with difficult people, how can we extend that practice of bodhichitta further to have an effective result with those who do not even realize the extent that they are harming themselves, not to speak of even the people they are harming around them?

RINPOCHE: Well of course there are people who are extremely vicious. This is caused by their having such strong kleshas in their minds that they are constantly doing vicious things and thereby harming, in some cases, many, many beings. The problem is that if you attempt to fight them on their own terms, by appearing angry and by confronting them directly, it often only strengthens or reinforces their own aggression and their own kleshas, so that in the long term the best thing you can do for them is, within a stable cultivation of love and compassion, to make aspirations for their benefit, such as the dedication of all of your virtue to them, and the specific aspiration that they generate bodhichitta. If you make these aspirations whole-heartedly and forcefully enough, then their minds will actually change.

Now the reason why your aspiration could beneficially affect somebody else's mind and cause a vicious person's state of mind to change is that, because of our individual accumulations of karma and our individual makeup of afflictions, we have individual and distinct habits. There are three types of habits: physical, verbal and mental. They produce the appearance of our distinct individual body, speech, and

mind, so that we appear to have different bodies. Everyone's body is individual to them. Nevertheless, the fundamental nature of all of this, and the fundamental nature of the mind is of unity, lucidity, and emptiness, which is completely unlimited and therefore has no center or circumference. It is beyond any kind of location or limitation. Therefore because this same nature is the fundamental nature of the mind of each and every individual being, the aspiration made by one being can affect another being.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, it was mentioned earlier that in the Nyingma tradition this practice should be practiced after the mandala offering in the context of Ngöndro, if I remember correctly. I wonder if inviting all these spirits is something that needs some courage. Is it advisable to purify oneself and do these parts of the Ngöndro practice before doing this practice?

RINPOCHE: Well, there is no danger or inappropriateness in someone who has not completed or is not involved in the practice of Ngöndro or preliminaries in doing this practice. Of course the preliminary practices of the Ngöndro are very important and beneficial, because they pursue the aims of the first two aspects of the path, causing the mind to go to the dharma, and causing dharma to become the path. Through going for refuge to the Three Jewels and generating bodhichitta, you cause your mind to go to the dharma. Then through the Vajrasattva practice, one removes or purifies the traces or stains of wrongdoing, and therefore removes impediments, such as various obstacles and sickness and so forth, which will arise as their maturation if they are

not cleaned up or removed. The mandala offering practice is very important. Through the removal of the stains of wrongdoing, you remove some of what obscures the nature of your mind and prevents the recognition of the mind's nature, but in order to have recognition, you also need to accumulate merit. The best way to accumulate merit is, of course, the mandala offering. Further, in order to have an initial recognition of your mind's nature, and also in order to increase and stabilize that recognition, guru yoga is essential. Of course the preliminaries are very important, but it would not be correct to say that someone who is not doing or has not done the preliminaries would be unable to or should not practice Chö, because Chö includes the essence of these preliminaries. It includes going for refuge, it includes the generation of bodhichitta, and it includes methods of gathering the accumulations and dispelling obscurations. It also includes elaborate ways of benefiting through offering your body through the white feast and the red feast. There is no danger or inappropriateness in someone who has not done Ngöndro practicing Chö.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, you said that the white, red, and fundamental wind correspond to aggression or aversion, attachment, and ignorance, and are the tangible presence of the three poisons at the time of conception. This explains what the white, red, and fundamental wind are from the samsaric point of view. Would you explain what the white, red, and fundamental wind are from the ultimate point of view? Do these correspond to the *thigle*, and are we to understand the white and red as wisdom and skillful means, bliss and emptiness, or how are we to understand these?

RINPOCHE: From the point of view of the pure nature of these constituents, underlying the coarse appearance of the body, which is a projection of habit, there is the nature of the body, which is the display of the mind's nature. As opposed to being a projection of habit, it is the display of the nature of mind. Therefore, coexisting with the I, and its impure or coarse constituents, are the pure or very subtle constituents. Simply put, these abide in the form of the forty-two peaceful and fifty-eight wrathful deities, who abide as inherent wisdom present within anyone's body. The way in which these abide is in the manner of channels, winds, and drops. Of these hundred deities, all the male deities abide in the form of white constituents or white drops. The female deities abide in the form of the red constituent or red drops. The non-dual essence of these is cultivated in the practice of mahamudra, through which you can attain the state of Vajradhara, the state of great union, in one lifetime. That is the pure essence of what in the impure context is the prana wind or life wind.

What is the connection between the life wind and the nature or mahamudra? The impure aspect of the wind is what we experience as breathing and the breath. In order to purify this or work with the wisdom constituent, which is present within the wind, one works with this wisdom constituent by resting one's mind in its fundamental nature, which is the practice of mahamudra.

PART THREE • GATHERING OF ACCUMULATIONS

VISUALIZATION

Combining the commentary with the liturgy, where we have reached in the liturgy is the line:

མདུན་གྱི་ནམ་མཁའི་གནས་སུ་

In the sky in front [...]

continuing up until the invitation and dissolution of the wisdom deities. That is the first part of the accumulation of merit that will be explained in the commentary.

The first part of the accumulation of merit consists of the generation or visualization of the field of accumulation. Previously you visualized yourself as the Great Mother, Prajnaparamita, and then dissolved that visualization into emptiness.

MANDALA PALACE

Here, when you commence this visualization, you do so conceiving of yourself in your ordinary form. At this point you no longer visualize yourself as the deity. Conceiving of yourself in your ordinary form, you think that in the sky in front of you is a green TRAM (ཧྭ) syllable, not TAM but TRAM. This melts into light and becomes a precious palace made entirely of various jewels and other precious materials, with four sides and four gates and so forth. The reason why you visualize

this syllable as green, in this context, is that from among the five colors most used in visualization, white, yellow, red, blue, and green, green is the one which is considered to include within it all of the others. The seed syllable from which the palace is generated has to be of a color that includes all colors because the palace itself is multicolored. The reason the palace is multicolored is the following. Palaces, which are the visualized residences of deities, are not like buildings of human construction. They are the natural display or radiance of the five wisdoms of that particular deity.

They are naturally a display of that deity's presence as, for example, your own shadow is of your presence when you walk out into the sunlight. Because they are the display or embodiment of the deity's five wisdoms, they are primarily of five colors. Generally speaking, the Eastern wall and Eastern part of the palace, including the gate, will be white, the Southern — yellow, the Western — red, the Northern — green and the ceiling and floor will often be blue in color. These palaces, regardless of the yidams whose residence they are, are all pretty much the same. They all are square, have four sides, and a gate or massive doorway in each side. Built like a portico, coming off the gate, in each case, is an elaborate gateway with a covering and a raised step outside the gate. Each of these porticos is held up by four columns. The palace also has a two-level roof. Then inside the palace are eight pillars or columns holding up the top. Similar to the columns in this room [at KTD], which is actually designed based upon the proportions, design, and decoration of these palaces.

The standardized features of these palaces, which include the ones that I have already mentioned, are not something that was made up arbitrarily by a group of lamas that got together. This is a natural display of the qualities of the buddha. The reason is that all of the training that was cultivated by the buddha in his path as a bodhisattva is included in what are called the thirty-seven factors of awakening. These thirty-seven factors include the four aspects of mindfulness, the four aspects of outer renunciation, the four feet of miracle or foundations of miraculous ability, the five powers, and the five strengths, the seven branches of the path of awakening, and finally the eight branches or limbs of the path of an Arya or a superior being. As a result of all of these factors on the path, having attained buddhahood a buddha will have thirty-seven qualities which correspond to these factors of awakening developed while traveling the path. These thirty-seven qualities are totally superior to the qualities of others and are distinct and present only for a buddha. The natural display of these thirty-seven uncommon qualities of a buddha is this type of palace, which actually has thirty-seven characteristic features. Each one of the features corresponds to certain aspects of the path. For example, the eight long pillars or columns within the palace are the display of the qualities arising from the noble eight-fold path.

If you are constructing a model of a palace, as is done when constructing a physical model of a deity's mandala, there are certain fixed proportions of size and height for this type of construction that were laid down by the Buddha in his original teachings. If you are meditating upon it or visualizing it, the case is somewhat different. Because

the natural display of the five wisdoms of that deity in ultimate truth has no substantial, definite or limited existence, you can visualize it as large or as small as you wish.

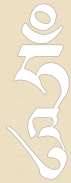
LOTUS THRONE

Having visualized that palace, you next think that in the center of the palace is a PAM (པཎ) syllable, which is brilliant white in color. This melts into light. It does not mention it in the text, but you should visualize that in the center of the palace is a golden throne, held up by eight lions, for a reason that will become clear in a minute. Then on top of that you visualize a white PAM syllable, from which comes a brilliant white lotus with a thousand petals. In the center of that lotus, you then visualize an orange or yellowish-orange MA (མ) syllable. That melts into light and becomes a sun disc, lying flat on top of the center of the lotus. On top of that you visualize a white A (ཨ) which melts into light and becomes a moon disc, lying flat on top of the sun disc.

Although it is not mentioned in the commentary, the reason why it is clear that you should visualize the lion throne, is that it refers to this pedestal of the deity as four-fold, which means that within the palace, there is also a precious throne, the palace and the throne together counting as one, and then the lotus, the sun and the moon.

VISUALIZATION OF THE DEITY

DEITY



HUNG

MOON



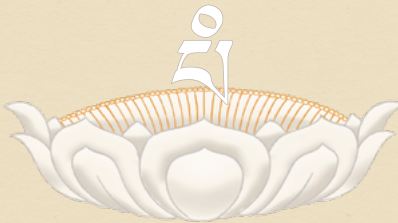
A

SUN



MA

LOTUS



PAM

MANDALA



TRAM

DEITY: MACHIK DROLMA

Standing upright on top of the moon disc, you visualize in essence your own mind in the form of a white HUNG (ཨུ) syllable. You next think that this white HUNG, which is in essence your mind, melts into light and it is transformed into your root guru in the form of **Machik Lapkyi Drolma**. She is brilliant white, and she has one face and two arms. She has three eyes that gaze upwards into space. She is standing in a dancing posture, with her left leg extended downward to touch the moon disc and her right foot contracted upward. In her right hand she is holding a large damaru or hand drum, made out of gold, which she is holding aloft into space. In her left hand she is holding a silver bell, which is resting gracefully on her left hip. Most of her hair is bound up in a topknot and the rest of it flows freely down her back.

She is not wearing any clothing, so she is naked, but she has jewelry. The first part of her jewelry is called the six bone ornaments, which represent her attainment or perfection of the six paramitas. The first of these is a bone wheel, which is on top of her head. This bone wheel represents the perfection or paramita of jnana (wisdom) or meditation. The second is a bone necklace, which represents the perfection of generosity. Then bone bracelets, which are at the wrists, above the elbows and at the ankles, which represent the perfection of morality, and bone earrings representing the perfection of patience. A bone girdle or belt, with bones hanging from it, represents the perfection of diligence. Finally, she is wearing a sixth bone ornament, which is made up of

elegant wheels of carved bone, on the front and on the back; these are attached to garlands of bone and form a cross or an “x”. Actually there are two of these going in both directions. There are two coming one way and two going the other way. I need to tell you this because if you are actually going to do this practice, you need to know what it is you have to visualize.

GURUS, BUDDHAS AND BODHISATTVAS

Your root guru is visualized in the form of Machik Lapdrön, standing in the dancing posture. She is surrounded by the Kagyu lineage of the Chö tradition. They are above her, to her right, and to her left.

Machik Lapdrön was married from the age of twenty-three until the age of thirty-five to an Indian siddha, whose name was Bhadraya. They had three children together: two sons who were named Gyalwa Tondrub and Tonyon Samdrub, and one daughter whose name was Lha Drolma. The first of her two sons became the inheritor or the lineage successor of the Sutra Lineage of Chö. She gave all of the empowerments and the instructions for the Sutra tradition of Chö to Gyalwa Tondrub. Her second son, Tonyon Samdrub, became the inheritor of the Tantric tradition of Chö. A third student of hers, named Kugom Chokyi Senge, became the inheritor of the tradition of the Unified Sutra and Tantra. When visualizing the gurus surrounding her, you should visualize her children, lineage inheritors, and all the lineages that came from them.

Slightly above Machik Lapdrön and to her right, at the level of her right ear, you visualize **Padampa Sangye**, her Indian teacher. He is dark red or dark brown in color and his hair is bound up in a topknot. He is not wearing much. All he is wearing is a meditation belt slung across his shoulder and a short skirt. In his right hand he is holding a hand drum.



Padampa Sangye

Whereas Machik's hand drum was made of gold, his is made of two human skulls, which have been fixed back-to-back, so that the empty spaces form the place for the skin of the drum. In his left hand, he is holding a thighbone trumpet. He looks like an Indian *atsara* or we would probably say *sadhu*. He is surrounded by all of the gurus of the Father Lineage of the Father Tantra and the Method aspect or *Upaya*. Padampa Sangye is visualized as seated on a lotus and moon disc seat.

In a corresponding position on the other side, near Machik Lapdrön's left ear, you visualize **Vajrayogini**.⁷ She is standing on, as a basic pedestal, a red lotus flower. Lying flat on top of the center of that lotus flower, is a male human corpse. The male human corpse is yellow and is lying on its back with the head facing to the left, Vajrayogini's left. On the top of the heart of that corpse is a sun disc. Standing upright in a dancing posture, similar to that of Machik Lapdrön herself, is Vajrayogini, who is bright red in color, with one face, and two hands. In her right hand she is holding aloft a hooked knife. In her left hand, in front of her heart, she is holding a skull filled with blood. In the crook of her left elbow is a katvangha staff. She is adorned with the five bone ornaments, the same as Machik Lapdrön, except she does not have the sixth ornament. In front of Vajrayogini is the **vajra dakini**, who is like Vajrayogini, but blue. To the right of Vajrayogini is the **ratna dakini**, who is yellow. Behind Vajrayogini is the **padma dakini** who is red. To the left of Vajrayogini is the **karma dakini**, who is green. These five deities of the Vajrayogini mandala are surrounded by all the gurus of the Mother Lineage of the Mother Tantra of Prajna or Knowledge.

7. Also known as Vajravarahi (Tib. *dorjé phakmo*). A semi-wrathful female yidam.



Vajrayogini

Above the head of Machik Lapdrön, you visualize seated on a lotus and moon disc seat, the **Buddha Shakyamuni**, who is brilliant gold in color, with one face and two arms. His right hand is in the earth pressing gesture, and his left hand is in the gesture of even placement. He is seated with his legs fully crossed in vajra posture and is wearing the three dharma robes. To his right, you visualize all Buddhas, behind him all of the Dharma, and to his left, you visualize the Arya Sangha, such as the bodhisattvas Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara, and Vajrapani. Surrounding all of them, you visualize the gurus of the nondual lineage of the nondual tantra of the ultimate meaning.

