



Acharya Lama Sönam Rabgye

Bodhisattva Chenrezig

Lama Sönam presented the Chenrezig retreat in English;
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This transcript of the retreat is humbly dedicated to the long life of
His Holiness the XVIIth Gyalwa Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje,
His Eminence the IVth Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, Lodrö Chökyi Nyima,
all wonderful Lamas and Khenpos of the Karma Kagyü Lineage,
and to the preservation of the Lineage of Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye.

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Introduction

May I greet you kindly and say many *tashi-de-le* to you. I am very happy that you have come to take part in the Chenrezig course. Before discussing the practice, let us chant *The Short Dorje Chang Lineage Prayer* together and relax for a few minutes afterwards.

The Reason for Practicing

Let me first speak about the reason we engage in the practice of Bodhisattva Chenrezig and Buddhist meditations. Chenrezig meditation is one of the main practices in Buddhism, especially in Mahayana and Tibetan Buddhism. It's a very profound and widespread practice. Even little children in Himalayan countries recite the mantra of Noble Chenrezig very easily. Knowing or not knowing the meaning and reason for practicing make a big difference, though.

Knowledge of the meaning and the benefit of practice is won by examining and testing. Knowing through analysis means understanding, "Oh yes, this is why people practice Chenrezig and why they are meditating. I want to find out for myself, so I will practice too." Knowing the reason stabilizes our confidence and determination. By finding the reason, our doubts are dispelled and then we have more energy and strength. Some disciples don't need to find reasons and needn't

engage in analytical research to know why it's good to practice, because they have inner faith and trust that practicing is beneficial. But such persons are an exception. They have no doubts and are certain, "This is authentic and true." His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa said that one's practice is more stable if one knows the reason why one is practicing. In Tibet, many people only have trust and confidence and are very successful. Some people in Tibet don't even know what the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are and don't know what taking refuge means, but inside they have deep faith and confidence in the Three Jewels.

There was a great man named Kongpo Ben in Tibet. He travelled to visit the Jowo Statue of Buddha Shakyamuni in the Jokhang at Lhasa. After he entered the temple, he talked to the Buddha statue because he felt that it was real. He said to the Buddha, "I came the long distance from Kongpo and am so happy to see you. Please accept my shoes as a present to you. I want to make three prostrations and circumambulate you." He made three prostrations and placed his shoes next to the statue on the shrine before setting out to make circumambulations. He saw all the offerings and the huge butter lamp on the shrine and thought they were meant for visitors. He was hungry, so he took a little bit from the offerings. The caretaker came, saw him eating the offerings, and said, "Why did you take food from the offering bowls? And you shouldn't put your shoes on the shrine." He wanted to throw the shoes out and the Buddha statue spoke, "No, no, don't throw my shoes out." After the Buddha had spoken and he had met him face-to-face, Kongpo Ben was certain that the Buddha had a very pure heart. He asked the Buddha, "Do you want to come to my place next year? I have very special beer and dry meat that I would like to give to you."

After having returned home, Kongpo Ben did not stop thinking that the Buddha had promised to visit him. When his wife went down to the river to fetch water every day, she kept watching to see if a visitor was arriving. After all, her husband never stopped telling everyone that the Buddha would come and they should inform him if they saw anyone special.

One day his wife returned home from the river with a bucket of water and told him, "You always told me that you are expecting a very important visitor. I just saw someone who looked important at the river." Kongpo Ben rushed to the river and saw the image of the Buddha in the water. Worried about the Buddha being underwater, he jumped into the river, caught hold of him, and pulled him out. The Buddha said to him, "Actually, I am beyond a physical body. But I appeared here because you always remember me. You are a very special and faithful disciple, so we have a connection." As they proceeded towards the village, they arrived in front of a big rock on the side of the road. The Buddha did not want to go any further and disappeared into the rock. Even today, an image of the Buddha is visible in the rock. If you have the sacred text composed by Patrul Rinpoche, *Kun-bzang-bla-ma'i-zhāl-lung*, translated into English as *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, you can read the story of Kongpo Ben who later became known as Jowo Ben.

It's very important to know why we practice. From the Buddhist point of view, since beginningless time all sentient beings have Bodhicitta-mind or the true nature of mind – these are a few of the many terms used when referring to the Buddha nature. We read in *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* by Je Gampopa that all living beings, even the smallest animals, have the inner, unlimited potential of Buddhahood. Nobody is higher or lower or bigger or smaller than anyone else – everyone is the same in that they have the Buddha nature. Gampopa presented the

example of milk and butter and wrote that butter is always connected with milk, just like oil is always inside a sesame seed. But we can't see this. Why? Because they are concealed. Likewise, we have the same essence as the Buddha and in that respect aren't different from him. But the Buddha had overcome all obscurations, like the mental defilements and negative emotions, and therefore his Buddha nature manifested clearly in many places and in many ways. As long as we aren't free from our obscurations, our true nature cannot manifest fully. It's important for us to feel that we are always endowed with the great quality of Buddha nature, just like milk and butter are indivisible, but butter can't be won if milk isn't churned. If we know how to churn milk, it's easy for us to win butter. In the same way, sentient beings haven't revealed their Buddha nature but can manifest it if they work at it.

Lord Buddha said, "I realized reality and showed the different methods of the path. Whether you walk the path or not depends on you. If you walk the path, you will find your Buddha nature." We have to learn to appreciate and acknowledge that we already have all good qualities within and therefore can develop and benefit in many good ways in our ordinary lives. So, those are the reasons we practice. We don't only practice for the sake of our ordinary life but also for the sake of our spiritual life. Therefore we meditate.

The main and basic quality that we have to develop is inner peace of mind and loving kindness and compassion, *Bodhicitta*. We all have Bodhicitta by nature. We really want to understand and develop it fully, though, and we should never become discouraged. All sentient beings have the root of loving kindness and compassion, but it needs to be developed and increased through meditation. We can feel deep inside that we have Bodhicitta when we have love and compassion for those who are near and dear to us, for example, for our family members and friends. We can really feel this when things aren't going well for them and we want to help them.

We try all the time to rid ourselves of any suffering we have and to be happy. We think that nobody is different, that all sentient beings are the same. Everybody tries to become free of any suffering or unhappiness they have and try their best to be happy. Therefore we feel, "Just as I want to be happy and do not want to suffer or be unhappy, may all sentient beings be happy and free of suffering." That is how we train and develop our practice. But we have to really feel inside, "Oh, I have a lot of compassion."

A second way to understand that we have Bodhicitta is reading the life stories of great masters, for instance, the life story of Lord Buddha, Jetsün Milarepa, or His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa. When we learn about their lives, sometimes tears come to our eyes or our body hairs stand up. These are also signs that we have the pure potential or seed of Bodhicitta within. Another sign is that people cry when they see a high person like His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa. Our potential is awakened in moments like that. Je Gampopa said that all sentient beings are endowed with this quality, but in some it is awakened and in others it's not awakened. So we all have to awaken our love and compassion. How do we do this?

