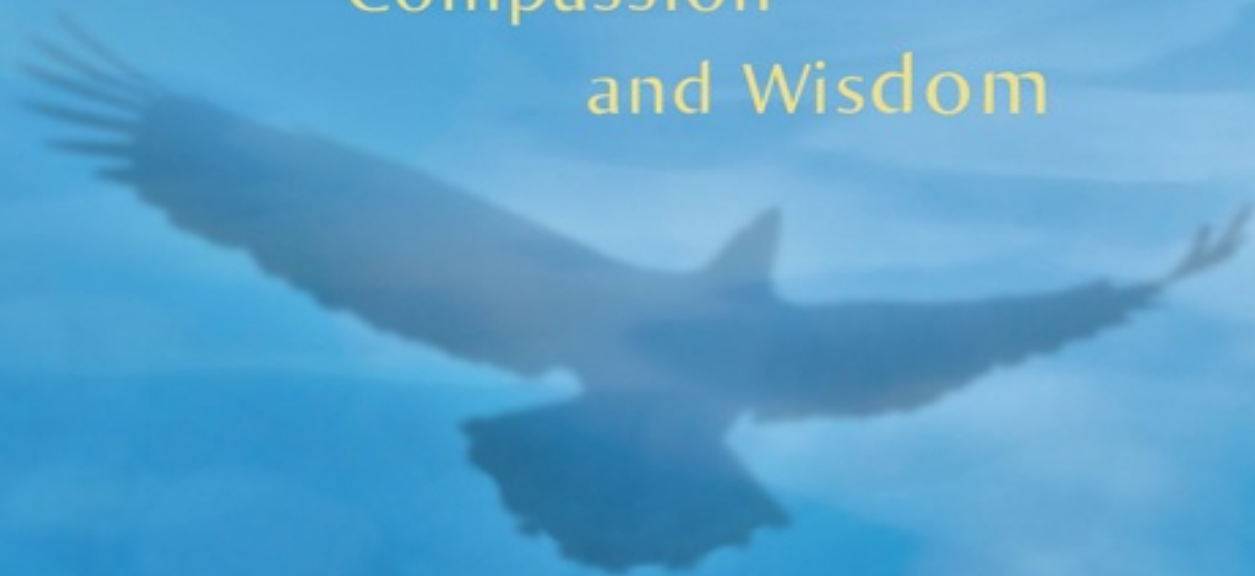


Modern Buddhism

The Path of
Compassion
and Wisdom



Geshe Kelsang Gyatso

Volume 2 **Tantra**

Modern Buddhism

The Path of
Compassion
and Wisdom



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GESHE KELSANG GYATSO

Modern Buddhism

THE PATH OF COMPASSION
AND WISDOM

Volume 2 of 3
TANTRA



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Tantra





Wisdom Dharma Protector

The Preciousness of Tantra

In his Sutra teachings Buddha gives us great encouragement to accomplish the ultimate goal of human life. This goal will be accomplished quickly through the practice of Tantra. Tantra, also known as ‘Secret Mantra’ or ‘Vajrayana’, is a special method to purify our world, our self, our enjoyments and our activities; and if we put this method into practice we shall very quickly attain enlightenment. As explained in *Modern Buddhism – Volume 1: Sutra*, our world does not exist from its own side; like a dream world, it is a mere appearance to our mind. In dreams we can see and touch our dream world, but when we wake up we realize that it was simply a projection of our mind and had no existence outside our mind. In the same way, the world we see when we are awake is simply a projection of our mind and has no existence outside our mind. Milarepa said:

You should know that all appearances are the nature of mind, and mind is the nature of emptiness.

Because our world, our self, our enjoyments and our activities are the nature of our mind, when our mind is impure they are impure, and when our mind becomes pure through purification practice they become pure. There are many different levels of purifying our mind. The subtle mistaken appearance of our mind cannot be purified through the practice of Sutra alone; we need to engage in the practice of Highest Yoga Tantra. When we completely purify our mind through Tantric practice, our world, our self, our enjoyments and our activities also become completely pure – this is the state of enlightenment. Attaining enlightenment is therefore very simple; all we need to do is apply effort to purifying our mind.

We know that when our mind is impure because we are feeling angry with our friend, we see him as bad; but when our mind is pure because we are feeling affectionate love for the same friend, we see him as good. Therefore, it is because of changing our own mind from pure to impure or from impure to pure that for us our friend changes from good to bad or from bad to good. This indicates that everything that is good, bad or neutral for us is a projection of our mind and has no existence outside our mind. Through practising Tantra we shall completely purify our mind and thus experience the complete purity of our

world, our self, our enjoyments and our activities – the ‘four complete purities’.

Although Tantra is very popular, not many people understand its real meaning. Some people deny Buddha’s Tantric teachings, whereas others misuse them for worldly attainments; and many people are confused about the union of Sutra and Tantra practice, mistakenly believing that Sutra and Tantra are contradictory. In *Condensed Heruka Root Tantra* Buddha says:

You should never abandon Highest Yoga Tantra,
But realize that it has inconceivable meaning
And is the very essence of Buddhadharma.

When we understand the real meaning of Tantra there will be no basis for misusing it, and we shall see that there are no contradictions at all between Sutra and Tantra. Practising Sutra teachings is the basic foundation for practising Tantric teachings, and the practice of Tantra is the quick method to fulfil the ultimate goal of Sutra teachings. For example, in his Sutra teachings Buddha encourages us to abandon attachment, and in Tantra he encourages us to transform our attachment into the spiritual path. Some people may think this a contradiction, but it is not, because Buddha’s Tantric instructions on how to transform attachment into the spiritual path are the quick method for abandoning attachment! In this way, they are the method to fulfil the aims of Sutra teachings.

We should take care not to misunderstand the meaning of transforming attachment into the spiritual path. Attachment itself cannot be transformed directly into the spiritual path; it is a delusion, an inner poison, and an object to be abandoned in both Sutra and Tantra. Transforming attachment into the path means that we transform the causes of attachment – our experiences of worldly pleasure – into the spiritual path. There are many methods for doing this that are explained in Tantric teachings.

The universal compassion accomplished through the practice of Sutra teachings, and the wisdom of Mahamudra Tantra accomplished through the practice of Tantric teachings, are like the two wings of a bird. Just as both wings are equally important for a bird to fly, so both Sutra and Tantra are equally important for practitioners seeking enlightenment.

Tantra is defined as an inner realization that functions to prevent ordinary appearances and conceptions and to accomplish the four complete purities. Although Buddha’s Tantric scriptures are sometimes called ‘Tantra’ because they reveal Tantric practices, actual Tantra is necessarily an inner realization that protects living beings from ordinary appearances and conceptions, which are the root of samsara’s sufferings. Ordinary appearance is our perception of all the

things that we normally see, such as our self and body. This appearance is subtle mistaken appearance. It is mistaken because our self, our body and all other things that we normally see do not exist, even though we always mistakenly see them; and it is subtle because for us it is difficult to understand that this appearance is mistaken. Our subtle mistaken appearance is the root of self-grasping, which is the root of all other delusions and suffering. We can abandon this subtle mistaken appearance completely only through the practice of Highest Yoga Tantra. When we do this we shall have accomplished the four complete purities mentioned above.

In general, our experience of worldly pleasure or enjoyments gives rise to attachment, which is the source of all suffering. However, through practising Tantra we can transform our experience of worldly pleasure into a profound spiritual path that leads us very quickly to the supreme happiness of enlightenment. The instructions of Tantra are therefore superior to all other instructions.

For living beings, the experience of worldly pleasures is the main cause of increasing their attachment, and therefore the main cause of increasing their problems. To stop attachment arising from the experience of worldly pleasures, Buddha taught Tantra as a method to transform worldly pleasures into the path to enlightenment. In accordance with the different levels of transforming worldly pleasures into the path, Buddha taught four levels or classes of Tantra: Action Tantra, Performance Tantra, Yoga Tantra and Highest Yoga Tantra. The first three are called the 'lower Tantras'. In Highest Yoga Tantra, Buddha taught the most profound instructions for transforming sexual bliss into the quick path to enlightenment. Since the effectiveness of this practice depends upon gathering and dissolving the inner winds into the central channel through the power of meditation, these instructions were not explained by Buddha in the lower Tantras. In the lower Tantras, Buddha taught instructions on how to transform worldly pleasures – other than sexual bliss – into the path to enlightenment through imagination, which is a simpler practice of Tantra.

The gateway through which we enter Tantra is receiving a Tantric empowerment. An empowerment bestows upon us special blessings that heal our mental continuum and awaken our Buddha nature. When we receive a Tantric empowerment we are sowing the special seeds of the four bodies of a Buddha upon our mental continuum. These four bodies are the Nature Truth Body, the Wisdom Truth Body, the Enjoyment Body and the Emanation Body. Ordinary beings do not possess more than one body, whereas Buddhas possess four bodies simultaneously. A Buddha's Emanation Body is his or her gross body, which can be seen by ordinary beings; the Enjoyment Body is his subtle body, which can be

seen only by practitioners who have gained higher realizations; and the Nature and Wisdom Truth Bodies are his very subtle bodies that only Buddhas themselves can see.

In Tantra, the principal objects to be abandoned are ordinary conceptions and ordinary appearances. The terms 'ordinary conceptions' and 'ordinary appearances' are best explained by the following example. Suppose there is a Heruka practitioner called John. Normally he appears to himself as John that he normally sees, and his environment, enjoyments, body and mind appear as those of John that he normally sees. These appearances are ordinary appearances. The mind that assents to these ordinary appearances by holding them to be true is ordinary conception. The appearances we have of an inherently existent 'I', 'mine' and other phenomena are also ordinary appearances; self-grasping and all other delusions are ordinary conceptions. Ordinary conceptions are obstructions to liberation, and ordinary appearances are obstructions to enlightenment. In general, all sentient beings, except Bodhisattvas who have attained the vajra-like concentration of the path of meditation, have ordinary appearances.

Now if John were to meditate on the generation stage of Heruka, strongly regarding himself as Heruka and believing his surroundings, experiences, body and mind to be those of Heruka, at that time he would have the divine pride that prevents ordinary conceptions. If he were also to attain clear appearance of himself as Heruka, with the environment, enjoyments, body and mind of Heruka, at that time he would have the clear appearance that prevents him from developing ordinary appearances.

At the beginning, ordinary conceptions are more harmful than ordinary appearances. How this is so is illustrated by the following analogy. Suppose a magician conjures up an illusion of a tiger in front of an audience. The tiger appears to both the audience and the magician, but whereas the audience believe that the tiger actually exists, and consequently become afraid, the magician does not assent to the appearance of the tiger and so remains calm. The problem for the audience is not so much that a tiger appears to them, as their conception that the tiger actually exists. It is this conception rather than the mere appearance of the tiger that causes them to experience fear. If like the magician they had no conception that the tiger existed, then even though they still had an appearance of a tiger they would not be afraid. In the same way, even though things appear to us as ordinary, if we do not conceptually grasp them as ordinary this will not be so harmful. Similarly, it is less damaging to our spiritual development that our Spiritual Guide appears to us as ordinary and yet we hold him or her to be in essence a Buddha, than it is for our Spiritual Guide to appear to us as ordinary and for us to believe that he or she is ordinary. The conviction that our Spiritual

Guide is a Buddha, even though he or she may appear to us as an ordinary person, helps our spiritual practice to progress rapidly.

To reduce ordinary appearances and conceptions Buddha taught the Tantra of generation stage; and to abandon these two obstructions completely Buddha taught the Tantra of completion stage, especially Mahamudra Tantra. By completing our training in these Tantras we shall become a Tantric enlightened being, such as Heruka, with the four complete purities.



Twelve-armed Heruka

The Tantra of Generation Stage

The following chapters present the instructions on the practices of Heruka and Vajrayogini, which are the very essence of Highest Yoga Tantra. The practice of Highest Yoga Tantra can be divided into two stages: generation stage and completion stage. In generation stage, through the power of correct imagination arising from wisdom, Tantric practitioners generate themselves as Tantric enlightened Deities such as Heruka, and their environment, body, enjoyments and activities as those of Heruka. This imagined new world of Heruka is their object of meditation and they meditate on this new generation with single-pointed concentration. Through continually training in this meditation, Heruka practitioners will gain deep realizations of themselves as Heruka, and their environment, body, enjoyments and activities as those of Heruka. This inner realization is generation stage Tantra.

Generation stage Tantra is defined as an inner realization of a creative yoga that is attained through training in divine pride and clear appearance of being an enlightened Deity. It is called a 'creative yoga' because the object of meditation is created by imagination and wisdom. The main function of generation stage Tantra is to purify ordinary death, intermediate state and rebirth, and to accomplish a Buddha's Truth Body, Enjoyment Body and Emanation Body. It is the quick method to ripen our Buddha nature.

Heruka is an enlightened Deity of Highest Yoga Tantra who is the manifestation of the compassion of all Buddhas. In generation stage Heruka practice, practitioners emphasize training in divine pride and clear appearance of being Heruka. Before training in divine pride, practitioners need to learn to perceive their body and mind as Heruka's body and mind. Having accomplished this, they then use their imagined Heruka's body and mind as the basis of imputation for their 'I' or 'self' and develop the thought 'I am Buddha Heruka.' They then meditate on this divine pride with single-pointed concentration. Through training in this meditation they will gain a deep realization of divine pride, which spontaneously believes that they are Heruka. At this time they have changed the basis of imputation for their I.

From beginningless time, in life after life, the basis of imputation for our self or I has been only a contaminated body and mind. Because our self or I is imputed upon a contaminated body and mind, whenever we develop the thought 'I' we simultaneously develop self-grasping ignorance, a mind grasping at an

inherently existent 'I' and 'mine', which is the root of all our suffering. However, for qualified Heruka practitioners, their deep realization of divine pride prevents self-grasping ignorance from arising so there is no basis for their experiencing suffering; they will enjoy their pure environment, enjoyments, body and mind of Heruka.

We may ask how, if these practitioners are not yet actually Buddha Heruka, they can believe that they are; and how it is possible for them to gain the realization of divine pride if their view that believes themselves to be Heruka is a mistaken view? Although these practitioners are not actually Buddha Heruka, nevertheless they can believe that they are because they have changed their basis of imputation from their contaminated aggregates to the uncontaminated aggregates of Heruka. Their view that believes they are Buddha Heruka is not a mistaken view because it is non-deceptive and arises from the wisdom realizing that the inherently existent 'I' and 'mine' do not exist. Their realization of divine pride that spontaneously believes themselves to be Heruka therefore has the power to prevent self-grasping ignorance, the root of samsara, from arising.

As explained earlier, things do not exist from their own side. There are no inherently existent 'I', 'mine' and other phenomena; all phenomena exist as mere imputations. Things are imputed upon their basis of imputation by thought. What does 'basis of imputation' mean? For example, the parts of a car are the basis of imputation for the car. The parts of a car are not the car, but there is no car other than its parts. Car is imputed upon its parts by thought. How? Through perceiving any of the parts of the car we naturally develop the thought 'This is the car'. Similarly, our body and mind are not our self but are the basis of imputation for our self. Our self is imputed upon our body or mind by thought. Through perceiving our body or mind we naturally develop the thought 'I' or 'mine'. Without a basis of imputation things cannot exist; everything depends upon its basis of imputation.

Why is it necessary to change the basis of imputation for our self? As mentioned above, since beginningless time, in life after life until now, the basis of imputation for our self has only been the contaminated aggregates of body and mind. Because the basis of imputation for our self is contaminated by the poison of self-grasping ignorance, we experience the endless cycle of suffering. To free ourselves from suffering permanently we therefore need to change our basis of imputation from contaminated aggregates to uncontaminated aggregates.

How can we change our basis of imputation? In general, we have changed our basis of imputation countless times. In our previous lives we took countless rebirths, and each time the basis of imputation for our self was different. When we took a human rebirth our basis of imputation was a human body and mind,

and when we took an animal rebirth our basis of imputation was an animal's body and mind. Even in this life, when we were a baby our basis of imputation was a baby's body and mind, when we were a teenager our basis of imputation was a teenager's body and mind, and when we grow old our basis of imputation will be an old person's body and mind. All these countless bases of imputation are contaminated aggregates. We have never changed our basis of imputation from contaminated to uncontaminated aggregates. Only through relying upon Buddha's Tantric teachings can we accomplish this.

We change our basis of imputation from contaminated to uncontaminated aggregates by training in clear appearance and divine pride of being Heruka. As Buddha explained in his Tantric teachings, first we learn to purify our body and mind by meditating on the emptiness of the body, mind and all other phenomena. Perceiving only emptiness, we then generate ourself as an enlightened Deity such as Heruka. We then learn to perceive clearly our body and mind as Heruka's body and mind, our world as Heruka's Pure Land, and all those around us as enlightened Heroes and Heroines. This is called 'training in clear appearance'. Perceiving our body and mind as the uncontaminated aggregates of Heruka's body and mind, we develop the thought 'I am Buddha Heruka'. We then meditate on this divine pride continually with single-pointed concentration, until we gain a deep realization of divine pride that spontaneously believes we are Buddha Heruka. At this time we have changed our basis of imputation from contaminated to uncontaminated aggregates.

If we are normally called John, for example, we should never believe that John is Buddha Heruka, but feel that John disappeared into emptiness before we generated as Buddha Heruka. We then believe that our I, which is imputed upon Heruka's body and mind, is Buddha Heruka. This belief is not a mistaken view, because it arises from wisdom, whereas mistaken views necessarily arise from ignorance. The realization of divine pride arises from wisdom and is a powerful method for accumulating great merit and wisdom.

Even if we have the realization that spontaneously believes that we are Buddha Heruka we should never indicate or declare this to others, as such behaviour is inappropriate in normal society. People will still see us as John and not Heruka, and we also know that John is not Heruka. The realizations of divine pride and clear appearance are inner experiences that have the power to control our delusions, and from which pure actions will naturally develop. There is therefore no basis for us to show inappropriate behaviour; we must continue to engage in our daily activities and communicate with others as normal.