Above Buddha Shakyamuni's head, you visualize the **Buddha Vairochana**, who is white in color, with one face, and two arms. His hands are in what is called the "gesture of turning the wheel of the dharma" or the "Vairochana gesture".

In front of Vairochana is the **Buddha Akshobhya**, who is blue in color and his hands are in the same two positions as Buddha Shakyamuni.

To the right of Vairochana is the **Buddha Ratnasambhava** who is yellow. His right hand is in the gesture of supreme generosity, extended over his right knee but with the palm facing out. His left hand is in the gesture of even placement.

Behind Vairochana is the **Buddha Amitabha**, both of whose hands are in the gesture of even placement.

To the left of Vairochana is the **Buddha Amoghasiddhi** whose left hand is in the gesture of even placement and his right hand is in the gesture of bestowal of protection. All five buddhas are in the nirmanakaya form, adorned with the three robes of a monk and without any jewelry. They are not holding any scepters or begging bowls.

In front of those five buddhas, in front of Buddha Akshobhya, you visualize **Green Tara** seated on a lotus and moon disc seat. She is a rich dark green in color, with one face and two arms. Her left hand holds the stem of a lotus flower in-between her ring finger and thumb. Her right hand is extended over her right knee in the gesture of supreme generosity.

Then behind the five buddhas, so that is behind Amitabha, you visualize another form of Vairochana called **Vairochana “Great Glacial Lake.”** This is a form of Buddha Vairochana, who is seen here with his two hands in the gesture of even placement or meditation.

That is the Zurmang tradition, to visualize those five buddhas with Tara in front and the other Vairochana in the back. According to the teachings of this practice by the Eighth Situ Rinpoche, Chökyi Jungne, above Buddha Shakyamuni's head, before the five buddhas, you should visualize the Prajnaparamita, the Great Mother. Above her head you can visualize the five buddhas with Tara and so forth as before.

Then above Vairochana's head, the central Vairochana, you would visualize **Vajradhara**. You should end up with five levels. It is called the five stack sources of refuge, with Machik Lapdrön Drolma, Buddha Shakyamuni, Prajnaparamita, Vairochana, and Vajradhara, from the bottom on up.

All of those buddhas are visualized seated on lion-throned lotuses and moon disc seats. Each of these main figures has the retinue individually mentioned, when describing that figure.

DAKAS, DAKINIS AND DHARMAPALAS

Then outside those retinues, there are lots of dakas and dakinis, surrounding the whole mass of these figures described so far. Below the dakas and dakinis, in front and below the rest of the figures, there are male dharmapalas to the right and female dharmapalas to the left.

Directly below Machik Lapdrön's throne, below the wisdom dharmapalas, are the seventy-five glorious mundane protectors: the ten protectors of the ten directions, the eight great planets, the eight great



Vajradhara



Vairochana Glacial Lake



Amitabha



Ratnasambhava



Vairochana



Amoghasiddhi



Akshobhya



Green Tara



Prajnaparamita



Dharma



Buddhas



Buddha Shakyamuni



Sangha



Surrounded by the gurus of the nondual lineage

Dampa Sangye



Surrounded by the
gurus of the Father
Lineage

Vajrayogini



Surrounded by the five
deities of her mandala
and the gurus of the
Mother Lineage

Male Dharmapalas



Female Dharmapalas



Worldly Protectors

Karmic Creditors

Beings of the Six Realms

nagas, the eight great gods, the nine fearsome ones, the twenty-eight constellations, and the four great kings.

The visualization can be classified according to what are called the four recipients of offerings and generosity. The first recipients are the Three Jewels and the Three Roots, who are the recipients of veneration. That includes Machik Lapdrön and her retinue, all the other gurus, and yidams. The second of the four recipients are the protectors, who are the recipients who possess special qualities. These are the supermundane protectors, male and female, as well as the mundane protectors, such as the seventy-five glorious ones.

EIGHT CLASSES OF GODS AND SPIRITS

Surrounding and below the mundane protectors is the third group of recipients or guests who are the eight classes of gods and spirits, including the gods, nagas, rakshasas, yakshas, matrikas, and in particular, those whom you have harmed in previous lives, so that you have a karmic debt. This third group of recipients is called your karmic creditors because they are the recipients of repayment. Because you have harmed them in a previous life, unless you repay them in another way, they are going to take repayment themselves. That is the third group of recipients.

SENTIENT BEINGS

Then together with the creditors, who are the recipients of repayment, you visualize the fourth group of recipients, who are all sentient be-

ings, all of whom have been your parents. That is, all beings of the six realms: gods, asuras, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and beings in the hell realm. All of these, who are called the six realms, are the recipients of your compassion. These and the creditors are all remaining peacefully or tranquilly in the presence of Machik Lapdrön with an attitude of physical, verbal, and mental veneration and respect towards her.

SUMMONING THEIR PRESENCE

Next, in the three places in each of the wisdom deities (first and foremost Machik Lapdrön, then all the other members of the five tier sources of refuge, and the surrounding dakas and dakinis and the male and female wisdom protectors), you visualize: inside their heads a white OM, in the throat a red AH, and at the center of the heart a blue HUNG. From these three syllables in general, and especially from the HUNG, rays of light shoot out and invite, from all the pure realms of buddhas everywhere, the actual wisdom deities. These wisdom deities are summoned to the place of practice and dissolve into the corresponding visualized deities.

ACCUMULATION OF MERIT THROUGH THE SEVEN BRANCH PRAYER

The other part of this third preliminary, the accumulation of merit, is the actual use of this visualized and now consecrated field of accu-

mulation. This is done by the recitation of the seven branches, which follows at this point in the liturgy. In the commentary it says:

Thus offer the seven branches as usual, connecting the liturgy with the meditation.

For example, during the first branch, that of homage, you think that you and all sentient beings emanate as many forms of your individual bodies as there are grains of dust in all realms. After emanating those innumerable bodies, then each of those bodies prostrates to the deities.

Homage

The first of the seven branches, which is given at this point, is the branch of homage or prostration, and it is quite extensive. First, it says:

སྐྱུ་བསམ་བཤེད་པའི་ཡུལ་ལས་འདས། རྒྱལ་བའི་ཡུམ་ལ་བྱག་འཆལ་ལོ། །

I bow to the Mother of the Victorious Ones, transcending expression in thought or word.

That is homage to Prajnaparamita. Then:

ཤུག་ཤེས་མཆོག་ཐམས་ཅད་མཐུན། རྒྱལ་བ་དེ་ལ་བྱག་འཆལ་ལོ། རྒྱེ་བ་བདུན་དུ་འགྲོ་དོན་མཛད། དམ་པ་
དེ་ལ་བྱག་འཆལ་ལོ། མི་མེན་ཡེ་ཤེས་མཁའ་འགྲོ་མ། ལཔ་སྟོན་སྟེ་ལ་བྱག་འཆལ་ལོ། རང་རིག་ཡེ་ཤེས་སྟོན་
མཛད་པའི། ལ་སླ་མ་རྣམས་ལ་བྱག་འཆལ་ལོ། །

I bow to the Sage, supreme and omniscient, Great One of the Shakyas.
I bow to Padampa [Sangye], benefiting beings for seven lifetimes. I bow
to Lapdrön, transcendent human and wisdom dakini. I bow to the father

| gurus, revealing self-aware wisdom.

The primary function of the guru is to show you the nature of your own mind. The text continues:

| དངོས་གྲུབ་ངེས་པར་སྟེར་མཛད་པ་འདི། ཡི་དམ་ལྷ་ལ་ཕྱག་འཆའ་ལོ། །

| I bow to the yidam deities, certain to grant siddhis.

It is in reliance upon the yidam that you attain both the common and supreme siddhis.

| སྒངས་རྟོགས་སྤྱན་གསུམ་ཚོགས་པ་ཡི། སངས་རྒྱས་རྣམས་ལ་ཕྱག་འཆའ་ལོ། །

| I bow to the buddhas, perfect in abandonment and realization

That is, the perfect abandonment or transcendence of all ignorance and affliction, that is the perfect realization of all that is to be realized.

| ཞི་གུར་འདོད་ཆགས་བྲལ་བ་ཡི། རྟེན་ཆས་རྣམས་ལ་ཕྱག་འཆའ་ལོ། །

| I bow to the genuine teachings, freeing from attachment and bringing peace.

This refers to the dharma of realization, the truth of cessation and of the path, the result and how to attain it.

| གང་ལ་ཕྱལ་བ་དོན་ཡོད་པ་འདི། རྟག་འདུན་རྣམས་ལ་ཕྱག་འཆའ་ལོ། གཞོན་ནུའི་མངོས་ཚུལ་ཡོན་ཏན་
ལྷན། རང་མ་པའི་དབྱངས་ལ་ཕྱག་འཆའ་ལོ། སྟོང་རྗེས་ངེས་པར་གང་བ་ཡི། སྦྱོན་རས་གཟིགས་ལ་ཕྱག་
འཆའ་ལོ། མཐུ་སྟོབས་ཆེན་པོས་གདུག་པ་འདུལ། རྩོམ་འཛིན་ལ་ཕྱག་འཆའ་ལོ། བཞགས་དང་ལོག་འདྲིན་

འདྲིམས་མཛད་པ། རྩོམ་སྐྱོད་རྣམས་ལ་ཕྱག་འཆལ་ལོ། ཇི་སྲིད་བྱང་ཚུབ་སྡིང་པོའི་བར། རྩིད་རྣམས་ལ་ནི་
སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆོ། རྩིད་རྣམས་ལ་ནི་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས། །

I bow to members of the Sangha, to whom making offerings is meaningful.
I bow to Manjushri, with his youthful beauty and fine qualities. I bow to
Avalokita, replete with true compassion. I bow to Vajrapani, taming the
malicious with his great power. I bow to the Dharma protectors, conquering
negative spirits and false guides. Until I have reached the heart of
enlightenment, I take refuge in all of you. I supplicate all of you.

Up to that point, that is the first of the seven branches, the branch of
homage or prostration.

Offering

The second of the seven branches is the branch of offering, which in
the liturgy is:

འདྲོད་ཡོན་ལྷ་ཡི་མཆོད་པ་འབུལ། །

I offer you the five sense pleasures.

The five desirables are beautiful sights, melodious sounds, pleasant
smells, delicious tastes, and pleasant tactile sensations. It is not the
case that we offer the five desirables to Machik Lapdrön and her reti-
nue because she delights in them or that she is particularly delighted
by beauty or euphony. It is simply that we wander through samsara
primarily because we are addicted to these five things. In order to
transcend our own obsession with them, we offer them up to the field
of accumulation.

Confession

The next line is the third branch, that of confession, in which we say:

ལྷོག་པ་མི་དགེ་སོ་སོར་བཤགས། །

I confess each wrongdoing and unvirtuous action.

We admit, without holding back or reservation, all of the wrongdoing we have performed throughout beginningless samsara.

Rejoicing

The fourth branch is rejoicing in the attainments of the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other beings.

Request to Turn the Dharma Wheel

Then the fifth branch is the exhortation to turn the dharmachakra, and you say:

བཀའ་ཚེས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་བསྐྱོར་བར་བསྐྱེལ། །

I entreat you to turn the wheel of the Dharma

which means, “For the benefit of beings, please teach the dharma.”

Request to Stay

The sixth branch is the request not to pass into parinirvana but to remain active in order to benefit beings. You say:

སྐྱུ་མུ་ངན་མི་འདའ་བཞུགས་གསོལ་འདེབས། །

and supplicate you not to pass into nirvana.

The point of this request is that the teachers remain active in teaching or benefiting sentient beings.

Dedication

The seventh and last branch is dedication.

དགེ་བ་སེམས་ཅན་གྱི་དོན་དུ་བསྔོ། །

I dedicate this virtue for the sake of all beings.

In that way, through the practice of the seven branches, you gather the accumulation of merit.

That was the third of the five preliminaries, which is the gathering of the accumulation of merit. Now comes the fourth, which is the purification of obscurations using the practice that is called “the stream of wisdom.”

PART FOUR • PURIFICATION OF OBSCURATIONS

To perform this next part of the practice, you continue to visualize Machik Lapdrön, together with the retinue in the sky in front of you. In addition, think that inside her body at the level of her heart is an eight-petaled white lotus. Next, resting on top of the center of this lotus, is a moon disc, lying flat. Standing upright and facing forward, on top of this moon disc, is a white HUNG (ཧུང) syllable. Surrounding the HUNG, starting from the front and making a full circle around the syllable, facing inward so as to be read from the inside, reading from the point of view of the HUNG rather than from the point of view of outside, is the **Prajnaparamita mantra**, TADYATA OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SOHA. That is also white.

You then think that from the HUNG, and from the mantra surrounding it, rays of light shoot out and strike each member of the field of accumulation: Buddha Shakyamuni, Yum Chenmo [Prajnaparamita], Vairochana, Vajradhara, Padampa Sangye, Vajrayogini, and all of their retinues. You think that all of their blessings, compassion, and wisdom are summoned by these rays of light. Then, wisdom in the form of streams of nectar or ambrosia is summoned back into the mantra and seed syllable in the heart of Machik Lapdrön.

Having dissolved back into the seed syllable and mantra garland, then, from the seed syllable and mantra garland, a stream of wisdom nectar starts to descend. Initially this fills Machik Lapdrön's body. Once it has

PURIFICATION OF OBSCURATIONS



The Prajnaparamita Mantra

TADYATHĀ OM GATE GATE PĀRAMGATE PĀRAMSAMGATE BODHI SVĀHĀ

filled her body, then the ambrosia that can no longer be contained by her body starts to flow out of the big toe of her left foot. This stream of wisdom ambrosia emerges from the big toe of her left foot, becoming a separate stream for each and every sentient being. It enters into the top of your head but it also enters into the top of the heads of all beings of the six realms, who are visualized surrounding you. This stream of ambrosia also enters each of the heads of those who are your karmic creditors, who receive repayment.

In the case of yourself and each and every sentient being, as it fills your body, it purifies all traces and stains of wrongdoing, all obscurations, and all misdoings, downfalls, and infractions that have been accumulating throughout beginningless samsara. It also expels from your body all sickness, demonic afflictions, impediments, and obstructions. All of this is driven out of your body by this stream of ambrosia, like creosote being expelled from a sieve by a stream of powerful liquid. All of this stuff gets flushed out of you, out of the pores of your skin, and especially out of your anus. It is flushed right out of you and goes all the way down to the bottom of the world, to the great golden ground on which the world is founded.

