

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

*A Chat
about
Yamantaka*



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A CHAT ABOUT YAMANTAKA



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LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE
A CHAT ABOUT YAMANTAKA

Edited by Thubten Chodron

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*To be read only by those with full initiation into the Highest Yoga
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Through the merit of having contributed to the spread of the Buddha's teachings for the sake of all sentient beings, may our benefactors and their families and friends have long and healthy lives, all happiness, and may all their Dharma wishes be instantly fulfilled.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1997, I was doing retreat in one of Vajrapani Institute's lovely cabins when I heard that Zopa Rinpoche was arriving to attend an FPMT board meeting. That spring, His Holiness the Dalai Lama had given Yamantaka initiation and commentary, and I had several questions regarding the protection wheel practice. Almost miraculously, Rinpoche had the time to see me (you know how difficult it is to get an interview with him) and I posed my questions. He responded briefly, and concluded by saying that others would want to learn about this too, so he would teach it to the practitioners in the area. I marveled at the good fortune of being able to hear the more extensive teachings that a group setting would provide.

In Rinpoche's typical style, before he taught the protection wheel section of the sadhana, he covered the preceding meditations and thus gave in-depth teachings on the four immeasurables, emptiness, and taking death as the path to dharmakaya. I later transcribed and edited those teachings to create this book.

Rinpoche has asked that only those who have received full initiation into the Highest Yoga Tantra practice of Yamantaka (Dorje Jigje) read this book. Please respect his wishes.

The sections of the sadhana quoted here have been italicized for easy reference.

I would like to thank the residents of Vajrapani Institute for making these teachings possible, Nick Ribush for publishing this book,

and Dharma Friendship Foundation in Seattle for supporting me while I worked on it. My deepest gratitude goes to Zopa Rinpoche for his kindness in giving these teachings and for having the confidence in us that we are capable of practicing them. All errors in this book are my own.

Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron

Seattle, Washington, USA

30 May 1999

ONE
MOTIVATION

At this time you have received a precious human life, which is extremely rare. Meeting a virtuous friend who shows the complete path to enlightenment without omitting anything is also extremely rare. At this time you have met not just one virtuous friend but many. Similarly, encountering the Buddhadharma, especially the Mahayana teaching, which explains the complete path to full enlightenment, happens infrequently. But this, too, you have encountered. In addition, you have met the secret mantra, or Vajrayana, teachings. Of these, you have encountered not just the lower tantras, but Highest Yoga Tantra, which contains the perfect methods of ceasing all mistakes of mind and completely realizing all good qualities in one brief lifetime of this degenerate era.

Given that you have this opportunity, simply aiming to avoid rebirth in the lower realms and attain a god or human body in the next life is insufficient. You must aim for liberation from all samsaric suffering and its cause—karma and disturbing thoughts. But that alone is not sufficient either. You must aim for full enlightenment. No matter how long it takes or how difficult it is, you must work for this in order to free all sentient beings from all suffering and lead them to full enlightenment. From your own side, even if you have to

be born in the hell realms for eons equal to the number of atoms in this earth in order to attain enlightenment for the benefit of sentient beings, you should be extremely happy to do so—as delighted as a swan is to dive into a pond; as happy as somebody going to the beach to relax after a hard day's work; as eager to do this as somebody is to plunge into a swimming pool on a hot day or as a prisoner is to go back home after doing many years' hard time. From your side, you should be extremely happy to go through whatever you need to in order to attain enlightenment for the benefit of sentient beings.

But from the side of the sentient beings, you should feel that even one sentient being suffering in samsara for one second is totally unbearable for you. Because countless sentient beings are experiencing the suffering of samsara at this very moment, think, "I must liberate them from all their suffering and lead them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. *This* is the purpose of my life. The longer I take to attain enlightenment, the longer will all sentient beings remain in samsara. Since they are depending on me to help them meet the Dharma, actualize the path, and attain enlightenment, I must attain enlightenment as quickly as possible. Since death is definite and can happen any moment, I must not waste time following my attachment and distractions. Before death arrives, I must try to attain enlightenment or at least put as many Dharma imprints on my mind-stream as possible. For this purpose, I am going to listen to the holy Dharma—specifically, how to practice the yoga of Yamantaka."

TWO

INTRODUCTION

THE MEANING OF MANTRA

In English, we say “tantra,” but Tibetans use the term “secret mantra.” The word tantra, or *gyüd*, is used in Tibetan texts, but people do not say, “I’m practicing *gyüd*.” They say, “I’m practicing *sang-ngag*”—secret mantra. This does not mean that all they do is recite mantras. Mantra does not just refer to some words you recite. It refers to the generation and completion stages, the whole tantric path to enlightenment. The word “mantra” means to protect the mind. In general, the entire lam-rim—beginning with how to rely on a spiritual master through to the completion stage of tantra, including the three principal aspects of the path—protects the mind. Guru devotion protects your mind from the mistaken thoughts that are obstacles to realizing the path to enlightenment and completing the work for self and others. Guru devotion is unbelievable protection against mistaken thoughts regarding your virtuous friends, including those thoughts that consider them to be ordinary people.

Renunciation protects your mind from attachment, clinging to samsara, and thus protects you from the cause of samsara and the oceans of suffering in the six realms that result from it. The realization

of bodhicitta protects you from the myriad obstacles that come from self-pre-occupation. It overcomes the obstacles to attaining all realizations of the Mahayana path and thus to offering infinite benefit to sentient beings. The wisdom realizing emptiness protects you from the root of suffering, ignorance, and thus all delusions, karma, and suffering.

Guru devotion and the three principal aspects of the path are preliminaries to tantra. The fundamental practice unique to secret mantra is clear appearance and divine identity, which protect the mind from ordinary appearance and ordinary concept. This is similar in all four classes of tantra, but in addition, the practice of the Highest Yoga Tantra protects you from ordinary death, ordinary intermediate state, and ordinary birth.

The completion stage protects you from the ordinary, impure, extremely subtle wind and mind, which, according to Highest Yoga Tantra, create samsara. On the completion stage, you practice methods to cease this extremely subtle wind and mind and to actualize the meaning clear light, the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness, that extremely subtle wisdom, the simultaneously-born bliss understanding emptiness. This is like an atomic bomb in ceasing the dualistic view and all defilements because it is the quickest way to cease the ordinary, impure, extremely subtle wind and mind. In this way, completion stage realizations are great protection. Only by having them can you become enlightened, and only then can the continuation of your consciousness become dharmakaya. Dharmakaya is not gross or even subtle mind. It is the extremely subtle mind free from the two obscurations. Only your extremely subtle mind-wind can continue on to that. The ordinary body and mind, the gross wind and mind, cannot become the dharmakaya; in fact, they are obstacles

to it. When the subtle wisdom, the simultaneously-born bliss non-dual with emptiness, arises, it purifies these.

Thus, since mantra means to protect the mind, it includes the entire path to enlightenment. Specifically, it refers to the tantric path, which is actualized on the basis of the preliminary realizations, the three principal aspects of the path—renunciation, bodhicitta and right view. If you research its meaning, every mantra contains the whole path to enlightenment, including the entire lam-rim.

TAKING DEATH, BARDO, AND REBIRTH INTO THE PATH TO THE THREE KAYAS

This teaching describes the protection wheel in the Yamantaka practice. However, first it is important to understand and meditate on taking the dharmakaya into the path. The practice of taking the three kayas into the path—taking death as the path to the dharmakaya, bardo as the path to the sambhogakaya, and rebirth as the path to the nirmanakaya—is the heart of the sadhana. To understand this, you have to know what are the base to be purified, the purifying path, and the purified result for each of these three.

This meditation technique can be done by human beings born in Dzambuling, the Southern Continent. In the text, Dzambuling seems to refer to only India, not the whole world. That could be because in ancient times the Buddhadharma, especially tantra, did not exist in other place. However, that has now changed.

In the case of taking death as the path to the dharmakaya, the basis to be purified is the ordinary death experienced by human beings who have a body that has the six elements and was born from

a womb in Dzambuling. As they die, these human beings experience twenty-five absorptions, which occur over eight phases. During this time, certain external and internal signs occur. The eight phases are:

1. The earth elements absorb into water.
2. The water element absorbs into fire.
3. The fire element absorbs into wind.
4. The wind element absorbs into consciousness.
5. The winds that are the vehicle, or mount, of the eighty superstitious thoughts absorb and the internal vision of white appearance occurs, like a clear sky pervaded by moonlight.
6. The internal vision of radiant red increase occurs, like a clear sky pervaded by sunlight.
7. The internal vision of the black near-attainment occurs, like a clear sky that is completely dark.
8. The clear light occurs, like a clear sky at dawn that is free from the three shortcomings—white appearance, red increase, and black near-attainment.

Such an ordinary death is the basis to be purified. The purifying path is the example clear light and the meaning clear light of the completion stage. These are the actual purifying path, but you prepare by fabricating them with your imagination on the generation stage. The purified result is the dharmakaya.

In practicing the various meditations on the completion stage, such as the tum-mo meditation of the Six Yogas of Naropa, the meditator concentrates on the central channel of the vajra body and draw the winds into the heart chakra. When this happens, the eight signs

occur as they do for ordinary people during the gradual process of death at the time of the base. All the signs from earth absorbing into the water down to black near-attainment and clear light happen. During the all-empty clear light, the meditator generates simultaneously-born great bliss.

After the clear light, due to the movement of the winds of the superstitious thoughts, the mind moves out of the clear light, and the meditator gradually experiences the eight signs in reverse order, beginning with near-attainment, red increase, white appearance and so forth.

At the time of actualizing the resultant dharmakaya, the clear light of no-more learning, the meditator again experiences the eight signs serially, in a way similar to the time of the base and the time of the path, from earth absorbing into water down to black near-attainment. At the time of experiencing the clear light, the meditator actualizes the transcendental wisdom of the dharmakaya. At that time, all the winds that make superstitious thoughts function are completely ceased. Because of that, it is impossible to move away from the clear light, which is the resultant clear light, the dharmakaya.

In taking bardo into the path, the basis to be purified is ordinary bardo, or intermediate state, which is under the influence of delusion and karma. The actual purifying path is the impure and pure illusory bodies on the completion stage. You prepare for these on the generation stage, by visualizing yourself manifesting as either a syllable or implements, although here in the Yamantaka practice, you visualize yourself as the causal vajra-holder, Manjushri. The purified result is the sambhogakaya, the enjoyment body of a Buddha.

In taking rebirth into the path, the basis to be purified is ordinary

rebirth under the influence of delusion and karma. The actual purifying path is the illusory body assuming a gross emanation body. You prepare for this on the generation stage by imagining yourself as the full Yamantaka. The purified result is the nirmanakaya, the emanation body of a Buddha.

By understanding this analogous process in which death, bardo, and rebirth are transformed into the three kayas, you will appreciate the skillful methods of the Vajrayana. This will inspire you to learn and meditate on this path.