The first step is recognizing that we have love and compassion. We can acknowledge this due to feelings of love and compassion that we have and the energy flowing through our body when we see someone in sickness or pain. Or we can acknowledge this due to the feelings we have, like our

body hairs rising or tears coming to our eyes when we hear about the lives of Bodhisattvas or see a highly realized master. These are signs that we have the good qualities.

In the monasteries, we carry out debates and dispute this issue with each other. In the debates, we ask each other questions like, “What is the source of smoke?” The answer is, “Fire causes smoke.” Everything has a cause and result, so in the same way as fire is the source of smoke, Bodhicitta-mind is the source of love and compassion. Through debating in this way, doubts are eliminated and we come to really know. Let us do a short meditation now and see if we can feel the warmth of love and compassion in our heart.

Having spoken about the reasons we practice and confident that practicing will be very beneficial, the second point I want to discuss is the root or basis of our practice, which is loving kindness and compassion.

The Basis of Practice

The Buddha spoke about the main point of practice in the 84,000 teachings that he gave. All teachings are contained in *The Three Pitakas*, the Vinaya-Pitaka, the Sutra-Pitaka, and the Abhidharma-Pitaka. The first concerns giving up harming others, and the second deals with trying to benefit oneself as well as all sentient beings. Again, the root of Buddhist practice is love and compassion which are developed by refraining from harming others and by benefiting oneself and all sentient beings. From among the two, compassion is more powerful than love and is our principal motivation. *Daia* is the Sanskrit term for ‘love,’ and *karuna* is the Sanskrit term for ‘compassion.’ Practice means connecting our mind more and more with the quality of loving kindness and compassion. If our negative emotions diminish through practice and we try to benefit others, a peaceful and harmonious energy naturally arises within us, like the sun and moon. This is the essence and main teaching of all religions. If we really feel love and compassion, we will be able to deal with our emotions more easily, our life will be more harmonious and relaxed, and we will be more reliable. Our energy will be more peaceful and we can share with all sentient beings.

Sometimes we have problems, which are emotional, right? Emotions - disturbing emotions like desire, attachment, anger, aggression, sadness, doubt, fear, and so forth - always cause problems and disturb our lives. So our practice consists of overcoming our emotions. How do we do this? By recognizing that an emotion is an emotion and isn’t permanent, by remembering that we don’t want to take it seriously, and by knowing that the true nature of our mind is always pure. Then we can develop love and compassion, even when an emotion arises. We try to let an emotion be by meditating love and compassion. If we see other people giving in to their emotions, we realize that this isn’t their true nature and have love and compassion for them. Meditation is like this.

Of course, disturbing emotions arise in our daily life due to causes and conditions and because we aren’t really free from attachment, desire, and anger. We lead our lives in dependence upon causes and conditions, which are our emotions. We’re all subject to the karmic workings of our emotions, so it’s important to understand this process and then to deal with our emotions through the meditation practice of love and compassion.

Compassion means having a big, open, and vast heart. In the Milarepa Guru Yoga, a big and open heart is described as *snying-rje-chen-po*, 'great compassion,' *sems-chen-snying-rje-chen-po*. *Sems-chen-po* means 'big and vast mind.' Great diligence and great *Geduld* ('patience' in German) are also qualities of a Bodhisattva. Whoever has great compassion, great love, great diligence, and great patience is called "a Bodhisattva." This is pure and supreme Bodhicitta. We know that we all have the chance to develop Bodhicitta and that it's very important in life. If we lose contact to our big heart, then our life becomes very difficult. When we realize this, then we have the energy to develop Bodhicitta, not only on a spiritual level but also in daily life. We need to help and connect meaningfully with each other all the time, so we need to stabilize our qualities. It's especially important to apply love and compassion when angry and aggressive emotions arise.

What is the opposite of love and compassion? Anger and hatred. If we are aggressive and angry all the time, we cannot feel love and compassion because our energy is disturbed. It's very necessary to have love, compassion, and patience in society. In the sixth chapter on patience in *The Bodhicharyavatara*, Shantideva said that next to love and compassion, patience is most important. He said that if we lose patience and are angry and aggressive, we cannot connect with people, not even with people near and dear to us. When we have a bad temper, our body shakes and we make many mistakes. Then our face changes fully, turns red, and people feel sad. For example, if I am a very good person but become involved with my emotions, or am in a bad mood, or become angry, then all my friends and relations distance themselves from me. They think, "He is really a nice person but is fully changed. He has lost his love and compassion and is full of anger and rage." Friends and relatives feel sad and think, "I am sorry for that." We need to recognize an emotion when it arises and know through reasoning that becoming involved with any emotion helps nobody.

Turning our attention inwards on our essence is having Bodhicitta-mind. Our inner essence is pure – it is the Buddha nature. So, it's better to distance ourselves from people who are not nice to us, who tell us, "You are bad," because we might become involved in an argument with them and will then lose our peaceful mind of loving kindness and compassion. By understanding this, we can develop our inner quality. This is one method. Another method to settle down so that we can develop and increase our Bodhicitta is to turn to Bodhisattva Chenrezig and recite his mantra, OM MANI PEMA HUNG.

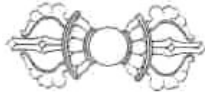
We are all good people, but we have to stabilize our goodness. If we lose our love and compassion and become impatient and aggressive, we become bad people.

We are taught that love and compassion is the root of all practices. There are eight great Bodhisattvas. Chenrezig is one of the main Bodhisattvas and is fully enlightened. He is the great Bodhisattva of love and compassion. In a Sutra, the Buddha said, "No other Bodhisattva has as much love and compassion as Chenrezig. His love and compassion are limitless."

There are long and short meditation practices of Noble Chenrezig. They can be practiced on the level of both Sutrayana and Tantrayana and are just different means to develop Bodhicitta more and more. You are welcome to ask any questions that you might have.

Question: “If I know that I am right and someone I am arguing with makes contrary claims and becomes aggressive, what should I do?” **Translator:** “What’s the problem? Do you beat each other up?” **Same student:** “No. How should I deal with this?” **Lama Sönam:** You have to find out why he thinks differently and find another solution. **Same student:** “It’s not a matter of finding a topic but of dealing with his emotions.” **Translator:** “It’s not the subject but the attitude.” **Lama Sönam:** Attitude, yes, that comes out sometimes. If someone tries to convince you of his point of view and becomes aggressive, it would be good to distance yourself. Mindfulness and awareness are important. **Translator:** “*Immer wieder Selbstprüfung* (‘check yourself again and again’).”