There is an additional visualization, which can be conjoined with this, which is a slightly more forceful or intense form of this practice. This is done if either you, the practitioner, is afflicted by sickness or demons, or if someone for whom you are doing Chö (you can also do Chö practice to benefit another person) is similarly powerfully afflicted. In either of those cases, add the following specifications.

Visualize that below you or the person you are doing the practice for, below the primary object of purification, is the karmic creditor who is afflicting you. It is in the form of a kind of fearsome being with the head of a makara, sea monster, or you can think of a crocodile, with its jaws gaping wide open ready to consume. It is quite some distance below you. You think that all of this stuff that is being expelled from your body, all this stuff that you don't need, all of your defilements and sicknesses, is transformed as soon as it leaves your body. Before it reaches the karmic creditor, it transforms into a magnificent ambrosia of excellent color, fragrance, taste, and nutritive quality. It falls into the karmic creditor's eagerly awaiting jaws, which pays back the debt, and therefore ransoms your life or the life of whoever it is that is afflicted.

This action actually causes that being, that karmic creditor, to generate bodhichitta. It not only satisfies, but also inspires that being to generate bodhichitta. That being, closing its jaws, then dissolves back into the golden ground at the bottom of the world. This added section is usually called the **Black Feast**, and is considered a forceful visualization to be done in specific circumstances.

That is the fourth of the five preliminaries, "The Stream of Wisdom Which Purifies Wrongdoing and Obscurations." If you have any questions about what we have gone through up to now, it is the time to ask.

QUESTIONS

STUDENT: Just a technical question. At the beginning of the visualization, you have Machik Lapdrön with the Buddha Shakyamuni and the entire field in front of you, but then it seems that she is above your head as the water flows down into your body. So how does that transform?

RINPOCHE: Well, it is true. When you are performing the purification practice and the recitation of the GATE Mantra, you can visualize Machik Lapdrön directly above your head. When you are finished with that phase of the practice, then you can send her back to the front.

STUDENT: Is there a name for the great black wrathful deity and is there any special service that is done to him? That is, the one that is underneath and has the jaws like a crocodile.

RINPOCHE: It is not a deity. You are just representing all of what you regard as demonic afflictions and disaster. You are embodying that in this visualized form. The only specification made about his appearance is the gaping jaws like those of a crocodile or makara. There is no specification of color or other appearance.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, I am really confused about the palace and all these deities. Are all these deities in the palace or are they in the space next to the palace?

RINPOCHE: You visualize this palace in front of you in the sky and you think that all of the wisdom deities are inside it. Below the palace, on the ground level in the central place in front of you, are your karmic creditors, as though they were the main guests at a feast. Surrounding them, in the outer perimeter, are all other sentient beings of the six realms.

STUDENT: When you are visualizing Machik Lapdrön, is she frozen, for example is the damaru still? Do you actually hear the beating of the drum?

RINPOCHE: Well, if you like, you could visualize her as turning her wrist and making the drum actually resound, but the bell is staying still. Because the bell is resting on her hip, she is not playing it.

Since the subject of damarus and bells has come up, generally speaking, to do the practice of Chö, you should have the proper type of damaru, **Chö damaru**, which is different from the other damaru. There is also the **thighbone trumpet**. It is better to have these but it is not the case that you absolutely cannot practice Chö without them. For example, if you are practicing in a large assembly of many people, it is not necessary that every single person be playing their damaru and thighbone trumpet. If you are traveling, and you do Chö as a daily practice, then you are going into various different environments, and it may be appropriate for you to do the practice without using these musical instruments. While the external implements are of importance, the most important thing is the visualization. The recitations are essentially a support for that. Perform the recitations slowly

while enabling yourself to actually do the visualizations as intensely as possible. If you find yourself in an environment, such as a retreat place, where it is appropriate to use the damaru and the thighbone trumpet, then it would be good to use them.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, sometimes when people are learning a practice they feel overwhelmed by the richness of all the details, and their ability to visualize the details clearly is not yet developed. Sometimes they feel discouraged about even attempting a practice because they cannot accomplish all the details right from the start. Could you please give us advice on the proper mental attitude to take towards gradually gaining skills in visualizations?

RINPOCHE: First of all, the Buddha taught two types of approaches, one of which is simple or devoid of elaboration and the other of which is elaborate. The first case is where someone cannot relate to an elaborate practice involving elaborate visualizations, palaces, and many different deities. If they wish to pursue a practice devoid of elaboration and if they can properly generate a unified state of shamatha and vipashyana then, if it is properly accomplished, that itself is the ultimate deity. They achieve the central purpose of the elaborate practice but without having to engage in it. Then there is the specific case where someone wishes to engage in practices like this one but they are not initially able to visualize all of the details specified in the commentary. The most practical thing to do is to begin by visualizing one deity, the central deity from the field of accumulation of so many different deities. Then, slowly generate a clear appearance or clear vi-

sualization of that deity. It might be helpful for that person, for example, to get a representation, such as a photograph of a good painting of the deity, and place that in front of them in their line of vision, while they are practicing. Then gradually familiarizing themselves with the deity's appearance and gradually developing the ability to visualize that deity clearly, they will automatically develop the ability to extrapolate that same visualization technique into the appearance of other deities as well.

STUDENT: In terms of more detail about the question asked earlier, I was actually wondering about people who are addicted to drugs, who have a specific addiction, or who are very sick. Now that we have talked about the black feast, can you use that for those people, in terms of having aspirations for them and seeing their impurities going down, like that, and helping generate bodhichitta for those people. For example, can you visualize those people being purified of all their addictions?

RINPOCHE: I think that would be appropriate. I think it would be helpful. You can actually do the visualization that was described to help someone else, in any situation of affliction. If they are seriously ill or otherwise afflicted, that would include a situation of any form of addiction, such as drug addiction or alcoholism, because an addiction is similar to any other kind of sickness, and is very much connected with the kleshas. In the purification process, you are expelling the person's kleshas, afflictions, addictions, sicknesses, and demonic obstructions. It would be appropriate and helpful.

STUDENT: So that we do not do the “upside-down Chö,” when we are doing these visualizations, how do we maintain the aspect that these people who we are praying for, or these various things that are from the mind, are all occurring from the mind?

RINPOCHE: Well, it is not so much the case that simply conceiving of various beings as gods and various beings as spirits is going to turn your practice into perverted or upside-down or opposite Chö. It only becomes a problem or perversion of Chö practice when you take the attitude, “This being is a demon, this being is demonic and is afflicting my patrons or my friends and therefore, for the sake of my patrons or my friends, in other words, for the sake of something that is mine, I must try to exterminate or at least trounce this demon through various violent magical practices.” Once you start thinking in that way, once you demonize spirits and view them as the enemy, and you stop thinking of what is good for them, then that becomes perverted Chö.

STUDENT: This concerns the visualization again. When visualizing the field of accumulation, can we do it by visualizing each figure in succession, for example first focus on one, and then another, and then another, in each session of practice, and go through all of them one at a time?

TRANSLATOR: In other words, in each session, specialize in one?

STUDENT: No, No. In each session just keep moving from one, to get it clear, and then move to the next.

RINPOCHE: Of course. In fact, it has to be done that way in the beginning. For example, you begin by generating a clear visualization of Machik Lapdrön. Then when you go on to visualize, for example, Buddha Shakyamuni, seated above her head you would probably have lost the clear appearance of Machik Lapdrön. That is okay. That is how it is done.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, concerning the **thighbone trumpet**, I am interested in the mystical derivation and essence. This thighbone trumpet speaks to all sentient beings, obviously through the symbolism of impermanence, since it is a skeletal remnant. What else is involved in understanding this musical instrument; what is its origin and derivation; and specifically are there any stories that could illustrate the mystical essence and significance of this instrument?

RINPOCHE: In general, in various tantras the Buddha taught the use of drums made out of skulls and trumpets made out of thighbones. The basic reason for this is that these instruments summon or attract dakas and dakinis. In the specific case of the Chö tradition, Machik Lapdrön's use and her extolling the use of thighbone trumpets to summon the gods and spirits were due in part to the prediction and instruction of her teacher, Padampa Sangye. He instructed her to live continually in solitary, isolated, and fearsome places, such as charnel grounds, on the banks of great rivers, in empty abandoned houses, and in other places renowned for being haunted. His prediction was that if she remained in these places meditating on the nature of mind, her progress would be great and her realization would come

very quickly. Therefore she did so in accordance with his instruction. If you are living in charnel grounds and you require the use of musical instruments, the instrument that is most easily available to you is a thighbone trumpet. They are all over the place. It has the advantage of being easily acquired, easy to find.

Beyond that, it is a natural musical instrument, since the human thighbone does not take much refinement to become a trumpet. Because it is natural, and not man made, spirits do not perceive it as threatening. Therefore it attracts them more than an artificial trumpet would. They perceive the sound of a thighbone trumpet as peaceful. When they read words or meaning into the music of the thighbone trumpet, they perceive these words as reassuring and inviting, not in any way as confrontational or aggressive. That is the particular reason why it is used in this practice. These days however, it is very, very hard to get hold of these things.

STUDENT: For different practices, there are different kinds of malas. Which **mala** would be most beneficial for this practice, and would you comment on the use of bone malas for any kind of practice?

RINPOCHE: It is true, as you said, that in the different tantras, different malas are recommended for specific practices of the yidams. However, in all tantras the bodhi seed and the lotus seed or lotus heart malas are said to be the best, which means that you can use those for any practice without having to worry about getting a different mala for each practice. With regard to bone malas in particular, there are certain specific tantras in which their use is required: for the man-

tra accumulation practice of Chakrasamvara and of Yamantaka, bone malas are required. Otherwise it is not necessary to use bone malas. In the case of the Chö practice in particular, it does not matter as much, and there is no specific recommendation.

PART FIVE • OFFERING THE DESIRABLE QUALITIES

Now we begin looking at the fifth section of the preliminaries, which is the offering of the desirable qualities.

DESIRABLE QUALITIES

With regard to the offerings of the desirable qualities, these offerings can be presented as five, as four, or as three. The most common presentation of five includes pleasant sights, pleasant sounds, delicious smells, delicious tastes, and pleasant tactile sensations. Here, they are summed up as four; the first two, pleasant sights and pleasant sounds, include by implication, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations. Besides pleasant form and sound, there is also thought and pleasure and pain.

Why is the presentation of the offerings of the five desirable qualities so important? The reason is that, as was taught by the Buddha, all of samsara consists of the three realms, the realms of desire, form, and formlessness. Of these three, we currently inhabit the realm of desire. The definition of the realm of desire is that all beings in this realm partake of craving, attachment, and grasping, and therefore crave desirable experiences of these senses. All beings of the desire realm crave pleasant sounds, and pleasant sights. Therefore since we continually experience and partake of these things through great craving, by offering these various things, to which we are so attached, to the sources of refuge, we are able gradually to let go of our craving, grasping, and

attachment to them. At the same time, through offering these things that are most significant to us in our experience, we also accumulate a vast amount of merit.

The first offering is that of offering everything that appears as **visible form** in all the realms of this world, in the forms of the beautiful karma mudra, which represents the unity of appearance and emptiness. The unity of appearance and emptiness refers to the fact that all of these things to which we give the name appearance or visible form do indeed appear in our experience, but nevertheless the nature of that appearance is unreality. None of these things that appear has any inherent or true reality in and of themselves. Therefore they are a unity of appearance and emptiness.

The second offering is all of the **sounds** that are heard. All of these sounds are offered as the dharma mudra, which is speech that is the unity of sound and emptiness. Sounds are of various different types. There are communicative sounds and uncommunicative sounds, that is, sound that is intended to convey something and sound that just appears. All of these sounds, without exception, no matter how they may sound to us, if they are examined lack any true or inherent existence in and of themselves. Therefore, like appearances, the nature of sound is the unity of sound and emptiness.

The third offering is the offering of all of the **various thoughts**, positive and negative, that arise in one's mind, all of which are offered as the mahamudra of mind, the unity of awareness and emptiness. This includes all the positive thoughts that can arise, especially thoughts of

faith, diligence, devotion, compassion, and aspiration and implementation bodhichitta. If, while they arise, you rest in their nature and experience the nature of thought as it arises, then as thought arises it is already subsiding within that direct experience of its nature. Negative thoughts that could arise include the thoughts of aversion, aggression, attachment, arrogance, jealousy, and apathy. If, when a negative thought arises, you rest in a recognition of the nature of that thought, then it is liberated as it arises and manifests in your experience, and you see into its nature which is dharmata. The reason why the positive and negative thoughts, if they are recognized as they are, can be liberated through that recognition, even as they arise, is that their nature is devoid of substantiality or true existence. Therefore they are the unity of awareness and emptiness.

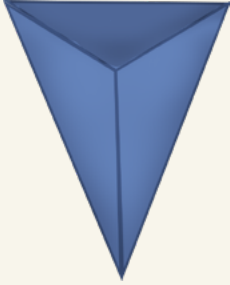
The fourth offering is the offering of **all pleasure and pain**. Either of these is offered in the form of the mudra of the auspicious signs and substances, which has been their nature from the very beginning. This means that although there is an infinite variety of pleasurable and painful experiences that sentient beings undergo, the fundamental nature of all of these is as experience or as sensations. They can be called short-term pleasure and long-term pleasure, short-term pain and very, very long-term pain, or basic fundamental pain, and all different kinds of different varieties of these. There is a fundamental nature of all of these, as experience or as sensations, and the essence of that nature is called the “mudra of the field of the auspicious signs and substances”. These four things are offered to the sources of refuge.

PRESENTING THE OFFERINGS

The visualization that is done in order to make these offerings is as follows. First of all, you will remember that this stage of the practice occurs immediately after the purification visualization. The descent of ambrosia, from the big toe of the left foot of Machik Lapdrön, through your body, has purified your body of all obscurations and coarse substances, causing them to dissolve into the great golden ground at the bottom of the world. As a result, you now conceive of your body as like a crystal vase, filled with ambrosia.

To make the first of the four offerings, from your own forehead, visualized in that purified form, you think that there emanate innumerable goddesses who embody and represent beautiful form. These offering goddesses are white in color and each is holding a mirror. All of these goddesses of visible form are offered to the field of accumulation. The field of accumulation, the five-tiered sources of refuge, includes first and foremost Machik Lapdrön, all of the dakas and dakinis who surround her, and all of the male and female dharmapalas who surround them. After these offerings are made to them, you think they are pleased and satisfied by this offering of form.

Next, in the same way, you think that from your throat, countless red goddesses who represent pleasing sounds are emanated. These red goddesses are holding various musical instruments, such as string instruments, flutes and so forth. As before, these innumerable goddesses are offered to all of the sources of refuge.