As mentioned before, Tantric realizations can be achieved simply through relying upon correct belief and imagination. This practice is very simple: all we

need to do is to become deeply familiar with meditation on correct belief and imagination as presented in Tantra, by applying continual effort. Understanding this we should be confident in our ability to accomplish generation stage realizations of Highest Yoga Tantra. Also, because our world and our self that we normally see do not exist, we have the precious opportunity to generate our new world and our self that are completely pure; this is generation stage. If our world and our self that we normally see existed it would be impossible to generate our world and our self as completely pure. When the strong perception of our world and our self that we normally see ceases through training in generation stage, we shall naturally experience our world and our self as completely pure. It is most important that our motivation for training in generation stage is the compassionate mind of bodhichitta.

The Tantra of Completion Stage

Generation stage is like drawing the basic outline of a picture and completion stage is like completing the picture. Whereas the principal objects of generation stage meditation – the mandala and Deities – are generated by correct imagination, the principal objects of completion stage meditation – the channels, drops and winds – already exist within our body and there is no need to generate them through the power of imagination. For this reason completion stage is not a creative yoga.

Completion stage Tantra is defined as an inner realization of learning developed in dependence upon the inner winds entering, abiding and dissolving within the central channel through the force of meditations. The objects of these meditations are the central channel, the indestructible drop, and the indestructible wind and mind.

THE CENTRAL CHANNEL

The central channel is located exactly midway between the left and right halves of the body, but is closer to the back than the front. Immediately in front of the spine is the life channel, which is quite thick, and in front of this is the central channel. It begins at the point between the eyebrows, from where it ascends in an arch to the crown of the head, and then descends in a straight line to the tip of the sex organ.

The central channel is pale blue on the outside and has four attributes: (1) it is very straight, like the trunk of a plantain tree; (2) inside it is an oily red colour, like pure blood; (3) it is very clear and transparent, like a candle flame; and (4) it is very soft and flexible, like a lotus petal.

At either side of the central channel, with no intervening space, are the right and left channels. The right channel is red in colour and the left is white. The right channel begins at the tip of the right nostril and the left channel at the tip of the left nostril. From there, they both ascend in an arch to the crown of the head, at either side of the central channel. From the crown of the head down to the navel, these three main channels are straight and adjacent to one another. As the left channel continues down below the level of the navel, it curves a little to the right, separating slightly from the central channel and rejoining it at the tip of the

sex organ. There it functions to hold and release sperm, blood and urine. As the right channel continues down below the level of the navel, it curves a little to the left and terminates at the tip of the anus, where it functions to hold and release faeces and so forth.

The right and left channels coil around the central channel at various places, thereby forming the so-called 'channel knots'. The four places at which these knots occur are, in ascending order: the navel channel wheel, or navel chakra, the heart channel wheel, the throat channel wheel and the crown channel wheel. At each of these places, except at the heart, there is a twofold knot formed by a single coil of the right channel and a single coil of the left. As the right and left channels ascend to these places, they coil around the central channel by crossing in front and then looping around it. They then continue upward to the level of the next knot. At the heart level, the same thing happens, except that here there is a sixfold knot formed by three overlapping loops of each of the flanking channels. The channels are the paths through which the inner winds and drops flow. To begin with, it is sufficient simply to become familiar with the description and visualization of the three channels.

AN EXPLANATION OF CHANNELS

There are three main channels: the central channel, the right channel and the left channel. The central channel is like the pole of an umbrella, running through the centre of each of the channel wheels, and the other two run either side of it. The central channel is pale blue and has four attributes: (1) it is very straight, like the trunk of a plantain tree; (2) inside it has an oily red colour, like pure blood; (3) it is very clear and transparent, like a candle flame; and (4) it is very soft and flexible, like a lotus petal.

The central channel is located exactly midway between the left and right halves of the body, but is closer to the back than the front. Immediately in front of the spine, there is the life channel, which is quite thick; and in front of this is the central channel. As mentioned before, it begins at the point between the eyebrows, from where it ascends in an arch to the crown of the head and then descends in a straight line to the tip of the sex organ. Although its most common name is the central channel, it is also known as the 'two abandonments' because gathering the winds into this channel causes the negative activity associated with the winds of the right and left channels to be abandoned. It is also known as the 'mind channel' and as 'Rahu'.

Either side of the central channel, with no intervening space, are the right and

left channels. The right channel is red in colour and the left is white. The right channel begins at the tip of the right nostril and the left channel at the tip of the left nostril. From there they both ascend in an arch to the crown of the head, either side of the central channel. From the crown of the head down to the navel, these three major channels are straight and adjacent to one another. As the left channel continues down below the level of the navel, it curves a little to the right, separating slightly from the central channel and rejoining it at the tip of the sex organ. There it functions to hold and release sperm, blood and urine. As the right channel continues down below the level of the navel, it curves a little to the left and terminates at the tip of the anus, where it functions to hold and release faeces and so forth.

Other names for the right channel are the 'sun channel', the 'speech channel' and the 'channel of the subjective holder'. This last title indicates that the winds flowing through this channel cause the generation of conceptions developed in terms of the subjective mind. Other names for the left channel are the 'moon channel', the 'body channel' and the 'channel of the held object', with the last title indicating that the winds flowing through this channel cause the generation of conceptions developed in terms of the object.

The right and left channels coil around the central channel at various places, thereby forming the so-called 'channel knots'. The four places at which these knots occur are, in ascending order, the navel channel wheel, the heart channel wheel, the throat channel wheel and the crown channel wheel. At each of these places, except at the heart level, there is one twofold knot formed by a single coil of the right channel and a single coil of the left. As the right and left channels ascend to these places, they coil around the central channel by crossing in front and then looping around it. They then continue upward to the level of the next knot. At the heart level, the same thing happens, except that here there is a sixfold knot formed by three overlapping loops of each of the flanking channels.

The four places where these knots occur are four of the six major channel wheels. At each of the six major channel wheels, a different number of spokes, or petals, branch off from the central channel in the same way that the ribs of an umbrella appear to branch off from the central pole. Thus, at the crown channel wheel (known as the 'great bliss wheel') there are thirty-two such petals or channel spokes, all of them white in colour. The centre is triangular with the apex facing forwards. (This refers to the shape of the coiled knot through which the spokes emanate, as seen from the top.) These thirty-two spokes arch downwards, like the ribs of an upright umbrella. A description of this and the three other major channel wheels where knots occur is given in Chart 1.

Chart 1 The Four Major Channel Wheels

<i>location</i>	<i>name</i>	<i>shape of centre</i>	<i>number of spokes</i>	<i>colour</i>	<i>direction of arching</i>
crown	great bliss wheel	triangular	thirty-two	white	downwards
throat	enjoyment wheel	circular	sixteen	red	upwards
heart	Dharma wheel	circular	eight	white	downwards
navel	emanation wheel	triangular	sixty-four	red	upwards

These four channel wheels contain a total of one hundred and twenty spokes. As for the remaining two major channel wheels, the channel wheel at the secret place has thirty-two red-coloured spokes arching downwards and the jewel channel wheel has eight white spokes arching upwards. It should also be noted that according to some texts the spokes at the crown, navel and secret place can be visualized as having various colours.

Since the heart channel wheel is of particular importance, it will now be described in more detail. Its eight spokes, or petals, are arranged in the cardinal and intermediate directions with the front being the east. In each spoke, there flows mainly the supporting wind of a particular element as indicated in Chart 2.

Chart 2 The Spokes of the Heart Channel Wheel

<i>direction</i>	<i>supporting wind</i>
east	of the earth element
north	of the wind element
west	of the fire element
south	of the water element
south-east	of the element of form
south-west	of the element of smell
north-west	of the element of taste
north-east	of the element of touch

From each of these eight petals or channel spokes of the heart, three channels split off, making twenty-four channels in all. These are the channels of the twenty-four places. They are all included in three groups of eight: the channels of the mind wheel, which are blue and contain mainly winds; the channels of the speech wheel, which are red and contain mostly red drops; and the channels of the body wheel, which are white and contain mostly white drops. Each channel goes to a different place in the body. These places are the twenty-four inner places. When we practise the extensive Heruka sadhana, we visualize the Deities of the body mandala at these places.

The outer tips of the eight channels of the mind wheel terminate at: (1) the hairline; (2) the crown; (3) the right ear; (4) the back of the neck; (5) the left ear; (6) the brow (the place between the eyebrows); (7) the two eyes; and (8) the two shoulders. Those of the speech wheel terminate at: (9) the two armpits; (10) the two breasts; (11) the navel; (12) the tip of the nose; (13) the mouth; (14) the throat; (15) the heart (the area midway between the two breasts); and (16) the two testicles or the two sides of the vagina. Finally, those of the body wheel terminate at: (17) the tip of the sex organ; (18) the anus; (19) the two thighs; (20) the two calves; (21) the eight fingers and eight lesser toes; (22) the tops of the feet; (23) the two thumbs and the two big toes; and (24) the two knees.

Each of these twenty-four channels splits into three branches, which are distinguished by the principal elements – winds, red drops and white drops – that flow through them. Each of these seventy-two channels then splits into a thousand, making seventy-two thousand channels in all. It is important for a Highest Yoga Tantric practitioner to be familiar with the arrangement of the channels since it is through gaining control over the winds and drops flowing through these channels that the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness is accomplished.

The winds in the body of an ordinary person flow through most of these channels except the central channel. Because these winds are impure, the various minds that they support are also impure, and so for as long as these winds continue to flow through the peripheral channels they will continue to support the various negative conceptions that keep us trapped in samsara. Through the force of meditation, however, these winds can be brought into the central channel, where they are no longer able to support the development of gross conceptions of dualistic appearance. With a mind free from dualistic appearances, we shall be able to gain a direct realization of ultimate truth, emptiness.

Corresponding to the twenty-four inner places of the Heruka body mandala are the ‘twenty-four outer places’, which are located at various points throughout

this world. Practitioners with pure karma can see these outer places of Heruka as Pure Lands, but people with impure karma see them only as ordinary places.

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE DROP

There are two types of drop in the body: white drops and red drops. The former are the pure essence of white seminal fluid or sperm, and the latter are the pure essence of blood. Both have gross and subtle forms. It is easy to recognize gross drops, but it is more difficult to recognize subtle drops.

The principal seat of the white drop (also known as ‘white bodhichitta’) is the crown channel wheel, and it is from here that the white seminal fluid originates. The principal seat of the red drop (also known as ‘red bodhichitta’) is the navel channel wheel, and it is from here that the blood originates. The red drop at the navel is also the foundation of the warmth of the body and the basis for attaining inner fire, or tummo, realizations. When the drops melt and flow through the channels, they give rise to an experience of bliss.

As just explained, at the heart channel wheel there is a sixfold knot formed by the right and left channels coiling around the central channel and constricting it. This is the most difficult knot to loosen, but when it is loosened through meditation we shall develop great power – the realization of clear light. Because the central channel at the heart is constricted by this sixfold knot, it is blocked like a tube of bamboo. Inside the central channel, at the very centre of this sixfold knot, is a small vacuole, and inside this is a drop called the ‘indestructible drop’. It is the size of a small pea, with the upper half white in colour and the lower half red. The substance of the white half is the very clear essence of sperm, and the substance of the red half is the very clear essence of blood. This drop, which is very pure and subtle, is the very essence of all drops. All the ordinary red and white drops throughout the body originally come from this drop.

The indestructible drop is like a small pea that has been cut in half, slightly hollowed out, and then rejoined. It is called the ‘indestructible drop’ because its two halves never separate until death. When we die, all the inner winds dissolve into the indestructible drop, and this causes the drop to open. As the two halves separate, our consciousness immediately leaves our body and goes to the next life.

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE WIND AND MIND

The nature of the indestructible wind is a very subtle 'inner wind'. Inner winds are energy winds that flow through the channels of the body, and they are much more subtle than outer winds. They are associated with, and act as mounts for, various minds. Without these winds our mind cannot move from one object to another. It is said that inner winds are like someone who is blind but who has legs, because they cannot perceive anything but can move from one place to another. Minds are like someone who has eyes but no legs, because minds can see but cannot move without their mount, the inner winds. Because minds are always mounted upon their associated inner winds, they can both see and move.

Inner winds that flow through the left and right channels are impure and harmful because they act as mounts for the minds of self-grasping, self-cherishing and other delusions. We need to make great effort to bring and dissolve these inner winds into the central channel so that we can prevent these delusions from arising.

For ordinary beings, inner winds enter, abide and dissolve within the central channel only during the death process and deep sleep. At these times the indestructible wind and mind manifest, but ordinary beings cannot recognize them because their memory or mindfulness is unable to function then. Completion stage Tantric practitioners can cause their inner winds to enter, abide and dissolve within the central channel at any time through the power of their meditation on the channels, drops and winds. They can therefore accomplish the realizations of the five stages of completion stage Tantra: (1) the initial realization of spontaneous great bliss (isolated body and speech of completion stage); (2) ultimate example clear light; (3) illusory body; (4) meaning clear light; and (5) the union of meaning clear light and the pure illusory body. From the fifth stage, practitioners will attain actual enlightenment within a few months.

There are five root and five branch winds. The root winds are: (1) the life-supporting wind; (2) the downward-voiding wind; (3) the upward-moving wind; (4) the equally-abiding wind; and (5) the pervading wind. The five branch winds are: (1) the moving wind; (2) the intensely-moving wind; (3) the perfectly-moving wind; (4) the strongly-moving wind; and (5) the definitely-moving wind.

AN EXPLANATION OF INNER WINDS

The definition of wind is any of the four elements that is light in weight and moving. Winds can be divided into external and internal winds, and into gross and subtle winds. Gross external wind is the wind we experience on a windy day. Subtle external wind is much more difficult to detect. It is the energy that makes plants grow and exists even inside rocks and mountains. It is with the help of subtle winds that plants draw up water, grow new leaves, and so forth. Such winds are the life-force of plants. Indeed, in some Tantric texts wind is called 'life' or 'life-force'. Thus, although it is incorrect to say that plants are alive in the sense of being conjoined with consciousness, we can say that they are alive in this sense.

Internal winds are the winds in the continuum of a person that flow through the channels of the body. The main function of internal winds is to move the mind to its object. The function of the mind is to apprehend objects, but without a wind to act as its mount it cannot move towards, or establish connection with, its object. Mind is sometimes likened to a lame person who can see, and wind to a blind person with legs. It is only by operating together with internal winds that minds can function.

There are many different winds flowing through the channels of the body, but all are included within the five root winds and the five branch winds. The five root winds are: (1) the life-supporting wind; (2) the downward-voiding wind; (3) the upward-moving wind; (4) the equally-abiding wind; and (5) the pervading wind.

Each of the five root winds has six characteristics by which it can be recognized: (1) its colour; (2) its associated Buddha family; (3) an element for which it serves as the support; (4) its principal seat or fundamental location; (5) its function; and (6) its direction (how it leaves the nostrils upon exhalation). These are summarized in [Chart 3](#).

The life-supporting wind is called the 'Akshobya wind' because, when it is completely purified, it transforms into the nature of Akshobya. At the moment, our life-supporting wind is like the seed of Akshobya's Form Body, but not Akshobya himself. The main function of the life-supporting wind is to support life by maintaining the connection between body and mind. The stronger the life-supporting wind, the longer we shall live. Another function of this wind is to support the water element of our body and to cause it to increase. The life-supporting wind is white in colour and its principal location is at the heart. When we exhale, it leaves from both nostrils, flowing gently downwards.

The downward-voiding wind is the seed of Ratnasambhava's Form Body and is associated with the earth element. It is yellow in colour and it functions to release urine, faeces, sperm and menstrual blood. Its principal locations are at

the anus and the sex organ, and when we exhale, it leaves horizontally from both nostrils, flowing heavily forwards.

The upward-moving wind is the seed of Amitabha's Form Body and is associated with the fire element. It is red in colour and it functions to enable us to swallow food and drink, to speak, to cough and so forth. Its principal location is at the throat, and when we exhale it leaves from the right nostril, flowing violently upwards.

The equally-abiding wind is the seed of Amoghasiddhi's Form Body and is associated with the wind element. It is greenish-yellow in colour and it functions to cause the inner fire to blaze, and to digest food and drink by separating the nutrients from waste matter. Its principal location is at the navel, and when we exhale it leaves from the left nostril, moving to the left and the right from the edge of the nostril.

The pervading wind is the seed of Vairochana's Form Body and is associated with the space element. It is pale blue in colour and, as its name suggests, it pervades the entire body, particularly the three hundred and sixty joints. It functions to enable the body to move. Without this wind we would be completely immobile, like a stone. This wind does not flow through the nostrils except at the moment of death.

Generally speaking, at any one time, one of the winds is flowing more strongly through the nostrils than the other winds. If, for example, the life-supporting wind is flowing strongly, the other winds (except the pervading wind) are flowing gently. Unless we observe our breath very carefully, it is difficult to notice the different movements of the four winds, but they definitely flow through our nostrils whenever we breathe.

Chart 3 The Root Winds

	<i>life-supporting</i>	<i>downward-voiding</i>	<i>upward-moving</i>	<i>equally-abiding</i>	<i>prevailing</i>
<i>colour</i>	white	yellow	red	green/yellow	pale blue
<i>Buddha family</i>	Akshobya	Ratnasambhava	Amitabha	Amoghasiddhi	Vairochana
<i>element</i>	water	earth	fire	wind	space
<i>seat</i>	heart	the two lower doors: the anus and the sex organ	throat	navel	both the upper and lower parts of the body, mainly the 360 joints
<i>function</i>	to support and maintain life	to retain and release urine, faeces, semen, blood, etc.	to speak, swallow, etc.	to cause the inner fire to blaze, to digest food and drink, etc.	to enable the body to come and go; to allow movement, lifting and placing
<i>direction</i>	from both nostrils, gently downwards	from both nostrils, horizontally forwards	from the right nostril, violently upwards	from the left nostril, moving to the left and the right from the edge of this nostril	this wind does not flow through the nostrils except at the moment of death

The five branch winds are: (1) the moving wind; (2) the intensely-moving wind; (3) the perfectly-moving wind; (4) the strongly-moving wind; and (5) the definitely-moving wind.