Next question: “Is the aim of the Chenrezig meditation to always maintain and be connected with one’s true nature of love and compassion in daily life?” **Lama Sönam:** Yes, it’s like that. Through the practice of Chenrezig, we connect with the blessing. Love and compassion are always there. **Same student:** “What about the path of practice? There is one part, which is to recite the text, and there is the other practice of dealing with problems in normal life.” **Lama Sönam:** You can also engage in the practices of the four immeasurables - immeasurable love, immeasurable compassion, immeasurable joy, and immeasurable equanimity. **Same student:** “I formulated my question wrongly. Maybe the problem is that I didn’t ask my question right but just said something and wanted to hear if I understood correctly. So, we practice the recitation and we have practice for daily life. How can I use the practice of Chenrezig and respond in daily life when I encounter problems?” **Lama Sönam:** As I mentioned earlier, the essence of Chenrezig is love and compassion. Apply the practice and look inside when problems and emotions arise in daily life. This is the remedy. If you don’t have enough time to recite the entire Sadhana, which is the case when you encounter problems, just feel love and compassion inside and recite Chenrezig’s mantra, OM MANI PEMA HUNG. This mantra is the essence of the entire Chenrezig practice. You can also recite the mantra when people expect things of you. **Same student:** “How can my practice be more aimed in daily life? ... It’s hard for me to formulate my question correctly. I understood that Chenrezig meditation is a means to experience my own nature in a protected place. How can I connect with my inner nature by reciting the mantra when I encounter daily problems? Can I have a key to unlock the door to be able to deal with situations better?” **Lama Sönam:** “I don’t understand you clearly because my English isn’t good enough. **Same student:** “My understanding is that through Chenrezig meditation, I make a connection with my true nature. It’s easier for me to do prayers, to open my heart, to be stable in a special place. When I am confronted with problems in daily life, do I use the key of the mantra to contact my true nature again quickly? Is this the right understanding?” **Lama Sönam:** Yes, that is correct. **Translator:** “He asked if there are any other tools to directly go into the stream of his big heart when he is angry, because anger is very strong? The mantra is okay, but maybe you know another tool how to directly make his true nature present?” **Lama Sönam:** Yes, the true nature. Patience. It’s not easy at a beginning level, but you have to try and then it becomes something that you can experience within. Jetsün Milarepa said, “*sGom-pa-ma-yin gom-pa-yin.*” The two words sound alike but the spelling is different. *Gom-pa* means ‘to become familiar’ and *sgom-pa* means ‘to meditate.’ In this instruction, Milarepa taught that true meditation means having becoming familiar with our true nature. If you are familiar with your meditation, then you can relax. But you have to train again and again and then it comes spontaneously.



Let us sing the following spiritual song together before turning our attention to the Sadhana:

*“All you sentient beings I have a good or bad connection with
As soon as you’ve left this confus’d dimension,
May you be born in the West, in Sukhavati,
And when you’re born there, complete the bhumis and the paths.”*



**The Sadhana of Bodhisattva Chenrezig, entitled
*The Universal Practice to Benefit Beings –
A Meditation on the Most Sublime Chenrezig
and the Recitation of His Mantra
as He Transmitted it Directly to Tangtong Gyalpo, Prince of Siddhas***

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The Chenrezig Sadhana that we will be practicing and studying was composed by Tangtong Gyalpo, who was born approx. 1361 C.E. and lived until 1485. He is revered as a great Mahasiddha in Tibet because he was very special. It is said that he was the very emanation of Bodhisattva Chenrezig. While meditating, Chenrezig appeared to Tangtong Gyalpo face-to-face and gave him the instructions. He wrote them down, so the Sadhana is not an ordinary text but is

very precious. It has an exceptional blessing and therefore is the main practice of many monks and lay people of Tibet who wish to be connected with Chenrezig.

In the Sadhana, first there is the short *Lineage Prayer to Vajradhara* and then the long *Lineage Prayer*. We can choose to recite the one or the other because this prayer is extra and then we can proceed to the main section of the practice.

Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana practices always begin with taking refuge. It is recited to establish the appropriate base and is the first gate we enter. The second gate is generating Bodhicitta to establish the appropriate base for Mahayana. The third gate is the visualization practice of the creation and completion stages, which is Vajrayana. The conclusion is dedicating the merit and prayers. So Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana are included in the practice of Chenrezig.

1. Taking Refuge and Generating Bodhicitta

The Refuge Prayer in the Chenrezig Sadhana that we recite is:

*“In the Buddha, Dharma, and noblest Sangha
I take refuge until enlightenment is reached.”*

There is an outer refuge and an inner refuge. The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha are the outer refuges. A *thangka* (‘painting’) or statue of the Buddha is a symbol of the Buddha. A text symbolizes his teachings, the Dharma, and the assembly of the fully ordained and lay practitioners stands for the noble Sangha. The inner aspect of *Zuflucht* (‘refuge’ in German) is the Lama, Yidam, and Wisdom-Protectors.

As practitioners, we’re not concerned about having more than we already have nor do we care about being better off – it’s not like that. In the way of Chenrezig, we pray on behalf of and for the sake of all sentient beings - all our male family members and friends who we imagine are at our right side and all our female family members and friends who we imagine are at our left side. We imagine all our human relatives and relations, our mother, father, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters at our right and left sides. All sentient beings of the six realms we feel indifferent about are situated behind us. The texts state that it’s most difficult to have love and compassion for our enemies, so we imagine them in front of us. Always complaining and blaming us, being a nuisance, being angry, and not being nice to us, it’s not easy to have love and compassion for them. This is one aspect of our enemies. Another aspect of our enemies is our karmic connections that manifest as suffering and problems due to negativities we did in past lives. So we imagine all our enemies in front of us. We see ourselves as the guide and guardian of all those beings we imagine surrounding us when we take refuge.

Why do we practice taking refuge in the Three Jewels? The Buddha is the supreme human being who is fully free from suffering. We take refuge in the Buddha because he protects against the confusion and temporary suffering of samsara. He is like a physician. The Dharma is his teachings and is like medicine. The Sangha are the helpers who show us how to practice; they are like nurses who are always nice to patients, take care of them, and tell them how to use the

medicine correctly. We need the protection of the Three Jewels so that we become cured of our negative emotions and wrong ways of seeing things.

The ultimate refuge is our Buddha nature or Bodhicitta. When we have realized our mind's true nature or Bodhicitta, then we will have vanquished all our negative emotions and defilements and will have reached the state of Buddhahood. At that time, we don't need the Dharma and the Sangha anymore. The example is crossing a big river. When crossing a big river, we need a boat. When we have reached the other shore, we don't need the boat anymore. Until we reach the state of Buddhahood, we need the Dharma and the Sangha. When we have become a buddha and are thus fully enlightened, we don't need the Dharma and Sangha anymore. **Translator:** "So we don't need the Buddha then?" **Lama Sönam:** When we have reached the state of a buddha, we don't need the two other objects of refuge to cross the ocean of samsara because we will have crossed it. Therefore we continually practice going for refuge in the Three Jewels.

Bodhisattva Chenrezig is our main object of refuge. He is the embodiment of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Whoever we see as our Root Guru - whether His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa or our Root Lama -, we visualize Chenrezig and our Root Guru as inseparable in space in front of us. This is the same as the outer practice of Guru Yoga. Chenrezig's heart is the Buddha, his speech is the Dharma, and his body is the Sangha. Without any doubt, we need to trust him fully. Just as Je Gampopa stated in *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, we need to fully appreciate what we are doing. He spoke about three kinds of faith and wrote, "Whenever we practice, we need trusting faith, longing faith, and clear faith." We know without doubt that Chenrezig is enough – he is our guide, our protector, and our main Yidam deity. He is the embodiment of all aspects of enlightenment. When we imagine him in front, we feel and think, "You are my only guide and protector. You are enough for me."