THREE

THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES

An ordinary person who wants to be born as a human, god, or powerful being must create the good karma that brings about such results. Similarly, a practitioner who wants to meditate and experience the path three kayas and the resultant three kayas must create the merit that bring those about. Tri Gyaltzen Senge's commentary on Yamantaka practice, *The Profound Path of the Great Secret*,¹ which is regarded as the best commentary on the Solitary Hero Yamantaka, says, "The preliminary accumulation of physical merit in this way is much more important for beginners than the actual practice." That is, if you do not pay attention to and practice the preliminaries, such as collecting merit and so forth, you will not succeed in your practice of the actual meditation. Thus, the sadhana contains the practice of guru yoga, followed by meditation on the four immeasurable thoughts, which are a powerful means of collecting extensive merit. For this reason, the four immeasurables are found in almost every sadhana, either at the beginning of the practice or just before taking death as the path to dharmakaya.

May all sentient beings have happiness (bliss).

May all sentient beings be free from all suffering.

May all sentient beings never be parted from happiness (bliss).

May all sentient beings be placed in a state of equanimity unperturbed by preconceptions of apprehender and apprehended or by the eight worldly concerns.

The first is immeasurable love; the second, immeasurable compassion; the third, immeasurable joy; and the fourth, immeasurable equanimity.

THE EIGHT WORLDLY CONCERNS AND THEIR ANTIDOTES

In the fourth immeasurable, you aspire for sentient beings to abide in equanimity unmoved by the eight worldly dharmas or by the superstitious thoughts of apprehender, which means the perceiving mind, and apprehended, which means the perceived object. For example, when I look at a flower, the flower is the object perceived and my consciousness is the perceiving mind perceiving it. The fourth line could also be translated as, “May all sentient beings be placed in a state of equanimity unperturbed by preconceptions of grasping consciousness and the objects it grasps, or by the eight worldly feelings,” or, “May all sentient beings be placed in a state of equanimity unperturbed by dualistic preconceptions of object and consciousness.”

Don't think that only Westerners have preconceptions. Tibetans do too! For example, the first Tibetan translator who came to Vajrapani Institute did not have a clear idea of what Vajrapani was. It seems that nobody had explained it to him before he came. At that time, Vajrapani had no electricity and he was very surprised. He must have visualized that there would be additional things and he did not like staying here. He wanted to live in the city. But the lamas like

Vajrapani Institute so much. Even though he came only once, Tsenshab Serkong Rinpoche enjoyed staying here very much and even wrote a one-stanza praise of the center.

The eight worldly concerns are—attachment to having material possessions and aversion to not; attachment to praise and aversion to criticism; attachment to good reputation and aversion to bad; and attachment to sense pleasures and aversion to their absence. In the fourth immeasurable, you aspire to cause sentient beings to be free from these biased attitudes.

The eight worldly concerns can be equalized by applying the antidotes, such as meditating on impermanence and death, contemplating the shortcomings of desirable objects (material possessions, praise, good reputation, and sense pleasures), or reflecting on the disadvantages of superstitious thoughts, especially attachment, that regard these objects. By deeply understanding any of these, you can not only stop the emotional problems of this life but also prevent creating the causes for lower rebirth or for suffering in the upper realms in future lives. When you diminish attachment to these desirable objects by contemplating their shortcomings, meditating on impermanence and death, and so forth, you are able to control your attachment and eventually free your mind from it. When your mind is free from attachment and craving for these objects no longer arises, you are able to equalize the four desirable and the four undesirable objects in your mind.

For practitioners who have equalized the eight worldly concerns, being praised or criticized is totally unimportant to their mind. They do not care if their reputation or image in society is good or bad. In the view of these practitioners, all such things are childish. Receiving or not receiving material goods, being comfortable or uncomfortable,

and being liked or disliked are insignificant because they realize that death can come at any moment, so what's the point? People who have realized impermanence and death see no point in caring about these things; there is no place for such thoughts to arise in their mind. They see such things as nonsensical, childish, and silly, like a child's attachment to a sandcastle he has built and thinks to be very important. Because of his attachment, the child gets angry and upset if his castle is destroyed by another person or a wave; the stronger his attachment, the angrier he gets.

When you have realized impermanence and death, you have no attachment for these four desirable objects, so if somebody disturbs them, you do not get angry. You have no attachment to these things, therefore, there is no reason for you to get angry. Thus, you do not engage in negative actions, which create the cause for suffering in the lower realms and in samsara in general.

Sentient beings are filled with problems and suffer greatly because of attachment to these four desirable objects. The eight worldly concerns and attachment clinging to this life make them miserable, full of dissatisfaction and anger. When somebody disturbs their objects of attachment, emotional thoughts such as anger, jealousy, and vengeance arise in their minds. Constantly, they engage in many negative actions in everyday life. Constantly, they create the cause for samsara in general and for the lower realms in particular. In addition, the eight worldly concerns and the karma created by them obscure their minds from realizing emptiness. As you understand the deeper implications of the eight worldly dharmas in our life and lives, you will see that wishing to lead all sentient beings to the equanimity of the eight worldly concerns is very profound and meaningful.

Meditation on the antidotes mentioned above stops attachment to the happiness of this life and the eight worldly concerns. Another antidote is meditation on emptiness. If you realize emptiness, there is no question that you will be able to stop these eight. The king of superstitious thoughts is the conception of inherent existence. While phenomena—I, action, object, and all other phenomena—do not have even the slightest atom of inherent existence, are completely devoid of inherent existence, the concept of inherent existence grasps them in exactly the opposite way. Due to the negative imprints left on your mind by the power of previous ignorance, you project inherent existence onto all these merely labeled phenomena. Your mind projects the appearance of inherent existence on all these phenomena that are, in fact, empty. After that, your mind apprehends this appearance as being one hundred percent true. At that moment, you make your own mind superstitious and ignorant. The concept of inherent existence is called a superstition because there is no such thing as inherent existence; the object does not exist in the way that your mind apprehends it to exist.

You live totally in superstition, twenty-four hours a day. First, you believe that there is a real I in this body. Then you believe that all the people and objects around you are real ones, appearing from there. You live in superstition with every phenomenon you contact every moment of every day.

As long as you do not practice mindfulness of emptiness—the very nature of phenomena—and mindfulness of dependent arising, then the more objects your senses contact, the more superstition arises. But the more phenomena that practitioners who are mindful of emptiness or dependent arising see, the more meditation they do and

the closer to liberation they get. This mindfulness is the remedy to samsara and to the disturbing attitudes and emotions that are the main enemy preventing liberation. Without mindfulness of emptiness and dependent arising, you create more causes for suffering and samsara. With it, you destroy the root of samsara—the ignorance that grasps at an inherently existent person and inherently existent aggregates.

Meditating on impermanence and death enables you to equalize the eight worldly concerns to a certain extent, but mindfulness of emptiness enables you to equalize them in a more profound way by seeing them as empty. Then you do not cling because both praise and blame are empty. You are not attached to reputation because both good reputation and bad are empty. Whatever happens—whether you have sense pleasure or not, whether you get material things and money or not—does not disturb your mind. Seeing these things as unimportant, your mind rests in equanimity.

This is one way to understand bringing sentient beings to the equanimity of the eight worldly concerns. In addition, there is another way to understand the eight worldly dharmas—inherently existent production and cessation, permanence and annihilation, coming and going, difference and sameness.²

PRECONCEPTIONS OF APPREHENDER AND APPREHENDED

All phenomena are contained within “apprehender and apprehended.” Holding the apprehenders, the minds that perceive objects, and the apprehended, the phenomena perceived, as inherently existent causes attachment and anger to arise. Being under the control of these

emotional thoughts, sentient beings' minds become unbalanced and partial, the opposite of equanimity. The evolution is that first you grasp everything as inherently existent. This causes attachment, anger, and other disturbing attitudes to arise. These, in turn, make the mind partial, prejudiced, and unequal. These mistakes of the mind make sentient beings create samsara and suffer in it. Seeing this, generate the thought to bring sentient beings into 1) the equanimity of the eight worldly dharmas and 2) the equanimity unmoved by either the superstitious thoughts of attachment, anger, and so forth or their root, the ignorance holding all phenomena—the apprehenders and the apprehended—as inherently existent.

One equanimity is that of equalizing the eight worldly dharmas; another, which is deeper, is that of equalizing apprehender and apprehended by realizing that both are empty of inherent existence. In emptiness there is no this or that, no bad or good. In the sphere of emptiness, all existents are of one taste. Because sentient beings suffer through not realizing this, generate the strong determination to lead them to this ultimate equanimity, in which everything is of one taste in emptiness, the sphere of Dharma.

When practicing each of the four immeasurable thoughts, generate it towards each sentient being without exception. Without omitting any sentient being, think, “May every one have happiness; may every one be free from suffering,” and so forth. Since the number of sentient beings is immeasurable, you create immeasurable merit, like the sky, with each of these thoughts. Even though I am unable to put the four immeasurables into practice and just recite the words, I like them very much. Also, if you think about the “merit business,” these four thoughts are most profitable!

People often come to me for practices to do and mantras to recite because they are sick. If I were to simply give them a mantra to recite for healing, they could recite it millions of times without a single recitation becoming Dharma. If your motivation is attachment to this life, even if you recite a mantra every day of your life, it does not become Dharma. Therefore, when I give people mantras to recite for healing, I always combine it with the four immeasurables, bodhicitta motivation, and a glance lam-rim prayer. Since they have to follow the whole set of prayers, my hope is that when they get to the mantra recitation, their motivation will be positive.

FOUR

MEDITATION ON THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES

Before we generate ourselves as Yamantaka, we will meditate on the four immeasurables to create merit.

May all sentient beings have happiness (bliss).

Think of every being in hell, those who experience the heavy suffering of heat and cold, the heaviest suffering in samsara. Wish them to have happiness, especially the happiness of enlightenment. [Meditation.]

Think of all the countless pretas suffering greatly from hunger and thirst. Wish them to have happiness, especially that of enlightenment. [Meditation.]

“May each of the countless animals have happiness.” Think not just of the animals on this planet, but of those in each of the numberless universes. They suffer principally from stupidity and from being eaten by other animals. They also suffer from being overworked or killed for food by human beings. “May all these animals, my mother sentient beings, have happiness, especially that of enlightenment.” [Meditation.]

Think of the sufferings of your kind mother sentient beings who are human. There are five types of suffering of birth,³ five types of suffering of aging,⁴ five types of suffering of illness,⁵ and five types of

suffering of death.⁶ Lama Tsong Khapa outlined these sufferings in the lam-rim so that it would be easy to meditate on them and get the broad view. Contemplating each of the five points of each suffering gives you an in-depth understanding. In addition to these, human beings suffer from meeting the undesirable, from not finding what they desire, and, even when they find what they want, from feeling dissatisfied and disillusioned.

Some lam-rim texts explain six types of samsaric suffering; Lama Tsong Khapa's explains eight. All of these can be subsumed into three—suffering of pain, suffering of change, and pervasive compounded suffering. Suffering of pain is the physical and mental pain that everybody recognizes as suffering. Suffering of change includes all the temporary samsaric pleasures because they are only suffering in nature. Pervasive compounded suffering refers to having taken these aggregates that are under the control of karma and delusion and therefore pervaded by suffering. They are the container of all problems; therefore, this body-mind experiences all the other sufferings. In addition, these aggregates are contaminated by the seed of disturbing thoughts, thus they compound, or are the foundation of, future samsara. This is how your kind mother sentient beings, the human beings, are suffering.