Then think that from your heart are emanated innumerable offering goddesses, who embody mind, bliss and emptiness, which is the nature of mind. These offering goddesses are blue and are holding *chojung*⁸ of blue light. Countless forms of these are emanated and make offerings to the field of accumulation, satisfying them with the offering of bliss and emptiness in the same way as before.

Then, for the fourth offering, you think that from your navel, there are emanated countless offering goddesses of the five colors, white, yellow, red, blue and green. They are holding various objects.

Some are holding the five desirable qualities of the senses, others are holding the auspicious marks and substances, such as the precious wheel and the precious vase. These innumerable offering goddesses are emanated and make offerings of the mudras of auspiciousness to the field of accumulation who, as before, are pleased and satisfied.

Having made these four types of offering, you then rest evenly in the freedom from conceptualization of the three aspects of the offering. These three aspects are the giver or the one performing the offering; the gift or the offering that has been made; and the recipients or the field of accumulation, to whom the offerings are presented. You rest in the recognition of emptiness, which is the emptiness of true existence

8. In literal translation "a source of all dharmas" is a form of a triangle piramid, standing up side down, and open on top.

of the person making the offerings; the emptiness of the offerings themselves such as the sights, sounds, bliss, emptiness, and mudras of auspiciousness; and the emptiness of those receiving the offerings, Machik Lapdrön, and her retinue. Resting in the emptiness of these is also resting in the fundamental equality or sameness of them, in their true nature.

PRACTICE OF TAKING AND SENDING

The next phase of the practice, which occurs in conjunction with and immediately after these offerings, is the practice of taking and sending. This practice is where you dedicate all of your pleasure, virtue, and happiness to all beings, and accept all of the suffering and causes of suffering into yourself. You perform this exchange by thinking that as you breathe out, all of your virtue and happiness, and all causes of happiness leave you in the form of rays of white light. This strikes and engulfs all beings, causing each being to completely experience or attain all of what you sent to them. As you breathe in, all of the suffering and causes of suffering, which afflict all beings, take the form of rays of black light. These are inhaled together with your breath and all beings then become free of them.

In that way, conjoining the practice of these offerings with the practice of taking and sending makes this the supreme method of gathering the accumulations, in that it is the rendering of offerings to all four recipients. Through the offerings of the forms, sounds, thoughts, and auspicious qualities, you have pleased the Three Jewels who are the

recipients of veneration. You have also pleased the protectors, the recipients who possess qualities. Through performing the practice of taking and sending you please the other two categories of guests, all sentient beings and karmic creditors. By intentionally giving all of your virtue, happiness, causes of happiness, longevity, and merit to all sentient beings — the recipients of compassion, and especially to your karmic creditors — the recipients of repayment — and by taking all of their suffering into yourself, in that way you have pleased those two guests as well.

In this way, you gather the greatest possible accumulation of merit. By making offerings to the holy sources or field of accumulation, the Three Jewels, you gather immeasurable merit. By dedicating all of this merit and all of this virtue to sentient beings, the merit becomes completely dedicated. The essential meaning of everything that has gone on up to this point, the preliminaries of the practice, is the gathering of the accumulations and the purification of obscurations in accordance with the common path. The common path refers to those aspects of the path that are common to both the sutra vehicle of causal characteristics and the mantra or Vajrayana vehicle of the fruition. It is said to be necessary to begin with the common path, those practices that are common to sutra and tantra. This is why, for example, traditionally we begin practice with the accumulation of the four-hundred-thousand in Ngöndro.

RECITATION

Next we will discuss how this meditation ties in with the liturgy. In the previous practice, the purification of obscurations, the visualization was done while reciting the mantra, TADYATA OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SOHA. You perform the visualization, while reciting that mantra, either the general or basic form of it. If you are doing it for yourself or someone else who is particularly ill or afflicted by spirits, you can do it with the addition of the makara — or crocodile-headed individual below you.

After you have finished repeating the mantra, you think that your body is completely pure, like a crystal, very, very insubstantial and pure, filled with wisdom ambrosia. Then as you begin the recitation:

སྟོང་གསུམ་རབ་འབྱམས་འཛིག་རྟེན་ཐམས་ཅད་དུ།

In the entire, infinite billion-world system,

which follows after the mantra, you visualize the presentation of these offerings, and then the taking and sending. The recitation continues until the words:

འཁོར་བ་སྤྱད་བསྐྱེད་ཀྱི་རྒྱ་མཚོ་སྐྱེས་པར་ཤོག།

May the ocean of samsara's suffering disappear.

We use a special melody for that phase of the liturgy, unaccompanied by the damaru and bell. There is no custom of using the damaru and bell at this point in the practice. Once you have finished that repeti-

tion, then you pick up the damaru and bell and you start playing it, without chanting for a while, while doing the first visualization.

THE MAIN PRACTICE

Next we come to the main practice, which has five parts: the transference of consciousness called “Opening the Door to Space”; offering the body as the mandala; and the three cycles of the white feast, the red feast, and the *tsok*, or feast offering.

PART ONE • TRANSFERENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The first of the five main practices of Chö is the transference of consciousness. In Jamgön Kongtrül’s commentary, this is presented in three ways, corresponding to the different faculties of different individuals: beginners, intermediate practitioners, and advanced practitioners. For beginners, there is what is called transference with visualization and with a support. For intermediate practitioners, there is transference with visualization but without a support. For advanced practitioners, there is transference without visualization and without a support.

In the transference for beginners with visualization and a support, you visualize the central channel and what you eject is your consciousness, which is in the form of a sphere of light. “With a support”

means that when you eject your consciousness, you eject it into the heart of Machik Lapdrön herself.

The second type of transference, with visualization but no support, involves, as in the first type, clearly visualizing the central channel, and the sphere of light, which you are ejecting. Since it is without support, you simply eject it into space. You do not eject it into the heart of Machik Lapdrön. Having ejected it into space, you mix your awareness with space and rest in the confidence that wherever there is space, there is awareness, wherever there is awareness, there is dharma-makaya.

The type of transference for the most advanced practitioners, or those of the highest faculties, is without visualization and without support. This means you do not need, in this practice of phowa, to visualize the central channel or the sphere of light. You also do not need to visualize Machik Lapdrön as the support into which you eject your consciousness. This type of transference consists of resting without altering in the nature of your mind, while going through the recitation that accompanies the transference of consciousness. That is the supreme or ultimate form of transference.

In some tantras, this last or supreme form of transference is referred to as transference into the dharmakaya, or dharmakaya transference for those of the highest faculties. In that context, transference is classified as dharmakaya transference, sambhogakaya transference, and nirmanakaya transference.

A. BEGINNER CAPACITY

ELABORATE

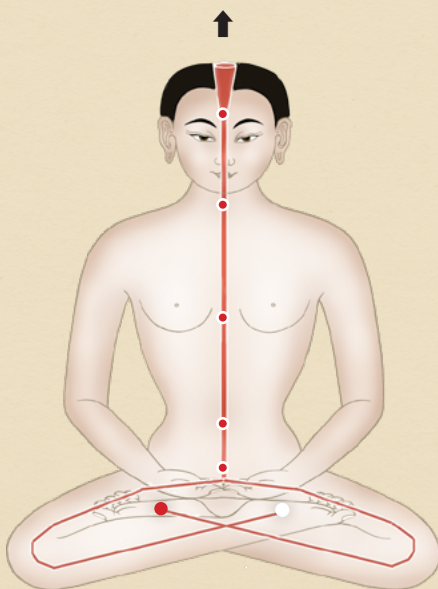
The first type of transference is for beginners of ordinary faculties, and consists of three subtypes: elaborate, concise, and extremely concise. The first of these, the elaborate form of transference, is not necessary in the practice of the daily Chö. Normally, it would be done while doing the elaborate form of the Chö practice, such as the one, called *The Origin of All Virtue*.⁹ Nevertheless, recognizing that there are individuals who delight and benefit from a more elaborate form of visualization, Jamgön Lodrö Thaye placed the instruction for this practice at this point in the text. There is no contradiction in performing this visualization during the daily practice. The elaborate manner begins by visualizing the central channel within your body, which is white on the outside and red on the inside, and it is extremely brilliant, luminous, and straight. The central channel reaches to the very top of your head, to the aperture at the very center. It also goes all the way down to the bottom of your trunk, at which point it divides into two, one of which goes down your right leg and ends at the center of the sole of your right foot and the other of which goes down your left leg and ends at the center of the sole of your left foot.

Now I will describe the **four characteristics of the central channel**, the avadhuti. To indicate great bliss, the aspect of upaya or method, it is white on the outside. To indicate lucidity, the aspect of prajna or

9. See note 4

TRANSFERENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Beginner Capacity: Elaborate and Concise



knowledge, it is red on the inside. To indicate it is the path to full awakening, it is extremely straight. Finally, to indicate that it leads to full liberation, the top part of it is flared, like the mouth of a trumpet. That is to say, where it reaches the top of your head, it gets wider. Although in the commentary it implies that both ends are flared, in fact, you should just visualize the top end as flared and the bottom end as reaching the soles of your feet.

Remember that this is the most extensive form of the transference visualization, so there will be a certain amount of elaboration. First, you visualize at the very bottom of the central channel, in the sole of your right foot, a sphere of white light, which is the drop or seed you inherited from your father. Then, in the same way, at the bottom of the central channel, in the sole of your left foot, a sphere of red light, which is the seed or drop that you received from your mother. Above these and inside each of your feet, you visualize the seed syllable of the hell realms, which is a smoke colored or black DU (ཏུ). Then, you visualize that inside the central channel, but now up at the level of the lower abdomen, at the genitalia, is the seed syllable of the preta or hungry ghost realm, which is a yellow TRE (ཏྭེ). Next, at the level of the navel, but again in the center of your body, you visualize the seed syllable of the animal realm, which is a gray colored DA (ཏཱ). At the level of the heart, again inside the central channel, you visualize the seed syllable of the human realm, which is a green NRI (ཏྭི). Again inside the central channel, at the level of the throat you visualize the seed syllable of the asura realm, which is a red A (ཏ). Finally, inside the head, towards the top of the head, inside the central channel, you visualize the seed of the god realms, which is a white OM (ཏྭ).

Having visualized those syllables, you think that from each of those syllables, rays of light are emanated. These rays of light summon, and then withdraw back into the syllables, all of the karma, and habits, and kleshas that would otherwise cause you and other beings to be born in those specific realms. All of that karma is drawn back into the corresponding syllables within your body.

Then, having visualized that, you next exclaim PHET once. As you do so, think that the spheres of light or the drops at the bottom of your feet shoot upward a small distance and dissolve into the syllables directly above them. That is to say, the white sphere at the bottom of your right foot shoots up and dissolves into the DU syllable above it. The red sphere at the bottom of your left foot shoots upward and dissolves into the DU syllable above that. This causes those two syllables, which have now mixed with those two drops to become two black drops of light. At this point, think that all the causes of birth in the hell realms, together with the results of those causes, the resulting experience of suffering in that environment of the hell realm, have been withdrawn into those two drops of black light.

Next you exclaim PHET a second time, which causes those two drops of black light to shoot up the channels in the legs and to combine together where those channels meet at the secret place, with the yellow syllable TRE. Those two drops and the TRE mix together, at which point you should think that all the causes and results of birth in the preta realms have been dissolved into that drop.

At that point, the two drops, having dissolved into the TRE, have mixed together and become a sphere of light that is like the egg of a particular bird. This sphere is the size of the diameter of your thumb, and it is of the five colors, radiant and luminous, radiating those five colors of light.

Then, in the same way, you again exclaim PHET and you think that the sphere of five-colored light shoots upward until it reaches the navel. There it dissolves into and mixes with the DA syllable, which is the seed of the animal realm. At that point, you think that all the causes of birth in the animal realm, and the results of those causes, resultant experience in the animal realm, all dissolve into that drop. Then you exclaim PHET again, and the drop shoots up to the heart, where it mixes with the green NIR syllable, which is the seed of birth in the human realm. At that point, you think that all causes of birth in the human realm and the results of that birth have been dissolved into the drop or absorbed by the drop. Then when you say PHET again, the drop shoots up to the throat, at which point it mixes with the red AH, which is the seed syllable of the asura realm. Here you think that all of the causes of birth and resultant birth itself in the asura realm have been absorbed into the drop. You then say PHET again, and the drop shoots up towards the top of your head, inside, where it mixes with the white OM, which is the seed of birth in the god realms. Think the drop at that point has absorbed all the causes and results of birth in the god realms.

As the drop is shot up, from level to level, each time it goes up and absorbs one of these seed syllables, it increases slightly in size and in luster. By the time it reaches the top of your head, and has absorbed the causes and results of the god realms, it is the size of a vulture's egg. It is extremely bright, brilliant, and luminous. Finally, again exclaiming PHET, you think that this drop shoots out the top of your head, and dissolves right into the heart of Machik Lapdrön, at which point, you rest your mind in the inseparability of the nature of your mind and the dharmakaya, which is the wisdom of Machik Lapdrön. That is the most elaborate form of the transference called "Opening the Door to Space."

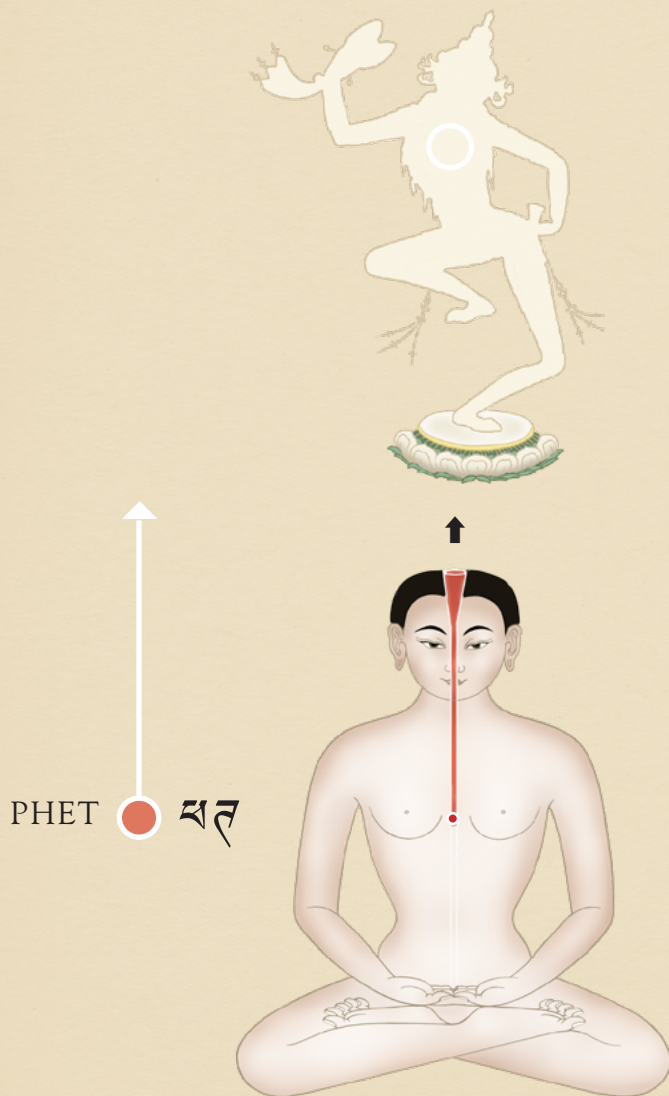
CONCISE

Next comes the intermediate version, the concise form, which is normally done in the daily practice of Chö. You may do the more elaborate one, if you wish, but this is the one that is normally done in the daily practice.