Having taken refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha in the name of all living beings, we develop Bodhicitta, which means not being concerned about ourselves, i.e., if we have enough, we have enough; if we are healthy, then it's okay. We need something to work with, so by meditating Chenrezig and reciting *The Bodhicitta Prayer*, we imagine that all suffering, illusions, and disturbing emotions of all sentient beings are pacified. This is one way of developing and increasing Bodhicitta.

Another way to develop and increase Bodhicitta is to reflect that all sentient beings are just like our mother in this life. We contemplate how our mother gave birth to us, how she cared for us, how she kept us warm when we were cold, that she always gave us milk to drink, that she showed us everything, and that she was extremely kind to us. In Buddhism, we think that we had a mother in every former life, that she was just as kind to us as our present mother, and that all sentient beings are connected as child-mother and mother-child. Realizing this, we want to share the best with them by attaining the Bodhisattva qualities of Noble Chenrezig. This is the purpose of *The Bodhicitta Aspiration Prayer* - we want to attain the same qualities that Chenrezig has to be able to help all mother-sentient beings who are confused and suffering in samsara. We really want to help them and therefore resolve to transcend samsara and attain liberation.

The Bodhicitta Aspiration Prayer that we recite with pure intention is:

*“Through the virtue generated by this meditation and mantra-recitation,
May I achieve Buddhahood for the benefit of all beings.”*

Having meditated this way, Chenrezig dissolves into light, dissolves into us, and we feel that we have received the power of his blessings; we feel that we have connected with him. This is the training.

I’m sure you all have a good connection to Bodhistva Chenrezig. Although it isn’t necessary, I give the oral reading transmission in accordance with the tradition so that you can practice the Sadhana.

2. The Creation Stage of Practice

Visualizing Chenrezig is a Vajrayana practice and includes calm abiding meditation through the creation stage of practice and special insight meditation through the completion stage of practice. The terms are different, but the meaning is almost the same. Since all appearances and experiences are the inseparability of the ultimate and relative truths, both aspects are a part of Vajrayana meditation practices. The completion stage of practice is carried out after the creation stage, ‘completion’ meaning the dissolution of everything into emptiness. This stage of practice coincides with the ultimate truth.

We visualize above our heads and the heads of all sentient beings surrounding us a lotus flower with eight petals that serves as a seat. On top of the lotus-seat is a moon-disc that serves as a cushion. On top of the moon-disc is Chenrezig’s seed syllable, the extraordinary letter HRIH, which is just as white as sparkling snow. This is a very nice calm abiding meditation with a pure object. We visualize that bright, five-coloured light radiates from the syllable HRIH as an offering to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions. The light returns and dissolves into the syllable HRIH, which transforms into Chenrezig.

We know how Chenrezig looks from thangkas and statues. His body is white in colour, which means that he has purified and is free from all negativities and that he has realized the inseparability of relative and ultimate Bodhicitta. There are images of different aspects of Chenrezig, with one thousand arms, eleven arms, four arms, two arms - but there is no one-armed Chenrezig. The main practice of Chenrezig is the four-armed Chenrezig. The four arms symbolize that he has ultimate Bodhicitta, which are the four immeasurables - immeasurable love, immeasurable compassion, immeasurable joy, and immeasurable equanimity.

The first two hands of Chenrezig are folded at his heart and hold a jewel. A jewel is something very precious and symbolizes richness and wealth, so possessing it means that one has no problems and is always happy and content. In the hands of Chenrezig, the jewel symbolizes that through his immeasurable love and compassion he fulfils the wishes and needs of all sentient beings. Chenrezig is like that. In his right hand he holds a *mala*, in his left hand a lotus flower. His mala is just as precious as a rosary is to Christians. It symbolizes Chenrezig’s pledge and commitment to lead all sentient beings to enlightenment. His realization is the same as that of the Buddha, but he remains on the ten Bodhisattva bhumis, i.e., he is still with us and, just as he promised, he will continue emanating in the world until all sentient beings are completely

enlightened. This is why many emanations of Chenrezig appear in the world, like His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa and other great masters. The lotus flower in his left hand means he dwells in samsara. Just as the pure lotus abides in mud, he is free from defilements and obscurations while abiding in samsara.

The lines of the creation stage of visualization practice in the Sadhana are very clear and easy to understand. The first verse that we recite while visualizing the instructions is:

“Above my head and above the heads of all beings throughout space is a white lotus flower bearing a moon-disc. Upon it is the syllable HRIH, which becomes the most sublime Chenrezig, white, bright, radiating five-coloured lights, smiling, gazing with great compassion, having one face, four arms, the upper two held together, and the lower holding a crystal rosary and white lotus.”

Bodhisattva Chenrezig appears in the Sambhogakaya form. As you know, there are three *kayas*. They are the *Dharmakaya* (‘the truth body’), the *Sambhogakaya* (‘the enjoyment body’), and the *Nirmanakaya* (‘the manifest body’). The three kayas are the pure, inner qualities of our body, speech, and mind. All Sambhogakaya deities, e.g., Arya Tara, Dorje Sempa, Vajradhara, have the same eight ornaments and wear the same five peaceful robes; they are the thirteen symbols of the Sambhogakaya form. Chenrezig also wears the five peaceful robes and is also adorned with eight ornaments. The eight ornaments are the crown, earrings, finger rings, necklaces, jewelled shoulder pads, bracelets, anklets, and a belt studded with jewels; so, not only the female Yidams wear jewels. The five peaceful robes are two upper garments, two lower garments, and a shawl over the shoulder. You can learn the names of the robes in commentaries on the Chenrezig Sadhana.

The antelope is a very special animal and represents Krishna in Hindu mythology. It’s also said to be an emanation of Chenrezig. The antelope is always completely peaceful, and Chenrezig is also always completely peaceful and smiling. Therefore he has an antelope pelt over his left breast. Chenrezig is the Bodhisattva of the inseparability of supreme compassion and wisdom of emptiness, symbolized by the antelope pelt.

Chenrezig belongs to the family of Buddha Amitabha, therefore the Buddha of Limitless Light is above the crown of Chenrezig. We can say that Buddha Amitabha is Chenrezig’s *Lehrer* (‘teacher’ in German). They are always united.

Chenrezig is always seated in the vajra-posture and is seen leaning back against a pure and bright moon-disc, which means that he is always at peace. He has an unimaginable, extraordinary energy and therefore he smiles very peacefully. He is the very embodiment of the Three Jewels and the Three Roots - the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, the Lama, the Yidams, and the Protectors - and he is always with us. We visualize this during the creation stage of meditation.

We recite the verse of the Sadhana while visualizing the instructions, which is:

“Adorned with fine silken clothes and precious gems, wearing an antelope-skin as a mantlet, crowned with the glory of Amitabha, seated in the vajra-posture with an immaculate moon for a backrest – this is the essence of all sources of refuge, fused together.”