Now think, “May they have all happiness, especially the highest happiness of full enlightenment.” Generating love for them comes easily if you first think clearly about their suffering, according to the brief explanation above. When you feel that very strongly, the wish for them to be happy will arise firmly and easily. [Meditation.]

Then think of the suffering of the demigods and gods, including those in the form and formless realms. They experience the general

suffering of samsara and, in addition, the particular sufferings of their realms. The formless realm goes to the peak of samsara and the beings born in it are not free from pervasive compounded suffering. The formless realm gods do not have problems such as aging and illness like human beings do, but their aggregates are still under the influence of delusion and karma, and the contaminated seed of disturbing thoughts in their mind-stream becomes the basis for and compounds future suffering. Thus, they are not free from pervasive compounded suffering.

The demigods suffer tremendously from painful jealousy for the wealth of the gods. The gods take away the wives of the demigods, so they fight and kill each other. Each level of gods in the god realm suffers from being controlled by other, more powerful gods, who kick them out and take their things. The specific sufferings of the gods include the five major and the five minor signs of death. During their lives, the gods have incredible comforts and sense enjoyments that are millions of times greater than those of the richest and most powerful human beings. But when they are dying, although their bodies are surrounded by beauty and enjoyments, for their minds, it is as if they are in hell. Due to karma, they see their next life and know they will be reborn in lower states with great suffering. They feel excruciating worry and fear because they can see both their present environment and the horrible suffering that they are about to be born into.

While the desire realm gods possess perfect sense enjoyments, all their actions enjoying those sense pleasures become the cause of lower rebirths. The base on which they are experiencing all this pleasure is, in fact, suffering in nature. Their ignorant minds hallucinate that it is pleasure, and they believe all those sufferings to be pleasure. That hallucination—regarding those sufferings as pleasure, believing them to

be pleasure, and being attached to them—is a fundamental, major suffering. Enjoying all this pleasure with attachment becomes only a cause of samsara as well as a cause to be reborn as a hell being, hungry ghost, or animal and to experience suffering in those realms. All the gods' actions are non-virtuous, even though they have perfect comfort and pleasure. Although all their enjoyments in reality are suffering in nature, since the gods regard and experience them with attachment, their actions of enjoying them become only non-virtue. Even though they do not understand that this is the case, this is what happens. Therefore, the gods' lives are spent totally in suffering. Generate immeasurable loving-kindness towards them. Think, “May my kind mother sentient beings—desire realm gods, and form and formless realm gods—have all happiness, especially the highest happiness of full enlightenment.” [Meditation.]

May all sentient beings be free from all suffering.

“May all my kind mother sentient beings be free from all suffering” is immeasurable compassion. Do as above, starting with the sentient beings in the hell realm. “May the countless hell realm beings, my kind mother sentient beings, be free from all suffering.” [Meditation.]

Think in a similar way towards the hungry ghosts. “May all my kind mother sentient beings, the hungry ghosts, be free from all suffering.” Remember not just their suffering of hunger and thirst, which is the particular suffering of hungry ghosts, but think of them experiencing all the sufferings of samsara, including the suffering of pain, the suffering of change, and especially pervasive compounded suffering. [Meditation.]

“May all my kind mother sentient beings, the animals, be free from all suffering.” I won’t repeat the instructions each time. They are the same as above. [Meditation.]

“May all my kind mother sentient beings, the human beings, be free from all suffering.” [Meditation.]

“May all my kind mother sentient beings, the demigods and gods, including the desire realm, form and formless realm gods, be free from all suffering.” [Meditation.]

“May all my kind mother sentient beings, those in the intermediate state, be free from all suffering.” [Meditation.]

May all sentient beings never be parted from happiness (bliss).

This is immeasurable joy. First think of the beings born in the lower realms—the hell beings, hungry ghosts and animals. “May those beings lacking temporal happiness never be separated from temporal happiness.” Then focus on those beings in the upper realms, who lack ultimate happiness—the cessation of suffering and its cause. “May those beings who are devoid of liberation, never be parted from this happiness.” Think of those who are devoid of the great liberation, enlightenment. “May those beings never be parted from the everlasting happiness of full enlightenment.” In this way, reflect on the various levels of happiness—temporal happiness, liberation from samsara, and the peerless happiness of full enlightenment—and wish all beings never to be separated from these. [Meditation.]

May all sentient beings be placed in a state of equanimity unperturbed by preconceptions of apprehender and apprehended

or by the eight worldly concerns.

Remember the meaning of this as described above. Think, “I will lead all my kind mother sentient beings to equanimity of the eight worldly concerns. Not just that, but I wish them to abide in the equanimity that all phenomena are of one taste in emptiness, of one taste in the sphere of Dharma.” In emptiness, there is no bad, no good, no enemy, no friend. There’s no I, no you. “I will cause sentient beings to abide in this equanimity unmoved by the thought of the eight worldly concerns and the king of the superstitions, self-grasping ignorance,⁷ which holds subject (apprehender, the perceiving mind) and object (the apprehended, the objects it perceives) as inherently existent. May they then be unperturbed by the other emotional minds—anger, attachment, jealousy, arrogance, and so forth—that arise from this ignorance.” Generate this thought of equanimity gradually and fully, beginning with the hell beings and spreading to those in all realms. “I will bring them into equanimity.” [Meditation.]

FIVE

DISSOLVING INTO EMPTINESS

Having meditated on the four immeasurables, you are ready to meditate on taking the three kayas into the path. Remember that you are clarified as Yamantaka and think, “For the benefit of my kind mother sentient beings, I am going to actualize the clear light of dharmakaya and then arise in the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya forms to benefit others.” No matter which Highest Yoga Tantra sadhana you do—Yamantaka, Heruka, Guhyasamaja, and so forth—motivate like this before meditating on taking the three kayas into the path.

OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HAM

OM SUNYATA JNANA VAJRA SVABHAVA ATMAKO HAM

Because I myself, the deities, the field of merit, and all other phenomena are dependent designations, everything becomes empty, having the true nature of selflessness, and is parted from the four extremes of eternalism, nihilism, and so forth.

Although the verse follows the mantras in the sadhana, His Holiness advises reciting the verse on emptiness first and the mantras afterwards. When you meditate and know the meaning of the mantras, you see that reciting them after the verse is more suitable.

I, the deities of the merit field, and all other phenomena are merely labeled in dependence on their base. Therefore, all these phenomena are devoid of eternalism, nihilism,⁸ and so forth—the four extremes—and everything is the nature of emptiness, the absence of inherent existence. What are the four extremes? The first is eternalism, or inherent existence. Whereas all phenomena exist by being merely labeled by mind, the mind apprehends them as existing from their own side without being merely labeled by mind. Apprehending things that are merely labeled by mind as if they were not merely labeled by mind is the view of eternalism. Thus, phenomena are free from eternalism because they do not exist inherently; they do not exist from their own side.

The second extreme is nihilism, or total non-existence. Existing means merely labeled by the mind in dependence upon the base. While phenomena exist in mere name, by being merely labeled by mind, thinking that they do not exist at all is the view of nihilism. “Not existing from its own side” is not the meaning of nihilism. Why? It is true that things do not exist from their own side, because they exist by being merely labeled by mind. Nihilism involves believing that they are simply non-existent. It does not specify that what is non-existent is a particular part of the appearance—inherent existence. It does not specify that the part of your perception that is hallucination is non-existent. Here, in the four extremes, “non-existent” means phenomena being totally non-existent—not existing even nominally. Thus, phenomena are free from being totally non-existent.

The third extreme is both eternalism and nihilism. Clearly, if phenomena are free from eternalism and free from nihilism, they are free from both. These three extremes are relatively easy to understand.

But with the fourth, if you do not think well, you can get confused.⁹ If you say that the fourth is neither eternalism nor nihilism, then you cannot say that phenomena do not exist that way, for in fact they are neither inherently existent nor totally non-existent. The first two points say that all phenomena are not eternalism and are not nihilism. So why bring it up again? We already said phenomena are not either of them. And it is true that all phenomena are neither eternalism nor nihilism.

The third extreme says all phenomena are not both eternalism and nihilism. So the fourth one should be that all phenomena are not non-eternalism and non-nihilism. But that is incorrect because all phenomena are non-eternalism and all phenomena are non-nihilism (that is, all phenomena are non-inherently existent and not totally non-existent). Therefore saying all phenomena are not non-eternalism and non-nihilism is incorrect. If you say this, you fall into nihilism again. Saying that all phenomena are not non-eternalism and non-nihilism is saying that they are both. If you say two negatives, it becomes a positive. I think they add all these negatives in debate in order to train the mind, to practice awareness and mindfulness. Here, if you are not careful, it is easy to make a mistake if you say all phenomena are not non-eternalism and non-nihilism—which means they are both—when you have already said in the third point that they are not both!

Why is it wrong to say that all phenomena are not non-eternalism and non-nihilism? Because all phenomena are both non-eternalism and non-nihilism. So what is the fourth extreme? Non-eternalism and non-nihilism existing from their own side. The fourth extreme is some truly existent state that is not eternalism and not nihilism. That does not

exist. That is what is being negated here. Phenomena are free from that.

For example, when you think you do not have money, you think no money existing from its own side. When you say, “I do not have a job,” you think there is no job existing from its own side. You think of an inherently existent “no job” or an inherently existent “no money.” The fourth extreme is similar—something that is non-eternalism and non-nihilism existing from its own side. All phenomena are devoid of that extreme.

OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HAM

OM SUNYATA JNANA VAJRA SVABHAVA ATMAKO HAM

The meaning of the mantra is this: SVABHAVA is nature, SHUDDHA is pure, SARVA DHARMA is all phenomena, SHUDDHO again is pure. HO HAM¹⁰ means this is me. The first SVABHAVA SHUDDHA indicates the emptiness of the object. It is repeated again towards the end of the mantra to indicate the emptiness of the mind, the cognizer, or apprehender, or that which is cognizing the object. In this way, the mantra indicates the emptiness of both subject—mind—and object. All phenomena can be included within these two.

The way of meditating with this mantra is as follows. What are all objects apprehended by the mind? What they are is what is merely labeled by mind. They exist by being merely labeled by mind. They are not non-existent. They exist, but exist in mere name. While they exist, they are empty. They exist only nominally, so they are totally empty of existing from their own side. This is how all phenomena exist.

The ignorance grasping inherent existence projects inherent existence onto these merely labeled objects that are in fact empty. When

you do not analyze, when you have not realized emptiness and are not practicing mindfulness on how things are empty, they appear inherently existent to you, and your mind holds that appearance to be true. In fact, the very nature of phenomena does not have inherent existence; their very nature is not inherently existent. Because it is unstained by inherent existence, the very nature of phenomena is pure. The first SVABHAVA SHUDDHA or “pure nature” indicates that all objects are not inherently existent, even though, when you do not analyze or meditate, they appear inherently existent, and your mind believes that to be true. The very nature of phenomena is that they are empty of existing from their own side, empty of any inherently existent nature. For example, a cloth is clean, or pure, because it does not contain dirt; gold is pure because it is not mixed with brass or other materials—all phenomena are pure because they are unstained by inherent existence. When you recite the first SVABHAVA SHUDDHA, meditate on the emptiness of objects. Look at them as empty, as pure of inherent existence.