The visualization of the following remains the same as the elaborate version. The body is again visualized as being an insubstantial, crystal-like vessel, filled with wisdom ambrosia. The central channel's four characteristics and visualization remains the same, with the channel extending from the top of the head, down to the soles of the feet. Lastly, the visualization of the central channel begins again by starting with the white sphere and the red sphere at the soles of your feet. Where this form of transference differs from the first is that you do not

TRANSCERENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Beginner Capacity: Extremely Concise



visualize the seed syllables of the various realms. Therefore when you exclaim PHET for the first time, the two drops shoot all the way up to the secret place, where they mix together to form one drop, which is the essence of your wind, your drops and your mind, all combined as one. Then, when you exclaim PHET a second time, it shoots up to the navel, the next time to the heart, then to the throat, to the head, and the last time, shoots out the top of the head. It then dissolves into Machik Lapdrön's heart, at which point you rest the mind exactly as explained before. That is the usual transference that is done in the daily practice.

EXTREMELY CONCISE

The third form of transference for those of ordinary capacity is the abbreviated one. For this one, you visualize the central channel as extending only from the top of your head down to your heart. It does not go below that. It stops and is closed at the heart. The central channel is planted into the heart, which is visualized as a red, eight-petaled lotus. Resting inside the central channel, on top of the calyx or center of this lotus, is a moon disc, which is like a slice out of the center of a pea in size. On top of that is a sphere of mixed red and white light. Visualizing that, you exclaim PHET only once. Through that exclamation of PHET, think that sphere of mixed red and white light shoots up the central channel. It goes all the way to and out of the top of your head, and directly, all at once, into the heart of Machik Lapdrön, like a bow shot from an arrow, or a bullet out of a gun. Then you rest your mind, mix your mind with Machik, as before.

The first, most elaborate one is normally used or only needs to be used in the more elaborate feast practices of Chö. The second, concise one is used the first time you do the transference of consciousness, before the mandala offering. This third very concise one, the most abbreviated one, is used for the second and third times you perform the transference of consciousness, which is actually performed at least three times in every daily session of Chö. Whereas the intermediate one is used before the mandala offering, this very concise one is used before the white feast and before the tsok feast offering.

B. INTERMEDIATE CAPACITY

The second type of transference is for those practitioners of intermediate capacity. This consists essentially of mixing awareness with space, through the visualization and concept of doing so. Through exclaiming PHET, you eject your consciousness as before, but into space, not into the heart of Machik Lapdrön. Then mixing your mind and your awareness with space, you rest in the confidence that having mixed it, wherever there is space, it is pervaded by your awareness, which is always pervaded by its nature, the dharmakaya. In that way, you rest in the great equality of the nature of your mind and the realized nature of the mind of Machik Lapdrön, which is the wisdom of the dharmakaya. That is the transference for those of intermediate capacity.

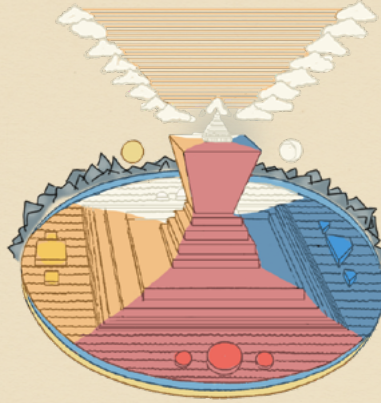
C. THE HIGHEST CAPACITY

The transference for those of the highest capacity is what is otherwise called the “Dharmakaya Transference” or “Transference Without Visualization and Without Support.” This is resting in recognition of the nature that all things that are included within the categories of samsara and nirvana, without exception, are in no way beyond self-awareness and bodhichitta. That is to say, that there is nothing that is anything other than the display of your own mind. There is nothing that does not, as its basic nature, have the same nature as the nature of your mind. From the very beginning, just as the nature of your mind has been this, so has the nature of each and every thing been an inexpressible, inconceivable, and indescribable expanse, which is called the expanse of the Great Mother, Prajnaparamita. Therefore in the true nature of each and every thing, nothing has ever wavered from or has passed beyond being just this. Nothing passes beyond being just this now, and nothing ever will pass beyond being just this. The definitive resolution, that is the nature of your mind and of all things, is this type of transference.

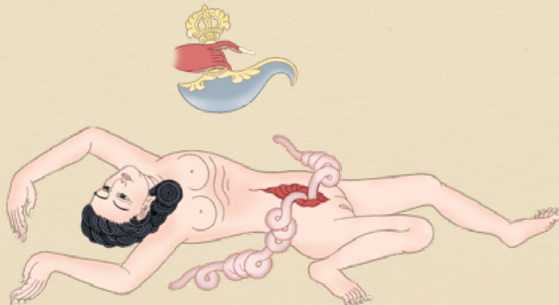
When practitioners have completely resolved within the direct experience of realization, this nature beyond elaboration, they are resting in that recognition, in that direct experience of their own mind, and therefore in all things as the unity of emptiness and cognitive lucidity which has an essential characteristic of awareness. That is resting in the wisdom of the buddha, the wisdom of Machik Lapdrön. Resting in that and never wavering from that is called “The Royal Transference”

or “The Monarch of all Forms of Transference.” This is the supreme form of “Opening the Door to Space” and is the actual ultimate meaning of Prajnaparamita. Therefore resting in that recognition is the ultimate practice or most essential practice of Chö. It is the essence of all of the teachings given by and the method taught by Machik Lapdrön. This is resting in even placement, in the expanse of the dharmadhatu, in a manner that is in accordance with the uncommon vehicle.

OFFERING THE BODY AS A MANDALA



skin	→	golden ground
bodily fluids	→	oceans
fingers and toes	→	iron mountains
torso	→	Mt Meru
arms and legs	→	four continents and eight subcontinents
head	→	god realms
heart	→	wish-fulfilling jewel
eyes	→	sun and moon
internal organs	→	eight symbols, seven articles, eight substances



PART TWO • OFFERING THE BODY AS A MANDALA

Next we come to the second of five sections of the main practice, which is the offering of one's body as a mandala. From this point onward, **this is a postmeditation practice** because, as was just mentioned, the actual essence of the meditation practice of the uncommon vehicle is resting evenly within the ultimate nature.

Whether it is done by one of the foregoing methods of the transference of consciousness, or by simply resting in the ultimate truth in mahamudra, it is in an essential sense the main practice of Chö. From this point onward is postmeditation conduct. Essentially it is enhancing resting in the mind's nature through these various methods, such as offering the body as a mandala. As was mentioned earlier, it is using a style of practice concordant with the conduct of the discipline of awareness, the second of the three types of conduct taught in Secret Mantra, in order to deepen one's recognition of the mind's nature.

The practice of offering the body as a mandala directly follows the previous practice. Assuming that you have done the first of the three types of transference, you have dissolved your consciousness in the form of a sphere of multicolored light into the heart of Machik Lapdrön and then rested evenly in that confidence of being inseparable from her. To begin the offering of the body as a mandala, think that your mind, in the form of a red HRI syllable emerges from the heart of Machik Lapdrön. Emerging from her heart, it is transformed into

Vajrayogini. You identify your mind with Vajrayogini. You have separated from your body, in case there is any misunderstanding about this, okay? Your body is now treated, as it says in the text, as “inanimate matter.”

You identify with Vajrayogini. She has no bone ornaments, so she is completely naked. She is holding the hooked knife in her right hand. She takes that hooked knife and touches the body, what used to be your body, flays it, and all the skin is pulled right off. Then she lays it out so that it settles on the ground nicely. She then piles the rest of you on top of that.

Once that is done, all of this body, this skin and the rest of it, changes. First, the skin becomes the golden ground at the base of the world. Next, all of the fluids of your body, primarily blood and lymph and whatever else, become the oceans of perfume or scented water, which are on top of that golden ground. Then your digits, your ten fingers and ten toes become a perimeter of iron mountains, which surround and demarcate the area of this world. Then your torso, your trunk, becomes Mt. Meru. Your four limbs become the four continents, as they are normally visualized in the mandala offering, together with the eight subcontinents. Then your head becomes the god realm, in particular, the realm of the thirty-three, which is on top of Mt. Meru. Your eyes become the sun and the moon. Your heart becomes the wish-fulfilling jewel.¹⁰ Your other internal organs become various of-

10. Tib. *yishin norbu*. A jewel said to exist in the naga or deva realms which gives the owner whatever he or she wants.

fering substances, such as the eight auspicious symbols,¹¹ the seven articles of royalty,¹² and eight auspicious substances¹³.

Each of the parts of your body corresponds to a specific part of the mandala offering. For example, your aorta becomes the wish-fulfilling tree in the realm of the gods. Your liver becomes the flat stone, which is the meeting place of the gods in the realm of the thirty-three. In that way, think that everything in your body becomes a precious offering, everything that is delightful, including the five desirable qualities. From this there emanate countless, inexhaustible, and unlimited clouds of offering, like those produced by the aspirations of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra.

The offerings of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra have essentially three characteristics. The first is duration: these offering substances will abide until samsara is emptied. The second is extent: they are unlimited. The offering substances appear in all buddha realms and all universes without limit. The third is number: each of the offering substances is duplicated innumerably.

11. The precious parasol, the golden fish, the vase, the lotus, the white conch shell, the endless knot, the victory banner and the golden wheel.

12. Precious wheel, wish-fulfilling gem, the earrings of the precious queen, the earrings of the precious minister, the tusks of the precious elephant, the horn of the precious unicorn/horse and the badge of the precious general.

13. The mirror, the giwang medicine, yoghurt, durva grass, a conch-shell, cinnabar, and mustard seeds.

Recollect when you make these offerings that there is no question of Machik Lapdrön and her retinue being pleased by having offerings presented to them, or displeased by having offerings not presented to them. You make these offerings in order that you and all beings might gather the accumulations of merit and wisdom and dispel obscurations. Think that as you make these offerings, you and all sentient beings actually succeed in gathering these accumulations and that all of your obscurations are purified.

Finally, to conclude the mandala offering, rest free of conceptualization of the three aspects: the person making the offerings, yourself; the offerings made, your body as a mandala; and the recipients of the offerings, Machik Lapdrön and her retinue. Rest free of mistaking these three as having inherent existence. Rest in emptiness, which is the nature of all three of these.

The way this is actually done is that, after the offering of the five desirable qualities, you pick up the damaru and bell and start playing them, but without chanting. While you are playing the damaru and bell, you visualize the ejection of consciousness and then the subsequent visualization of your body as a mandala offering. How long it takes is up to you. Once you have completed those two visualizations then, visualizing your body as a mandala offering, you chant the description of it, which is found in the next recitation in the text. You may use any melody. It is normally chanted accompanied by the damaru and bell. Previously, you have been playing the damaru and bell

without chanting. Now you continue to play it and work it into the rhythm of the chanting.

That completes the first two of the five sections of the main practice: the ejection of consciousness and the offering of the body as a mandala. If you would like to ask questions about what has gone up to this point, please go ahead.

QUESTIONS

STUDENT: Rinpoche, after receiving this empowerment I actually became quite ill with vomiting and diarrhea and a lot of feelings of paranoia, feelings of almost possession. I began thinking, as I was going through this, mostly all night last night, that maybe this was a warning, and that it is a little bit too much to invite all of these karmic monsters into my consciousness. I was wondering if you might say something about the fear that maybe this is too much of a practice to do. The other question I have is about another fear. I have heard for many years that it was possible that if you did phowa too often, you could actually shorten your own life.

RINPOCHE: Taking your second question first, there is no record of there being any danger from this particular form of the transference of consciousness. The form of transference of consciousness practice in the context of Chö, which has the particular name of “Opening the Door to Space,” is based upon an understanding that the nature of mind is fundamentally the same as the nature of all things. In regards to that equality, since the visualization of practice is essentially an ex-

pression of that recognition, it is not considered to cause any danger of impairing your longevity. With regard to your first question, if it means anything, becoming dramatically ill in that way after an empowerment could be understood to be a sign that you are purifying obscurations, and therefore some people would regard it as a positive sign.

Now the practice of transference in the context of Chö is distinct from the practice of transference as a practice. When you are cultivating the ability to eject your consciousness, for example in connection with the Amitabha practice or a similar system of the ejection of consciousness, because you are doing it repeatedly and the visualization is different, there is said to be a slight possibility that you might shorten your life by doing it excessively. Therefore countermeasures are traditionally taken. For example, when you are doing the Amitabha phowa transference of consciousness, at the close of every session, continuing to visualize Amitabha, above the top of your head, either in his usual form or as Amitayus, the Buddha of Long Life, you think that the ambrosia of long life descends into you from him. Then you dissolve Amitabha or Amitayus into your heart. Also, while visualizing the descent of ambrosia; you recite the Amitayus mantra of longevity. These are ways of preventing any possibility of shortening your life through the ejection of consciousness practice.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, in the description of the Chö lineage, it was said that Prajnaparamita related to dharmakaya, Vajrayogini to sambhogakaya, and Arya Tara to nirmanakaya. Could there be some explanation about that? Thank you.

RINPOCHE: Well the reason why those three deities are classified as corresponding to the trikaya in that way, is that Prajnaparamita, the Great Mother, is the direct embodiment of the nature of all things, which is to say, the dharmakaya or mahamudra. From that nature, from the dharmakaya, there arise the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya, which are therefore here expressed as Vajrayogini and Arya Tara respectively. All three, the Great Mother, Vajrayogini, and Arya Tara have the same fundamental nature, which is Prajnaparamita. That fundamental nature, which is itself the dharmakaya, is the ground from which the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya appear.

STUDENT: It seems to me that it could be dangerous to discuss this practice with people who are not Tibetan Buddhist. Would you comment on that please?