Then we visualize that from Chenrezig's body - his forehead, his throat, and his heart - five-coloured light radiates out to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the ten directions, returns, and dissolves into all sentient beings, purifying them of all their negativities and defilements. Then they transform into Chenrezig. We just feel this, and this is how we train to have the pure vision, pure concepts, pure appearances. All impurities of beings in the six realms of samsara are purified and they transform into Chenrezig, becoming brothers and sisters or sons and daughters of Chenrezig. We feel that the entire outer world has been transformed into the Pure Land of Chenrezig and all sentient beings of the inner world are transformed into Chenrezig. Let us recite the prayer and meditate in this way for a short while together:

"I and all beings pray to our Lama, the most sublime Chenrezig, clearly visualized as above. We pray in unison and with full concentration, 'Whatever you do, you know best; we rely on you single-mindedly, regardless of any other concern. Please free us from the six realms of samsara and lead us to the all-knowing state.'"

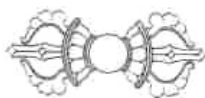
(It is written in the Sadhana: "Repeat this prayer as much as you can, 7, 21, 100, or any number of times until your being 'boils up' with fervour and your disposition has definitely changed. If you so wish, here you may insert *The Seven-Branch Prayer* composed by Gelongma Palmo, or Gelong Pema Karpo's prayer to Chenrezig, his Yidam, or any other such prayer rich in blessing. This will be of further benefit.") Before continuing with the teachings, though, please ask any questions you might have.

Question: "I have a question. When visualizing, do I imagine Chenrezig as he is seen in a picture in the thangka or statue? How large should he be? Is he just light? Is he like a real person?" **Lama Sönam:** He should not be visualized like a body consisting of flesh and bones. The deities are visualized as the inseparability of form and emptiness. The example used is the rainbow. Its colours appear brightly and intensely, but it doesn't truly exist. It arises and ceases again, right? In visualization practice, the deity's form is like a rainbow – the inseparability of form and emptiness. The image we visualize is not a flat body like in the in a thangka, but it is form-emptiness, i.e., wisdom and compassion inseparable. **Same student:** "But it's here?" **Lama Sönam:** Yes, you visualize the deity in front of yourself. The text doesn't state how big or small the image should be. You just imagine the size of the deity according to your inner feeling, how comfortable you feel, and how familiar you are with it.

Next question: "Why is it the syllable HRIH and not HUNG?" **Lama Sönam:** Each deity has an own seed-syllable because it means something different. For instance, the seed-syllable of Arya Tara is TAM. **Translator:** "So it's a matter of the language, whether you say 'cow' or *Kuh* ('cow' in German)." **Lama Sönam:** The seed-syllable of each deity refers to a different aspect and a special connection. The seed-syllable of Chenrezig is HRIH; the seed-syllable of Tara is TAM. **Same student:** "So, there's no reason why it's so? You cannot make it another way?" **Lama Sönam:** Another way? A specific seed-syllable is connected with a specific deity. **Same student:** "So, there's no text written by somebody who explained why it's like this?" **Lama Sönam:** You mean why HRIH, for example, isn't the seed-syllable of all deities? **Same student:** "Yes, or why it arises out of a syllable? HUNG is easier, but HRIH is difficult. I painted it again and again and thought it would become easier, but it didn't." **Lama Sönam:** Everything has a reason, the

different colours, the arms and hands, the mala, and the flower. HRIH is Chenrezig's element. The seed of an ordinary being is the union of the father and mother elements, right? After the elements have united, the seed develops more and more and a form with eyes, ears, nose, tongue, etc. evolves and grows. Slowly this form grows and grows and grows and is born into the world. The process of visualization is like this. When you visualize Chenrezig, the HRIH is like this. We visualize light offerings going out from the HRIH to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The light returns and dissolves into the seed-syllable. Then HRIH completely becomes Chenrezig. Every deity has a different seed-syllable, and HRIH is the seed-syllable of Chenrezig. Is it clear? **Same student:** "A little bit." **Translator:** "The Christian Bible begins with the statement, 'In the beginning was the word.'" **Lama Sönam:** In Vajrayana, visualizing a deity is similar to the process of becoming a human being. It is practicing to transform one's impure seed, one's body, speech, and mind, into the pure form of a deity. That is why we engage in visualization practices. It's not necessary to ponder why HRIH isn't visualized for Tara, which would only be a terminological issue. Each deity has an own seed-syllable, just like the father and mother elements unite and become a specific seed. We could ask: If everything is the same, why aren't there totally identical people? Why do people have different characters if everything is the same? There's no answer to questions like this. The father and mother elements are the seed that are like a deity's seed-syllable. The seed-syllables of a deity vary, because every deity has a specific aspect.

Next question: "I have a short question. I always noticed that Chenrezig is connected to Buddha Amitabha. Is it wrong to connect his mantra to Amitabha?" **Lama Sönam:** Chenrezig belongs to the Buddha family of Amitabha. **Translator:** "White Tara also belongs?" **Lama Sönam:** Yes, that refers to the different texts. There are lotus and vajra texts of deities of deities. There are five Buddha families in all and each has different texts. Many peaceful deities belong to the lotus family. Amitabha is the main deity of the lotus family, so he has lotus texts. There are also the Buddha families of Amoghasiddhi and Ratnasambhava and they have other texts. Tara and Chenrezig belong to the lotus family. But it would go too far to discuss this. We are concentrating on Chenrezig now.



The Seven-Branch Prayer

Let us recite *The Seven-Branch Prayer* together. It is:

"Filled with appreciation, I pay homage to the sublime One, mighty Chenrezig, and to all the Victors and their Sons in the ten directions and three times.

Offering flowers, incense, butter-lamps, perfumes, food, music, and other real and imaginary offerings, I pray this gathering of Realised Beings to accept them.

I confess all faults committed since beginningless time through a mind overpowered by negativity – the ten unvirtuous actions, the five capital offences of no reprieve, and so forth.

I rejoice in the goodness of whatever virtue Shravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, ordinary beings, or anybody has accumulated in the three times.

I pray that the Dharma Wheel – of the Mahayana, Hinayana, and of the teachings common to both – be turned in accordance with the wishes and aptitudes of beings.

I pray that until samsara has been completely annihilated, you will not pass away but will look with compassion upon the beings sunk in suffering's vast ocean.

Whatever virtue I thus accumulate, may it all be a cause for enlightenment. May I reach without delay the full skills of a true guide for beings.”

The first branch of the prayer is making prostrations and paying homage to Bodhisattva Chenrezig. The purpose of making *phyag-'tsäl-lo* is to overcome pride. The second branch concerns making actual and mental offerings to the deity to overcome greed and grasping, which can be a problem - sometimes. People have many things, keep what they have for themselves, and cannot give anything away. They cannot be generous, so making offerings is practiced to overcome miserliness.