The second SVABHAVA SHUDDHO, refers to the emptiness of the subject, the mind, that which apprehends objects. What is the mind? It is nothing except that which is merely labeled by mind, designated by thought, in dependence on the base. The mind is a phenomenon that is formless, colorless, and without shape. Its nature is clear and able to perceive objects. In dependence on that base, thought makes up the label “mind.” That is all the mind is. Even the mind does not exist from its own side. Even the mind is totally empty of inherent existence. Since the very nature of the mind is emptiness, the mind too is pure and unstained by inherent existence.

As you meditate on the meaning of the mantra, you and all

phenomena evaporate into emptiness. All phenomena are empty like space. Emptiness is not space, but it is like space. Everything is empty of existing from its own side. Your wisdom seeing emptiness is infinite bliss in nature. This great bliss perceives emptiness and is non-dual with it. In the view of that wisdom, there is no differentiation between object, emptiness, and subject, wisdom. They are of one taste, one taste in emptiness. [Meditation.]

Think, “This is my future resultant holy mind of Yamantaka, the dharmakaya.” The last two syllables in the mantra are HO HAM, which means “this is me.” Meditate now on the meaning of HO HAM—“I am the resultant holy mind of Yamantaka, the dharmakaya.” [Meditation.]

The syllable OM in the mantra means the same as it does in other mantras. That is, through this meditation you purify ordinary appearance of your body, speech, and mind and transform them into the completely pure vajra body, speech, and mind of Yamantaka. This is signified by OM, which is made of three sounds: AH, O, and M, which represent the deity’s holy body, speech, and mind that we wish to attain. OM has ten benefits—sublimity, wealth, treasure, auspiciousness, and so forth—and has great meaning.

OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HAM is recited many times during every sadhana; for example, when you bless the offerings. This is how to meditate on it. In the case of blessing the inner offering, your transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness—the dharmakaya—manifests as nectar. Here, when you do the self-generation, it takes the form of the deity’s body—wrathful or peaceful—with certain colors and a particular number of faces, arms, and legs, holding various implements. Depending on all

this, it is labeled as this or that deity.

The second mantra recited while dissolving into emptiness is *OM SUNYATA JNANA VAJRA SVABHAVA ATMAKO HAM*. The meaning of OM is as above. SUNYATA means emptiness, JNANA is exalted wisdom, VAJRA means indestructible or inseparable, SVABHAVA is nature, ATMAKO means entity, and HO HAM¹¹ is I am. Together it means, “I have the mind whose nature is inseparable blissful exalted wisdom (subject) and emptiness (object).”

THE ULTIMATE GURU, THE DEITY, AND YOU

THE ULTIMATE GURU

Rinpoche: The central figure of the *Guru Puja* merit field is Lama Losang Thubwang Dorje Chang. Of the several names put together, Lama is your root lama, Losang is Je Tsong Khapa, Thubwang is Shakyamuni Buddha, and Dorje Chang is Vajradhara. At Vajradhara's heart is the syllable HUM, the concentration being. How do you explain the four—Lama, Losang, Thubwang, Dorje Chang? What does it mean that one is at the heart of the other and the syllable HUM is at Vajradhara's heart?

Roger Munro: The guru is all of those beings. The guru is the manifestation of all of them.

Rinpoche: But what unites them all? What makes you see all these different aspects as one?

RM: The definitive, or ultimate guru, the dharmakaya, his realizations.

Bev Gwyn: The transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness. Those four and the HUM are embodiments of the actual guru; they manifest out of bliss and emptiness. They have the same nature and are just different manifestations of the enlightened mind.

Rinpoche: In the merit field you visualize the lamas of lineage of blessing, the lamas of the profound lineage, and those of extensive lineage, the deities of the four classes of tantra, the thousand Buddhas of this fortunate eon, bodhisattvas, arhats, dakas, dakinis, and protectors. You think of them as one, one in essence.¹² What is it that makes them one? What makes you see all these different manifestations as one in essence, as one? You are not saying all the bodhisattvas, arhats, and so forth are one. There are many bodhisattvas in the world. But here you visualize all these manifestations as one. What makes you think or realize that they are one?

Don Brown: They are all manifestations of the enlightened mind, appearing in different forms to meet the various needs of the students.

Rinpoche: Because they are the same enlightened mind?

DB: Not the same mind, but the same essence. They all have enlightened mind, the fully realized potential of the mind free of all defilements and endowed with all good qualities and capacities.

Rinpoche: You mean they all have that quality, so they are all one? They are one being in reality because they all are the same enlightened mind?

DB: They have different mind-streams.

Rinpoche: If they have separate mind-streams, how can they be one?

DB: They are not one but they are similar in having the experience of being enlightened.

Rinpoche: So are all sentient beings one because they have the same

Buddha nature? Are they all a manifestation of each other because they all have the same Buddha nature? Are you a manifestation of him and is he a manifestation of you? Let's use an example; there are one thousand mugs just like this one, same size, same color, produced at the same time. So are these one thousand mugs one?

Lobsang Gyaltzen: No. They all come from the same prototype so they are similar, but they are not the same.

Rinpoche: They're not the same? But these one thousand mugs are exactly the same, same size, same color, produced at the same time. So are they one because they are the same type? If they are not one, why not?

Lobsang: Because there are one thousand of them!

Linda Gatter: Their causes and conditions are different. But the causes and conditions of the enlightened mind are the same.

Rinpoche: In the merit field, the Buddhas, deities, bodhisattvas, and so forth have completely different aspects and you say they are one. But the mugs are the same and you say they are not one because there are one thousand of them.

Lobsang: But, are all the Buddhas exactly the same? No.

Rinpoche: You said the Buddhas have separate minds. So they are all different? One came from Chicago, one came from North Carolina, one came from Vajrapani Institute?

Lobsang: It seems to me that in the dharmakaya there is some mysterious union of the Buddhas' minds. But they initially come from separate sources. As sentient beings they were different, and in nirmanakaya

aspects, such as Tara, Vajrasattva, and so on, they are separate too.

BUDDHA NATURE AND BEING A BUDDHA

Rinpoche: When you become enlightened, do you become all the Buddhas or just one Buddha?

Lobsang Gyaltzen: You become the Buddha that you are.

Rinpoche: So the Buddha has to become Buddha again?

Lobsang: When you become Buddha you realize your Buddha nature, you realize that you are already Buddha in your potential.

Rinpoche: Are you pregnant?

Lobsang: No, I'm just a fat monk. When I was in the hospital, one of the nurses said, "I hope you are pregnant. It would be wonderful for Buddhism. It would give you a big edge over Christianity."

Rinpoche: Let's say that you are going to reincarnate as a woman in your next life and become pregnant. You have the potential to do that, don't you? But just because you have that potential, are you pregnant now? It is similar. If you say you are already Buddha because you have Buddha potential, then you should also be pregnant because you have the potential to be pregnant in a future life. This is according to your philosophy.

Lobsang: There is a fallacy in your argument.

Rinpoche: Having the potential to be pregnant does not mean you are pregnant now. So what makes the two situations different? They're

similar. Having Buddha nature does not mean you are Buddha now.

Lobsang: But some Buddhist schools insist that if I have Buddha potential or Buddha nature, then I actually am a Buddha now, only I haven't realized it. For example, Robina has the possibility to become a Buddha. It does not mean she is a Buddha now, but she only has to realize that her mind is Buddha and then she is Buddha. If she resides in *rig-pa* over time, isn't that Buddhahood?

Rinpoche: So the aryas, arhats, bodhisattvas of the eighth, ninth, and tenth bhumis are all Buddha? So, before becoming enlightened, there are no tenth bhumi bodhisattvas? Just thinking that you are a Buddha who is free from all defilements because you have Buddha nature does not make the disturbing emotions go away. You have to realize emptiness. Without realizing emptiness, you cannot eradicate the king of delusions, ignorance. Without eradicating that, you cannot eliminate the other delusions. You have to follow the whole procedure with all of the steps of the path to liberation or enlightenment. The essence of that path is the wisdom realizing emptiness because that is what ceases all delusions. If somebody does not understand emptiness but just concentrates on the conventional nature of the mind—the clear and cognitive nature of mind—he or she cannot attain liberation. Similarly, just believing “I'm Buddha” without realizing emptiness does not bring liberation. If someone were a Buddha just because he thought, “I'm a Buddha,” that would make him a Buddha without realizations, an ignorant Buddha. Why? Because just thinking “I'm Buddha” does not make delusions go away. You have to realize emptiness and go through the gradual process of developing that realization over the five paths.

You run into a lot of trouble if you try to defend philosophically, “I am a Buddha because I have Buddha nature.” Many logical mistakes ensue, and many people will debate your view. Using this as a philosophy is problematic. However, using it as a meditation practice and not as a philosophy is different. But this applies only to tantra because the sutra vehicle does not have the practice of visualizing yourself as the Buddha. This is found only in the tantra vehicle.

Using the thought “I am a Buddha” as a meditation technique in tantra involves holding the divine pride, or divine identity, “I am Buddha,” “I am Yamantaka,” “I am Chakrasamvara.” How is this done? For example, the mind labels “I” in dependence on today’s aggregates. Tomorrow’s aggregates do not exist now. Although today’s aggregates will have ceased by tomorrow, their continuation exists in the form of tomorrow’s aggregates. Thursday’s aggregates have ceased by Friday, and Friday’s aggregates exist. The label “I” is imputed in dependence on these.

Similarly, when this life ceases, the consciousness takes another body and I is labeled in dependence on the aggregates of the next life. The base—the aggregates—has changed, but the label I continues and is imputed on the continuation of aggregates in the next life.

The heart of a tantric sadhana begins with purifying the ordinary I in emptiness. Ordinary appearance has two aspects, the appearance of an inherently existent I and inherently existent aggregates, and the appearance of ourselves and our aggregates as ordinary. These two are purified in emptiness at the same time, so the appearance of the ordinary aggregates and ordinary I cease. The mind that realizes that all these are empty experiences great bliss, and you hold the divine pride, or divine identity, of being the dharmakaya that you will become in

the future. You identify with the primordial transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness. You label I on that and hold the divine identity of being the guru-deity's holy mind, the dharmakaya. You think that your mind has actually become this; you identify with the dharmakaya that you will become in the future. On this pure base, your future dharmakaya, you label I, "This is me." You make that strong determination.

Then that transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness manifests as the sambhogakaya, and you label I on the pure base, the pure aggregates of the sambhogakaya. It is the same when your wisdom later manifests as the nirmanakaya. The label I is the same, but the base, the aggregates, have changed. Instead of labeling I on your present ordinary aggregates, which are controlled by delusion and karma, you label I on the pure aggregates that you will attain when you become enlightened.

In the sadhana of the generation stage practice, you meditate on yourself as the deity and think, "I am a Buddha." You have to hold that divine pride strongly. When you have realization, divine pride naturally comes that "I am a Buddha." Sometimes if you do retreat on a deity with which you have a strong connection, you can easily or naturally feel that you are that deity. This divine identity is developed in a specific way, for a specific purpose. You label Buddha in dependence upon the Buddha—the holy body, speech, and mind—that you will become in the future. That is the base of designation, and it is something that exists. Your future Yamantaka exists, your future Tara exists. You label Buddha in dependence on that pure base, that completely pure mind, dharmakaya.