The five branch winds are so called because they branch off from the life-supporting wind, which resides in the heart centre. The main location of these winds is in the four channel spokes of the heart channel wheel, from where they flow through our channels to the five doors of the sense powers. Because they function to enable sense awarenesses to develop, the five branch winds are also called the 'five winds of the sense powers'. The colour and function of each branch wind are summarized in Chart 4.

Chart 4 The Branch Winds

<i>name</i>	<i>colour</i>	<i>function</i>
the moving wind	red	to enable the eye awareness to move to visual forms
the intensely-moving wind	blue	to enable the ear awareness to move to sounds
the perfectly-moving wind	yellow	to enable the nose awareness to move to smells
the strongly-moving wind	white	to enable the tongue awareness to move to tastes
the definitely-moving wind	green	to enable the body awareness to move to tactile objects

The first wind, the moving wind, flows from the heart through the door of the eyes to enable the eye awareness to move to its object, visual forms. Without the moving wind, eye awareness would be powerless to contact visual forms. The reason we cannot see when we are asleep is that the moving wind has withdrawn from the door of the eye sense power back to its seat at the heart.

The intensely-moving wind flows from the heart to the ears, enabling the ear awareness to move to sounds; the perfectly-moving wind flows from the heart to the nostrils, enabling the nose awareness to move to smells; the strongly-moving wind flows from the heart to the tongue, enabling the tongue awareness to move to tastes; and the definitely-moving wind flows from the heart all over the body, enabling the body awareness to move to tactile objects.

The downward-voiding wind, the upward-moving wind, the equally-abiding wind, the pervading wind, and the five branch winds are all gross internal winds. The life-supporting wind has three levels: gross, subtle and very subtle. Most mounted winds of conceptual thoughts are gross life-supporting winds; the mounted winds of the minds of white appearance, red increase and black near-attainment are subtle life-supporting winds; and the mounted wind of the mind of clear light is a very subtle life-supporting wind.

The life-supporting wind is very extensive. If a defiled life-supporting wind manifests, negative conceptual thoughts will develop, but if the life-supporting wind is purified, negative conceptual thoughts will be pacified. All meditations use the mental awareness, and the mounted wind of mental awareness is necessarily a life-supporting wind.

Each of the five winds of the sense powers and the gross life-supporting wind has two parts: a wind that develops the specific type of awareness, and a wind that moves the awareness towards its object. These twelve winds normally flow through the right and left channels, and are the principal objects to be purified by means of vajra recitation, as explained in *Tantric Grounds and Paths* and *Essence of Vajrayana*. If we want to overcome distractions, it is very important to cause these twelve winds to enter, abide and dissolve within the central channel.

The indestructible wind is the very subtle wind that is associated with, and acts as the mount for, the very subtle mind. It is called the 'continuously residing body' because we have had this body continuously in life after life. Although our mind of self-cherishing believes that our present body is our own body and cherishes it, in reality our present body is a part of others' bodies because it is part of our parents' bodies. Our self imputed upon our present body and mind will cease at the end of the death process, whereas our self imputed upon our

continuously residing body and mind will never cease, but goes from one life to the next. It is this person or I that will finally become an enlightened being. Through this we can understand that, according to Highest Yoga Tantra, in the mental continuum of each and every living being there is a deathless person or I who possesses a deathless body. However, without relying upon the profound instructions of Highest Yoga Tantra we cannot recognize our own deathless body and deathless I, our actual self. A Yogi once said:

First, due to fear of death, I ran towards Dharma.
Then I trained in the state of deathlessness.
Finally I realized there is no death and I relaxed!

Inside the indestructible drop resides the indestructible wind and mind, the union of our very subtle wind and very subtle mind. The very subtle wind is our own body, or continuously residing body. The very subtle mind, or indestructible mind, is our own mind, or continuously residing mind, and is mounted upon the very subtle wind. Because the union of our very subtle wind and very subtle mind never ceases, it is called the 'indestructible wind and mind'. Our indestructible wind and mind have never separated since beginningless time, and they will never separate in the future. The potential to communicate possessed by the combination of our very subtle body and mind is our very subtle speech, which is our own speech, or continuously residing speech. This will become a Buddha's speech in the future. In short, inside the indestructible drop is our own body, speech and mind, which in the future will become the enlightened body, speech and mind of a Buddha. These three, our very subtle body, speech and mind, are our real Buddha nature.

Having gained some experience of generation stage Tantra, which is like drawing the basic outline of a picture, we need to engage in the meditations on completion stage Tantra in order to complete the picture. These are the meditations on the central channel, indestructible drop, and indestructible wind and mind, known as the 'yogas of the channel, drop and wind'.

HOW TO MEDITATE ON THE CENTRAL CHANNEL

First, we should learn to perceive what our central channel looks like, contemplating as follows:

My central channel is located exactly midway between the left and right halves of my body, but is closer to the back than the front. Immediately in front of the spine, there is the life channel, which is quite thick, and in front of this is the central channel. It begins at the point between my eyebrows, from where it ascends in an arch to the crown of my head, and then descends in a straight line to the tip of my sex organ. It is pale blue in colour on the outside, and it is an oily red colour on the inside. It is clear and transparent, and very soft and flexible.

At the very beginning we can, if we wish, visualize the central channel as being fairly wide, and then gradually visualize it as being thinner and thinner until finally we are able to visualize it as being the width of a drinking straw. We contemplate like this repeatedly until we perceive a generic image of our central channel. Then, while believing that our mind is inside the central channel at our heart, we focus single-pointedly on the central channel at the level of our heart and meditate on this. We should train continually in this way until we gain deep experience of this meditation.

HOW TO MEDITATE ON THE INDESTRUCTIBLE DROP

To perceive our indestructible drop, we contemplate as follows:

Inside my central channel at the level of my heart there is a small vacuole. Inside this is my indestructible drop. It is the size of a small pea, with the upper half white in colour and the lower half red. It is like a pea that has been cut in half, slightly hollowed out, and then rejoined. It is the very essence of all drops and is very pure and subtle. Even though it is the substance of blood and sperm, it has a very clear nature, like a tiny ball of crystal that radiates five-coloured rays of light.

We contemplate like this repeatedly until we perceive a clear generic image of our indestructible drop at our heart inside our central channel. With the feeling that our mind is inside our indestructible drop at our heart, we meditate on this drop single-pointedly without distraction.

This meditation is a powerful method for causing our inner winds to enter, abide and dissolve within the central channel. Master Ghantapa said:

We should meditate single-pointedly

On the indestructible drop that always abides at our heart.
Those who are familiar with this meditation
Will definitely develop exalted wisdom.

Here ‘exalted wisdom’ means the wisdom of the clear light of bliss experienced when the knots at the heart channel wheel are loosened. Of all the knots in the central channel, these are the most difficult to loosen; but if from the beginning of our completion stage practice we concentrate on our heart channel wheel, this will help us to loosen these knots. This meditation, therefore, is a powerful method for gaining qualified completion stage realizations.

HOW TO MEDITATE ON THE INDESTRUCTIBLE WIND AND MIND

To gain deeper experience of the wisdom of the clear light of bliss, we engage in meditation on the indestructible wind and mind. First we find the object of this meditation, that is, the clear perception of our indestructible wind and mind, by contemplating as follows:

Inside my indestructible drop is the union of my indestructible wind and mind in the aspect of a tiny nada, which symbolizes Heruka’s mind of clear light. It is reddish-white in colour and radiates five-coloured rays of light. My indestructible drop, located inside my central channel at my heart, is like a cave, and the union of my indestructible wind and mind is like someone living inside this cave.

An illustration of the nada can be found in *Modern Buddhism – Volume 1: Sutra*. We contemplate repeatedly in this way until we perceive the nada, which is the nature of the union of our indestructible wind and mind. With the strong recognition that the nada is the union of our very subtle wind and mind, and feeling that our mind has entered into this nada, we meditate single-pointedly on the nada without forgetting it.

Through gaining deep experience of the meditations on the central channel, the indestructible drop and the union of the indestructible wind and mind, our inner winds will enter, abide and dissolve within the central channel, and we shall experience special signs. We can tell whether or not the winds have entered the central channel by checking our breathing. Normally there are imbalances in our

breath – more air is exhaled through one nostril than through the other, and the air begins to leave one nostril before the other. However, when the winds have entered the central channel as a result of the meditations explained above, the pressure and the timing of the breath will be the same for both nostrils during inhalation and exhalation. Therefore, the first sign to be noticed is that we will be breathing evenly through both nostrils. Another noticeable imbalance in the normal breath is that the inhalation is stronger than the exhalation, or vice versa. The second sign that the winds have entered the central channel is that the pressure of the inhalation will be exactly equal to that of the exhalation.

There are also two signs indicating that the winds are abiding in the central channel: (1) our breathing becomes weaker and weaker, eventually ceasing completely, and (2) all abdominal movement normally associated with the breath stops. In the normal course of events, if our breathing were to stop we would be filled with panic and think that we were close to death, but if we are able to stop breathing through the force of meditation, far from panicking our mind will become even more confident, comfortable and flexible.

When the winds are abiding within the central channel, we no longer have to rely upon gross air to survive. Normally our breathing stops only at the time of death. During sleep our breathing becomes much more subtle, but it never stops completely. During completion stage meditation, however, our breath can come to a complete halt without our becoming unconscious. After the winds have been abiding in the central channel for five or ten minutes, it is possible that they will escape again into the right and left channels. If this happens, we shall resume breathing. Air flowing through the nostrils is an indication that the winds are not abiding within the central channel.

What are the signs that the winds have dissolved within the central channel? There are seven winds that must dissolve, and each has a specific sign indicating that its dissolution has been completed. The seven winds are: (1) the earth element wind; (2) the water element wind; (3) the fire element wind; (4) the wind element wind; (5) the wind mounted by the mind of white appearance; (6) the wind mounted by the mind of red increase; and (7) the wind mounted by the mind of black near-attainment. The first four of these winds are gross and the last three are subtle. These seven winds dissolve gradually in sequence, and with each dissolution there is a particular appearance.

The earth element wind supports and increases everything that is associated with the earth element in our body, such as our bones, cartilage and fingernails. When this wind dissolves within the central channel, we perceive an appearance known as the ‘mirage-like appearance’. This is like the appearance of shimmering water that is sometimes seen on the floor of a desert. There are three

levels on which this mirage-like appearance is perceived, depending upon the degree to which the earth element wind has dissolved within the central channel. If the dissolution is only slight the appearance will be vague, the least clear, and very difficult to recognize; if the dissolution is almost complete the appearance will be clearer and more vivid; and if the wind dissolves completely the appearance will be unmistakably clear and vivid, and impossible not to perceive. When the earth element wind has dissolved and the mirage-like appearance has been perceived, the next wind will dissolve and a different appearance will manifest. The more completely the first wind dissolves, the more vivid will be our perception of this next appearance.

The second wind to dissolve is the water element wind, which supports and increases the liquid elements of the body such as the blood. The appearance associated with this dissolution is called the 'smoke-like appearance'. Some texts say that this appearance is like smoke billowing from a chimney, but this is not the actual appearance. There is an appearance like billowing smoke, but this occurs just prior to the actual dissolution of the water element wind. It is not until this initial appearance has subsided that the actual smoke-like appearance is perceived. This is like thin wisps of wafting blue smoke drifting in the air in a slowly swirling haze. As before, there are three levels on which this appearance is perceived, depending upon the degree to which the water element wind has dissolved.

Next comes the dissolution of the fire element wind. This wind supports and increases the fire element in the body and is responsible for bodily heat and so forth. The sign that this wind has dissolved is the 'sparkling-fireflies-like appearance'. This appearance is sometimes described in terms of an open crackling fire seen at night, with the mass of ascending sparks swirling above the fire resembling the sparkling-fireflies-like appearance. Once again, there are three levels on which this appearance is perceived, depending upon the degree of dissolution.

Following this, the wind element wind dissolves. This is the wind mounted by gross conceptual thought. It powers gross dualistic appearances and the gross conceptual thoughts that result from holding these appearances to be true. The sign that the fourth of the gross winds has started to dissolve is the 'candle-flame-like appearance'. This is like the steady, erect flame of a candle in a draughtless room. Once again there are three levels on which this appearance is perceived.

When the earth element wind has dissolved within the central channel and the power of the earth element is thereby diminished, it may seem as though the water element has increased because, as the power of the former element

diminishes, the latter is perceived more clearly. For this reason, the dissolution of the earth element wind into the central channel is often described as ‘the earth element dissolving into the water element’. For similar reasons, the subsequent dissolutions are referred to as ‘the water element dissolving into the fire element’, ‘the fire element dissolving into the wind element’, and ‘the wind element dissolving into consciousness’.

After the candle-flame-like appearance, all gross conceptual minds have ceased functioning because the winds upon which they are mounted have dissolved and disappeared. When the meditator has completed the dissolution of the fourth wind, the first subtle mind – the mind of white appearance – arises. With this mind, the meditator perceives an appearance of whiteness, like the bright light of the moon pervading an empty sky on a clear autumn night. As before, there are three levels of clarity to this appearance depending upon the ability of the meditator.

At this point the mind is completely free from gross conceptions, such as the eighty indicative conceptions listed in *Clear Light of Bliss*, and the only perception is that of white, empty space. Ordinary beings also perceive this appearance, for example, at the time of death, but they are unable to recognize it or to prolong it because at this stage the ordinary gross level of mindfulness has ceased to function. However, even though there is no gross mindfulness at this stage, those who have trained properly according to the practices of completion stage Tantra are able to use the subtle mindfulness they have developed during meditation to recognize and prolong the white appearance, something that ordinary beings are unable to do.

When the subtle wind mounted by the mind of white appearance dissolves, the mind of red increase arises. This mind and its mounted wind are more subtle than the mind and wind of white appearance. The sign that occurs when this mind arises is an appearance like red sunlight pervading an empty sky. Once again, there are three levels of clarity to this appearance.

When the subtle wind mounted by the mind of red increase dissolves, the mind of black near-attainment arises. This mind and its mounted wind are even more subtle than the mind and wind of red increase. The mind of black near-attainment has two levels: the upper part and the lower part. The upper part of the mind of black near-attainment still possesses subtle mindfulness, but the lower part has no mindfulness at all. It is experienced as an overwhelming unconsciousness, like that of a very deep faint. At this point, we would appear to others to be dead.

The sign that occurs when the mind of black near-attainment arises is an appearance like a very black, empty sky. This appearance comes with the upper

part of the mind of black near-attainment, immediately after the cessation of the mind of red increase. As the experience of black near-attainment progresses and we approach complete unconsciousness, our subtle mindfulness ceases. The more strongly the wind dissolves into the central channel, the more deeply unconscious we become during the mind of black near-attainment; and the more deeply unconscious we become at this time, the more vividly we shall perceive the subsequent appearance of clear light. This is similar to the experience of someone who stays in a dark room for a long time; the longer he stays there, the brighter the outside world will appear when he eventually emerges. Thus, the degree of brightness experienced depends upon the depth and duration of the previous darkness.

When the subtle wind mounted by the mind of black near-attainment dissolves, the mind of clear light arises. This mind and its mounted wind are the most subtle of all. The sign that occurs when this mind arises is an appearance like an autumn sky at dawn – perfectly clear and empty.

When the mind of clear light arises, a very subtle mindfulness is restored, according to the meditator's level of development. The very subtle wind and the very subtle mind that is mounted upon it, reside in the indestructible drop in the centre of the heart channel wheel. Normally the very subtle mind does not function, but at the time of the clear light it manifests and becomes active. If we have trained in the techniques of completion stage Tantra, and have become proficient in them, we shall be able to perceive and maintain the appearance of clear light. Eventually, by learning to use the very subtle mindfulness developed at this stage, we shall be able to focus our very subtle mind on emptiness, and in this way use the mind of clear light as the means for attaining a Buddha's Truth Body.

Our mind cannot become more subtle than the mind of clear light. During the first four appearances (mirage-like, smoke-like, sparkling-fireflies-like and candle-flame-like) the gross winds dissolve; and during the next three (white appearance, red increase and black near-attainment) the subtle winds dissolve. Then, with the appearance of the clear light, the very subtle mind and its mounted wind manifest and become active. These cannot dissolve because they are indestructible. After death, they simply pass to the next life.

Of the three subtle winds mounted by the three subtle minds, the least subtle is that mounted by the mind of white appearance. This mind is called 'white appearance' because all that is perceived is an appearance of white, empty space. It is also called 'empty' because the mind of white appearance perceives this white space as empty. At this stage the appearance of white and the appearance of empty are of equal strength.

When the wind mounted by the mind of white appearance dissolves, the second of the three subtle minds – the mind of red increase – arises. The mounted wind of this mind is more subtle than that mounted by the mind of white appearance. This mind is called ‘red increase’ because the appearance of red space is increasing. It is also called ‘very empty’ because the appearance of empty is stronger than that of the previous mind. At this stage the appearance of empty is stronger than the appearance of red.

When the wind of the mind of red increase dissolves, the third subtle mind – the mind of black near-attainment – arises. This mind is called ‘near-attainment’ because the experience of clear light is now close at hand. It is also called ‘great empty’ because the appearance of empty is even greater than that of the previous mind.

When the third subtle wind, that mounted by the mind of black near-attainment, dissolves, the mind of clear light arises. This mind is called ‘clear light’ because its nature is very lucid and clear, and because it perceives an appearance like the light of an autumn dawn. It is also called ‘all-empty’ because it is empty of all gross and subtle winds and perceives only an empty appearance. The object of the mind of clear light is very similar in appearance to the object perceived by a Superior being in meditative equipoise on emptiness. Collectively, the four minds – the mind of white appearance, the mind of red increase, the mind of black near-attainment and the mind of clear light – are referred to as the ‘four empties’.

If a completion stage meditator is highly accomplished, he or she will have a very vivid experience of clear light and will be able to maintain that experience for a long time. Just how vivid our experience of clear light is depends upon how vivid the previous seven appearances were, and this in turn depends upon how strongly the winds dissolve within the central channel. If the winds dissolve very strongly, the meditator will have a vivid experience of all the appearances and will be able to prolong the experience of each one. The longer we are able to remain with the experience of each appearance, the longer we shall be able to remain with the clear light itself.