The third branch of the prayer is making confessions, which is a power of thought to clear away hindrances to spiritual progress. Sometimes we do things knowingly; sometimes we do things without control. This verse addresses the ten unvirtuous actions that we knowingly or unknowingly committed and we confess to Chenrezig. The most negative deeds are killing one's mother, father, or an Arhat, splitting the Sangha, etc. Of course, we never did things like that, but maybe we did in a previous life. We aren't Bodhisattvas and it's normal not to want to hurt anyone, but it happens. It's important to recognize and know, “Oh, I did something wrong that isn't good for others and isn't good karma for me.” We just need to recognize anything negative we did and refrain from repeating it. Knowing that we did something wrong and regretting it, we confess it to Chenrezig. If we confess with remorse, then our negative karma becomes purified. Now, unvirtuous deeds are not qualities, but confessing them is a quality. If we recognize that we did something wrong and really regret it, we confess and promise, “I will never do that again.” That's how we purify our negative karma.

The fourth branch addresses rejoicing in the *bsöd-nams*, ‘virtue,’ of other living beings. It is: “I rejoice in the goodness of whatever virtue Shravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, ordinary beings, or anybody has accumulated in the three times.” Rejoicing in others' positive deeds dispels our jealousy and hatred. It is very great to realize that it's special and thus to be happy when someone else does something good with body, speech, and mind. By rejoicing in others' good deeds, the beneficial result is the same as if we had performed the virtuous action ourselves. On the other hand, if we are happy that someone did something bad and engaged in wrongdoing by thinking, for example, “He did something really good when he beat that other person up and stole from him,” then the result is the same as if we had committed the unvirtuous action ourselves. So, it's only beneficial to rejoice in the good deeds of others and not to be happy when they hurt others. There is a story about a king who lived during the Buddha's times, 2600 years ago, that I want to tell. It exemplifies the remedy against hatred and jealousy.

The king invited Lord Buddha and his 500 monks to his palace to offer them many nice things. A very old and very poor lady who always sat at the entrance to the royal grounds dreamed about this and rejoiced about the king's decision. She exclaimed, “Super!” She realized that he had done something good in his previous life to become a king in this life and even cried that in this life he would be offering many nice things and meals for an entire day to the Buddha and his 500

monks. The Buddha saw this. After the festivities were over, the Buddha asked the king, “Today we did so many good things and accumulated much merit. Of course, we usually dedicate the merit to all sentient beings, but today to whom specifically should we dedicate the merit?” The king was very proud of himself, of how well everything went, and replied, “Today I did so many good things and accumulated much merit. Of course I dedicate it to you.” Lord Buddha told him, “Today we dedicate the merit to the old lady, because she has a pure and clear heart. She rejoiced with body, speech, and mind in your deed.” The moral of the story is to not be jealous but to just rejoice in others’ good deeds. The benefit of rejoicing in others’ good deeds is the same as though we had performed the action, therefore it’s very important.

The fifth verse of *The Seven-Branch Prayer* is the request that the Wheel of Dharma be turned. We recite it to overcome our ignorance. It is: “I pray that the Dharma-Wheel – of the Mahayana, Hinayana, and of the teachings common to both – be turned in accordance with the wishes and aptitudes of beings.”

The sixth branch is: “I pray that, until samsara has been completely annihilated, you will not pass away but will look with compassion upon the beings sunk in suffering’s vast ocean.” This line is requesting the teacher not to enter nirvana but to remain in the world so that all sentient beings are rescued from samsaric existence. We recite it to overcome our false views.

The last point, the seventh branch, is: “Whatever virtue I thus accumulate, may it all be a cause for enlightenment. May I reach without delay the full skills of a true guide for beings.” This line is the dedication of merit that we have been able to accumulate so that all sentient beings become liberated. The dedication is very important. Even if we only meditate for five minutes, we are practicing the first paramita of generosity by dedicating the merit to sentient beings. It’s a very good practice

We realize why *The Seven-Branch Prayer* is included in all Mahayana practices. It’s included in the Medicine Buddha Practice, too.

So far we have looked at the first preliminary practice of taking refuge and generating Bodhicitta and secondly at the main practice of visualizing Chenrezig in what is the creation stage of practice. Thirdly, we discussed *The Seven-Branch Prayer*. Now I will speak about the mantra-recitation.

The Mantra-Recitation

There is a short special prayer to Chenrezig in the Sadhana that was spoken and composed by Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo in his life as Gelong Pema Karpo. It is entitled, *The Vajra Words of Prayer to the Sublime Chenrezig*. After having recited this prayer and the mantra, let us do a short meditation and then continue with the dissolution stage of practice.

“The Vajra Words of Prayer to the Sublime Chenrezig,” spoken by the great Mahasiddha (Tangtong Gyalpo) in his existence as Gelong Pema Karpo is:

“I pray to you, Lama Chenrezig,

*I pray to you, Yidam Chenrezig,
I pray to you, most sublime Chenrezig,
I pray to you, great Refuge and Protector Chenrezig,
to you I pray, loving Protector Chenrezig.
Please hold us with your compassion, compassionate Buddha.
For all beings who have been wandering countless numbers of times in endless samsara and who
endure unbearable torments,
There is no other refuge than you, Great Protector.*

*Through the power of bad actions accumulated since beginningless time under the influence of hatred,
one is born in the hells. May all beings who endure the tortures of heat and cold be reborn in your
presence, great symbol of perfection.
OM MANI PEMA HUNG.*

*Through the power of bad actions accumulated since beginningless time under the influence of avarice,
one is born in the realm of the craving spirits. May all beings who undergo the torments of starvation
and thirst be reborn in your presence in the perfect Pure Land of Potala.
OM MANI PEMA HUNG.*

*Through the power of bad actions accumulated since beginningless time under the influence of
ignorance, one is born as an animal. May all beings afflicted by the sufferings of stupidity and dullness
be reborn in your presence, O Protector.
OM MANI PEMA HUNG.*

*Through the power of bad actions accumulated since beginningless time under the influence of desire,
one is born in the realm of men. May all beings who endure the pains due to excessive activity and
constant frustration be reborn in the perfect Pure Land of Dewachen.
OM MANI PEMA HUNG.”*

(Then it is written in the Sadhana: “This prayer, ‘*The Vajra Words of Prayer to the Sublime Chenrezig*,’ was spoken by the Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo, who remembered them from a previous life when he had been the monk Pema Karpo, who addressed this prayer one-pointedly to the Sublime Chenrezig whilst doing the Nyung-Ne practice from his twentieth to his eightieth year.”)

Continuing with the Sadhana, we pray:

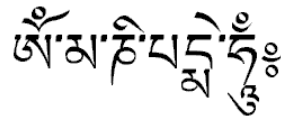
*‘Through the power of bad actions accumulated since beginningless time under the influence of
jealousy, one is born in the realm of the jealous semi-gods. May all beings who endure the pains of
fighting and quarrelling be reborn in the Pure Land of the Potala.
OM MANI PEMA HUNG.*

*Through the power of bad actions accumulated since beginningless time under the influence of pride,
one is born in the realm of the gods. May all beings who undergo the sufferings of transmigration and
fall be reborn in the Pure Land of the Potala.
OM MANI PEMA HUNG.*

Throughout all my existences may I, by deeds like those of Chenrezig, also liberate beings in impure places and spread the supreme sound of the six-syllable mantra throughout the ten directions.