You do not label dharmakaya on ignorance. You are not labeling

Buddha on your ordinary aggregates. You are not labeling the ordinary I Buddha. That is wrong. It is not possible for somebody who is an ordinary sentient being to be a Buddha. Being an ordinary sentient being in samsara with ordinary aggregates under the control of delusion and karma is completely opposite to being a Buddha with completely pure aggregates that are the nature of the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness.

The foundation of the secret manta practice is viewing everything as pure. You stop the ordinary appearance and ordinary concept of yourself and your aggregates and see the pure base, the deity's holy body and mind, and label I in dependence on them. Similarly, you stop the ordinary appearance and concept of your environment and enjoyments by meditating on their emptiness and generate the pure environment and enjoyments of the mandala. You visualize now, as if they already existed, the four completely purified results that you will meet in the future when you become a Buddha—the pure body, environment, enjoyments, and activities. Meditating like this becomes the skillful path to quickly achieve these four purities. Meditating as described above and holding the divine identity of the dharmakaya becomes the path to actually generate the example and meaning clear lights, which are the dharmakaya of the path, and they enable you to attain the resultant dharmakaya. Similarly, holding the divine pride of being the sambhogakaya causes you to attain the sambhogakaya, and holding the divine pride of being the nirmanakaya causes you to attain the nirmanakaya.

This is completely different from thinking that your ordinary body is the deity's holy body and your ignorance is the deity's mind. This is why you run into problems if you use as a philosophy "I am a

Buddha because I have Buddha potential.” However, taking this as a skillful tantric way to practice and meditating correctly is an effective way to transform your mind. When you do a tantric sadhana, you have to hold strong divine pride that “I am a Buddha.” Also, actually twenty-four hours a day—in meditation sessions and in break times—you are supposed to hold this divine identity. This is part of your practice from the time you take initiation. Looking at things as pure, not ordinary, is also part of the tantric vows. The tantric vows are like a constitution. They are designed to safeguard you against problems. Each of the tantric vows is important because it protects you from obstacles and thus becomes an essential cause to realize the path and to attain enlightenment.

Although you practice tantra, in reality you are not Buddha yet. If you could become a Buddha just by doing that meditation once, then studying the entire path for many years would be unnecessary, superfluous, like an unnecessary burden. If simply visualizing yourself as a Buddha once made you a Buddha, then Guru Shakyamuni Buddha would not have explained the gradual path in many sutras and tantras. The lineage lamas would not have had to write root texts and commentaries with many details. In reality, you are not a Buddha, but in your pure view, are you a Buddha or not? That’s something to check.

A similarity exists between tantric practice and other traditions that advise thinking, “I am a Buddha.” Thinking “I’m Buddha” is the same, but the way of doing it is very different. In other traditions you do not go through the process of dissolving the ordinary aggregates into emptiness and generating a pure base, pure aggregates, in dependence upon which you label “I am Buddha.” However, if you relate what other traditions say to tantra and think that you should

practice pure view twenty-four hours a day, you will not get confused. However, you should not label “Buddha” on these ordinary, impure aggregates. That is totally wrong and many mistakes arise. But if you use thinking “I am a Buddha” as a meditation technique, not as a philosophy, it can be as effective as it is in tantra. Thus, if you relate to tantric practice what other traditions say, there is no contradiction. This is my ignorant guess as to interpreting what is said in other traditions.

You can use many meditation techniques that may not be literally true to help calm your disturbing attitudes. For example, when you are angry, in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*, Shantideva advises you to think that you are a tree or a piece of wood. A piece of wood does not care if it is insulted or hit. It does not get angry and want to retaliate. Therefore, to avoid getting angry in situations where you are harmed, thinking that you are a piece of wood can be effective. This is a meditation technique to help your mind. But that does not mean it is an accurate philosophy.

SEEING YOUR THOUGHTS AS THE DEITY’S MIND, THE DHARMAKAYA

The main point of Dharma practice is to stop disturbing attitudes and emotions and to cultivate positive ones. In the sutras and tantras, the Buddha explained many techniques for doing this. Shantideva’s technique of thinking of yourself as a piece of wood when anger arises works by changing your concept. In tantric practice there is a similar technique of changing your concept of the object, only here it is done by visualizing the object of anger or attachment as the deity. Thus, in

tantric practice you are instructed to see all people and things as the mandala, all sounds as the mantra, and all your thoughts as the deity's holy mind, the dharmakaya.

Another technique to practice when disturbing emotions arise does not involve viewing the object differently but instead concentrating on the nature of your anger or attachment. Focus on that and not the object. If you think about the object, of course your anger or attachment will continue, so instead of looking at the object, just look at your anger or attachment. This will help to stop those disturbing thoughts.

Another method is to look at those thoughts as pure, as the dharmakaya. Without a doubt, that will calm anger, attachment, and other disturbing thoughts. This is not saying that ignorance and delusions are the dharmakaya, but to look at them as the dharmakaya, to meditate on the dharmakaya, will help stop the delusion and calm your mind. In this way, your thought becomes pure.

For example, if you look at this place as an ordinary place, ordinary thoughts and concepts will arise. You will become attached to or critical of it. If you look at it as pure, as the mandala, your thought becomes pure and your mind becomes calm and free of delusion. This does not mean that this place is the mandala of Yamantaka. I'm not saying that. But if you stop your ordinary view and visualize the place as a mandala instead, then in dependence upon this pure object, your thoughts will be pure. A pure object helps your mind have pure thoughts. It protects your mind from critical, judgmental thoughts and enables you to collect merit, purify, and approach enlightenment.

Similarly, thinking of yourself or others as the deity does not mean that your ordinary flesh and bone body is the deity's holy body. First, you meditate on emptiness to purify the ordinary appearance and

concept of yourself and others, then you visualize the deity's holy body, the pure aggregates, and then you meditate that yours is the deity's holy body.

From this example, you can understand that seeing your thoughts as the dharmakaya does not mean that ignorance is the dharmakaya. It means that from your side, you meditate that your thoughts are the dharmakaya. When disturbing emotions or wrong conceptions arise, rather than following them, look at them as the dharmakaya. Look at the nature of the dharmakaya. Look at them as the mind of bliss and emptiness. That will stop those thoughts, which is the main point.

This is similar to visualizing the person at whom you are angry as the deity. The minute you think of him or her in a pure form, as a deity, your concept immediately changes. This stops delusions arising towards them. It does not mean that from his or her side the person is an enlightened being, free from samsara. But seeing the person as pure is a skillful technique for preventing your mind from generating all sorts of wrong judgements and antagonistic criticism. Similarly, here you look at the delusions as the dharmakaya. Focus on that; keep your mind looking at the dharmakaya. Then your delusions and ordinary thoughts will stop.

First, meditate on your thoughts as being empty and dissolve them into emptiness. Within that emptiness, pure view—the dharmakaya—arises. Allowing your mind to be filled with delusions and ordinary thoughts causes samsara and becomes an obstacle to attaining enlightenment. By looking at those thoughts as the dharmakaya, your thoughts will be pure. Pure thoughts are a cause for enlightenment.

CLEAR LIGHT NATURE OF MIND

Rinpoche: Does anger have clear light nature of mind or not?

Lobsang Gyaltsen: Yes.

Rinpoche: Does anger go to enlightenment or not? Does anger have Buddha nature or not?

LG: Yes, it has Buddha nature.

Rinpoche: If anger has Buddha nature, then it has to go to enlightenment. Does the continuity of your anger go to enlightenment?

Student: No, anger does not have clear light nature.

Rinpoche: It does not have clear light nature of mind?

S: The mind has clear light nature. The anger does not.

Rinpoche: How does the mind have clear light?

S: That is its ultimate nature.

Rinpoche: Geshe Sopa Rinpoche explained that clear light nature of the mind means the emptiness of the mind. That is Buddha nature. If you say the mind is clear and aware, which is the definition of the conventional nature of mind, that “clear” is not related to the mind’s ultimate nature. That is its conventional nature. Does anger have ultimate nature?

S: Yes, it is empty.

Rinpoche: The nature of mind is clear light. The clear light nature of

mind is Buddha nature, Buddha potential. It needs to be analyzed whether the emptiness of the anger is Buddha nature or not.

SEVEN

MEDITATION ON YAMANTAKA

In this degenerate time, when our minds encounter many obstacles to the practice of Dharma, the most powerful deity is Yamantaka. Due to internal obstacles—disturbing attitudes and emotions, and karma—we encounter external obstacles that prevent us from being successful in our practice of Dharma or from practicing it altogether. Without relying on a deity such as Yamantaka, practicing Dharma and actualizing the entire path to enlightenment is very, very difficult. Yamantaka is the extremely wrathful aspect of Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom. Since we need to develop Dharma wisdom, we need to practice the special deity who embodies it.

Today, we will meditate on taking death, bardo, and rebirth as the path to the three kayas. In preparation for this, we will make requests to the lineage lamas, take refuge, generate bodhicitta, do the instantaneous self-generation as the deity, and purify with Vajrasattva. As we do this practice, I will give instructions at certain points.

REQUEST TO THE LINEAGE LAMAS

*To the all pervading lord Manjushri Vajra Bhairava (the
Opponent of Yama),*

*To the essence of all conquerors, Venerable Tsong Khapa,
To the father, your spiritual offspring, and all the lamas of
the lineage,
I request, please bestow the supreme and mundane attainments.*

REFUGE AND BODHICITTA

*I go for refuge to the Triple Gem. I shall liberate all sentient beings and lead
them to the state of enlightenment. I shall purely generate bodhicitta. (3X)*

The lineage lamas absorb one into the other and finally into your root guru. Due to your strong devotion and your guru's compassion, your root guru from whom you received the Yamantaka initiation absorbs into your heart.

When you visualize the lineage lamas at the beginning of the practice, remember the reasons for seeing your guru as the embodiment of all Buddhas, as we discussed before. From Yamantaka to your direct guru, all your gurus are one in essence. They are all manifestations of the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness, the dharmakaya, the primordial liberator. This is the ultimate guru, which has no beginning or end, is eternal, and pervades all existence. With infinite compassion embracing all sentient beings, the dharmakaya, the ultimate guru, continuously works for sentient beings by taking forms according to the karma of the sentient beings to be benefited. Whenever a sentient being's karma is ripe, the dharmakaya immediately takes a form that is beneficial for that sentient being and guides him or her from happiness to happiness and finally to enlightenment.

After the lineage lamas and the refuge objects dissolve into you,

your mind becomes one with the dharmakaya, the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness. Meditate that everything that exists melts into bliss and emptiness.

INSTANTANEOUS SELF-GENERATION

Instantaneously I arise in the form of the glorious Vajra Bhairava, with one face and two arms, holding cleaver and skullcup.

Within emptiness, your wisdom instantly manifests as a lotus. The petals in the four main directions are red. In the southeast and northwest, they are yellow; in the southwest green; and in the northeast black. Your mind is the dharmakaya, the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness. It appears in the form of a shaft of blue light which then becomes Yamantaka, dark blue, with one face and two arms, holding a skullcup and a curved knife. Yamantaka's body has form, but the experience, the essence, is the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness, the dharmakaya, the ultimate guru experiencing great bliss. From the feet to the hair, every single atom of Yamantaka's holy body is infinite great bliss in nature. This great bliss, this dharmakaya wisdom, is focused on the deity's holy body and at the same time understands that the holy body appearing as something real, from there, is not true. Although Yamantaka appears, he is empty. He is like a dream, an illusion.