If a person dies a violent death, he or she progresses through these appearances very rapidly, but if the death is slow or natural the appearances from mirage-like to clear light will be experienced more gradually and for longer. If we have developed the realization of ultimate example clear light, we shall be able to have exactly the same experience of these appearances while in deep concentration that we would have if we were actually dying. Moreover, if we have trained well in the meditations explained above, we shall be able to meditate on emptiness throughout all four empties, except during the time spent

in the swoon, or faint, of the mind of black near-attainment.

To be able to perceive the four empties clearly, exactly as in the death process, we must be able to dissolve all the winds into the indestructible drop in the centre of the heart channel wheel. If they dissolve into another channel wheel of the central channel, such as the navel channel wheel, we shall experience similar appearances, but they will be artificial – not the true appearances that occur when the winds dissolve into the indestructible drop, as they do at the time of death.

Although an accomplished meditator can abide within the clear light for a long time, he or she must eventually move on. When we arise from the clear light, the first thing we experience is the mind of black near-attainment of reverse order. Then we experience in sequence the mind of red increase, the mind of white appearance, the eighty gross conceptual minds, the minds of the candle-flame-like appearance and so forth, as the minds evolve in an order that is the reverse of that in which they previously dissolved.

Thus the mind of clear light is the foundation of all other minds. When the gross and subtle minds and their mounted winds dissolve into the indestructible drop at the heart, we remain with only the clear light, and then it is from this clear light that all the other minds evolve, each one grosser than the previous one.

These sequences of serial and reverse order are experienced by ordinary beings during sleep and the initial stages of waking up, during death and the initial stages of their next rebirth, and by qualified completion stage practitioners during meditation. Because enlightened beings have attained permanent cessation of the seven winds listed above, they experience only the very subtle mind of clear light – even their compassion and bodhichitta are part of their mind of clear light.



Ghantapa

The Completion Stage of Mahamudra

The term ‘Mahamudra’ is Sanskrit. ‘Maha’ means ‘great’ and refers to great bliss, and ‘mudra’ here means ‘non-deceptive’ and refers to emptiness.

Mahamudra is the union of great bliss and emptiness. Mahamudra Tantra is defined as a mind of fully qualified clear light that experiences great bliss and realizes emptiness directly. Because emptiness is explained in detail in Buddha’s Sutra teachings and is a part of Mahamudra, some texts say that it is Sutra Mahamudra; but actual Mahamudra is necessarily a realization of Highest Yoga Tantra.

The instructions on Mahamudra Tantra given by the Wisdom Buddha Je Tsongkhapa Losang Dragpa are superior to those given by other scholars. As the scholar Gungtang says in *Prayer for the Flourishing of the Doctrine of Je Tsongkhapa*:

The emptiness that is explained in Buddha’s Sutra teachings,
And the great bliss that is explained in Buddha’s Tantric teachings –
The union of these two is the very essence of Buddha’s eighty-four thousand
teachings.

May the doctrine of Conqueror Losang Dragpa flourish for evermore.

The nature of Mahamudra is a fully qualified clear light. As mentioned previously there are many different levels of the experience of clear light depending upon the degree of dissolution of the inner winds into the central channel. The realization of great bliss developed in dependence upon the inner winds entering, abiding and dissolving within the central channel, prior to attaining the fully qualified clear light, is the first of the five stages of completion stage. It is called ‘isolated body and speech of completion stage’, which means that at this stage the practitioner is free, or isolated, from gross ordinary appearances and conceptions of body and speech.

A fully qualified clear light mind experiencing great bliss that realizes emptiness with a generic image is called ‘ultimate example clear light’. This realization is called ‘ultimate’ because it is a fully qualified clear light. It is called ‘example’ because by using this realization as an example, practitioners understand that they can accomplish a fully qualified clear light mind experiencing great bliss that realizes emptiness directly, which is called

‘meaning clear light’. The realization of ultimate example clear light is the second of the five stages of completion stage. It is also called ‘isolated mind’ because at this stage practitioners are free, or isolated, from gross ordinary appearances and conceptions of mind.

When practitioners arise from the concentration of ultimate example clear light, their indestructible wind – their continuously residing body – transforms into the illusory body. This is a divine body, which in nature is wisdom light having the aspect of the divine body of an enlightened Deity such as Heruka. The colour of the illusory body is white. The realization of this illusory body is the third of the five stages of completion stage, and is called ‘illusory body of the third stage’.

Practitioners who have attained the illusory body of the third stage meditate on emptiness again and again with their clear light mind of bliss until they directly realize the emptiness of all phenomena. When they accomplish this they attain ‘meaning clear light’, a fully qualified clear light mind experiencing great bliss that realizes the emptiness of all phenomena directly. This realization of meaning clear light is the fourth of the five stages of completion stage, and is called ‘meaning clear light of the fourth stage’. ‘Meaning clear light’ and ‘Mahamudra Tantra’ are synonymous.

When practitioners arise from the concentration of meaning clear light they attain the pure illusory body and completely abandon ordinary conceptions and all other delusions. When these practitioners manifest meaning clear light again, they will attain the union of meaning clear light and pure illusory body. The realization of this union is the fifth of the five stages of completion stage, and is called ‘union of the fifth stage’. From this fifth stage practitioners will attain actual enlightenment – the Path of No More Learning, or Buddhahood.

As mentioned above, Mahamudra is the union of great bliss and emptiness. This means that Mahamudra Tantra is a single mind that is both bliss and wisdom: it experiences great bliss and realizes emptiness directly. Mahamudra Tantra is a collection of merit that is the main cause of a Buddha’s Form Body, and a collection of wisdom that is the main cause of a Buddha’s Truth Body, or Dharmakaya. When training in the meditations of Mahamudra Tantra we are transforming our continuously residing body and mind into a Buddha’s Form Body and Truth Body. Mahamudra Tantra, therefore, gives inconceivable meaning to our life.

GREAT BLISS

The bliss explained by Buddha in completion stage Tantra is unequalled among all other types of bliss and is therefore called 'great bliss'.

In general, there are many different types of bliss. For example, ordinary beings sometimes experience some artificial bliss when they engage in sexual activity, and qualified meditators experience a special bliss of suppleness during deep meditation due to their pure concentration, especially when they attain tranquil abiding and accomplish the concentration of the absorption of cessation. Moreover when Dharma practitioners, through training in higher moral discipline, higher concentration and higher wisdom, attain permanent inner peace by abandoning self-grasping, they experience a profound bliss of inner peace day and night in life after life. These types of bliss are mentioned in Buddha's Sutra teachings. The bliss of completion stage, however, is quite different from all of these, and is vastly superior. The bliss of completion stage – great bliss – is a bliss that possesses two special characteristics: (1) its nature is a bliss arisen from the melting of the drops inside the central channel; and (2) its function is to prevent subtle mistaken appearance. No other form of bliss possesses these two characteristics.

A bliss possessing these two characteristics can be experienced only by those who are engaged in Highest Yoga Tantra practice, and by Buddhas. Even many high Bodhisattvas abiding in Pure Lands have no opportunity to experience it because, although they have very high realizations, their bodies lack the necessary physical conditions for generating bliss possessing the two characteristics. What are these conditions? They are the three elements of flesh, skin and blood that come from the mother; and the three elements of bone, marrow and sperm that come from the father. These six elements are essential for accomplishing this bliss, which is the quick path to Buddhahood. It was because humans possessed these conditions that Buddha explained Tantric teachings to us in the first place. Therefore, from this point of view, we are more fortunate than many high Bodhisattvas abiding in Pure Lands who are experiencing great enjoyments. It is said that these Bodhisattvas pray to be born in the human world so that they can meet a qualified Vajra Master and practise the quick path to enlightenment. In *Song of the Spring Queen*, Je Tsongkhapa says that without experiencing this bliss there is no possibility of attaining liberation in this life. It goes without saying, therefore, that without this bliss there is no possibility of attaining full enlightenment in this life.

If we develop and maintain this bliss through the practice of completion stage meditation, we can transform our attachment into a special method for completing the quick path to enlightenment. Before we attain this bliss, our attachment causes us to be reborn in samsara, but once we have this bliss our

attachment causes us to be released from samsara. Moreover, once we attain this bliss we shall be able to stop our samsaric rebirths very quickly. The cause of samsara is our mind of self-grasping. According to the teachings of Highest Yoga Tantra, self-grasping depends upon its mounted wind, which flows through the right and left channels. For human beings, without this wind self-grasping cannot develop. By gaining the bliss of completion stage, we can gradually reduce the inner winds of the right and left channels until finally they cease completely. When they cease, our self-grasping ceases, and we experience liberation from samsara.

From this we can see that in Sutra alone there is no liberation, not to mention full enlightenment. The Highest Yoga Tantra teachings are Buddha's ultimate intention, and the Sutra teachings are like the basic foundation. Although there are many explanations of how to attain liberation or nirvana in the Sutra teachings, if we check precisely it is very difficult to understand from Sutra teachings how nirvana can be attained. 'Nirvana' means 'the state beyond sorrow' – the permanent cessation of self-grasping and its mounted wind – and its nature is emptiness. If we have never heard Highest Yoga Tantra teachings and someone asks us precisely how we attain such a nirvana, we cannot give a perfect answer. As Je Tsongkhapa said, the final answer can be found only in teachings on Highest Yoga Tantra.

The bliss that arises from the melting of drops inside channels other than the central channel has no special qualities. When ordinary beings engage in sexual intercourse, for example, this causes their downward-voiding wind to move upwards, and this in turn causes their ordinary inner heat, or tummo, to increase in their right and left channels, principally in the left. As a result the red drops of the woman and the white drops of the man melt and flow through the left channel. This flowing of the drops causes them to experience some bliss, but it is very short-lived and the drops are soon released. Having had this brief experience of bliss, they are not left with any good results, except maybe a baby!

By contrast, when a qualified Tantric practitioner practises the completion stage meditations that are explained above, he or she will cause his inner winds to gather, abide and dissolve within the central channel. This will cause the downward-voiding wind located just below the navel to move upwards. Normally this wind functions to release the drops, but because it is now rising within the central channel, the inner heat located at the navel will increase inside the central channel, thereby causing the drops to melt and flow also inside the central channel.

For the practitioner of a male Deity, the white drop begins to flow down from the crown and, when it reaches the throat, the practitioner experiences a very

special bliss possessing the two characteristics, or qualities. As the drop flows down to the heart, the bliss becomes stronger and more qualified; as it flows down to the navel, the bliss becomes even stronger and more qualified; and finally, as it flows down to the tip of the sex organ, the practitioner experiences spontaneous great bliss – the great bliss of completion stage. Because the downward-voiding wind is reversed, the drop is not released at this point but flows up again through the central channel, causing the practitioner to experience even greater bliss. For such a practitioner, the drops are never released and so they flow up and down the central channel for a very long time, giving rise to unceasing bliss. The practitioner can cause such bliss to manifest at any time simply by penetrating the central channel with concentration.

The stronger this bliss becomes, the more subtle our mind becomes. Gradually our mind becomes very peaceful, all conceptual distractions disappear, and we experience very special suppleness. This mind is infinitely superior to the experience of tranquil abiding explained in Sutra teachings. Moreover, as our mind becomes more subtle our subtle mistaken appearance is reduced, and eventually our mind becomes the very subtle mind of the clear light of bliss. This is a very high realization. When the clear light of bliss concentrates on emptiness it mixes with emptiness very easily because subtle mistaken appearance is greatly reduced. Finally it realizes emptiness directly, and whereas previously it felt as if our bliss and emptiness were two things, now they have become one nature. This mind is the union of great bliss and emptiness, or meaning clear light.

The initial realization of the union of great bliss and emptiness is the path of seeing of Highest Yoga Tantra. However, even though it is only the path of seeing, it has the power to eliminate both the intellectually-formed delusions and innate delusions together. When the practitioner rises from this concentration of the union of bliss and emptiness, he or she has abandoned all the delusions and has attained liberation. At the same time, he or she has attained the pure illusory body. From that moment, the practitioner's body is a vajra body, which means a deathless body, and he or she will never again experience ageing, sickness or contaminated rebirth.

As mentioned above, previously when the practitioner was ordinary, he or she was using a body taken from others – from his or her parents. We normally say 'My body, my body' as if our present gross body is our real body, but this is not our actual body because originally it was part of our parents' bodies. When a Tantric practitioner attains a vajra body, however, he has manifested his own body, the continuously residing body. When he perceives this vajra body he develops the thoughts 'I' and 'mine'. Such a practitioner has now become a

deathless person.

We have had our very subtle body, very subtle speech and very subtle mind since beginningless time. These are the continuously residing body, the continuously residing speech and the continuously residing mind, and they are our actual Buddha nature. The Buddha nature explained in Sutra is not actual Buddha nature because it is a gross object that will cease; actual Buddha nature is explained only in Highest Yoga Tantra. Normally, for ordinary beings, the only times their very subtle body, speech and mind become manifest are during deep sleep and death. However, even though they are not normally manifest, our very subtle body is the seed of a Buddha's body, our very subtle speech is the seed of a Buddha's speech, and our very subtle mind is the seed of a Buddha's mind.

As already mentioned, the very subtle body is the very subtle wind upon which the very subtle mind is mounted. This very subtle body and very subtle mind are always together. Since they are the same nature, and are never separated, they are called the 'indestructible wind' and the 'indestructible mind'. The union of the indestructible wind and mind is normally located inside the indestructible drop, inside the central channel at the heart.

Our very subtle mind manifests only when all our inner winds dissolve within our central channel. When this happens we gradually experience the eight signs described previously, as we pass through the different levels of dissolution. Finally, with the last level of dissolution, the very subtle mind of clear light becomes manifest. At the same time, the very subtle body also becomes manifest.

During death, the inner winds dissolve naturally and fully within the central channel and the very subtle mind and very subtle body naturally become manifest, but we cannot recognize them. However, by practising the completion stage meditations explained above, we can cause our very subtle mind and body to become manifest during meditation. Until we attain the realization of illusory body, our very subtle body will not maintain a definite shape or colour. When we attain the union of bliss and emptiness, our very subtle mind transforms into meaning clear light and, when we rise from that meditation, our very subtle body transforms into the vajra body, or pure illusory body, which does have definite shape, colour and so forth.

For example, if we are a Heruka practitioner, whenever we do self-generation as Heruka with a blue-coloured body, four faces, twelve arms and so on, we are building the basic foundation for the illusory body. In the future, when our very subtle body transforms into the illusory body it will look like real Heruka. Previously it was merely an imagined body, but at this time it will become real. This is a very good reason for now practising generation stage very sincerely.

When we attain the pure illusory body, we shall no longer think of our gross body as our body. The basis for imputing our I will have completely changed, and we shall now impute I in dependence upon our subtle body. When we have reached this attainment, we shall have become deathless because our body and mind will never separate. Death is the permanent separation of body and mind, but the body and mind of those who have attained the illusory body never separate because they are indestructible. Finally, our pure illusory body will transform into Buddha's Form Body and our union of bliss and emptiness will transform into Buddha's Truth Body, and we shall experience the union of Buddha's Form Body and Truth Body, the Union of No More Learning.

In the section on the benefits of bodhichitta in *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* Shantideva says:

Just like the supreme elixir that transmutes into gold,
Bodhichitta can transform this impure body we have taken
Into the priceless jewel of a Buddha's form;
Therefore, firmly maintain bodhichitta.

Here, 'elixir' refers to a special substance that can transform iron into gold, like that used by great Masters such as Nagarjuna. This verse says that bodhichitta is a special method that, like a supreme elixir, has the power to transform our impure body into a Buddha's Form Body. How can it do this? According to Sutra, a practitioner cannot attain enlightenment in one life but must practise for many lives until finally he or she is born into Akanishta Pure Land with a pure body. It is only with this pure body that he or she can attain Buddhahood. There is no method in either Sutra or Tantra for transforming our present impure body into a Buddha's body. This impure body must eventually die; it must be left behind. Even the holy Buddha Shakyamuni himself left behind the gross body that came from his parents when he passed away. Thus, if we ask how bodhichitta can transform this impure body into a Buddha's body, there is no correct answer within Sutra teachings. This is because, according to Sutra teachings, the gross body is the real body; the Sutras never mention the continuously residing body, the vajra body, or the deathless body.

By following the Tantric view, however, we can answer this question as follows. The body referred to by Shantideva is not the gross body, but our own body, our continuously residing body, which is the very subtle wind upon which our very subtle mind is mounted. At present this is an impure body because it is obscured by delusions and other obstructions, like a blue sky covered by clouds. These defilements are not the nature of our subtle body, but are temporary

defilements. The method for transforming this impure body into a Buddha's Form Body is not conventional bodhichitta, but the ultimate bodhichitta of Highest Yoga Tantra, the union of great bliss and emptiness. This ultimate bodhichitta can directly transform our impure continuously residing body first into the pure illusory body and finally into the Form Body of a Buddha. Since Shantideva himself was a sincere Tantric practitioner, we can be certain that this was his intended meaning.

As mentioned previously, to generate the bliss that possesses two special qualities we need to gather and dissolve our inner winds within our central channel. There are two ways to do this: by penetrating our own body or by penetrating another's body.

We begin by penetrating our own body. Here, the term 'our own body' refers to our channels, drops and winds, and 'penetrate' to concentrating on our central channel, drops and winds, as already explained. Meditation on the central channel is called the 'yoga of the central channel', meditation on the drops is called the 'yoga of the drop', and meditation on the winds is called the 'yoga of wind'.

Penetrating another's body means relying upon an action mudra, or consort, and engaging in sexual intercourse. However, just penetrating another's body will not bring our inner winds into our central channel if we do not already have deep experience of and familiarity with the yoga of the central channel, the yoga of the drop and the yoga of wind. This means that we must have gained the experience of dissolving some of our inner winds within the central channel at the heart channel wheel and, through this practice, be able to perceive clearly the eight signs of dissolution from the mirage-like appearance to the clear light. Only when we have such experience is it the right time to rely upon an action mudra. This order of practice is very important.