By the power of thus praying to you, most Sublime One, may all the beings I will have to train pay the greatest of attention to karma, strive to act virtuously, and practice the Dharma for the sake of all beings.”

(Then it is written in the Sadhana: “While keeping the meaning of the preceding verses well in mind, recite the OM MANI PEMA HUNG mantra as much as appropriate, either 100, 1,000, 10,000, 100,000 times, or any number of times, spending the great part of the session on this.”)



This is the mantra-recitation, which we can repeat with ease as often as we want and depending upon the time we have. We can repeat it 108 times by counting the beads on our mala, or two times of our mala, or more. While reciting Chenrezig’s very special mantra, we imagine the world as Chenrezig’s pure mandala, all sentient beings as emanations of Noble Chenrezig, and all sounds as his wonderful mantra.

What is the meaning of the six-syllable mantra? There are many explanations on the meaning of the mantra, long, middle-length, and short. I will offer a short explanation. First, though, it would be good to know what the term *mantra* means. It is a Sanskrit term. *Man* means ‘mind’ and *tra* means ‘protection.’ In Tibetan, the meaning is described as *tha-mal-kyi-s nang-shen-le-skyop-par-byed-pa*, ‘protection from attachment to appearances of the ordinary mind,’ i.e., protection from negative emotions and from attachment and grasping to worldly appearances. That is the meaning of the Sanskrit word *mantra*.

Noble Chenrezig’s mantra was adapted from the Sanskrit language into Tibetan. OM is a very special syllable in Mahayana and Vajrayana and is the essence of the three kayas, the Dharmakaya, the Sambhogakaya, the Nirmanakaya, as well as the essence of the five bodies of a buddha. The syllable MANI was translated into Tibetan as *nor-bu*. What is *nor-bu*? An invaluable, precious jewel. PEMA means ‘lotus’ and in the mantra of Noble Chenrezig it means *nor-bu-pe-ma-chen*, ‘a great, invaluable jewel-lotus.’ It is Chenrezig’s name. The texts state that all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas gave Chenrezig this name, so the syllable PEMA in his mantra signifies his name. This is why the four-armed Chenrezig holds the invaluable jewel in the two hands that are folded at his heart. He also holds the precious mala in his other right hand, and a wonderful lotus flower in his other left hand. The sixth and last syllable HUNG in the mantra symbolizes Chenrezig’s extraordinary activities.

Through his supreme compassion of a Bodhisattva, Chenrezig performs extraordinary activities for the benefit and welfare of all living beings. He also protects all sentient beings from suffering and confusion. He has many aspects. Since he cannot always help all living beings at the same time with four arms only, he also manifests with a thousand eyes, a thousand hands, and a thousand tongues, protecting and helping every living being with each one. These are all aspects of Chenrezig.

While repeating his mantra, we address all aspects of Chenrezig – his compassion, his love, his help in eliminating all suffering and confusion of sentient beings in samsara. While repeating his mantra, we are praying to him, “You are our protector. Please give your blessing to all living beings and help everyone connect with you fully and perfectly.”

When we have time and if we have a mala, we are free to hold the mala at our heart and repeat the mantra while counting the beads. We can do this 100 times, 1000 times, 100,000 times. Repeating Chenrezig’s mantra, which is his name, is actually calling him. When we have a wish, we can call him, similar to calling him on the phone. He will answer. We should make best use of our phone, otherwise leaving one is useless. And the more often we call him, the more closely we will be connected with him. This practice is another way of engaging in the Guru Yoga practice of calling the Lama from afar, and the connection takes place through devotion. Some people are really very impressed and cry when they chant the sacred text, *Calling the Lama from Afar* that was composed by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye. I have seen this happen in monasteries many times and experienced it myself, too. We recite the mantra very often and our feelings change through the very strong blessings we receive from chanting the mantra.

Presently, we’re not totally free from ordinary emotions and thoughts, but we can feel that our negative emotions and thoughts are calmed down and transformed into positive ones when we repeat Chenrezig’s mantra. Not all emotions are negative; there are also positive emotions.

There are different ways of speaking mantras, loudly or silently. Making a sound while repeating Chenrezig’s mantra is all right. There are mantras that are only recited in the mind and are referred to as “secret.” Chenrezig’s mantra isn’t secret. There are also many different melodies to sing his mantra. We can compose our own melody to sing his mantra. In Himalayan countries, people even repeat Chenrezig’s mantra when they go to the bathroom or do hard work or tend their fields, and it leads to good results. Our connection becomes closer and closer the more we chant his mantra, and then, one day, we will see Chenrezig face-to-face. Many great masters saw him face-to-face. We, too, can see him. When we do, our negativities will have been dispelled and we will belong to his family. Then we will be enlightened and will have become Chenrezig.

In the old tradition, Chenrezig’s mantra consisted of seven syllables, OM MANI PEMA HUNG HRIH. But in the Sadhana composed by Tangtong Gyalpo, HRIH is the seed-syllable, so the mantra consists of the six-syllables.

There are extensive explanations of the mantra, but there was no time during this retreat to discuss them in detail. Padma Karpo explained that the mantra transforms the six realms if samsara. The hell, hungry ghost, and animal realms are the lower realms that are transformed into pure realms through the mantra. The realms of humans, demi-gods, and gods are the higher realms that are transformed through the mantra. These realms become transcendent through the six paramitas. There are so many ways in which the six realms are purified and then those dwelling there become Noble Chenrezig.

I spoke of visualization as the method to transform our impure outer world into Chenrezig’s Pure Land and the inner world into disciples or emanations of Chenrezig. We don’t only see this for

ourselves but for all sentient beings at the same time. We fully feel, “I and all sentient beings take refuge in Chenrezig. All of us are the Yidam and our practice and mantra-recitation are manifestations of Noble Chenrezig.”

When we recite the following prayer to Chenrezig, it will become clear to us and we will understand:

“Highest One, unblemished by any fault and of white form, whose head is crowned by a perfect Buddha, you look upon beings with eyes of compassion – I bow down to Chenrezig.”

3. The Dissolution Stage of Practice

Having fervently recited the above prayer, we visualize the following instructions that we recite:

*“Through this one-pointed prayer, light radiates from the form of the Sublime One and purifies impure karma, impure appearances, and the deluded mind. The outer environment is the Pure Land of Dewachen and the body, speech, and mind of beings therein are the perfect Form, sublime Speech, and pure Mind of mighty Chenrezig, the indivisible union of appearance, sound, and vivid intelligence with Voidness.
OM MANI PEMA HUNG.”*

The dissolution practice is called *rdzogs-rim* in Tibetan (‘completion stage of practice’). In this meditation, we visualize as before the outer world as the pure realm of Chenrezig and the inner world that consists of all sentient beings as emanations of Chenrezig. Everyone is included in the family of Chenrezig who is our Root Guru. We visualize that the outer world and sentient beings dissolve into light. This light dissolves into Chenrezig. Then he melts into light that dissolves into us. Then we visualize that we melt into light and are like a rainbow. Slowly the rainbow vanishes. This doesn’t mean that we disappear or turn into a vacuum, rather we realize emptiness. If we don’t do this, there is the danger that we become attached to Chenrezig, which would also be a concept.