What exists is that which is merely labeled by mind. Thus, his holy body is the unification of emptiness and dependent arising. It is empty; it does not exist from its own side. While it is empty, it exists in mere name. While it exists in mere name, it is empty. [Meditation.]

PURIFYING WITH VAJRASATTVA MEDITATION

On the crown of my head, from PAM, comes a lotus, on top of which from AH comes a moon disc. On this, from HUM, comes a five-spoked white vajra, its hub marked with a HUM. From this, light rays emanate and collect back, and it transforms into Vajrasattva, with a white body, one face and two arms, holding a vajra and bell and embracing the consort Dorje Nyema, white, with one face and two arms, holding a cleaver and skullcup. Both are adorned with silken scarves and various jeweled ornaments. The Lord sits in the vajra position, and from a white HUM on a moon disc at his heart light, rays emanate, bringing forth wisdom beings who are similar to him. JAH HUM BAM HOH. They become non-dual.

Once again from the HUM at his heart, light rays emanate, bringing forth the empowering deities. "All Tathagata Buddhas, please confer the empowerment on him." Having thus been requested, they hold up vases filled with the nectar of wisdom and confer the empowerment, saying: "OM SARVA TATHAGATA ABHISHEKATA SAMAYA SHRIYE HUM." Vajrasattva's body becomes filled with wisdom nectar, and Akshobhya crowns his head.

"Bhagavan Vajrasattva, I request you to cleanse and purify me and all sentient beings of our negativities and obstacles, as well as our degenerated and broken words of honor." Having been thus requested, from HUM at his heart, light rays emanate and purify all sentient beings and present offerings to please the Buddhas and their spiritual children. All their good qualities collect back in the form of light which dissolves into HUM, whereby his brilliance, power, and strength become sublime.

OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA, VAJRASATTVA DENOPA TITHA,
 DIDO ME BHAVA, SUTO KAYO ME BHAVA, SUPO KAYO ME BHAVA, ANURAKTO
 ME BHAVA, SARVA SIDDHI ME PRAYATSA, SARVA KARMA SU TSAME, TSITTAM
 SHRIYAM KURU HUM, HA HA HA HA HO, BHAGAVAN SARVA TATHAGATA,
 VAJRA MAME MUN TSA, VAJRA BHAVA MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA AH HUM PHET
 (21X)

Out of ignorance and delusion, I have transgressed my words of honor and let them degenerate. I take refuge in you, Guru-protector. I take refuge in you, foremost Vajra-holder, Lord of beings with a nature of great compassion.

Of the four opponent powers, generate determination not to do those actions again: “From now on, I will abandon the negativities that I am capable of abandoning. Other negativities that are more subtle and difficult to avoid I will avoid for however long I can—a day, a few minutes, or at least a few seconds.” Guru Vajrasattva is extremely pleased by your resolve.

Vajrasattva says, “O child of my family, you are cleansed and purified of all negativities and obstacles, as well as your degenerated samaya.”

Generate very strong faith as Guru Vajrasattva tells you that all negative karma, obscurations and broken samaya vows are purified. Think that exactly what he said happened and that all negativities collected from beginningless rebirths until now have been completely purified and not the slightest trace of them remains in your mind-stream.

Then he dissolves into me and my body, speech, and mind become inseparable from the holy body, speech, and mind of Vajrasattva.

Vajrasattva dissolves into you and becomes inseparable with your extremely subtle wind and mind, which are what goes on to enlightenment. In emptiness, there is no I who is purifying, no action of purifying, no negative karma that is purified. Meditating on the emptiness of the circle of these three becomes extremely powerful purification.

THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES

May all sentient beings have happiness (bliss).

Think of each realm of sentient beings, with the sentient beings in it experiencing the suffering of that particular realm as well as the general suffering of samsara. Generate the thought of loving-kindness for each and every sentient being.

May all sentient beings be free from all suffering.

One by one, think, “May all hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, demigods, gods, and intermediate state beings be free from all suffering.”

May all sentient beings never be parted from happiness (bliss).

“May each hell being, each hungry ghost, each animal, each human

being, each demigod, each god, and each intermediate state being not be separated from happiness.”

May all sentient beings be placed in a state of equanimity unperturbed by preconceptions of apprehender and apprehended or by the eight worldly concerns.

“I will cause sentient beings to abide in equanimity unmoved by the eight worldly concerns or the superstition that grasps subject (mind) and object (all phenomena) as inherently existent. I will bring sentient beings to this great equanimity in which everything is of one taste in emptiness.”

TAKING DEATH AS THE PATH TO THE DHARMAKAYA

Before beginning the meditation of taking death as the path to the dharmakaya, generate strong motivation, thinking, “I am going to actualize the clear light dharmakaya and then manifest in the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya forms in order to benefit others.”

After purifying and collecting merit in the presence of the merit field, you can dissolve the merit field in any of four ways:

1. It returns to its own abode;
2. It becomes non-objectifying right there;
3. It absorbs into you and blesses you; or
4. As you meditate on the emptiness of all phenomena and purify yourself in emptiness, at the same time, the merit field becomes non-objectifying, or empty.

The great yogi Lalita recommended doing it the fourth way. Let everything—the merit field and all other phenomena—appear empty to your mind.

The essence of taking death as the path to the dharmakaya is to meditate on the clear light mixed with emptiness. Instead of continuously experiencing the ordinary death of the base caused by delusion and karma, this meditation will enable you to generate the example clear light and meaning clear light, which are the dharmakaya of the path. By meditating on these two clear lights, you will actualize the transcendental wisdom of the resultant dharmakaya.

This will happen in the future, but you meditate as if it has actually happened now. You imagine that you have already actualized the resultant transcendental wisdom of the dharmakaya. By meditating in this way, you use ordinary death, intermediate state, and rebirth to attain enlightenment. For this reason, these meditations form the main practice of generation stage of the Highest Yoga Tantra and are called taking death as the path to the dharmakaya, taking intermediate stage as the path to the sambhogakaya, and taking rebirth as the path to the nirmanakaya. You receive special benefits from practicing the meditation of taking death as the path to the dharmakaya. First, each time you do it, you purify the ordinary death that will happen to you in the future. That is, this meditation stops you from experiencing your ordinary future death. Second, it creates the merit that will enable you to actualize the example and meaning clear lights of the path. Third, it generates the special potential, or imprint, to actualize the resultant dharmakaya in your mind-stream.

Because I myself, the deities, the merit field and all other phenomena are

dependent designations, everything becomes empty, having the true nature of selflessness, and is parted from the four extremes of eternalism, nihilism and so forth.

You, the deities of the field merit, and all other phenomena exist by being merely labeled in dependence upon their bases. Therefore, everything is devoid of the four extremes—eternalism, nihilism, and so forth. Meditate on the meaning of the four extremes. All these existents are not inherently existent, not eternalism; nor are they non-existent, or nihilism. Phenomena are not both eternalism and nihilism; nor are they not inherently existent non-eternalism and non-nihilism. Thus, the true nature of all phenomena is selflessness; emptiness.

OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HAM

Meditate on the meaning of this mantra. The nature of all objects—the apprehended—is pure; it is empty of inherent existence. Similarly, the nature of all subjects, the minds that apprehend, is also pure and unstained by inherent existence. Everything is totally empty. The wisdom understanding emptiness experiences great bliss non-dual with emptiness. Think, “This is my resultant Yamantaka’s holy mind, the dharmakaya. This is me.”¹³

Now we will do the actual meditation of taking death as the path to dharmakaya. From the blue HUM at the heart of you, Yamantaka, blue light rays radiate, touching all animate and inanimate things—all places and all living beings. All places become mandalas and all living beings become Yamantaka. Everything is purified and becomes pure.

The process of the absorption of the elements and the corresponding visions occurs in eight steps. Saying that the earth element absorbs into the water element, for example, does not mean that earth goes into water. Rather, the power of the earth element is exhausted, so the potential of the next strongest element, water, appears clearer and more powerful. Due to that, external and internal signs appear. At each step, meditate on bliss and emptiness. With each succeeding step, your understanding of emptiness becomes clearer and your experience of bliss non-dual with emptiness becomes stronger.

1. *The earth element absorbs into water.* Imagine all the mandalas become light and absorb into the beings who have become Yamantaka. These Yamantakas then melt into light and absorb into you. You have the internal sign, which is like the appearance of a mirage. Think, “I must recognize the clear light and meditate on bliss and emptiness.” In this way, make a plan from the beginning to be able to recognize the clear light.

If there were no mind perceiving the mirage-like vision, no vision would exist. That means the mirage-like vision comes from the mind. The mirage-like vision is merely labeled by mind, by your own thought. When sunlight strikes the sand, from a distance it appears like water. Even though that vision just comes from your mind and is merely labeled by your mind, it does not appear that way. It appears not merely labeled by your mind. This is the refuted object. This means it is a hallucination. This mirage-like vision is totally non-existent from its own side. [Meditation.]

The wisdom seeing this emptiness experiences great bliss non-dual with that emptiness. [Meditation.]

Think that the mirage-like vision caused by the earth element absorbing into water is happening. Now the smoke-like vision caused by the water element absorbing into fire is about to happen. Prepare to recognize and meditate on this next stage.

2. *The water element absorbs into fire.* You as Yamantaka absorb into the HUM at your heart. There is nothing else except the HUM. The inner vision is like smoke, like the inside of a house filled with bluish incense smoke, but you are not seeing it with your eyes. Think, "This time I must recognize the clear light and meditate on bliss and emptiness." I just described one way of meditating on emptiness, so I will not repeat it each time. How does the smoke-like vision appear to me? It appears as something real from there. It appears not merely labeled by mind. That is the refuted object. That is a hallucination, which means it is totally non-existent. While you are one-pointedly looking at that, think in your heart that it is totally non-existent. See it as empty. The mind seeing emptiness experiences great bliss. [Meditation.]

Think that the mirage-like vision caused by earth absorbing into water has happened. The smoke-like vision caused by the water element absorbing into fire is happening. The spark-like vision caused by the fire element absorbing into wind is about to appear. Prepare to recognize and meditate on this next stage.

3. *The fire element absorbs into wind.* The *shab-kyu*, the curved line below the main letter HA of the HUM, absorbs into the HUM. Think, "This time I must recognize the clear light and meditate on bliss and emptiness." You have a vision like sparks of fire. For example, when

you put a pot with a lot of carbon on the bottom on a fire, sparks appear. Or when a pile of dry hay burns, many fire sparks fly into the surrounding space. The text says that this vision resembles fireflies.

Examine how the fire sparks appear to you. Do they appear as real ones from there? That is a total hallucination; it is totally non-existent. Here you do not need to use the words “from its own side” when you say it is non-existent. “Its own side” is used only when we are negating the inherent existence of things that exist. But when you speak of things that do not exist, such as an inherently existent vision like fire sparks, something real appearing from there, you do not need to use the additional words “from its own side” because such an inherently existent thing is totally non-existent. Meditate on emptiness intensively. The wisdom seeing emptiness experiences great bliss non-dual with emptiness. [Meditation.]