RINPOCHE: As you say, if people are not involved in the practice of secret mantra and have no interest in it, or appreciation of it, and have not received the empowerment of Machik Lapdrön, it is better not to talk to them about it.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, a technical question. If we have ejected our consciousness, can it sometimes be difficult to play the damaru and the bell in our physical body, while still maintaining that our physical body is not where our consciousness resides at the moment?

RINPOCHE: This does not seem to be a problem. Even though you visualize that you have ejected your consciousness and you cease to identify with your physical body, that is a form of meditation. In fact,

you have not left your physical body, and your physical body has not become inert or inanimate matter. You can still play the drum and bell.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, would you please say a little bit about the Chö initiation, its lineage? The other question is in the visualization, there is a second form of Vairochana, behind the dhyana buddhas. Could you please say a little bit about that form?

RINPOCHE: First of all, about the lineage of empowerment that I have given, it is considered to be the empowerment of the lineage of Chö, which is the Unification of the Sutra and Tantra lineages, which came down from Machik's lineage successor, Kugom Chökyi Senge.

Well, this form of Vairochana, who is visualized behind the main five buddhas and above Buddha Shakyamuni, is Vairochana "Glacial Lake," and is visualized as white in color and with his hands in the gesture of meditation. As for who or what he is, he is essentially Buddha Vairochana. The only explanation given in the commentary for why you visualize a second Vairochana, behind the main group of the five buddhas who are presided over by Vairochana, is that it is the custom of the Zurmang tradition. It is an instruction that came down orally initially, and then was committed to writing in this text, but no further explanation for its significance is given.

There is a certain amount of this repetition in the visualization, for example, below the five buddhas you have Buddha Shakyamuni, to

his right are all buddhas, which includes Buddha Shakyamuni. There is a certain amount of that.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, earlier you were talking about the spirits of the body, and you spoke about the sperm, the white, being aggression and the father; the red, being the ovum, the mother and that would be attachment; and the great life wind or life force being ignorance. I want to know if this means that aggression, attachment and ignorance are not only habitual tendencies we have, but are also the basis of our physical body, so that while doing the practices diminishes or overcomes the three poisons we are also transforming the body, and by doing the practices of the different winds when we are transforming the body, we are also working on diminishing and overcoming these three poisons.

RINPOCHE: The basic point is that the three poisons are the cause of experiencing this type of embodiment. Therefore, as you indicated, if by purification of the three poisons you mean the actual revelation or discovery of their nature as wisdom, then that discovery will produce the recognition of the nature of the body as pure.

The way this is done can be understood by going back to the foundations or basis of Chō practice. We saw that the root of the three poisons and indeed of all kleshas is grasping at a self. In fact, it is this grasping at a self that causes us to wander through samsara. The direct remedy for grasping at a self is meditation on and recognition of selflessness. Then if this recognition of selflessness arises, through the eradication of grasping at a self, naturally the three poisons and

everything else that ensues upon or arises from that grasping will disappear, will be eliminated.

In the case of a buddha who has perfectly attained the dharmakaya, which is the ultimate achievement of benefit for oneself, then the three poisons are transformed into respective aspects of wisdom. For example, what we experience as aversion or aggression is transformed into mirror-like wisdom. What we experience as attachment or desire is transformed into discriminating wisdom. What we experience as bewilderment is transformed into dharmadhatu wisdom. When those wisdoms are revealed, when that is attained, that is the definition of buddhahood.

PART THREE • WHITE FEAST

Now we come to the white feast, which is known as “The White Feast Including the Three Aspects.”

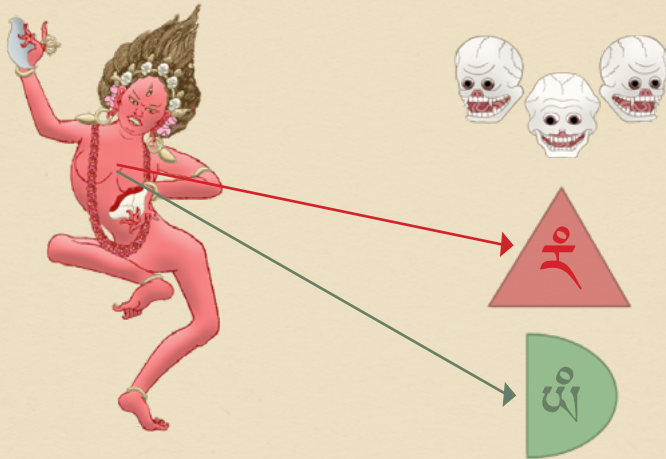
The white feast taught here is the primary white feast practice usually called either “Taking the Three Types of White Feast on the Path,” or “The White Feast for the Four Recipients.” It starts with those words:

རང་ལུས་ཤ་ཁྲག་སྤང་པོ་འདི། །བདག་ཏུ་འཛིན་པའི་སྒོ་སྤངས་ནས། །

I have shed the mind that grasps as a self my body, this heap of flesh and blood.

The first part of the white feast practice is to perform, for a second time, the ejection of consciousness called “Opening the Door to Space.” You may do any of the elaborate, intermediate, or concise forms. The custom, as was mentioned earlier, is to do the simple or briefest form of ejection of consciousness before the white feast. To begin the practice, you visualize the central channel or avadhuti in the center of your body, white on the outside and red on the inside. It extends from the top of the head down to the heart, where it is closed. At the top of the head, it is flared, so that the opening is wider than most of the channel. The heart itself is visualized as a red, eight-petaled lotus. Resting on top of the center or calyx of that heart, inside the central channel, is a white moon disc seat, pedestal, or cushion, on top of which is your consciousness in the form of a sphere of mixed white and red light. Exclaiming PHET, this sphere, which is your consciousness, is forcefully ejected up, out of, and through the central channel, out the

WHITE FEAST • PART 1



top of your head, and dissolves into the heart of Machik Lapdrön. At that point, you rest briefly with the confidence that your mind and the mind of Machik Lapdrön, which is the wisdom of the dharmakaya, have been mixed.

Next, as was the case with the mandala offering, when you arise from that you think that your mind, in the form of a red HRI (ཧྲི) syllable, is emanated from the heart of Machik Lapdrön. This HRI transforms into Vajrayogini who, as before, is holding a hooked knife in her right hand and is adorned only with a garland of red flowers.

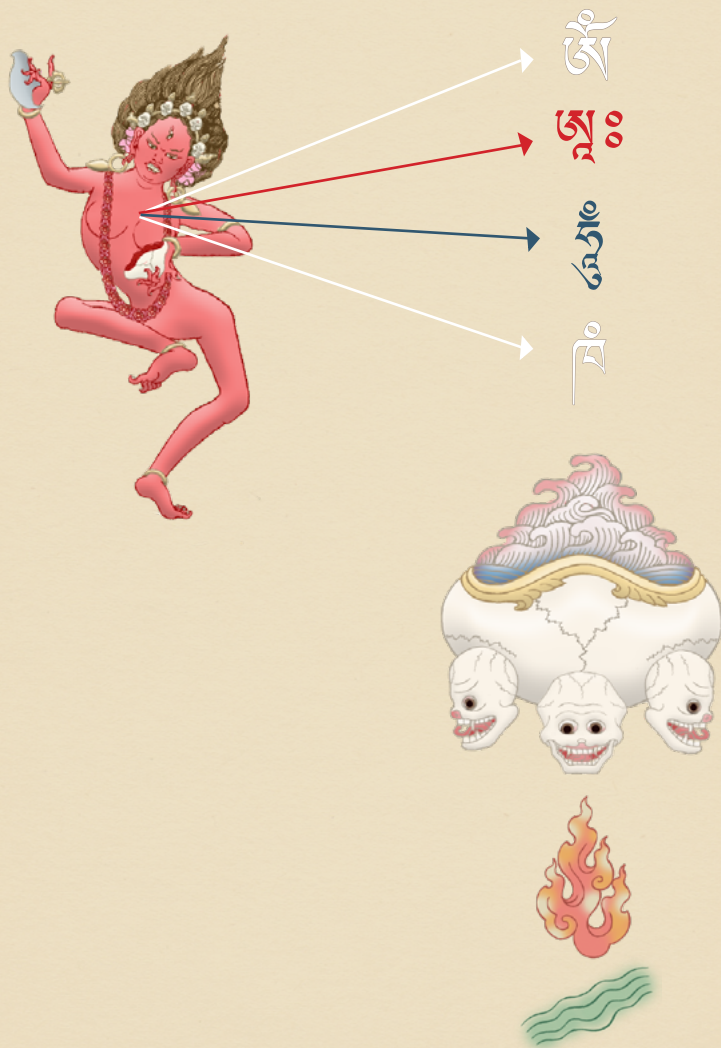
CREATING AMBROSIA

Then, from the heart of yourself as Vajrayogini, initially from your heart, a green YAM (ཡམ) syllable is emanated. This comes to rest in front of you and is transformed into the mandala of wind, which produces a great deal of wind. Next, from your heart is emanated a red RAM (རམ) syllable, which comes to rest above the mandala of wind, and becomes a blazing mandala of fire.

Next, you think that spontaneously, as though appearing of themselves, are three large human skulls, each of which is the size of Mt. Meru. They are placed in a triangular formation, so as to form a hearthstone on which a pot could rest. These are arranged to form three points of a triangle above the mandala of fire.

Then you think that Vajrayogini, with whom you are identifying, touches the forehead of what was your body with the tip of her hooked

WHITE FEAST • PART 2



knife. That causes what used to be your skull, to fly off and it turns over and lands on top of these three hearthstones. The skull becomes huge, the size of the galaxy.

Vajrayogini then picks up the rest of your body with the tip of the hooked knife, and drops it into this huge *kapala* or skull. Then, barely being touched by the hooked knife, the body instantly crumbles into fragments of flesh, blood, and bone, like a bowl of soup.

From Vajrayogini's heart, a white KAM (ཀཎྟ) syllable is emanated. This comes to rest in the space above the *kapala*.

Next, from her three places are emanated the three syllables, OM (ཨོཾ), AH (ཨ), and HUNG (ཧཱུྃ) which are white, red, and blue respectively. They come to rest above the KAM. HUNG is at the bottom, above that is AH, and above that is OM.

From the heart of Vajrayogini, a light is radiated. This strikes the mandala of wind causing it to send forth a great deal of wind. That wind, moving upwards, strikes the mandala of fire, causing it to blaze. That fire burning upwards heats up the *kapala*, causing all of the contents — the flesh, blood, and bone — to melt into ambrosia, boil and become very hot. As the contents of the *kapala* boil, steam rises and strikes the KAM syllable in the space above the *kapala*, causing it to release a stream of purifying ambrosia, somewhat like milk in appearance. This falls into the *kapala*, purifying the contents of any impurities. Then the KAM syllable melts into light, and dissolves into the flesh and blood in the *kapala*.

From the three syllables, which remain above the kapala, the white OM, the red AH, and blue HUNG, rays of corresponding colors of light shoot outward. These rays of light strike the forehead, throat, and heart of all of the wisdom deities in the field of accumulation. That includes Machik Lapdrön, Buddha Shakyamuni, the Buddhas of the Five Families, Prajnaparamita, Padampa Sangye, Vajrayogini and her retinue, all of the gurus of the various lineages, all of the yidams and four classes of tantra, and all the male and female wisdom dharmapalas.

From the foreheads of all of those deities, whose foreheads have previously been struck by the rays of white light from the OM, rays of white light now issue forth, which then dissolve back to the OM. The OM syllable then melts into light and dissolves into the contents of the kapala, which then become like an ocean of milk, very white, bright, and luminous. Then, from the throats of all of those deities, whose throats have previously been struck by the rays of red light from the syllable AH, rays of red light issue forth and dissolve back into the AH syllable, which then melts into light and dissolves into the kapala, causing the contents of the kapala to become a mixture of white and red ambrosia. Finally, from the hearts of those deities, who had previously been struck by light from the blue HUNG, rays of blue light issue forth. These dissolve back into the HUNG, causing the HUNG to melt into the contents of the kapala, with the contents becoming a mixture of gleaming white, red, and blue ambrosia.

In that way, you think that the ambrosia within the kapala becomes an ocean of wisdom ambrosia. The steam that continues to arise from this ocean of ambrosia takes the form of innumerable offering substances, such as the eight auspicious signs and the five desirable qualities, which fill the sky with offerings. The liquid part of the ambrosia is actual ambrosia, possessing the one hundred excellent tastes. The solids within the ambrosia take the form of various desirable and useful things that are fit to be offered. It becomes inconceivable in quality and variety, an ocean of ambrosia and offerings.

THE MANNER OF OFFERING

From oneself as Vajrayogini, one then emanates various offering goddesses holding kapalas, which they will use as ladles to scoop this ambrosia from the main kapala. Scooping this up, they offer it first to the root and lineage gurus, visualized in the field of accumulation. When it has been offered, the ambrosia takes the form of an infinite variety of offering substances that are suitable or pleasing to the root and lineage gurus.

The ambrosia is next offered to the yidams of the four classes of tantra in the following way. Thinking that these dakinis or offering goddesses emanated from your heart are scooping up the ambrosia with the kapalas that they are holding as ladles, you think that they present these to the yidams of the four classes of tantra — kriya tantra, charya tantra, yoga tantra, and anuttarayoga tantra — and the ambrosia becomes the outer, inner, and secret offerings, which please the yidams.

The outer offerings are the offerings of drinking water, washing water, flowers, incense, lamps, perfumes, food, and music. The inner offerings are, in the case of some yidams, the five desirable qualities and, in the case of other yidams, amrita, rakta, and torma. The secret offering is the offering of bliss and emptiness.

When it is offered by these emanated dakinis to all the dakas and dakinis in the field of accumulation, the offerings take the form of a vast feast offering. When it is offered to the samaya-bound and wisdom dharmapalas, it takes the form of substances of support, fulfillment, and practice. Support substances are such things as supporting tormas, and vases for the protector practice, with life stones and the “Wheel Bearing the Essence” mantra placed within these. In the case of the fulfillment substances, it takes the form of many black animals, such as black yaks, black sheep, black dogs, black horses. Various other objects that are pleasing to the protectors include suits of armor and weapons. Finally, there are the practice substances, which take the form of masks depicting the faces of the various protectors, as well as statues and thangkhas.

When the ambrosia is being presented to the mundane protectors, such as the seventy-five glorious ones, it takes the form of whatever is most pleasing to them. When it is presented to one’s karmic creditors, the recipients of repayment, those who otherwise obstruct one, it takes the form of whatever form of desirable thing is most pleasing to them — whatever it is they feel they are lacking, whatever it is they seek in repayment of the karmic debt.

When the ambrosia is presented to all of the spirits of this galaxy, all of those spirits who preside over specific localities, it takes the form of cleansing smoke offerings and of various gifts, whatever would be most enjoyed by them.