Sometimes we have a clear visualization and don’t want to let go of it. So the completion stage of practice is a remedy against being attached to the deity and the mantra through realization of *‘khor-gsum-mi-mig-pa*, ‘the non-referential three spheres or concepts of subject, object and action.’ We are the subject, Chenrezig is the object, and the mantra-recitation and meditation are the action. Wisdom means realizing that these three ‘spheres’ don’t truly exist, i.e., they are empty of inherent existence. This is the meaning of ‘emptiness’ and is the ultimate truth. As mentioned, the creation stage of practice is similar to training calm abiding meditation and the completion stage of practice is similar to training special insight meditation.

4. Post-Meditation

The last phase of practice is post meditation and dedication, i.e., integrating our practice in daily life.

Having meditated the completion stage of practice, we “wake up” from our practice and continue with daily life. We have to eat, go shopping, look after our daily chores, tend our friendships, and go to work to earn our living. We couldn’t survive without *Geld* (‘money’ in German). We may not be careless, and of course our practice is always connected to daily life. As Jetsün Milarepa taught, “We turn daily behaviour to the Dharma.”

Let us recite the verse for post-meditation together. It is:

“My body, the bodies of others, and all appearances are the perfect form of the Sublime One, all sounds the melody of the six syllables, all thoughts the vastness of the great Jnana.”

This verse for post-meditation means that during daily life we see all outer forms as Noble Chenrezig. We don’t hear sounds of wind, water, machines, cars, etc. in an ordinary way, but we hear everything as the sound of his mantra. Whatever we think - whether good thoughts or bad thoughts - are all pure concepts and thoughts.

Meditating Noble Chenrezig is the practice to transform our body, speech, and mind. Whatever activity we are engaged in, we feel that we are serving our Lama - Lama Chenrezig. When we walk wherever we are going, we think we are doing *‘khor-ba* of Chenrezig. When we eat, we think we are offering the meal to Chenrezig. When we talk with others, we think we are supplicating or praying to Chenrezig. Not distracted too much by useless things, we always have mindfulness and awareness. Then everything we do in daily life becomes meaningful. This is how we train. Now the post-meditation section in the Sadhana is *fertig* (‘completed’).

5. Dedication

The conclusion of every practice is the dedication prayer. In the Sadhana of Bodhisattva Chenrezig, the short dedication that we recite is:

“Through this virtue, may I quickly achieve the realization of mighty Chenrezig and may I bring every single being to that same state.”

The purpose of dedication is that the benefit of our practice increases. **Translator:** “If there is no dedication?” **Lama Sönam:** Of course there is a benefit, but the merit doesn’t increase and slowly disappears. So there’s a difference. It’s very important to dedicate the merit of our practice. Take the example of a big ocean and a drop of water falling on its surface. Our dedication is like a drop of water on the ocean, i.e., our practice of dedication for the sake of all sentient beings means that the ocean will never dry up but will grow. We don’t think that our dedication is like a drop of water falling on hard ground, sinks into the earth, and eventually dries up. We always dedicate any practice we do, which means that we share any merit we have been able to accrue with all sentient beings. This is practicing great generosity.

There is also *The Guru Rinpoche Prayer*, *The Vajrakilaya Prayer*, *The Mahakala Prayer*, and the long life prayers, followed by the closing dedication prayer above in the Sadhana of Bodhisattva Chenrezig that you have. It’s not necessary to do these practices, unless you have the initiation and have committed yourself to do so. After the dedication we can pray *The Dewachen Prayer*

three times. If it is too much, after the short mantra-prayer you can do the long life prayers and then sing *The Dewachen Prayer*. If that is too much, you can just recite the mantra and dedicate the merit.

The Guru Rinpoche Prayer that we sing three times is:

‘HUNG.

On the northwest border of the country Oddiyana, on the pistil of a lotus flower, endowed with the marvellous attainment, you are renowned as the Lotus-Born, surrounded by a retinue of Dakinis. Emulating you in my practice, I pray that you will come and confer your blessings.

GURU PEMA SIDDHI HUNG.’

The Short Wishing-Prayer for Rebirth in Dewachen is:

‘E-MA-HO! How wonderful!

The wondrous Buddha of Infinite Radiance sits with the great Compassionate Lord to his right and the Bodhisattva of Great Might to his left and is surrounded by countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Beyond all reckoning are the happiness, joys, and marvels in his pure land known as Dewachen. As soon as I and others leave this life may we be born there directly, with none of the delay caused by another birth. Once there, may we behold Amitabha’s face. May all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the ten directions give their blessing that all this may come true without hindrance.

TE-YATA PENTSA TRI-YA AWA BODHA NA-YE SO-HA.’

The Dedication Prayer for Rebirth in Dewachen that is a Treasure Text found by Tulku Minjur Dorje is:

‘All Victorious Ones and your Sons throughout time and space, please think of me.

Rejoicing in the completion of the two accumulations, I offer whatever virtue I have gathered in the three times to the Three Jewels.

I pray that the Buddha’s teachings may spread and dedicate all virtue to all beings that they may achieve Buddhahood.

Uniting all the roots of virtue, may they ripen in our being and may the two obscurations be purified and the accumulations be completed.

May all live long and may our realization increase.

May we achieve the ten Bodhisattva levels in this life and as soon as we pass away, may we take birth in Dewachen.

There, may we be born in an open lotus and achieve Buddhahood in that same body.

After enlightenment, may we emanate to guide all beings.’

Conclusion

Thank you very much. It was a very good time going through the practice of Bodhisattva Chenrezig and sharing the little experience I have while being here with all of you. I wish you the best and thank you very much. I also want to thank Anne for her excellent translation into German. She could understand my broken English. **Anne:** “It was very nice for me. Thank you.” **Josef:** “Lama Sönam, we would like to give you a small donation on behalf of our group. Thank

you very much for coming to Münster, for offering us this wonderful retreat and the precious teachings. Please return to us.”



The Potala Mountain

The Potala Mountain is on an island 5 hours drive from Shanghai. There are four famous sacred Buddhist mountains in China. The others are Ermei Mt. in Szechuan [Samantabhadra], Wu Tai Mt. in Shanxi [Manjushri], and Jiuhua Mt. [Kshitigarbha]. Wu Tai Mt. is the only one with Tibetan resident Lamas, and many Rinpoches have been there.

Dedication

May all virtue that is created by accumulating merit and wisdom
be dedicated to attaining the two truth bodies that arise from merit and wisdom.

May Bodhichitta, great and precious, arise where it has not arisen.
Never weakening where it has arisen, may it grow ever more and more.

May the life of the Glorious Lama remain steadfast and firm.
May peace and happiness fully arise for beings as limitless in number as space is vast in extent.
Having accumulated merit and purified negativities,
may I and all living beings without exception swiftly establish the levels and grounds of
Buddhahood.



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