There are only ten doors through which the winds can enter the central channel. They are located along the central channel as follows: (1) the upper tip of the central channel: the point between the eyebrows; (2) the lower tip: the tip of the sex organ; (3) the centre of the crown channel wheel: located in the apex of the cranium; (4) the centre of the throat channel wheel: located near the back of the throat; (5) the centre of the heart channel wheel: located between the two breasts; (6) the centre of the navel channel wheel; (7) the centre of the secret place channel wheel: four finger-widths below the navel; (8) the centre of the jewel channel wheel: located in the centre of the sex organ, near its tip; (9) the wheel of wind: the centre of the forehead channel wheel; and (10) the wheel of fire: the centre of the channel wheel located midway between the throat and the heart channel wheels. Just as we can enter a house through any of the doors

leading in from the outside, so the winds can enter the central channel through any of these ten doors.

The central channel is in reality one single channel, but it is divided into different sections: the central channel of the crown channel wheel, the central channel of the throat channel wheel, the central channel of the heart channel wheel, the central channel of the navel channel wheel, and so forth. Because there are these different locations, when a practitioner wants to bring his or her winds into the central channel, he or she must choose one of these points at which to concentrate.

In *Clear Light of Bliss*, I explain how to bring the inner winds into the central channel through the sixth of the ten doors, the centre of the navel channel wheel. We do this by visualizing our inner heat, known as tummo, inside our central channel at the navel in the aspect of a short-AH and meditating on this. This common practice, known as ‘tummo meditation’, accords with the tradition of the Six Yogas of Naropa. It was originally explained in *Hevajra Root Tantra* by Buddha Vajradhara, and since then has been used by many practitioners such as Milarepa and his disciples, and later by practitioners in Je Tsongkhapa’s tradition. However, the instructions of the Ganden Oral Lineage present an uncommon Mahamudra Tantra practice. This is a very special practice of Mahamudra that Je Tsongkhapa received directly from Manjushri, who had received it directly from Buddha. The lineage of this instruction, the Ganden Oral Lineage, which is a close lineage, was then passed to Togden Jampel Gyatso, Baso Chokyi Gyaltzen, Mahasiddha Dharmavajra, and so on. A full list of the lineage Gurus of this special instruction is given in *Clear Light of Bliss*. These Spiritual Guides are the close lineage Gurus.

In this Mahamudra Tantra practice, we choose the centre of the heart channel wheel from among the ten doors to bring the winds into the central channel. This practice is indicated in the following verse from the sadhana *Offering to the Spiritual Guide*, which is the uncommon preliminary practice of Mahamudra Tantra according to Je Tsongkhapa’s tradition:

I seek your blessings, O Protector, that you may place your feet
On the centre of the eight-petalled lotus at my heart,
So that I may manifest within this life
The paths of illusory body, clear light, and union.

These words actually reveal that penetrating the central channel of the heart channel wheel, the indestructible drop and the indestructible wind – the three yogas explained above – are meditations on isolated body. These lead to the

meditations on isolated speech and isolated mind, which in turn lead to the meditations on illusory body, meaning clear light and union.

Because penetrating and concentrating on the indestructible drop at the heart is a powerful method for attaining the realizations of completion stage, Buddha Vajradhara praises this method in *Ambhidana Tantra*, where he says:

Those who meditate on the drop
That always abides at the heart,
Single-pointedly and without change,
Will definitely attain realizations.

The Practice of Heruka Body Mandala

THE LINEAGE OF THESE INSTRUCTIONS

As mentioned above, Heruka – also known as Chakrasambara – is an enlightened Deity of Highest Yoga Tantra who is the manifestation of the compassion of all Buddhas.

To lead living beings to the supreme happiness of enlightenment, all the Buddhas' compassion appears in the form of Heruka who has a blue-coloured body, four faces and twelve arms, and embraces the consort Vajravarahi. Every part of Heruka's body is the nature of wisdom light. Although each aspect of Heruka's body has great meaning, as explained in the commentary to Heruka body mandala practice called *Essence of Vajrayana*, at first we should be satisfied with the mere name Heruka. There is no need to search closely for Heruka's body, because like a rainbow the closer we search for it the more it will disappear. The name Heruka has three parts, 'He' 'ru' and 'ka'. 'He' refers to the emptiness of all phenomena, 'ru' refers to great bliss and 'ka' refers to the union of great bliss and emptiness. This indicates that through relying upon Heruka with faith we shall attain the realization of the union of great bliss and emptiness, which is the actual quick path to enlightenment.

Heruka imputed upon Buddha's Enjoyment Body is 'Enjoyment Body Heruka', and Heruka imputed upon Buddha's Emanation Body is 'Emanation Body Heruka'; together they are called 'interpretative Heruka'. Emanation Body Heruka can be seen even by ordinary beings who have a special pure mind. When, through training, we are able to believe spontaneously that our Spiritual Guide is an emanation of Heruka, we shall see Emanation Body Heruka. Heruka imputed upon Buddha's Truth Body, or Dharmakaya, is called 'definitive Heruka', and always lacks form, shape and colour. Because its basis of imputation, Buddha's Truth Body, is extremely subtle, definitive Heruka can be seen only by Buddhas and not by other beings. It is also called 'wisdom being Buddha Heruka'. Definitive Heruka pervades the entire universe; there is no single place where definitive Heruka is absent.

Buddha expounded extensive, middling and condensed Heruka root Tantras. The *Condensed Root Tantra* and many of its commentaries written by Indian Buddhist Tantric scholars, including the great Yogis Ghantapa and Naropa, were

translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Later, many Tibetan Tantric scholars, including the great translator Marpa, the founder of the Kagyu tradition, and Je Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelug tradition, wrote commentaries to the practice of Heruka Tantra. In this present age, the great Lama Je Phabongkhapa wrote special commentaries to the practices of Heruka body mandala and Vajrayogini. He also wrote many profound ritual prayers, or sadhanas, and gave extensive teachings on these. It is through the great kindness of Je Phabongkhapa and his heart disciple, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, that even in these times of extreme spiritual degeneration the profound practices of Heruka body mandala and Vajrayogini are flourishing both in the East and the West.

Je Phabongkhapa had direct visions of Heruka. At one time Heruka told him: 'For seven generations, the practitioners of your instructions of Heruka and Vajrayogini will have the special good fortune to accomplish easily the realizations of these practices.' Whenever I contemplate this I think 'How fortunate we are'. It is said that as the general level of spirituality decreases, it becomes increasingly difficult for practitioners to receive the blessings of other Deities, such as Guhyasamaja and Yamantaka; but the opposite is the case with Heruka and Vajrayogini – the more times degenerate the more easily practitioners can receive their blessings. This is because the people of this world have a special karmic connection with Heruka and Vajrayogini, and the emanations of Heruka and Vajrayogini and their places – the Pure Lands of Keajra – pervade everywhere throughout this world.

The first lineage holder of these instructions on Heruka body mandala is the great Yogi Ghantapa. He received the empowerment and instructions of Heruka body mandala direct from Heruka. Ghantapa lived deep in a forest in Odivisha, (present-day Orissa), in India, where he engaged in intensive meditation on Heruka and Vajrayogini. Since he was living in such an isolated place his diet was poor and his body became emaciated. One day the king of Odivisha was out hunting in the forest when he came across Ghantapa. Seeing how thin and weak he was, the king asked Ghantapa why he lived in the forest on such a poor diet, and encouraged him to return with him to the city where he would give him food and shelter. Ghantapa replied that just as a great elephant could not be led from the forest by a fine thread, so he could not be tempted to leave the forest by the riches of a king. Angered by Ghantapa's refusal, the king returned to his palace threatening revenge.

Such was the king's anger that he summoned a number of women from the city and told them about the arrogant monk in the forest. He offered great wealth to any one of them who could seduce him and force him to break his vows of celibacy. One woman, a wine-seller, boasted that she could do this and she set

out for the forest to look for Ghantapa. When eventually she found him she asked if she could become his servant. Ghantapa had no need of a servant, but he realized that they had a strong relationship from previous lives and so he allowed her to stay. Ghantapa gave her spiritual instructions and empowerments and they engaged sincerely in meditation. After twelve years they both attained the Union of No More Learning, full enlightenment.

One day Ghantapa and the former wine-seller decided to encourage the people of the city to develop a greater interest in Dharma. Accordingly, the woman returned to the king and reported that she had seduced the monk. At first the king doubted the truth of her story, but when she explained that she and Ghantapa now had two children, a son and a daughter, the king was delighted with the news and told her to bring Ghantapa to the city on a particular day. He then issued a proclamation disparaging Ghantapa, and ordered his subjects to assemble on the appointed day to insult and humiliate the monk.

When the day came, Ghantapa and the woman left the forest with their children, the son on Ghantapa's right and the daughter on his left. As they entered the city Ghantapa was walking as if he were drunk, holding a bowl into which the woman was pouring wine. All the people who had gathered laughed and jeered, hurling abuse and insults at him. 'Long ago', they taunted him, 'our king invited you to the city but you arrogantly refused his invitation. Now you come drunk and with a wine-seller. What a bad example of a Buddhist and a monk!' When they had finished, Ghantapa appeared to become angry and threw his bowl to the ground. The bowl sank into the earth, splitting the ground and causing a spring of water to appear. Ghantapa immediately transformed into Heruka and the woman into Vajrayogini. The boy transformed into a vajra which Ghantapa held in his right hand, and the girl into a bell which he held in his left hand. Ghantapa and his consort then embraced and flew into the sky.

The people were astonished and immediately developed deep regret for their disrespect. They prostrated to Ghantapa, begging him and the emanation of Vajrayogini to return. Ghantapa and his consort refused, but told the people that if their regret was sincere they should make confession to Mahakaruna, the embodiment of Buddha's great compassion. Through the deep remorse of the people of Odivisha and the force of their prayers a statue of Mahakaruna arose from the spring water. The people of Odivisha became very devoted Dharma practitioners and many of them gained realizations. The statue of Mahakaruna can still be seen today.

Because of Ghantapa's pure practice of Heruka and Vajrayogini in the forest, Vajrayogini saw that it was the right time for him to receive her blessings and so she manifested as the wine-seller. Through living with her Ghantapa attained the

state of full enlightenment.

In this modern age, people find it difficult to believe that human beings are able to fly, but such things were very common in ancient times when people had strong potentialities for spiritual attainments. Milarepa, who was a great practitioner of Heruka and Vajrayogini, at one time – as explained in his life story – told a large assembly of his disciples how he had gained the ability to fly. Through various methods, including his tummo meditation, he had released the central channel knots at his heart, navel and below the navel, and because of this he developed a very special physical suppleness that pervaded his body. This made his body extremely light, like a soft feather. At first he could only levitate but gradually he was able to move through space until finally he was able to fly like an eagle. One day Milarepa was flying above a small town called Longda, near where a father and son were ploughing a field. The son first saw Milarepa flying and said, ‘Father, look in the sky. There’s a man flying!’ The father looked carefully and, realizing that it was Milarepa, told his son, ‘This man is called Milarepa. He is an evil person who killed many people through his black magic.’ However, the son deeply appreciated what he saw and said ‘There is no sight more amazing than a human being flying through the sky.’ Milarepa attained the enlightened state of Buddha Heruka through the practice of Heruka body mandala, and many of his disciples including Rechungpa attained the Pure Land of Keajra without abandoning their human body. We can understand this from his collection of songs called ‘gur bum’ in Tibetan. Shortly before he intended passing away, Milarepa gave advice to his assembled disciples, finally saying ‘We will meet in the Pure Land of Keajra.’ The actual method to attain the Pure Land of Keajra is qualified meditation on the self-generation of Heruka and Vajrayogini.

Milarepa and his root Guru Marpa, and Je Tsongkhapa and his heart disciple Khedrubje have a special connection. It is said that Marpa is one of Je Tsongkhapa’s former incarnations and Milarepa is one of Khedrubje’s former incarnations. Through this we can understand the great kindness of these holy beings who, by changing their physical aspect, continually benefit the people of this world from generation to generation.

The Pure Land of Keajra is the Pure Land of Heruka. It is sometimes also called ‘Akanishta’, which means the ‘Highest’ Pure Land, and ‘Pure Dakini Land’ indicating that it is also the Pure Land of Vajrayogini. In general, when an ordinary person takes rebirth in any of the Pure Lands of Buddha he or she is permanently freed from all sufferings and will never again take rebirth within samsara, a contaminated rebirth. Therefore taking rebirth in the Pure Land of Buddha is like attaining liberation or nirvana. For this reason, when an ordinary

person takes rebirth in a Pure Land of Buddha through the practice of transference of consciousness, or powa, it is called ‘attaining enlightenment in one moment’. However, this is only similar to the attainment of enlightenment and is not the actual attainment.

The Pure Land of Keajra is unequalled among all the other Pure Lands of Buddhas. Living beings who abide in other Pure Lands, such as Sukhavati and Tushita, do not have the opportunity to practise completion stage Tantra. Because their bodies have no channels, drops and inner fire (tummo), they are unable to meditate on the central channel, drops and inner fire. However, living beings who dwell in the Pure Land of Keajra have bodies that possess channels, drops and inner fire. These have the nature of light, but they function in the same way as the channels, drops and inner fire of human beings. They can therefore meditate on the central channel, indestructible drop and indestructible wind and mind, and in this way they can accomplish the realizations of meaning clear light and pure illusory body, and attain enlightenment within one single life. This is the special good fortune of living beings who dwell in the Pure Land of Keajra. This shows the special power of the instructions on the practices of Heruka and Vajrayogini. It is through practising these instructions that living beings who dwell in the Pure Land of Keajra have this special good fortune.

The extensive sadhana of Heruka body mandala lists thirty-nine lineage holder Teachers, or ‘lineage Gurus’, from Ghantapa to Heruka Losang Yeshe, Trijang Rinpoche. All these spiritual Teachers and many of their disciples attained the realization of Highest Yoga Tantra through practising Heruka body mandala and Vajrayogini. We should therefore engage with confidence in our practice of Heruka body mandala and Vajrayogini.

WHAT IS THE HERUKA BODY MANDALA?

In this context, ‘body’ refers to our subtle body – our channels and drops; and ‘mandala’ means an assembly of enlightened Deities. Our channels and drops are called our ‘subtle body’ because they are parts of our body that are not easy to recognize. The Heruka body mandala is the assembly of the imagined Heruka (ourselves) with the consort Vajravahni (who is the same as Vajrayogini) – the nature of our purified indestructible white and red drops – and our imagined retinue (the Heroes and Heroines) – the nature of our purified channels and drops – in the imagined Pure Land of Keajra. Generally, ‘mandala’ refers to either a ‘supporting’ mandala, which means the world, environment and palace of an enlightened Deity or Deities, or a ‘supported’ mandala, which means an

assembly of enlightened Deities.

The purpose of meditating on Heruka body mandala is to receive the powerful blessings of Buddha Heruka and his retinue within our channels and drops. Through these blessings we can be freed from any obstacles within our channels and drops, and our meditation on the central channel, indestructible drop and indestructible wind and mind will be successful. Because of this we shall easily develop and make progress in the five stages of completion stage mentioned above, and through this fulfil our final goal.

The explanation of how to generate the Heruka body mandala and how to meditate on it given in this book is simple but presents the very essence. I have prepared this for those who are unable to practise the extensive sadhana of Heruka body mandala. In this practice, we need to visualize thirty-six channels of our body, which are the twenty-four channels of the twenty-four places of our body, the four channels of our heart channel wheel, and the eight channels of our eight sense doors. We also visualize the white indestructible drop and the red indestructible drop at our heart, and the twenty-four drops that are contained within the twenty-four channels of the twenty-four places of our body. We then need to receive the powerful blessings of Heruka Father and Mother and his retinue of Heroes and Heroines within these channels and drops.

The twenty-four places of our body represent the twenty-four places of Heruka in the world. The twenty-four places of our body are: (1) the hairline; (2) the crown; (3) the right ear; (4) the back of the neck; (5) the left ear; (6) the point between the eyebrows; (7) the two eyes; (8) the two shoulders; (9) the two armpits; (10) the two breasts; (11) the navel; (12) the tip of the nose; (13) the mouth; (14) the throat; (15) the heart; (16) the two testicles; (17) the tip of the sex organ; (18) the anus; (19) the two thighs; (20) the two calves; (21) the eight fingers and eight toes; (22) the tops of the feet; (23) the two thumbs and two big toes; and (24) the two knees.

When we meditate on Heruka body mandala we meditate on ourself as Heruka with our consort Vajravahni, surrounded in concentric circles by the four Yoginis of the great bliss wheel, the eight Heroes and Heroines of the heart wheel, the eight Heroes and Heroines of the speech wheel, the eight Heroes and Heroines of the body wheel, and the eight Heroines of the commitment wheel. In this way we meditate on the assembly of sixty-two enlightened Deities. Ourself Heruka, and Vajravahni, are included within the Deities of the great bliss wheel, and are the principal Deities.

While meditating on the assembly of sixty-two enlightened Deities we should believe that ourself Heruka is the nature of our purified indestructible white drop and Vajravahni is the nature of our purified indestructible red drop. The four

Yoginis of the great bliss wheel are the nature of our purified four channels in the cardinal directions of the heart channel wheel. The twenty-four Heroines of the heart, speech and body wheels are the nature of our purified twenty-four channels of the twenty-four places of our body. The twenty-four Heroes of the heart, speech and body wheels are the nature of our purified twenty-four drops that are contained inside the twenty-four channels of the twenty-four places of our body. The eight Heroines of the commitment wheel are the nature of our purified eight channels of the eight sense doors.

If we continually meditate in this way on this assembly of the sixty-two enlightened Deities every day with strong faith and conviction, we shall definitely receive the powerful blessings of these enlightened Deities within our channels and drops, we shall be free from obstacles of the channels and drops, and our meditations on completion stage will therefore be effective. This means that through these meditations we shall attain meaning clear light, pure illusory body and finally enlightenment in this short life.

Many completion stage practitioners experience difficulties in gathering and dissolving their inner winds into the central channel through meditation, and in developing qualified clear light and bliss. This is because their channels and drops do not function correctly, and may even give rise to physical pain. Through sincerely practising the meditations on Heruka body mandala we shall be freed from all these obstacles.