When it is offered to virtuous nagas, for those nagas who are of the Brahmin caste it takes the form of naga medicine and the three whites and the three sweets: milk, yogurt, butter, sugar, molasses, and honey. When the ambrosia is offered to nagas of the lower caste within the naga realm, and those nagas who are unvirtuous, meaning that they lack compassion and delight in consuming the flesh and blood of other beings, it takes the form of oceans of flesh and blood.

With regard to all sentient beings of the six realms, gods, asuras, humans, animals, pretas, and beings of the hell realm, the ambrosia takes the form of whatever object is most pleasing to those individual beings. They and all the rest of the four types of recipients are extremely pleased and satisfied.

The manner in which the four recipients or the four guests are pleased is as follows.

Through making offerings to the Three Jewels, Machik Lapdrön, and her retinue, the recipients of veneration, you and all sentient beings come to gather the accumulation of merit and purify your obscurations.

Similarly, by making offerings to the glorious wisdom protectors, who possess special qualities, all of the obstacles to the practice of dharma of yourself and all beings are removed.

Next is the making of offerings towards one's karmic creditors, those who bring about impediments. Since they are now repaid and satisfied, they are happy and come to generate bodhichitta.

As for making offerings to all sentient beings of the six realms, by giving them each what they need, one should think that their individual sufferings, whatever they are, are pacified. This means, that among sentient beings, all of them who are in pain cease to be in pain. All of them who are ill come to possess health. All of them who suffer from age become young. All of them who are miserable become happy. All of them who have been impaired in some way are restored to full senses, and have all the parts of their body restored. Finally, all sentient beings, without exception, through receiving this generosity, naturally come to generate a strong enthusiasm for the practice of dharma.

Visualizing this, there is no accompanying recitation. You do this visualization slowly, and while doing it, you continue to play the damaru and bell, and periodically you recite PHET fairly softly.

PART FOUR • RED FEAST

Next, we come to the fourth part of the main practice, the red feast, which directly follows. Having completed the previous visualization, you think that the remaining ambrosia within the kapala changes in an instant into a mountain of flesh, oceans of blood, and heaped masses of bones. This huge mass of flesh filling the kapala is the size of Mt. Meru. There is as much blood as there would be in all the oceans of the world, and huge heaped masses of bone. All of this is extremely fresh and shiny, and full of juice and the kinds of things that one wants in fresh bones and meat. It is not cold or congealed in any way, but is steaming hot. In essence or nature, this remains undefiled wisdom ambrosia but it takes the form of flesh and blood that have the characteristics of “one born seven times a Brahmin,” which is to say, that it has the quality of pacifying suffering and kleshas upon any contact. This mass of flesh, bone, and blood, by being seen, by being heard, and certainly by being tasted and ingested in any way, will immediately pacify the kleshas and pacify suffering. That initial visualization is the red feast.

While doing that initial part of the visualization, you continue to play the damaru and bell at the same rhythm. At that point, you put down the bell and pick up the thighbone trumpet and blow it three times. And then you play a flourish on the damaru.

You next think, as a result of your summons with the thighbone trumpet, that all of your karmic creditors are summoned again to receive

this part of the feast. These karmic creditors include all beings to whom you owe life, by having taken their life; all those to whom you owe merit by having in some way impaired their prosperity or merit; all those to whom you owe influence, authority, or social position by having impaired any of those; and all those to whom you owe anything whatever that you took from them without having the right to do so. This also includes all the spirits of place, especially the powerful spirits who inhabit or influence the area in which you reside, or indeed anywhere within this galaxy, and all of the spirits of body, that is to say, all of the various gods and demons that inhabit your physical body or are always around you — in short, all of the eight types of spirits that were specified in the context of the generation of bodhichitta and the refuge vow. All of those and all obstructors in general are summoned and you think that they assemble in front of you.

Now, having summoned the recipients of the red feast, you recite the red feast liturgy, which is the next liturgy in the text beginning with:

ན་མོ། གནས་གནན་ས་འདིར་གནས་ཀྱི་ལྷ་འདྲེ་དང་། །

NAMO. Gods and demons who stay in this terrifying place

This can be done with any number of traditional melodies that are used when one is playing the damaru. If you are using a damaru and bell for this practice, then at this point, you continue to play the damaru and chant rhythmically coordinated with the playing. If you are doing this without the damaru, there is another melody that is used when performing this part of the liturgy unaccompanied.

Most of the meaning of this red feast recitation will be obvious, but a few things may not be. First of these is where it says:

ལུས་ཕྱི་གཟུགས་བླག་གི་མཆོད་པ་འབུལ།

I offer you the six sections of flesh, my external body.

This refers to the four limbs, the upper body, and the lower body. Than you say:

བཀའ་པ་རྣམས་ཕྱིན་བླག་ཐོབ་པར་ཤོག།

May the six perfections be attained.

The next thing, that is a little mysterious in some texts, is when it says:

ནང་ཆ་བླ་དགའི་མཆོད་པ་འབུལ།

I offer you the nine inner children.

In some texts it is written “the nine apertures,” but here it actually is **the nine inner children**. This refers to nine internal organs, which are called the children of certain aspects of your body, because they are produced primarily from those aspects. These are for example: the liver, which is the child of the blood; the spleen, which is the child of the flesh; the lungs, which are the child of the breath; the kidneys, which are the child of the mouth; the small intestine, which is the child of the fat; the large intestine, which is the child of the lymph; and the duodenum, which is the child of food etc. It is not that important to know this, but since it is referred to in the text, and you will not know what it is unless I tell you, I have mentioned it. The

aspiration you make in connection with this is: “By offering these nine parts of my internal body, may I and all beings come to attain the realization of the nine vehicles.” The nine vehicles in this context are: the shravakayana or vehicle of the hearers; the pratyekabuddhayana or vehicle of the solitary realized ones; the bodhisattvayana or Mahayana; the kriya tantra; the acharya tantra; the yoga tantra; and, in this context, the father tantra; the mother tantra; and the nondual tantra.

The next two lines are:

དབང་པོ་ནམ་ལུ་མཆོད་པ་འབུལ། །སྤྱོད་ལེ་ཤེས་ཐོབ་པར་ཤོག །

I offer you the five senses. May the five kayas and wisdoms be attained.

The five sense organs are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and the body as an organ of tactile sensation. The aspiration is that through offering this you and all sentient beings attain the inseparable five bodies and five wisdoms of the five families.

The five kayas are first of all the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya, with which you are familiar. These three, although they appear distinct, are of the same fundamental nature, the dharmakaya. That nature of all three is expressed as a fourth kaya, which is called the abhisambodhikaya, body of manifest awakening. While they are of the same nature, they are distinct in their function. The dharmakaya is the fundamental nature, while the sambhogakaya expresses itself in the appearance or experience of beings with pure karma. They each have distinct functions. Their distinctness is the fifth kaya, which is simply called the vajrakaya.

The five wisdoms are the transformation of what we experience as the five poisons. At the time of awakening, what we now experience as bewilderment becomes the dharmadhatu wisdom, aversion becomes the mirror-like wisdom, pride becomes the wisdom of equality, attachment or desire becomes the wisdom of discrimination, and jealousy becomes the wisdom of accomplishment. The aspiration here is that oneself and all beings will attain the awakening consisting of these five bodies and these five wisdoms.

The rest of the liturgy of the red feast is the specific encouragement to the recipients to accept it. You say for example:

ཁྱེད་ཚོ་གས་རྒྱལ་ས་ལུས་འདི་མཆོད་པ་འབུལ། ཁྱེད་རིངས་པ་རྒྱལ་གྱིས་སྟོན་པ་ཟོ། །དལ་བ་རྒྱལ་གྱིས་ཅོས་
ལ་ཟོ། །རིངས་དང་མི་རིངས་བྱེ་བྲག་གིས། །བཙོས་བསེགས་སྟོན་པ་གང་བདེར་ཟོ། །ལྟོ་པོ་ཆེ་རྒྱལ་ས་འགྲངས་ཆད་
ཟོ། །ཤིང་པོ་ཆེ་རྒྱལ་བྱག་ཆད་བྱར། །ཁེང་གེ་ཤ་ལ་རོལ་པ་བཞིན། །ཕུད་ལྷག་མ་མེད་པར་མཆོད་པ་བཞིན། །

To all of you, I offer this body. Those in a hurry, eat it raw. Those with leisure, eat it cooked. Whether in a hurry or not, eat it as you will — boiled, roasted, or raw. You with big stomachs, eat your fill. You strong ones, take all you can carry. Like a lion relishing meat, consume this offering. Leave nothing behind.

While reciting that, you visualize that the assembled recipients, the creditors, consume this red feast, delightfully enjoying this flesh and blood and that, through partaking of it, their spite is pacified, your debt to them is repaid, and the continuity of the karmic debt, the bad connection, is ended through the debt being repaid. The red feast and the previous white feast are the primary white and red feast for this

practice. They are like the root visualizations of the white and the red feast.

Now, following this in the text, a number of alternate white feast and red feast visualizations are offered. It is suggested in the text that, if you wish to do these additional white and red feasts, you can do them alternately. In a few evenings of practice, you would finish one cycle and then start again. There is no necessity, however, for you to do the other ones given. The main ones are the ones that I have just explained, therefore I will not go through the others in detail.

EMPTYING THE SIX REALMS

The exception to this is one of the succeeding visualizations, which is called “Emptying the Six Realms.” It is taught in the oral tradition that one should apply this at the end of the red feast practice. To conclude the red feast practice, one thinks that there is a very little left over in the bottom of the kapala consisting of flesh, blood, and bone, and that this turns back into ambrosia in appearance. At the beginning of the red feast, it turned from ambrosia into flesh and blood, now it turns back. Then think that rays of light, from the heart of yourself as Vajrayogini, strike the six realms of all sentient beings. First these rays of light strike the hell realms and all sentient beings of the hell realms, so that the hell realms are emptied. This means that you think that all sentient beings abiding within the hells are brought immediately to the attainment of buddhahood, therefore causing what was previously the hell realm to become the pure realm of the Vajra family in the east,

“the Joyful.” Next, rays of light from the heart of yourself as Vajrayogini strike the realm of the pretas, emptying that realm by causing all beings in that realm to attain buddhahood, and causing the realm of the pretas to become the pure realm of the Padma family, Sukhavati or “the Blissful.” In the same way, the rays of light strike all beings and places in the animal realm, causing all those beings to attain buddhahood, thereby transforming the animal realm into the central pure realm of the Buddha family, “the Densely Arrayed.” The rays of light next strike all beings and places within the human realm causing it to become the pure realm of the Ratna family, which is called “the Glorious.” Then the rays of light strike all beings and places within the asura realm, causing it to become the pure realm of the Karma family, “Completed Activity.” Finally the rays of light strike all beings and places within all of the god realms, causing all of those beings to attain buddhahood and causing the god realms to become the pure realm of Akanishtha, the highest realm of the dharmadhatu. In that way, you think that you completely empty all six realms of samsara.

That is the conclusion of the red feast practice.

THE LINEAGE SUPPLICATION

Before you get to the tsok practice, there is a lineage supplication. Essentially you supplicate the lineage gurus, with Machik Lapdrön first and foremost among them, with strong yearning and devotion, and with physical, verbal, and mental veneration and respect. You supplicate them principally in connection with strong aspirations that you

and all beings come to be completely free from grasping at a self and from all forms of hope and fear.

The lineage supplication in this next section of the liturgy begins with the words:

ཕ་རྒྱུད་ཐབས་ཀྱི་བརྒྱུད་པ་ལ་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས། །

I supplicate the father tantras, lineage of method.

It is customarily recited while playing the damaru in a rhythm coordinated with the chanting. You repeat the supplication with the foregoing melody, playing the drum and bell, up to:

ལྷ་མེད་བྱང་ཆུབ་ཐོབ་པར་ཤོག །

and attain unsurpassable awakening.

Think that principally your aspiration and supplication are for freedom from all grasping at a self, the freedom from hope and fear. At the conclusion of the supplication, you rest without conceptualizing the three aspects: the supplicator, the supplicated and the supplication. You rest in the unity or inseparability of your mind and the mind of the sources of refuge.

PART FIVE • TSOK OFFERING

Next we come to the fifth and final section of the main practice, which is offering the aggregates of oneself and others as a feast offering. Now, before beginning the Tsok Feast, which follows after the lineage supplication, there is a little bit of a vocabulary problem because there are two different words that I have been translating as feast: you should almost say “feeding” or “dispensing” for what I have been calling white feast and red feast, because for *tsok*, you can also use “feast.”

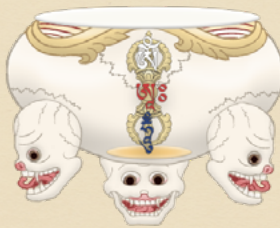
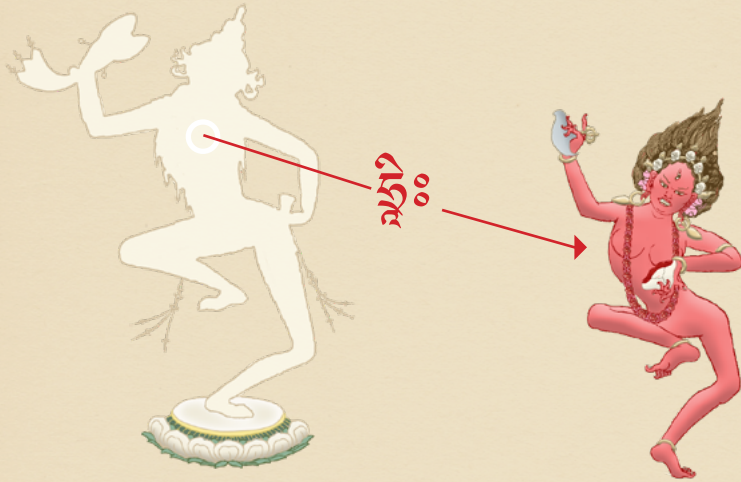
THREE-FOLD MIXING

The first procedure within this feast practice is called the three-fold mixing. The first mixing is mixing your awareness and the awareness of others. This refers to a situation, for example, like when you are doing Chö practice for the benefit of another person, such as someone who is ill. At this point in the practice, you would attempt to or imagine mixing your mind and the mind of that person.

Then, the second mixing is mixing awareness with the dharmadhatu. That consists of again performing the ejection of consciousness, exclaiming PHET as you do so.

After having mixed awareness with the dharmadhatu, again, as in the previous two sources of offering, your mind arises from the heart of Machik Lapdrön, in the form of a red HRI (ཨྲི), which becomes Vajrayogini. Vajrayogini then touches the forehead of your former body with the point of a hooked knife, causing the skull to fly off, as at the

TSOK OFFERING



beginning of the white feast, and it comes to rest on top of the spontaneously arisen three hearthstones of skulls.