Think that the smoke-like vision caused by water absorbing into fire has happened. The spark-like vision caused by fire absorbing into wind is happening. The vision of a glowing lamp caused by the wind element absorbing into consciousness is about to occur.

4. *The wind element absorbs into consciousness.* The main part of the letter HA at your heart absorbs into the line that forms the top of the letter. At this time the eighty superstitions absorb. You have an internal vision that resembles the glow around a light in a golden bowl or butter lamp. It is not the light itself, but the glow around it. Think, “This time I must recognize the clear light. I must meditate on bliss and emptiness.”

How does the glowing vision appear to you? Does it appear as something real from there? This is a hallucination. In reality such an

inherently existent vision does not exist at all. It is totally empty. The wisdom seeing this emptiness experiences great bliss. Meditate more intensively on emptiness. Your experience of bliss is stronger as well.

By the fire element absorbing into wind, the vision of fire-sparks has happened. The vision of a glowing lamp is happening. Now the white appearance is about to occur.

5. *The white appearance.* The line at the top of what was the letter HA absorbs into the crescent moon above it. "This time I must recognize the clear light and meditate on bliss and emptiness." The white appearance is like a very clear autumn sky; clear space completely filled by moonlight. It can have the brightness of the light of a full moon when the ground is covered by snow. The white appearance appears as something real from there. That means it is a hallucination. Strongly think that this appearance, this vision, is a hallucination. That means it is totally non-existent. Meditate on emptiness with the wisdom of great bliss. Your experience of emptiness is stronger than before; your bliss is greater than before.

The wind element has absorbed into consciousness and the vision of a glowing lamp has happened. The red appearance is about to occur.

6. *The radiant red appearance.* The crescent moon absorbs into the drop above it. "I must recognize the clear light and meditate on bliss and emptiness." The red appearance is like the copper or pink color of the sky in the morning when the sun rises. Meditate on bliss and emptiness on the red appearance. Look at how the red appearance appears to you. It appears as not merely labeled by mind. That is the refuted object. Think strongly that it is a hallucination, that is, it does

not exist at all. See emptiness more intensely than before and experience even greater bliss non-dual with emptiness.

The white appearance has happened. The black appearance is about to happen.

7. *The black near-attainment.* The drop absorbs into the *nada*, the squiggle. "This time I must recognize the clear light. I must meditate on bliss and emptiness." The vision is one of complete darkness. Examine the appearance of the darkness. Normally this is not a very good example for recognizing the refuted object because you do not see darkness. How does the darkness appear? As darkness from its own side, real darkness appearing from there? That is a complete hallucination. It does not exist in the slightest. To help your meditation on emptiness, think that without the mind, there is no darkness. Without your mind labeling darkness, without the concept, darkness does not exist. That means darkness comes from your mind. It is merely labeled by your mind. Real darkness appearing from there is a hallucination; it is totally empty, totally non-existent. You see emptiness much more clearly than before and experience greater bliss than before.

The red appearance has gone and the clear light is about to happen.

8. *The clear light.* The *nada*, that fine line with three curves, absorbs from the bottom upwards and vanishes. Not the slightest thing remains. All that appears is empty space. It is like the sky on a clear autumn dawn, very clear space, devoid of the mistaken appearances of the white, red, and dark appearances.

What appears is space. What your mind understands is emptiness.

Here, meditate on the emptiness of the I or emptiness of the space, whichever is more effective. To meditate on the emptiness of the I, check to see if you feel that there is a meditator in the space; that somewhere in this empty space, there is an I who is meditating.

One way to see the I as empty is to use reasoning. The I is not inherently existent because it is dependent arising.¹⁴ Since the I arises dependently, it cannot exist from its own side, under its own power. This dependent I, this merely labeled I exists, but it does not exist inherently. An inherently existent I is totally non-existent.

The other way to see the I as empty is to target the I that is meditating in space. Focus on that real I meditating, appearing from there, the real self that is meditating. Right on top of that I, think, "This is the refuted object." That means it is a hallucination. It is totally non-existent. There is no real I in space meditating on the dharmakaya. You need to realize that that I is totally non-existent. Meditate on that emptiness very intensively. This emptiness is much stronger than before. The mind that realizes this emptiness experiences the greatest bliss; bliss as limitless as the sky. The bliss is non-dual with that emptiness, like water mixed with water. Think, "This is my resultant Guru Yamantaka's holy mind, the dharmakaya." Determine strongly, "This is me."

TAKING THE INTERMEDIATE STATE AS THE PATH TO THE SAMBHOVAKAYA

This wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness instantly manifests as the complete mandala with yourself as Manjushri in the mandala.¹⁵ Continue with the experience of great bliss non-dual with emptiness,

which is your resultant dharmakaya. Do not leave that awareness. Have continual awareness that whatever you manifest as—mandala, deity, and so forth—is great bliss and emptiness in nature. Be aware that all these things that appear as something real from there are hallucinations. Manjushri's holy body appearing as something real from there is a hallucination. The mandala appearing real from there—an inherently existent mandala—is a hallucination. Have continual awareness that in reality, all these are non-existent. That wisdom of great bliss is continuously aware that all these things appearing as something real from there are completely non-existent. [Meditation.]

You are Manjushri. Think, "This is my resultant sambhogakaya." [Meditation.]

TAKING REBIRTH AS THE PATH TO THE NIRMANAKAYA

You as Manjushri now transform into the complete aspect of Yamantaka, with nine faces, thirty-four arms, and sixteen legs. The essence of Yamantaka is the great bliss understanding emptiness, the blissful wisdom understanding that Yamantaka's holy body has no inherently existent nature. Think, "This is my resultant Yamantaka's actual nirmanakaya." [Meditation.]

The main point in the practice of Highest Yoga Tantra is meditation on the dharmakaya. Serkong Rinpoche used to emphasize that even if you do not have much time, don't miss out on meditating on the dharmakaya. This will help prepare you for meditating in this way at the time of death.

Here, we have done a more extensive meditation. The main idea is to try to not miss anything, to catch the clear light when it dawns.

Therefore, before you begin visualizing the absorptions and with each step as each vision happens, determine very strongly to meditate on bliss and emptiness, especially at the time of the clear light. With each step, plan to recognize the clear light when it arises and to meditate on bliss and emptiness at that time. In addition, meditate on bliss and emptiness as each vision occurs, and with each successive vision experience clearer emptiness and stronger bliss than before. I think it was in Lama Tsong Khapa's commentary, *A Clear Lamp of the Five Stages*, that a shorter way of doing this was explained—you make your strong plan to meditate on bliss and emptiness, the dharmakaya, when you reach the clear light just when you begin your meditation on the absorptions.

DEDICATION

With continual mindfulness of emptiness, dedicate the merits. In emptiness, there are no merits—your own, the Buddhas', the bodhisattvas', or anybody else's. In emptiness there is no I. In emptiness there are no sentient beings. In emptiness there is no action of leading sentient beings to enlightenment. In emptiness there is no enlightenment. Dedicate with this awareness. Due to the merits of the three times collected by myself, Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and all other sentient beings, which do not exist, may the I, who does not exist, attain Guru Yamantaka's enlightenment, which does not exist, and lead all sentient beings, who do not exist, to that enlightenment, which does not exist, by myself alone, who does not exist. In emptiness, none of these exists. What exists is only that which is merely labeled. Other than that, there is nothing.

EIGHT

EMPTINESS

Bring your attention to the nature of your life, particularly the nature of samsaric life. Our life under the influence of delusions and karma is impermanent; it is suffering in nature. All people, possessions, and sense objects around us, all these causative phenomena, change within every second; they are constantly decaying. Under the control of causes and conditions, they do not last. These causative phenomena—including this life—can cease at any time. When death arrives, you have to leave everything. There is no choice but to separate from everything, including your cherished body.

Mindfulness of impermanence and death brings peace of mind. Realization of impermanence leads you towards liberation and enlightenment because it helps curtail obstacles—the disturbing emotions. Without mindfulness, meditation, and realization of impermanence and death, your attitude towards life is filled with disturbing emotions, particularly attachment. As a result, you are born repeatedly in samsara, especially in the lower realms of suffering. When you are mindful of impermanence and death, you want to practice Dharma and actualize the path to enlightenment.

In reality, everything—all actions, agents, and phenomena—is merely labeled by mind. How all phenomena exist is by being merely

labeled by the mind in dependence upon a valid base. Even the base is that which is merely labeled by mind in dependence upon another base. It goes on and on like that. Starting from the I and going down to the sub-atomic particles of your body, everything is merely labeled in dependence upon a base. Nothing else exists except that which is merely labeled by the mind. What phenomena are is that which is merely labeled by mind. Everything exists in mere name. All phenomena are only nominally existent.

Therefore, the I, action, and all phenomena are totally empty. They are totally non-existent right there from their own side. As much as possible, try to practice mindfulness of emptiness and dependent arising—that everything exists in mere name in dependence upon its base, which also exists in mere name in dependence upon its base.

Living your life with the mindfulness that things do not exist from their own side is the ultimate solution to death. Common people find it unpleasant even to hear or think about death. The realization of emptiness is the ultimate means of overcoming death, of liberating yourself from the suffering of birth, aging, sickness, and death, and all the other sufferings that occur between birth and death as well. The realization of emptiness frees you from the oceans of suffering of each realm. In addition, it ceases even the subtle obscurations, making it possible for this mind-stream to become enlightened.

In reality, phenomena exist merely nominally, by being merely labeled by mind. But your past ignorance projects upon them the appearance of inherent existence. There is not just the appearance of action, object, I, form, sound, smell, and so forth, but something extra—inherent existence; something real appearing from there. Due

to past ignorance, this projection occurs, and then your present ignorance apprehends it as true. This is happening in your own life, right now. Then your present ignorance, which apprehends all this as true, leaves the negative imprint on your mind-stream for phenomena to appear to you as inherently existent in the future. And again, you experience the appearance of an inherently existent I, inherently existent action, inherently existent form, sound, smell, taste, tangible object, inherently existent enlightenment, inherently existent hell, inherently existent liberation, inherently existent virtue and non-virtue, inherently existent happiness and suffering, inherently existent depression, inherently existent peace of mind, and so forth.

This has been happening in your life continuously, from beginningless samsaric rebirths. You have been completely trapped in hallucination. Besides being caught in the present hallucination, by following ignorance and not meditating on emptiness, sentient beings continuously create the cause for more hallucination in the future. It is like a fly inside a house. The windows and the doors may be open, but the fly does not go out. It does not go to where there's an opening but flies around where there is no exit. Hitting its body against a closed window again and again, it ignores the freedom offered by all the open windows. It never even looks in their direction. Nobody is keeping the fly trapped in the house; the fly itself stays there. It never pays attention to the big space that is open all the time. It only looks where there is no space and goes around and around. Even though seeing the open space and flying there is so easy—there is no suffering or hardship involved—it does not do that. But the door is always open.