Within the sixty-two enlightened Deities, Heruka and Vajravarahi are the principal and the others are their retinue. The four Yoginis of the great bliss wheel are Dakini, Lama, Khandarohi and Rupini; and their function is to bestow upon us spontaneous great bliss. The eight Heroes and Heroines of the heart wheel are Khandakapala and Partzandi, Mahakankala and Tzändriakiya, Kankala and Parbhawatiya, Vikatadamshtri and Mahanasa, Suraberi and Biramatiya, Amitabha and Karwariya, Vajraprabha and Lamkeshöriya, Vajradeha and Drumatzaya; and their function is to bestow upon us the attainment of Buddha's holy mind. The eight Heroes and Heroines of the speech wheel are Ankuraka and Airawatiya, Vajrajatila and Mahabhairawi, Mahavira and Bayubega, Vajrahumkara and Surabhakiya, Subhadra and Shamadewi, Vajrabhadra and Suwatre, Mahabhairawa and Hayakarne, Virupaksha and Khaganane; and their function is to bestow upon us the attainment of Buddha's holy speech. The eight Heroes and Heroines of the body wheel are Mahabala and Tzatrabega, Ratnavajra and Khandarohi, Hayagriva and Shaundini, Akashagarbha and Tzatrawardini, Shri Heruka and Subira, Pāmanarteshvara and Mahabala, Vairochana and Tzatrawardini, Vajrasattva and Mahabire; and their function is to bestow upon us the attainment of Buddha's holy body. Our present body, speech

and mind are contaminated by the poison of delusions, so they act as the basis of all suffering. We therefore need to attain a Buddha's holy body, speech and mind. The eight Heroines of the commitment wheel are Kakase, Ulukase, Shönase, Shukarase, Yamadhathi, Yamaduti, Yamadangtrini and Yamamatani; and their function and commitment is to pacify our obstacles. The Heroes and Heroines of the five wheels are so called because they are victorious over the enemies of ordinary appearance and conceptions.

THE PRELIMINARY PRACTICES

The following explanation of how to practise Heruka body mandala is based on the instructions of the Ganden Oral Lineage. It is simple but very profound. Following these instructions we should practise Heruka body mandala in conjunction with the sadhana, or ritual prayer, called *The Yoga of Buddha Heruka* (see *Modern Buddhism – Volume 3: Prayers for Daily Practice*). As this sadhana implies, there are six stages to practising Heruka body mandala: 1. training in going for refuge; 2. training in renunciation; 3. training in bodhichitta; 4. training in Guru yoga; 5. training in the generation stage of Heruka body mandala, and 6. training in completion stage.

The first four trainings are preliminary practices and the remaining two are the actual practice of Heruka body mandala. Just as a vehicle depends upon its four wheels, so the precious vehicle of Heruka body mandala practice depends upon the four wheels of training in going for refuge, renunciation, bodhichitta and Guru yoga. Training in going for refuge is the gateway through which we enter Buddhism; renunciation is the gateway through which we enter the path to liberation; bodhichitta is the gateway through which we enter the path to enlightenment; and Guru yoga is the gateway through which the blessings of all the Buddhas will enter our mind. These are the basic foundations that make the practice of Heruka body mandala effective.

TRAINING IN GOING FOR REFUGE

In this training we should remember and contemplate the following, as explained in *Modern Buddhism – Volume 1: Sutra*:

I want to protect and liberate myself permanently from the sufferings of this life and countless future lives. I can accomplish this only by receiving

Buddha's blessings, putting Dharma into practice and receiving help from Sangha – the supreme spiritual friends.

Thinking deeply in this way, we first make the strong determination and then the promise to seek refuge sincerely in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha throughout our life. We should meditate on this determination every day and maintain our promise continually for the rest of our life. As the principal commitment of our refuge vow we should always apply effort to receive Buddha's blessings, to put Dharma into practice and to receive help from Sangha, our pure spiritual friends including our Spiritual Teacher. This is how we go for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Through this we shall accomplish our aim – permanent liberation from all the sufferings of this life and countless future lives, the real meaning of our human life.

To maintain our promise to go for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha throughout our life, and so that we and all living beings may receive Buddha's blessings and protection, we recite the following refuge prayer from the sadhana *The Yoga of Buddha Heruka* every day with strong faith:

*I and all sentient beings, until we achieve enlightenment,
Go for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.*

TRAINING IN RENUNCIATION

In this training we remember and contemplate how we shall experience unbearable suffering in our countless future lives, as explained in detail in *Modern Buddhism – Volume 1: Sutra*. Then, from the depths of our heart, we should think:

There is no benefit in denying the sufferings of future lives; when they actually descend upon me it will be too late to protect myself from them. Therefore I definitely need to prepare protection now, while I have this human life that gives me the opportunity to liberate myself permanently from the sufferings of my countless future lives. If I do not apply effort to accomplish this, but allow my human life to become empty of meaning, there is no greater deception and no greater foolishness. I must put effort now into liberating myself permanently from the sufferings of my countless future lives.

We meditate on this determination continually until we develop the spontaneous

wish to liberate ourself permanently from the sufferings of countless future lives.

TRAINING IN BODHICHITTA

In this training we should maintain the practice of the five stages of training in bodhichitta that was explained in detail in *Modern Buddhism – Volume 1: Sutra*. In conclusion, we think:

I should not be content with seeking merely my own liberation; I must consider the welfare of other living beings. They are all my mothers, and they are drowning in the vast and deep ocean of samsara, experiencing unbearable suffering in life after life, without end. While I am just one single person, other living beings are countless in number; the happiness and freedom of others are therefore far more important than my own. I cannot bear that my countless mothers are experiencing unbearable physical suffering and mental pain in this life and in their countless future lives; I must permanently liberate them all from their suffering, and for this purpose I will make great effort to become an enlightened Buddha.

We should maintain this supreme good heart of bodhichitta, continually day and night. All our meditations on generation and completion stages should be motivated by this supreme good heart, and we should always remember that all our meditations on generation and completion stages are methods to fulfil our bodhichitta wishes. To generate bodhichitta we recite from the sadhana:

*Through the virtues I collect by giving and other perfections,
May I become a Buddha for the benefit of all.*

TRAINING IN GURU YOGA

The term ‘Guru’ is a Sanskrit word that means ‘Spiritual Guide’. A Spiritual Guide can be eastern, western, male, female, ordained or lay. Our Spiritual Guide is any Spiritual Teacher who leads us into correct paths to liberation and enlightenment by giving teachings and showing a good example. Guru yoga is a special training in relying upon our Spiritual Guide; in this context, ‘yoga’ means training in spiritual paths, not physical training. The sadhana *The Yoga of Buddha Heruka* in *Modern Buddhism – Volume 3: Prayers for Daily Practice*,

presents the Guru yoga of Je Tsongkhapa inseparable from our root Guru, Buddha Shakyamuni and Heruka, who is known as Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka. In this context, ‘root Guru’ refers to our Spiritual Guide from whom we have received the instructions, transmission and empowerment of Heruka body mandala. The name Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka implies that our root *Guru*, Je Tsongkhapa (or *Sumati Kirti*, Sanskrit for Je Tsongkhapa’s ordained name), *Buddha* Shakyamuni and *Heruka* are one person but have different aspects. We need to maintain this recognition at all times for our practice of Heruka body mandala to be effective. To benefit each and every living being directly every day, definitive Heruka emanated Buddha Shakyamuni, who in turn emanated Je Tsongkhapa, who in turn emanated our Spiritual Guide; they are like one actor showing different aspects at different times.

The purpose of this Guru yoga practice is:

- (1) To accumulate a great collection of merit, or good fortune. Because of our lack of merit it is difficult for us to fulfil our wishes and we experience many obstacles to accomplishing spiritual attainments.
- (2) To purify negativity, or non-virtuous actions. When we purify the countless potentialities of our non-virtuous actions we purify our mind. As mentioned above, by purifying our mind we shall attain full enlightenment.
- (3) To receive the powerful blessings of all the Buddhas. We have the seed of the realizations of Highest Yoga Tantra in general and Heruka body mandala in particular, which is part of our Buddha nature. However, without receiving the powerful blessings of all Buddhas through our Spiritual Guide, who is their representative, our seed of the realization of Highest Yoga Tantra will never ripen.
- (4) To generate the experience of great bliss and emptiness. This practice is a powerful method to ripen our seed of the realization of Mahamudra Tantra.

Through accomplishing these four necessary conditions we can easily make progress in the main practice of this sadhana, which is training in generation and completion stages.

Je Sherab Senge, one of Je Tsongkhapa’s heart disciples, received the special instructions of the Guru yoga of Je Tsongkhapa from Je Tsongkhapa himself.

This is called the ‘Guru yoga of the Segyu lineage’, now known as the Guru yoga of *Heart Jewel*. The instructions of the Guru yoga of *Heart Jewel* were originally only given as oral instructions. Later the great Yogi Palden Sangpo composed a sadhana based on these oral instructions, and since then it has been practised publicly. The Guru yoga of *Heart Jewel* can be practised either according to Sutra tradition or according to Highest Yoga Tantra tradition. The sadhana, *The Yoga of Buddha Heruka*, presents the practice of the Guru yoga of *Heart Jewel* according to Highest Yoga Tantra. Those who have the commitment to practise *Heart Jewel* can add prayers to Dorje Shugden just before the dedication verses of *The Yoga of Buddha Heruka*.

The practice of this Guru yoga has five stages: 1. visualization and meditation; 2. inviting the wisdom beings; 3. the practice of the seven limbs; 4. making special requests; and 5. generating the experience of great bliss and emptiness.



Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka

VISUALIZATION AND MEDITATION

We recite the following from the sadhana, while concentrating on its meaning:

In the space before me is Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka – Je Tsongkhapa inseparable from my root Guru, Buddha Shakyamuni and Heruka – surrounded by all the Buddhas of the ten directions.

While we visualize this we think and contemplate:

Je Tsongkhapa attained enlightenment to lead all living beings to the liberating path through his emanations. Who is his emanation now leading me to the liberating path? It is definitely my Spiritual Guide from whom I have received instructions, transmission and empowerment of Heruka body mandala, and who shows a qualified example.

Thinking in this way we should strongly believe that our Spiritual Guide is an emanation of Je Tsongkhapa, and then meditate on this belief single-pointedly. We should practise this meditation continually.

INVITING THE WISDOM BEINGS

We recite the following verse from the sadhana, while concentrating on its meaning:

*From the heart of the Protector of the hundreds of Deities of the Joyful Land,
To the peak of a cloud which is like a cluster of fresh, white curd,
All-knowing Losang Dragpa, King of the Dharma,
Please come to this place together with your Sons.*

The ‘Protector of the hundreds of Deities of the Joyful Land’ refers to Buddha Maitreya. We believe that wisdom being Je Tsongkhapa together with his retinue dissolves into the assembly of Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka visualized in front of us, and they become non-dual.

We also recite the following request from the sadhana:

*In the space before me on a lion throne lotus and moon,
The venerable Gurus smile with delight.
O Supreme Field of Merit for my mind of faith,
Please remain for a hundred aeons to spread the doctrine.*

THE PRACTICE OF THE SEVEN LIMBS

With strong faith in our Spiritual Guide, Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka, we should sincerely engage every day in the practice of the seven limbs. These are: 1. prostration; 2. offerings; 3. purification; 4. rejoicing; 5. requesting the turning of the Wheel of Dharma; 6. beseeching the Spiritual Guides to remain for a long time; and 7. dedication. In this context, the actual practice of Heruka body mandala is like the main body, and the seven limbs are like the limbs that support the main body. Just as our body is able to function in dependence upon its limbs, so the effectiveness of our training in Heruka body mandala depends upon our practice of the seven limbs.

PROSTRATION

Making prostrations to enlightened beings is a powerful method for purifying negative karma, sickness and obstacles, and for increasing our merit, our happiness and our Dharma realizations. Temporarily prostrations improve our physical health and make our mind happy, and ultimately they cause us to attain a Buddha's Form Body. Generating faith in the holy beings is mental prostration, reciting praises to them is verbal prostration, and showing respect to them with our body is physical prostration. We can make physical prostrations by respectfully prostrating our entire body on the ground; by respectfully touching our knees, palms and forehead to the ground; or by respectfully placing our palms together at the level of our heart.

To make powerful prostrations to the holy beings, we imagine that from every pore of our body we emanate another body, and from every pore of these bodies we emanate yet more bodies, until our emanated bodies fill the entire world. Then, while reciting the following verse, we strongly believe that all these countless bodies make prostrations to Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka and all the Buddhas of the ten directions:

Your mind of wisdom realizes the full extent of objects of knowledge,

*Your eloquent speech is the ear-ornament of the fortunate,
Your beautiful body is ablaze with the glory of renown,
I prostrate to you, whom to see, to hear and to remember is so meaningful.*

We should do this practice of prostration every day. As a preliminary guide for our actual practice of Heruka body mandala, we can collect a hundred thousand prostrations, either throughout our daily life or in retreat.

OFFERINGS

From the depths of our heart we make the following determination:

To liberate all living beings from suffering permanently
I make excellent offerings to the supreme holy being
Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka,
And to all the other holy beings.

However many flowers and fruits there are,
And all the different types of medicine;
All the jewels there are in the world,
And all the pure, refreshing waters;

Mountains of jewels, forest groves,
And quiet and joyful places;
Heavenly trees adorned with flowers,
And trees whose branches hang with delicious fruits;

Scents that come from the celestial realms,
Incense, wish-granting trees, and jewelled trees;
Harvests that need no cultivation,
And all ornaments that are suitable to be offered;

Lakes and pools adorned with lotuses,
And the beautiful call of wild geese;
Everything that is unowned
Throughout all worlds as extensive as space –

Holding these in my mind, I offer them well

To you, the supreme beings, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
O Compassionate Ones, holy objects of offering,
Think of me kindly and accept what I offer.

Eternally I will offer all my bodies
To you, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
Out of respect, I will become your servant;
Please accept me, O Supreme Heroes.

While we imagine making all of these offerings, we can recite the following short verse:

*Pleasing water offerings, various flowers,
Sweet-smelling incense, lights, scented water and so forth,
A vast cloud of offerings both set out and imagined,
I offer to you, O Supreme Field of Merit.*

In Buddhism an offering is anything that delights the enlightened beings. Our main offering is our practice of compassion, as this gives enlightened beings the greatest delight. Therefore, our motivation for making offerings should be compassion for all living beings – our sincere wish to liberate all living beings from suffering permanently.

In summary, we should always regard all our daily Dharma practices as unsurpassed offerings to Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka – the synthesis of our Spiritual Guide, Je Tsongkhapa, Buddha Shakyamuni and Heruka – and to all the other enlightened beings. In this way we can accumulate immeasurable merit, or good fortune.

PURIFICATION

Purification is the supreme method to prevent future suffering and to remove obstacles to our Dharma practice, especially to the practice of Heruka body mandala. It makes our actions pure so that we ourselves become pure. Since our body is not our self, cleaning our body alone is not enough; we need to clean our self through purification practice.

What is it that we need to purify? We need to purify our non-virtuous and inappropriate actions. In our countless previous lives we performed many actions that caused other living beings to experience suffering and problems and,

as a result of these non-virtuous actions, we now experience suffering and many different problems. Although the actions themselves have ceased, their potential to give rise to suffering and problems still remains on our subtle consciousness, and will remain for life after life until it ripens. Therefore, on our root consciousness there are infinite negative potentials, which function to lead us into wrong paths and cause us to experience endless suffering. These are serious obstacles to our Dharma practice in general, and to our practice of Heruka body mandala in particular.

We can understand how our non-virtuous potentials are the main obstacle to our Dharma practice through contemplating the following:

In our previous lives we performed actions that rejected holy Dharma, and denied rebirth, karma and the attainment of liberation and enlightenment. As a result of this we now experience: (1) difficulties in developing the intention to practise Dharma, (2) difficulties in believing Dharma teachings, such as karma, and (3) difficulties in making progress in our Dharma practice.

Purification practice is very simple. All we need to do is contemplate the great disadvantages of the non-virtuous actions that we have performed since beginningless time. Then with strong regret we confess all these non-virtuous actions, as well as transgressions of our vows and commitments, to Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka, and to all the other holy beings, while reciting the following verse:

*Whatever non-virtues of body, speech and mind
I have accumulated since time without beginning,
Especially transgressions of my three vows,
With great remorse I confess each one from the depths of my heart.*

We should repeat this practice many times. At the end of each session we make a strong determination not to perform any non-virtuous action or to transgress any of our vows and commitments. As the great preliminary guide for our Heruka body mandala practice, we can collect a hundred thousand recitations of this verse – concentrating strongly on its meaning. Alternatively we can collect a hundred thousand recitations of Vajrasattva's mantra.

REJOICING

We should learn to rejoice in others' virtuous actions, happiness, good qualities and good fortune. Normally we do the opposite and develop jealousy. Jealousy is very harmful for individuals and society. In an instant it can destroy our own and others' happiness and harmony, and lead to fighting, or even war. In everyday life we can see how people react with jealousy in regard to relationships, business, position and religious views, causing suffering to so many people. Our problems of jealousy can be solved simply by learning to rejoice in others' happiness and goodness. This can be practised even while we are lying down, relaxing, or going about our daily activities.

With very little effort we can accumulate immeasurable good fortune simply by rejoicing in the excellent deeds of Buddhas such as Je Tsongkhapa. We can do this while reciting the following verse with strong concentration on the meaning:

*In this degenerate age you strove for much learning and accomplishment.
Abandoning the eight worldly concerns, you made your freedom and
endowment meaningful.
O Protector, from the very depths of my heart,
I rejoice in the great wave of your deeds.*



Buddha Vajradhara

REQUESTING THE TURNING OF THE WHEEL OF DHARMA

We begin this practice by thinking:

I have the opportunity to listen to, understand and practise holy Dharma, and therefore the good fortune to enter, make progress on and complete the path to enlightenment. How wonderful it would be if all other living beings could enjoy the same good fortune!