Next, similar to the beginning of the white feast, you think that Vajrayogini picks up the rest of the body with the hook of the hooked knife, and drops it into the kapala. You think that your aggregates and the aggregates of the person, such as the person who is ill for whom you may be doing the practice, are mixed together as a feast substance. That is the third mixing.

CREATING AMBROSIA

Then you visualize that the body, which is offered as the feast, which is your body combined with the body of, if there is one, the person for whom you are doing the practice, takes the form of a five-pronged golden vajra within the kapala. You then visualize that the apex of the vajra is marked with a white OM (ཨྐྱ), the center of the vajra with a red AH (ཨྱ) and the lower point or bottom of the vajra with a blue HUNG (ཨླ). In addition, you think that the opening, the top of the kapala, is covered with a moon disc cover, and that the vajra is standing on a sun disc within the kapala.

To be more specific, the OM is visualized at about the center of the upper and middle prong. The AH is visualized at the center of the ball in middle of the vajra, and the HUNG is visualized at the center of the bottom, middle or central prong.

Next, visualizing yourself as Vajrayogini, you think that from your forehead rays of white, red, and blue light radiate out. You visualize a white OM, a red AH, and a blue HUNG in your three places. From these, the rays of corresponding color radiate out and dissolve into the forehead, throat, and heart of Machik Lapdrön. Then from the three syllables in the three places in Machik Lapdrön's body, rays of light of the three corresponding colors radiate out and dissolve into the corresponding three places on the body of each member of the field of accumulation. From those same three places, on the bodies of each member of the field of accumulation, rays of light of the same corresponding colors shoot out, and dissolve back into the same three places on the body of Machik Lapdrön.

Next, from the OM in the forehead of Machik Lapdrön, rays of white light shoot out. These strike the OM in the top portion of the vajra, causing the moon disc, the OM, and the top third of the vajra to melt into ambrosia, partially filling the kapala with white ambrosia.

Then, in the same way, from the AH in Machik Lapdrön's throat, rays of red light shoot out. These strike the AH in the center of the vajra, causing that AH and the central portion or third of the vajra to melt into light and to become an ocean of red ambrosia, which further fills the kapala.

Finally, from the HUNG in the heart of Machik Lapdrön, you think that blue rays of light shoot out. These strike the HUNG in the bottom portion of the vajra, causing the remaining portion of the vajra and the HUNG to melt into ambrosia, and to become an ocean of blue am-

brosia, which fills the kapala together with the white and red ambrosia. When the bottom part of the vajra melts, the sun disc on which it is standing, together with the HUNG, also melt into blue ambrosia. After that, the kapala is filled with a combination of white, red, and blue ambrosia, which in essence is wisdom ambrosia, and in form, is all various offering substances. They have the power to pacify all kinds of suffering and difficulties through any contact. This ambrosia, by being tasted or ingested in any way, will pacify sickness, stop pain, and restore health and vitality.

Once you have done that visualization, you recite the beginning of the feast liturgy:

ཨྌ་མ་གཅིག་མ་ལ་གསལ་བ་འདེབས། །

OM I supplicate Machikma.

This is normally recited without accompaniment by the damaru and at every fourth line you ring the bell.

This way you reach the conclusion of the first section, which is the consecration of the feast:

ཆོས་རྒྱུང་སྤང་མའི་ཐུགས་དམ་བསྐྱང་གྱུར་ཅིག །

and Dharma protectors and guardians be repaired.

Here you stop chanting briefly and begin playing the damaru and bell because there is a further visualization.

THE MANNER OF OFFERING

While you are playing the damaru, you visualize that many offering goddesses are emanated from the heart of yourself as Vajrayogini. By using kapalas as ladles, they scoop up the ambrosia in the kapala, and offer it to all of the recipients, starting with the kind root and lineage gurus, all the way down to the sentient beings, who are recipients of compassion. This feast of ambrosia is presented to all of them: the Three Jewels, who are recipients of veneration; the protectors who are the recipients who have qualities; the creditors who are recipients of repayment; and sentient beings who are the recipients of compassion.

Then, from the steam that rises from the ambrosia, many other types of feast offering are emanated. First the outer feast offering, which is all of the good things throughout the universe that are not owned by anyone; then the inner feast offering of all of the good things that are owned by individuals, including their vitality, their merit, their prosperity, their authority, and their social position; and then, the offering of the pleasure of sexual union, so to all the male recipients, dakinis are offered, and to all the female recipients, dakas are offered. That offering is the secret feast. The fourth offering, the ultimate feast of suchness, is resting in mahamudra, the clear light, which is free from conceptualization of the three aspects.

In making these offerings to the four recipients, visualize the following. In the case of offerings made to the Three Jewels, the recipients of veneration, and the protectors, the recipients who possess qualities, think that you and all sentient beings come to possess abundant merit.

The deities bestow the two attainments, common and supreme, upon you and all beings. Through making these offerings to the karmic creditors, the recipients of repayment, think that they are satisfied and pleased and that they come to generate bodhichitta, and that all karmic debts are repaid. Through making these offerings to all sentient beings of six realms, who are the recipients of compassion, think that all of their karma, all of their kleshas, all of their other obscurations are pacified or purified, and that they are forever free of suffering.

Continue to play the damaru and bell while doing this visualization. When you have completed the visualization, then you put down the damaru and bell and recite the next section of the feast liturgy:

ཧྲི་བྱག་པ་རྫོང་འཆང་ཆེན་མན་ཆད་དང་།

HUNG. From Vajradhara of the sixth (family)

You recite the main part of the feast liturgy, playing the bell, ringing the bell every four lines, until you get to the last repetition of:

ཐུད་ལྷག་མ་མེད་པར་བཞེས་སུ་གསོལ།

Consume it all with nothing left behind [...]

which completes that section of the feast liturgy.

OFFERING LEFTOVERS

The next part of the feast practice is the offering of the remainder or leftovers of the feast. At this point you think that there is a little bit left

over of the ambrosia that was offered to the four recipients as the main part of the feast. The remainder is transformed into flesh, blood, and bone, in a way similar to the red feast practice before, where you visualize the kapala as a huge container, the size of the threefold world. Inside of it, you think that the leftover ambrosia becomes a mountain of flesh, an ocean of blood, and a huge mass of bone. This is presented to all of those who are promised the leftovers by two dakinis who are emanated from yourself as Vajrayogini. These dakinis, who are the “empresses of the charnel grounds,” are in the form of skeletons.

You then think that the leftover offerings are presented to all of the mundane dakinis and other spirits, and to various beings of the eight classes of gods and spirits who have not previously received the feast offerings. This includes those who did not arrive before in time to get some, or were too timid to accept the main portion of the feast offering, or feel that they only deserve the leftovers. In order to make sure that they receive some, you specifically dedicate the leftovers to them, and to all of those spirits and beings in general who are weak and timid, and therefore unable to approach the offerings during the main portion of the practice. All of these come at this time and are presented with these offerings by these two skeletal dakinis. All of them are completely satisfied and fulfilled. Being delighted with the offerings that they have received, they promise to perform all of the activities that are their duty in protecting the practitioner.

While doing this visualization, you then blow the thighbone trumpet three times and you begin the recitation of the leftover liturgy:

སྲིད་གསུམ་བླ་མ་འབར་བའི་གཏོར་གཞིང་དུ། །

In the blazing tormā vessel, vast as the three levels of existence,

which is accompanied by the playing of the damaru. There is a traditional melody, but if you do not know that one, you can really use any euphonic melody that will work with the rhythm.

THE CONCLUSION

Now we come to the third portion of the commentary, which is the conclusion. This has three sections, the dedication and aspiration, the dissolution of the visualization, and the postmeditation practice.

PART ONE • DEDICATION

The intention of the dedication and aspiration are that through the virtue that you have accumulated through offering your body as a gift in this way, you and all sentient beings may come to eradicate completely all grasping at a self, and therefore come to realize the wisdom or awakening of the Great Mother, the meaning of Prajnaparamita.

PART TWO • DISSOLUTION

The second section of the conclusion is the dissolution of the visualization, which happens in stages. First you think that starting from the right, all the male dharmapalas and all those on the right, together with his retinue, dissolve into Padampa Sangye. Then, Padampa Sangye dissolves into the dharmakaya Vajradhara, who dissolves into the five buddhas, who dissolve into the central figure Vairochana, who dissolves into the Great Mother, who dissolves into Buddha Shakya-

muni, who dissolves into Machik Lapdrön. Then you think that all of the female dharmapalas on the left dissolve, together with her retinue, into Vajrayogini. Then she dissolves into Machik Lapdrön.

Next, you think that the remaining single figure, Machik Lapdrön herself, shrinks until she becomes the size of one joint of your thumb, and is extremely radiant with five colored lights. In that size, she comes to rest above the top of your head. She then dissolves into you, through the top of your head and flows down the center of your body, or floats down the center of your body, until she comes to rest in your heart, which is visualized as an eight-petaled red lotus. She rests, seated in vajra posture, on the eight-petaled lotus, which then closes around her, so that it becomes a chamber rather than really a pedestal.

Alternatively, you can imagine that Machik Lapdrön becomes a sphere of light, the size of a goose egg. This dissolves into you through the top of your head. The sphere of light then dissolves into your heart, at which point you rest your mind as inseparable from Machik Lapdrön's. It is customary to do that visualization for the abbreviated daily practice.

Once you have in either way dissolved Machik Lapdrön into yourself, you then recite the next part of the liturgy, which is accompanied by a damaru:

གཙོད་ཡུལ་ཉམས་སུ་ལེན་པའི་གང་ཟག་གིས། །རང་སེམས་བདུད་དུ་མི་ལྟ་བར། །

May those who practice Chö not see their mind as mara.

The meaning of that recitation is basically concerned with aspiring to be free from grasping at a self in general, and especially from all kinds of hope and fear — not only gross but also subtle kinds, concerned with attachment to meditation experiences and even hope and fear about impediments to spiritual progress. For example, one aspires to be free from any kind of self-satisfaction, no matter how well things appear to be going or how well you appear to be progressing. You are trying to be free from the thought, “Well I am doing pretty well.” Along with that, you are also trying to be free from fear or anxiety about not doing so well — negative thoughts such as thinking, “Well, if I do this maybe I will get sick, or maybe this will make my obstacles worse, or maybe I will not succeed, or things will not go well for me”.

PART THREE • TAKING THE PRACTICE ON THE PATH IN POSTMEDITATION

PRACTICE OF AVALOKITESHVARA

Now we come to the third and final part of the conclusion, which is bringing this practice onto the path or leading into postmeditation. Following the preceding recitation, you think that in an instant you become the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezik, specifically the four-armed form known as “The Tamer of Beings.” The palms of his first two arms are joined together in front of his chest. His second right hand is holding a crystal mala and his second left hand is holding a white lotus by the stem. In this case, he is standing. Visualizing

yourself in that form, you think that all of the mundane gods and spirits and sentient beings of the six realms, who you have been visualizing, come to surround you and respectfully prostrate to you as Avalokiteshvara and circumambulate you with an attitude of utmost veneration.

Then you think that rays of light from the heart of yourself as Chenrezik strike all of these beings. This causes all of the males among them to become Chenrezik, and all of the females among them to become Arya Tara. As you recite the six syllable mantra, OM MANI PEME HUNG, all of these Chenreziks and Taras recite it together with you, so that the sound resounds and buzzes and hums.

Normally, before chanting the mantra OM MANI PEME HUNG, you chant the four-line homage to Chenrezik, which is found in the usual Chenrezik sadhana. I am not sure what you have in your version of the text, but that is what you normally recite.¹⁴ Then you chant the mantra.

At the conclusion of chanting the mantra, OM MANI PEME HUNG, you think that all of the remaining guests or recipients, that is all sentient beings who have been visualized as Chenrezik and Tara, delighted with all that they have received, return to their natural places of residence. Then, you rest naturally, allowing the visualization or

14. In the translation of the Chō sadhana by Michele Martin: *Free of fault, white in color, you are crowned by a perfect Buddha. Gazing with eyes of compassion on all beings, Avalokiteshvara, to you I bow.*

conceptualization of yourself as Chenrezik to dissolve into emptiness. You rest in the recognition or experience of your mind's nature, without any kind of alteration. In short, you rest in mahamudra.

The commentary goes on to point out that a Chö practitioner needs to engage in the common preliminaries: the contemplations concerning the preciousness of human existence, impermanence, the defects of samsara, and the results of actions. Also, they are to engage in the uncommon preliminaries: refuge, bodhichitta, purification, mandala offering, and guru yoga. Following that, the essence of Chö practice is coming to recognize the meaning or wisdom of the Great Mother. This recognition is aided and enhanced through the practice of unified shamatha and vipashyana.

PRACTICE OF SHAMATHA AND VIPASHYANA

Now, towards the end of this commentary, some instruction in shamatha and vipashyana is given, according to the tradition of Machik Lapdrön, connected with introducing the wisdom of the Great Mother. In essence, this is the same as mahamudra instruction. If you have not had the opportunity to receive mahamudra teachings, or if for whatever reason you are unsure of how to proceed with the practice of mahamudra, then your teachers, such as Bardor Tulku Rinpoche and Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche are able to give you these instructions. You can get detailed personal instruction and guidance from them on mahamudra practice and there is nothing better than that.

Now, this is not true just for mahamudra practice per se. Whatever practice you do, for the preliminaries, shamatha practice, the cultivation of bodhichitta, and the generation stage, you can get detailed personal instructions and advice on how to continue this practice from your teachers, by going to them and asking them questions. This has to begin with your explaining specifically what it is you are doing as a practice, to give them a context. Then based upon that, they will give you advice, further guidance, more specifics, or alterations of the technique, as appropriate. Then you return, you apply that, and then you go back, you explain your further experience and get further guidance. This kind of gradual experiential instruction is the most effective and practical way to proceed.

I am delighted in what we have been doing. I have had this opportunity to explain something about dharma to you and you have had the opportunity to listen to something about dharma here.

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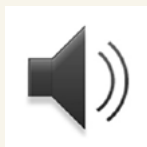
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CHÖ LÜJIN PRACTICE PERFORMED BY KYABJE TENGA RINPOCHE

Audio recording

A recording of *Lüjin* practice performed by Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche at his main European seat, Benchen Phüntso Ling in Allmuthen, Belgium, probably in the summer of 2002. Please keep in mind that the particular melodies used by Rinpoche during this practice are unique to Benchen Monastery in Tibet and most likely are not the same as melodies used by other monasteries.



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