From the depths of our heart we then repeatedly request Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka to emanate countless Spiritual Teachers to teach holy Dharma and guide all living beings to the state of ultimate happiness, enlightenment, while reciting the following verse:

*From the billowing clouds of wisdom and compassion
In the space of your Truth Body, O Venerable and holy Gurus,
Please send down a rain of vast and profound Dharma
Appropriate to the disciples of this world.*

BESEECHING THE SPIRITUAL GUIDES TO REMAIN FOR A LONG TIME

In this practice we think:

If the Spiritual Teachers who have been emanated by holy beings remain in this world for many aeons, all living beings will gradually have the opportunity to listen to, understand and practise Dharma. In this way, eventually all living beings without exception will attain enlightenment.

We then request Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka that his emanations who are teaching Dharma will remain in this world until samsara ends, while reciting the following verse:

*From your actual deathless body, born from meaning clear light,
Please send countless emanations throughout the world
To spread the oral lineage of the Ganden doctrine;*

And may they remain for a very long time.

DEDICATION

Whenever we perform any virtuous actions, we should dedicate them to the attainment of enlightenment and to the flourishing of Buddha's doctrine, which benefits all living beings. The great Master Atisha said:

Dedicate your virtues throughout the day and the night, and always watch your mind.

If we dedicate our virtuous actions in this way, their potentialities will never be destroyed by anger and wrong views but instead will increase in strength. The practice of dedication makes our virtuous actions effective. We can engage in this practice while reciting the following verse:

*Through the virtues I have accumulated here,
May the doctrine and all living beings receive every benefit.
Especially may the essence of the doctrine
Of Venerable Losang Dragpa shine forever.*

In summary, while practising each of the seven limbs we should apply effort to making the sun of our faith shine continually on the snow mountain of our Spiritual Guide – Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka – and make strong requests. Through this, the blessing waters of all the Buddhas of the ten directions will flow down, our very subtle body will receive a special power that transforms it into an enlightened body, and our very subtle mind will receive a special power that transforms it into an enlightened mind.

MAKING SPECIAL REQUESTS

To make this special request, we first offer the entire universe, regarding it as the Pure Land of Buddha, to Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka and all the Buddhas of the ten directions. This offering is called a 'mandala offering', a detailed explanation of which can be found in *Guide to Dakini Land*. Then, while concentrating on its meaning, we recite three times the following request prayer from the sadhana:

*O Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka, from now until I attain enlightenment,
I shall seek no refuge other than you.
Please pacify my obstacles and bestow upon me
The two attainments of liberating and ripening.
Please bless me so that I will become definitive Heruka,
In which state I shall experience all phenomena as purified and gathered into
emptiness,
inseparable from great bliss.*

This prayer has the same meaning as the essence mantra of Heruka. Through completing the meditations on generation and completion stages, we abandon all our subtle mistaken appearances; this abandonment is the attainment of ‘liberating’. And, due to ripening our Buddha nature completely, we experience ourself as a real Buddha, and our world, enjoyments and activities as those of a Buddha; this experience is the attainment of ‘ripening’. By accomplishing these two attainments we become definitive Heruka; that is, Heruka imputed upon Buddha’s Truth Body, or Dharmakaya. At the same time we experience all phenomena as purified, which means that we have purified the subtle mistaken appearance of all phenomena; and we experience all phenomena gathered into emptiness, which means we realize that all phenomena are not other than emptiness. These two experiences of ‘purified’ and ‘gathered’ imply that we have realized the union of the two truths directly and simultaneously; this realization is actual enlightenment. With this prayer we are requesting Guru Sumati Buddha Heruka to bestow all these attainments upon us.

As ordinary beings we have only one body that we can use, and this in reality is part of our parents’ bodies. Buddhas, however, possess four bodies simultaneously: the two Truth Bodies, which are the Wisdom Truth Body and Nature Truth Body; and the two Form Bodies, which are the Enjoyment Body and Emanation Body. Buddha’s mind is the Wisdom Truth Body and the emptiness of Buddha’s mind is the Nature Truth Body; together they are called the ‘Truth Body’ or ‘Dharmakaya’. Buddha’s bodies that possess form are called Form Bodies. Buddha’s subtle Form Body is called the Enjoyment Body, and Buddha’s gross Form Body is called the Emanation Body. A Buddha’s Truth Body is extremely subtle and therefore can be seen only by Buddhas and not by others. A Buddha’s Enjoyment Body can be seen by Superior Bodhisattvas, and a Buddha’s Emanation Body can be seen by ordinary beings who have a pure mind.

GENERATING THE EXPERIENCE OF GREAT BLISS AND EMPTINESS

After we have recited the special request prayer three times sincerely from our heart, we then think and imagine:

Due to my making requests in this way, all the Buddhas of the ten directions dissolve into Je Tsongkhapa who is inseparable from my root Guru, he dissolves into Buddha Shakyamuni at his heart, and Buddha Shakyamuni dissolves into Heruka at his heart. With delight, Guru Heruka, who is the nature of the union of great bliss and emptiness, enters my body through my crown, and dissolves into my mind at my heart. Because Heruka, who is the nature of the union of great bliss and emptiness, becomes inseparable from my mind, I experience spontaneous great bliss and emptiness. I perceive nothing other than the emptiness of all phenomena, the mere absence of all phenomena that I normally see or perceive. My subtle mistaken appearance of all phenomena, including the channels, winds and drops of my body, is purified.

Holding this belief, we meditate on the emptiness of all phenomena while experiencing great bliss.

TRAINING IN THE GENERATION STAGE OF HERUKA BODY MANDALA

There are five stages to training in the generation stage of Heruka body mandala, the actual self-generation practice of Heruka body mandala: 1. generating the body mandala of Heruka; 2. training in clear appearance; 3. training in divine pride; 4. training in non-dual appearance and emptiness; and 5. training in mantra recitation.



Buddha Vajradharma

GENERATING THE BODY MANDALA OF HERUKA

While meditating on the emptiness of all phenomena, perceiving nothing other than emptiness, we think and imagine:

In the vast space of emptiness of all phenomena, the nature of my purified mistaken appearance of all phenomena – which is the Pure Land of Keajra – I appear as Buddha Heruka with a blue-coloured body, four faces and twelve arms, the nature of my purified white indestructible drop. I am embracing Vajravarahi, the nature of my purified red indestructible drop. I am surrounded by the Heroes and Heroines of the five wheels, who are the nature of my purified subtle body – the channels and drops. I reside in the mandala, the celestial mansion, which is the nature of my purified gross body. Although I have this appearance it is not other than the emptiness of all phenomena.

At this point, (1) while experiencing great bliss and emptiness, (2) we meditate on the clear appearance of the mandala and Deities with divine pride, while (3) recognizing that the Deities are the nature of our purified channels and drops, which are our subtle body, and that the mandala is the nature of our purified gross body.

In this way we train sincerely in one single meditation on generation stage possessing these three characteristics. Holding the third characteristic – recognizing the Deities as the nature of our purified subtle body, and the mandala as the nature of our purified gross body – makes this concentration an actual body mandala meditation.

TRAINING IN CLEAR APPEARANCE

For our meditation on the body mandala of Heruka to be qualified we need to train in clear appearance. We think and imagine deeply, as above:

In the vast space of emptiness of all phenomena, the nature of my purified mistaken appearance of all phenomena – which is the Pure Land of Keajra – I appear as Buddha Heruka with a blue-coloured body, four faces and twelve arms, the nature of my purified white indestructible drop. I am embracing Vajravarahi, the nature of my purified red indestructible drop. I am

surrounded by the Heroes and Heroines of the five wheels, who are the nature of my purified subtle body – the channels and drops. I reside in the mandala, the celestial mansion, which is the nature of my purified gross body. Although I have this appearance it is not other than the emptiness of all phenomena.

We mentally repeat this contemplation again and again until we perceive clearly the object of our meditation – the Heruka body mandala, which is the assembly of imagined Heruka (ourselves) with consort Vajravahni, the nature of our purified white and red indestructible drops, and our imagined retinue of Heroes and Heroines, who are the nature of our purified channels and drops, in the imagined Pure Land of Keajra. When we perceive the assembly of this supporting mandala and supported Deities – the Heruka body mandala – we hold it without forgetting and remain on it single-pointedly for as long as possible.

We should repeat this meditation again and again, until we are able to maintain our concentration clearly for one minute every time we meditate on it. Our concentration that has this ability is called ‘concentration of placing the mind’. In the second stage, with the concentration of placing the mind, we meditate on the Heruka body mandala continually until we are able to maintain our concentration clearly for five minutes every time we meditate on it. Our concentration that has this ability is called ‘concentration of continual placement’. In the third stage, with the concentration of continual placement, we meditate on the Heruka body mandala continually until we are able to remember immediately our object of meditation – the Heruka body mandala – whenever we lose it during meditation. Our concentration that has this ability is called ‘concentration of replacement’. In the fourth stage, with the concentration of replacement, we meditate on the Heruka body mandala continually until we are able to maintain our concentration clearly throughout our whole meditation session without forgetting every time we meditate on it. Our concentration that has this ability is called ‘concentration of close placement’. At this stage we have very stable and clear concentration focused on the Heruka body mandala.

Then, with the concentration of close placement, we meditate on the Heruka body mandala continually until finally we attain the concentration of tranquil abiding focused on the Heruka body mandala, which causes us to experience special physical and mental suppleness and bliss. Through this concentration of tranquil abiding focused on the Heruka body mandala, we shall certainly attain the Pure Land of Keajra in this life or in our next life.

TRAINING IN DIVINE PRIDE

Through perceiving our imagined Heruka's body and mind we develop the thought 'I am Heruka'; this thought is divine pride. It is a correct thought or belief because it arises from wisdom that realizes correct reasons. Generally, if we improve our clear appearance of perceiving the Heruka body mandala through the practice of concentration mentioned above, this makes it easier for us to develop and increase divine pride. This is because clear appearance reduces our ordinary appearance, and this makes it easier for us to develop and increase the thought 'I am Heruka'. However, we can train in divine pride by contemplating correct reasons why it is necessary for us to change the basis of imputation for our self from a contaminated body and mind to the uncontaminated body and mind of Heruka. How we can do this has already been explained in the chapter *The Tantra of Generation Stage*.

TRAINING IN NON-DUAL APPEARANCE AND EMPTINESS

This is a very profound practice of generation stage. The explanation of this practice presented in this book is based on the instructions of the Ganden Oral Lineage. With respect to the term 'non-dual appearance and emptiness': 'appearance' refers to the Heruka body mandala, which is the assembly of the supporting mandala and supported Deities of Heruka body mandala, the nature of our purified gross and subtle bodies; 'emptiness' refers to the emptiness of all phenomena; and 'non-dual' means that the Heruka body mandala and emptiness are one object but have different names. When we perceive and realize this non-dual Heruka body mandala and emptiness we have found the object of our meditation; we should hold this object without forgetting, and remain on it single-pointedly for as long as possible. We should practise this meditation continually and sincerely, without distraction. By doing this, initially we shall realize appearance (the Heruka body mandala), which is the conventional truth, and emptiness, which is the ultimate truth, simultaneously with our gross mind. Finally we shall realize these two truths directly and simultaneously with our very subtle mind. Our very subtle mind that realizes these two truths directly and simultaneously is the state of enlightenment.

When we first meditate on Heruka body mandala we have a strong perception of the Heruka body mandala that we normally perceive. This perception is our mistaken appearance of the Heruka body mandala. It is mistaken because the Heruka body mandala that we normally perceive does not exist, even if we perceive it. The strong perception of the Heruka body mandala that we normally perceive, directly interferes with our understanding that the Heruka body

mandala and the emptiness of all phenomena are non-dual. However, through meditating on the emptiness of all phenomena with strong concentration, the strong perception of the Heruka body mandala that we normally perceive will cease during meditation. Automatically we shall then realize that the Heruka body mandala and the emptiness of all phenomena are non-dual. This can be illustrated by the analogy of seeing two empty glasses in front of us. At first we would perceive the spaces inside the two glasses as different, but if we were to break the two glasses we would realize that the spaces inside them were non-dual.

In the sadhana the words ‘Although I have this appearance it is not other than the emptiness of all phenomena’ reveal the training in non-dual appearance and emptiness. If we understand clearly the meaning of the union of the two truths (explained in detail in the chapter on *Training in Ultimate Bodhichitta in Modern Buddhism – Volume 1: Sutra*) it will not be difficult to understand the meaning of non-dual appearance and emptiness that is explained in this section.

THE ACTUAL MEDITATION ON NON-DUAL APPEARANCE AND EMPTINESS

Having accomplished clear appearance and divine pride through training in them as explained above, we then think and contemplate:

As all phenomena that I normally perceive do not exist, the Heruka body mandala that I normally perceive does not exist. Heruka body mandala is a mere name, which means that it is not other than the emptiness of all phenomena. The emptiness of all phenomena and Heruka body mandala are non-dual; they are not two different objects but one object with different names.

Thinking in this way, when we perceive as non-dual the assembly of the supporting mandala and supported Deities of the Heruka body mandala existing as mere name, and the emptiness of all phenomena, we meditate on this non-dual Heruka body mandala and emptiness single-pointedly with the experience of great bliss. As mentioned above, through continually practising this meditation, initially we shall realize the Heruka body mandala, which is the conventional truth, and emptiness, which is the ultimate truth, simultaneously with our gross mind. Finally we shall realize these two truths directly and simultaneously with our very subtle mind. Our very subtle mind that realizes these two truths directly

and simultaneously is actual enlightenment. It is a wisdom that is permanently free from the mistaken appearance of all phenomena; such a wisdom is possessed only by fully enlightened Buddhas. Through this we can understand that this training in non-dual appearance and emptiness is a powerful method to attain enlightenment very quickly and easily. This training is the very essence practice of the instructions of the Ganden Oral Lineage. Through this training Gyalwa Ensapa and many of his disciples began, made progress on and completed the Vajrayana path; and in this way they attained enlightenment within three years.

TRAINING IN MANTRA RECITATION

The Sanskrit word ‘mantra’ means protection of mind. Through reciting the mantras of Heruka Father and Mother and their retinue with strong faith we can protect ourself from being harmed by inanimate objects such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes and fire, and by animate objects such as humans and non-humans; we can pacify our sickness, untimely death and other adverse conditions; we can increase our good fortune, lifespan, and especially our internal qualities of faith, correct view, correct intention and other spiritual realizations; we are able to control our delusions such as anger; we can benefit others through performing various kinds of actions including wrathful actions; and especially we can lead ourself and others to the supreme happiness of enlightenment.

We recite the following mantras as a request to bestow these attainments upon us, while recognizing and believing that the wisdom beings of Heruka Father and Mother and their retinues are inseparable from the imagined Heruka (ourself) and consort Vajravarahi, and our retinue of Heroes and Heroines.

THE ESSENCE MANTRA OF HERUKA

We recite the following, while concentrating on the meaning:

At my heart is wisdom being Buddha Heruka, definitive Heruka.

*O Glorious Vajra Heruka, you who enjoy
The divine illusory body and mind of clear light,
Please pacify my obstacles and bestow upon me*

*The two attainments of liberating and ripening.
Please bless me so that I will become definitive Heruka,
In which state I shall experience all phenomena as purified and gathered into
emptiness, inseparable from great bliss.*

OM SHRI VAJRA HE HE RU RU KAM HUM HUM PHAT DAKINI DZALA SHAMBARAM SÖHA

We can recite this mantra twenty-one times, a hundred times or as many times as we wish.

THE THREE-OM MANTRA OF VAJRAYOGINI

We recite the following, while concentrating on the meaning:

*At the heart of imagined Vajrayogini (Vajravarahi) is wisdom being Buddha
Vajrayogini, definitive Vajrayogini.*

OM OM OM SARWA BUDDHA DAKINIYE VAJRA WARNANIYE VAJRA BEROTZANIYE HUM
HUM HUM PHAT PHAT PHAT SÖHA

We should recite at least as many three-OM mantras as we promised to recite when we received a Vajrayogini empowerment.

The ‘three-OM’ mantra is the union of the essence and close essence mantras of Vajravarahi. The meaning of this mantra is as follows. With OM OM OM we are calling Vajrayogini – the principal Deity – and her retinue of Heroines of the three wheels (the body, speech and mind wheels). SARWA BUDDHA DAKINIYE means that Vajrayogini is the synthesis of the minds of all Buddhas, VAJRA WARNANIYE means that she is the synthesis of the speech of all Buddhas, and VAJRA BEROTZANIYE means that she is the synthesis of the bodies of all Buddhas. With HUM HUM HUM we are requesting Vajrayogini and her retinues to bestow upon us the attainments of the body, speech and mind of all the Buddhas. With PHAT PHAT PHAT we are requesting them to pacify our main obstacle – the subtle mistaken appearance of our body, speech and mind; and SÖHA means ‘please build within me the basic foundation for all these attainments’.

As mentioned above, because our present body, speech and mind are contaminated by the poison of delusions they act as the basis of all suffering. We therefore need to attain a Buddha’s holy body, speech and mind.

THE CONDENSED MANTRA OF THE SIXTY-TWO DEITIES OF HERUKA BODY MANDALA

We recite the following, while concentrating on the meaning:

At the heart of each of the sixty-two Deities is their individual wisdom being, their own definitive Deity.

OM HUM BAM RIM RIM LIM LIM, KAM KHAM GAM GHAM NGAM, TSAM TSHAM DZAM
DZHAM NYAM, TrAM THrAM DrAM DHrAM NAM, TAM THAM DAM DHAM NAM, PAM
PHAM BAM BHAM, YAM RAM LAM WAM, SHAM KAM SAM HAM HUM HUM PHAT

We can recite this mantra seven times, twenty-one times, one hundred times or more.

When we recite this mantra we are making requests to wisdom being Buddha Heruka with Vajravarahi, and his retinue of Heroes and Heroines of the five wheels, to pacify our obstacle of subtle mistaken appearance and to bestow upon us the attainments of outer and inner Dakini Land. Outer Dakini Land is the Pure Land of Keajra and inner Dakini Land is meaning clear light. The moment our mind is free from subtle mistaken appearance, we open the door through which we can directly see all enlightened Deities. For as long as our mind remains polluted by subtle mistaken appearance this door is closed. The meaning of subtle mistaken appearance has already been explained.

After mantra recitation, we conclude our practice of *The Yoga of Buddha Heruka* sadhana by reciting dedication and auspicious prayers.

Those who wish to perform a close retreat of Heruka body mandala can do so in conjunction with the sadhana *Blissful Journey: How to Engage in a Close Retreat of Heruka Body Mandala* which can be found in *Modern Buddhism – Volume 3: Prayers for Daily Practice*.

TRAINING IN COMPLETION STAGE

Training in completion stage is the method for releasing our mind completely from subtle mistaken appearance. We shall finally attain enlightenment by completely abandoning the subtle mistaken appearance of all phenomena through our realization of completion stage. Developing the realization of completion stage depends upon the inner winds entering, abiding and dissolving within the central channel through the force of meditation. The objects of these meditations are the central channel, indestructible drop and the indestructible

wind and mind. Therefore, in this context, training in completion stage means training in meditation on the central channel, indestructible drop and the indestructible wind and mind.

In the scriptures it is said that meditation on the central channel is like a wishfulfilling cow. Just as a wishfulfilling cow provides milk unceasingly, so meditation on the central channel will enable us to experience great bliss unceasingly, and the meditations on the indestructible drop and on the indestructible wind and mind will enable us to experience the fully qualified clear light of bliss, which has the function of releasing our mind permanently from subtle mistaken appearance. A detailed explanation of the channels, drops and winds, how to meditate on the central channel, indestructible drop, and indestructible wind and mind, and how to make progress in realizing the five stages of completion stage has already been given.

The Instructions of Vajrayogini

THE YOGAS OF SLEEPING, RISING AND EXPERIENCING NECTAR

Vajrayogini is a female enlightened Deity of Highest Yoga Tantra who is the manifestation of the wisdom of all Buddhas. Her function is to guide all living beings to the Pure Land of Keajra, or Pure Dakini Land. The instructions of Vajrayogini were taught by Buddha in *Root Tantra of Heruka*. The great Yogi Naropa received these instructions directly from Vajrayogini, and passed them to Pamtingpa – one of his heart disciples. Pamtingpa then passed these instructions to the Tibetan translator Sherab Tseg, and from Sherab Tseg these instructions have been passed down in an unbroken lineage to Je Phabongkhapa, and then to the most venerable Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, holder of the lineage. It is from this great master that I, the author of this book, received these precious instructions.

Highest Yoga Tantra can be divided into Father Tantra and Mother Tantra. Mother Tantras principally reveal the training in clear light, which is the main cause to attain Buddha's holy mind; and Father Tantras such as Guhyasamaja Tantra principally reveal the training in the illusory body, which is the main cause to attain Buddha's holy body. Because Vajrayogini Tantra is Mother Tantra, the main body of Vajrayogini practice is training in clear light. This main body has eleven limbs, which are called the 'eleven yogas'. In this context, 'yoga' means training in spiritual paths. For example, training in a spiritual path in conjunction with sleep is called the 'yoga of sleeping'.

When the eleven yogas are listed in the scriptures, the first is the yoga of sleeping. This indicates that we should begin the practice of Vajrayogini with the yoga of sleeping. As already mentioned, the main body of Vajrayogini practice is training in clear light. Clear light naturally manifests during sleep; we therefore have the opportunity to train in recognizing it during sleep. When we recognize and realize clear light directly, we shall have attained meaning clear light, the realization of the fourth of the five stages of completion stage.

What is clear light? It is the very subtle mind that manifests when the inner winds enter, abide and dissolve within the central channel. Clear light is the eighth sign of the dissolution of inner winds within the central channel, and it

perceives emptiness. There are three different types of clear light: (1) the clear light of sleep, (2) the clear light of death, and (3) the realization of clear light.

During sleep our very subtle mind manifests because our inner winds naturally enter and dissolve within our central channel. This very subtle mind is the clear light of sleep. It perceives emptiness, but we cannot recognize the clear light itself or emptiness because our memory cannot function during sleep. In a similar way, during our death, our very subtle mind manifests because our inner winds enter and dissolve within the central channel. This very subtle mind is the clear light of death. It perceives emptiness, but we cannot recognize the clear light itself or emptiness because our memory cannot function during death.

During waking, if we are able to cause our inner winds to enter, abide and dissolve within the central channel through the power of meditation, we experience a deep dissolution of our inner winds into the central channel, and through this our very subtle mind will manifest. This very subtle mind is the realization of clear light. Its nature is a bliss arisen from the melting of the drops inside the central channel, and its function is to prevent mistaken appearance. It is also the realization of the clear light of bliss, which is the very essence of Highest Yoga Tantra and the actual quick path to enlightenment.

In conclusion, the main body of Vajrayogini practice is training in clear light of bliss. This can be divided into two: (1) training in bliss; and (2) training in clear light. Before training in bliss we should know what it is. This bliss is not sexual bliss; we do not need to train in sexual bliss as anyone, even an animal, can experience this without training. The bliss that we are training in is the bliss that Buddha explains in Highest Yoga Tantra. It is called 'great bliss', and possesses two special characteristics: (1) its nature is a bliss arisen from the melting of the drops inside the central channel; and (2) its function is to prevent subtle mistaken appearance. Ordinary beings cannot experience such bliss. As mentioned earlier, the sexual bliss of ordinary beings arises from the melting of the drops inside the left channel, and not the central channel.

In the *Condensed Heruka Root Tantra* Buddha says:

The supreme secret of great bliss
Arises through melting the drops inside the central channel;
Thus it is hard to find in the world
A person who experiences such bliss.

Such a great bliss is experienced only by someone who is able to cause their inner winds to enter, abide and dissolve within their central channel through the power of meditation. Because this great bliss prevents subtle mistaken

appearance, when we experience this bliss our ignorance of self-grasping and all distracting conceptual thoughts cease, and we experience a deep inner peace, which is superior to the supreme inner peace of nirvana explained by Buddha in Sutra teachings.



Venerable Vajrayogini

HOW TO PRACTISE THE YOGA OF SLEEPING

Every night when we are about to sleep we should think:

*To benefit all living beings
I shall become the enlightened Buddha Vajrayogini.
For this purpose I will accomplish the realization of the clear light of bliss.*

We then recollect that our body, our self and all other phenomena that we normally perceive do not exist. We try to perceive the mere absence of all phenomena that we normally see, the emptiness of all phenomena, and we meditate on this emptiness. Then we think and imagine:

In the vast space of emptiness of all phenomena – the Pure Land of Keajra – I appear as Vajrayogini surrounded by the enlightened Heroines and Heroes. Although I have this appearance it is not other than the emptiness of all phenomena.

We meditate on this self-generation.

We should train in this profound self-generation meditation while we are sleeping, but not in deep sleep. Through training in this practice each and every night with continual effort, gradually our memory will be able to function during sleep. Because of this, when our very subtle mind manifests during sleep we shall be able to recognize or realize it. Through further training we shall realize our very subtle mind directly. When this happens our mind will mix with the emptiness of all phenomena, like water mixing with water. Because of this our subtle mistaken appearance will quickly and permanently cease, and we shall become an enlightened being, a Buddha. As Buddha said: ‘If you realize your own mind you will become a Buddha; you should not seek Buddhahood elsewhere’. With regard to this accomplishment our sleep has so much meaning.

HOW TO PRACTISE THE YOGA OF RISING

We should try to practise the yoga of sleeping throughout the night, and throughout the day we should try to practise the yoga of rising. Every day, in the early morning, we should first meditate on the mere absence of all phenomena

that we normally see or perceive, the emptiness of all phenomena. Then we think and imagine:

In the vast space of emptiness of all phenomena – the Pure Land of Keajra – I appear as Vajrayogini surrounded by the enlightened Heroines and Heroes. Although I have this appearance it is not other than the emptiness of all phenomena.

We meditate on this self-generation.

We should repeat this meditation practice again and again, throughout the day. This is the yoga of rising. Then at night we again practise the yoga of sleeping. Through continually practising the cycle of the yogas of sleeping and rising, our ordinary appearances and conceptions, which are the root of our suffering, will cease.

HOW TO PRACTISE THE YOGA OF EXPERIENCING NECTAR

Whenever we eat or drink, we should first understand and think:

For enlightened beings all food and drink are supreme nectar, which possesses three special qualities: (1) it is medicine nectar that cures sickness; (2) it is life nectar that prevents death; and (3) it is wisdom nectar that pacifies delusions.

With this recognition, whenever we eat or drink we should offer our pleasure in these objects of desire to ourself, the self-generated Vajrayogini. Through practising in this way we can transform our daily experience of eating and drinking into a spiritual path that accumulates a great collection of merit, or good fortune. In the same way, whenever we enjoy seeing attractive forms or beautiful things, enjoy hearing beautiful sounds such as music or songs, enjoy smelling beautiful scents and enjoy touching tangible objects, we should offer our pleasure in these objects of desire to ourself, the self-generated Vajrayogini. In this way we can transform all our daily experiences of objects of desire into a spiritual path that leads us to the attainment of the enlightened state of Vajrayogini.

In summary, we should recognize that in the vast space of emptiness of all phenomena – the Pure Land of Keajra – is ourself Vajrayogini surrounded by the

enlightened Heroines and Heroes. We should maintain this recognition throughout the day and night, except when we are concentrating on common paths, such as going for refuge, training in renunciation and bodhichitta, and engaging in purification practices.

This way of practising the yogas of sleeping, rising and experiencing nectar is simple but very profound. There are also other ways of practising these yogas, an explanation of which can be found in *Guide to Dakini Land*.

THE REMAINING EIGHT YOGAS

The remaining eight yogas from the yoga of immeasurables to the yoga of daily actions should be practised in conjunction with the sadhana *Quick Path to Great Bliss* composed by Je Phabongkhapa (see *Modern Buddhism – Volume 3: Prayers for Daily Practice*). This sadhana is very blessed and precious. A detailed explanation of how to practise each yoga can be found in *Guide to Dakini Land*, but the following is a brief explanation of their essence.

THE YOGA OF IMMEASURABLES

Going for refuge, generating bodhichitta, and meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva are called the ‘yoga of immeasurables’ because they are trainings in spiritual paths that will bring us immeasurable benefit in this life and countless future lives.

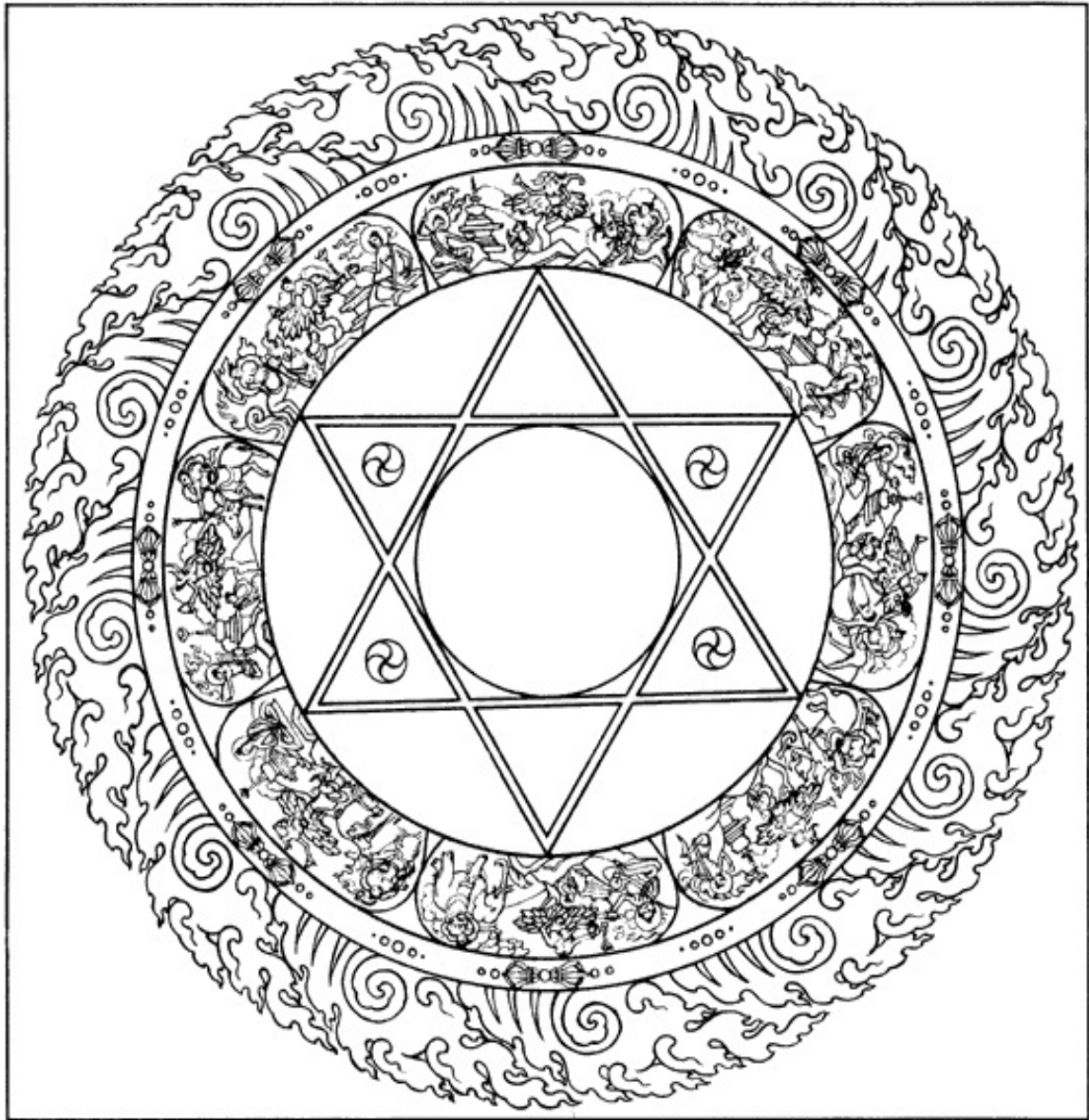
The meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva gives us the great opportunity to purify our mind quickly, so that we can more quickly attain enlightenment. As mentioned above, attaining enlightenment is very simple; all we need to do is apply effort to purifying our mind.

THE YOGA OF THE GURU

In this Guru yoga practice, to receive the blessings of all the Buddhas’ speech we visualize our root Guru in the aspect of Buddha Vajradharma. Vajradharma, Vajradhara, Vajrasattva and Heruka are different aspects of one enlightened being. The function of Buddha Vajradharma is to bestow the blessings of all the Buddhas’ speech. Through receiving these blessings, our speech will be very

powerful whenever we explain Dharma instructions. In this way we can fulfil the wishes of countless living beings and purify or heal their mental continuums through the nectar of our speech.

This Guru yoga contains a practice called ‘kusali tsog offering’, which has the same function as the ‘chod’ or ‘cutting’ practice. It also contains a practice of receiving the blessings of the four empowerments, which will give us great confidence in accomplishing the realizations of generation and completion stages.



Mandala of Vajrayogini

THE YOGA OF SELF-GENERATION

This yoga includes the practices of bringing death, the intermediate state (bardo) and rebirth into the paths of the Truth Body, Enjoyment Body and Emanation Body.

In this practice, the supporting mandala is visualized in the aspect of a double tetrahedron, which symbolizes the emptiness of all phenomena; and the supported Deities are ourself, the imagined Vajrayogini, and our retinue of Heroines.

THE YOGA OF PURIFYING MIGRATORS

In this practice, having generated ourself as the enlightened Buddha Vajrayogini, we imagine ourself giving blessings that liberate all living beings from suffering and negativities and transform them into the state of Vajrayogini – the state of ultimate happiness. This is a special practice of taking and giving according to Highest Yoga Tantra. It causes our potential to benefit directly each and every living being to ripen, and it also fulfils the commitment we made when we took the Highest Yoga Tantra empowerment in which we promised to benefit all living beings.

THE YOGA OF BEING BLESSED BY HEROES AND HEROINES

In this practice, through meditating on the body mandala of Vajrayogini, our channels and drops will receive powerful blessings directly from the thirty-seven Heroines – the female enlightened Deities of the Vajrayogini body mandala – and indirectly from their consorts, the Heroes. Also, through inviting all Heroines and Heroes (female and male enlightened beings) from the ten directions in the aspect of Vajrayogini and dissolving them into us, we shall receive the blessings of all Heroes and Heroines.

The meditation on Vajrayogini's body mandala is very profound. Although it is a generation stage practice it functions to cause the inner winds to enter, abide and dissolve within the central channel. Je Phabongkhapa highly praised the practice of Vajrayogini body mandala.

THE YOGA OF VERBAL AND MENTAL RECITATION

By concentrating on verbal recitation of the Vajrayogini mantra (the ‘three-OM mantra’) we can accomplish the pacifying, increasing, controlling, wrathful and supreme attainments, which are mentioned in the section *Training in Mantra Recitation*. The practice of mental recitation presents two completion stage meditations, both of which are the very essence of Vajrayogini practice. These two meditations are clearly explained in *Guide to Dakini Land*.

THE YOGA OF INCONCEIVABILITY

As described in the sadhana *Quick Path to Great Bliss* (see *Modern Buddhism – Volume 3: Prayers for Daily Practice*), having dissolved everything from the formless realm to the nada into emptiness, we imagine that we experience the clear light of bliss, and with this experience we meditate on the emptiness of all phenomena – the mere absence of all phenomena that we normally perceive. This meditation is training in the clear light of bliss, the main body of Vajrayogini practice. Through continually practising this meditation, gradually we shall experience meaning clear light – the union of great bliss and emptiness – which is the actual inconceivability. In this context, ‘inconceivability’ means that it cannot be experienced by those who have not attained meaning clear light.

THE YOGA OF DAILY ACTIONS

The yoga of daily actions is a method for transforming all our daily actions such as eating, sleeping, working and talking into profound spiritual paths, and thus extracting great meaning from every moment of our life.

Dedication

Through the great collection of virtue that I have accumulated by composing this book, may each and every living being have the opportunity to listen to and practise the precious teachings of Sutra and Tantra, and thereby experience the pure and everlasting happiness of enlightenment.