Your life is just like this example. The opportunity to attain liberation from samsara is always there. All phenomena, including I, action,

and object, have been empty from beginningless time. It is not that phenomena have been empty at certain times and inherently existent at others. They have never been inherently existent. Therefore, the opportunity to realize emptiness has always existed and always will. By generating that realization, you will be able to eliminate the root of samsara, ignorance, the innate conception of inherent existence. By eliminating ignorance, you will cease everything that stems from it—all the other disturbing attitudes and emotions, all karma, the whole of samsara. You will attain complete cessation of suffering and its cause. Even though the opportunity to liberate yourself has always been there, so far you have not taken it.

Like the fly, you have not paid attention to or turned towards the door to liberation, the very nature of phenomena, the object of wisdom, emptiness. Continuously following ignorance, you have kept going towards suffering by believing the view of ignorance and thinking that the object of ignorance, which is false, is actually true. This has been your fundamental mistake.

In the view of your mind, every phenomenon, including the I, is one hundred percent existent from its own side, one hundred percent truly existent, one hundred percent not merely labeled by mind. Phenomena are one hundred percent real, one hundred percent there on the base, one hundred percent solid. When you look at the mountains, you think they are something real appearing from there. When you look at the road, it is a real road appearing from there. Your body is a real body appearing from there. Your emotions are real ones appearing from there. This is the view of ignorance.

Ignorance is the view of one part of your mind, but it is not the view of your entire mind. When your wisdom realizes emptiness, in

the view of that wisdom mind, everything is empty. In the view of your wisdom seeing the ultimate nature of the person and phenomena, all these phenomena that ignorance apprehends as one hundred percent true are seen as false. In the view of the other part of your mind, wisdom, all the objects apprehended by ignorance—all these inherently existent things that appear real from there—are totally non-existent. This does not mean that all phenomena are non-existent. In the view of wisdom, all phenomena do exist, but they are totally empty of existing from their own side. In the case of the objects of ignorance, inherently existent phenomena, we can say they are completely non-existent. However, when speaking of nominally, or conventionally, existent phenomena, which do exist, we must include the qualifying term “from their own side” and say that they are totally empty of existing from their own side.

Rather than thinking that emptiness comes from outside, recognize that perceiving it depends on which mind you follow—you have different views. Your present view, the view of ignorance, is that everything you see—the lights, the carpet, your friends—is real from there, real from the side of their base. But this is not the view of all of your mind; it is just the view of one part of your mind. If you follow the wisdom mind, you will have a different view of life, phenomena, and yourself. The former view sees everything as inherently existent, the latter as empty. They are completely opposite perceptions. How you see the world, your life, and yourself is completely different in the two views. It becomes very interesting.

I, ACTION, AND OBJECT

I, action, object, and all other phenomena are simply that which has been merely labeled by the mind. Therefore, they are empty and do not exist from their own side. The I does not exist from its own side; neither do the action or the object acted upon. Similarly, all other phenomena do not exist from their own side, or under their own power, and are therefore totally empty.

The best meditation on emptiness is when there is no meditator, no action of meditating, and no object of meditation. The *Guhyasamaja Root Tantra* as well as sutra teachings say that if you can gradually approach this experience, you are meditating on emptiness correctly.

The body is not I. The mind is not I. The association of body and mind together is not I. The I exists nowhere on these aggregates. To express it another way, the aggregate of form is not I. The aggregate of feeling is not I. The aggregate of discrimination is not I. The aggregate of compositional factors is not I. The aggregate of consciousness is not I. Even the collection of all five aggregates is not I. No I exists anywhere on these aggregates. Be very clear about this. Firmly understand this.

It is very good if you can meditate on this and hold the experience steady for even an hour. The more you meditate on emptiness in session, the more you will be able to feel it during the breaks. Doing intensive meditation on emptiness and having intensive mindfulness of it enables the continuation of this understanding to remain even when you are working or engaged in other activities after your meditation session.

What is the I? It is that which is merely labeled by mind. Although that is sufficient, to make it clearer and be more precise, you may want to say that the I is that which is merely labeled by the mind in dependence upon the aggregates. Saying “in dependence upon the aggregates” counteracts the wrong idea that your mind’s labeling something is sufficient for it to exist. Your mind can label many things—such as a rabbit’s horn or a hairy turtle—that do not in fact exist. For something to exist, it needs a valid base in addition to the mind and label. The I, for example, exists by being merely labeled by the mind in dependence upon the aggregates, which are its base. The I cannot be labeled on just any base; it has to be valid. The aggregates are a valid base for the label I. The I is that which is merely imputed or designated by the mind in dependence upon a valid base. After the mind merely imputes the I, it believes that an I is really there. The I is just an idea or label that the mind makes up and believes.

Even the mind—the thing that makes up the label, that creates the idea—is not independent. It, too, does not exist at all from its own side, under its own power. What is the mind? Nothing other than that which is merely labeled by thought. Therefore, even the mind is empty. That which creates all these ideas is itself empty, not something concrete; it does not exist from its own side. This thing called “mind,” which exists and creates all these ideas and labels, is that which is merely labeled by thought. It exists by being merely labeled by thought in dependence upon a valid base.

After this analysis, it is clear that the I, which is merely imputed by the mind, and the mind itself, which is also merely imputed by thought, are totally empty from their own side. But they are not non-existent. They are like non-existent; it’s as if they do not exist. After

this analysis, what you see and feel is not that they're totally non-existent. They exist, but it is almost as if they don't. What the I is, what the mind is, is unbelievably subtle. Even the mind that labels exists in an extremely subtle way.

In the same way, all phenomena exist so subtly that it is almost as if they were non-existent. If you analyze the base of the I—the aggregates—you have the same experience. From gross body down to its atoms, and from the mind down to the smallest moments of mind, everything exists by being merely labeled. You can mentally divide the continuity of consciousness into smaller and smaller time periods—year, month, week, day, hour, minute, second, split second, and so on. These mini-mind moments are the base in dependence upon which the mind is labeled. To ignorance, your hallucinating mind, all these appear inherently existent. They seem to exist from their own side, to be something concrete, something real from there, but in reality, in the view of wisdom, from the I down to the sub-atomic particles and from the mind down to the tiniest moments of consciousness, everything exists by being merely labeled. Having made this analysis, how do you feel your I and mind? It is not that they are non-existent, but it is like they are non-existent. What they are is extremely fine, extremely subtle.

From the I and the mind that labels I down to the sub-atomic particles and mini-moments in the continuity of mind, everything is totally empty of existing from its own side. They are totally non-existent from their own side. When you reach this conclusion, this experience, concentrate one-pointedly on emptiness.

Some lines in the *Seven Points of Thought Transformation* describe succinctly how to meditate on emptiness:

Having gained stability, receive the secret (teaching).

Consider all phenomena as a dream.

Examine the nature of unborn awareness.

The remedy itself is released in its own place.

Place (your meditation) on the nature of the foundation of all—
the essence (of the path).

In the meditation break, be a creator of illusion.

Although few in words, these lines are very powerful to meditate on. Remembering just a few words helps you to not get caught in the words of emptiness but to reflect on its meaning. For example, “Be a creator of illusion” reminds you that you are the creator. With this awareness, practice mindfulness of things being like an illusion. By memorizing these lines, you can easily recall them when meditating. I do not know exactly what they mean, but I find them very effective, very powerful.

Similarly, *The Thirty-seven Practices of a Bodhisattva* contains some verses that give invaluable advice on how to use mindfulness of emptiness when you encounter problems.

Whatever appears is your own mind.

Your mind from the start was free from fabricated extremes.

Understanding this, do not take to mind

[Inherent] signs of subject and object—

 This is the practice of bodhisattvas.

When you encounter attractive objects,
Though they seem beautiful,
Like a rainbow in summer, do not regard them as real
And give up attachment—

This is the practice of bodhisattvas.

All forms of suffering are like a child's death in a dream.
Holding illusory appearances to be true makes you weary.
Therefore, when you meet with disagreeable circumstances,
See them as illusory—

This is the practice of bodhisattvas.

The last stanza speaks first of the mistake of looking at hallucinations as true. Doing so makes you suffer; it tortures your life; it is exhausting. Then Togme Zangpo gives the solution. When you meet unfavorable conditions, see them as hallucinations. That is, when things happen that you do not like, that you think are objectionable, practice as bodhisattvas do by seeing them as hallucinations. To see as a hallucination what is in fact a hallucination is a powerful technique. There are no truly existent problems.

In addition to seeing that no truly existent problems exist out there, you can transform the problem by transforming your concept of it. Change the concept that labels it as a problem and views it as a problem into a thought that gives a positive label to that situation and thus looks at the situation positively. For example, instead of labeling it as a problem, label it as an opportunity to practice patience.

WHAT IS AN ILLUSION?

Rinpoche: In English, does the word “illusion” only refer to a magician’s creation?

Student: Illusion can refer to a range of things, not only what is created by a magician. A hallucination is an illusion, a mirage is an illusion. So is a reflection in a mirror. A mistaken idea is also an illusion.

Rinpoche: What is a mirage?

Student: It’s an appearance of water where there is no water.

Rinpoche: So the appearance of the water is an illusion?

Student: Yes.

Rinpoche: Then the appearance of the water does not exist.

Student: The appearance of the water does exist. The illusion exists, but the water does not exist.

Rinpoche: That’s correct. The appearance of water exists, but the water does not exist. So the appearance of the water isn’t a hallucination.

Student: Correct.

Rinpoche: Tsa! You contradicted yourself! So the appearance of water isn’t a hallucination.

Student: The appearance of the water isn’t a hallucination because the appearance is there. The water isn’t there. It’s like when you look up and see a face in the clouds. That’s a hallucination and an illusion. You know it’s only clouds in the shape of a face. There’s no real face there.

Rinpoche: Are the pictures of our gurus and statues of the Buddha that we see hallucinations?

Student: There is a particular tribe in Africa that cannot recognize objects in photographs. If you show them a picture of another member of the tribe, they will not recognize him because the photo is flat and still, while their friend is three dimensional and moves. We see a person in the photo because we read meaning into the shapes we see there. In a sense, that's an illusion because we make it up in our mind. There's really just a flat surface there. It only has meaning to us because as a convention, we give it that meaning. We reconstruct meaning in our mind.

Rinpoche: Which one is a hallucination—what we see or what they see?

Student: Going back to the mirage, there's an illusion there, but there's no water there.

Rinpoche: Yes. So you're saying the appearance of water isn't an illusion, right?

Student: There's a sense object that is correct. The mirage exists and it's not an illusion.

Rinpoche: So a mirage isn't a hallucination? Isn't the appearance of an inherently existent I an illusion?

Student: Yes.

Rinpoche: In that case, all sentient beings are already enlightened because the appearance of inherent existence does not exist because it's a hallucination.

Student: It exists. If it's a hallucination it does not follow that it does not exist. It exists as an hallucination.

Rinpoche: It exists as a hallucination, but it's not a hallucination?

Student: There's a basis out there that does not exist. The inherently existent I does not exist. But the perception of the inherently existent I does exist.

Rinpoche: So the appearance of the inherently existent I isn't a hallucination?¹⁶

Student: It is a hallucination. It exists as a hallucination.

Rinpoche: Are you saying that the appearance of inherent existence is like an illusion? So it's not an illusion?

Student: It is illusion, that's why it exists.

Rinpoche: It's an illusion?

Student: There's no basis for the perception. It's an illusion.

Rinpoche: If the inherently existent I is an illusion, is the appearance of an inherently existent I also an illusion? Are those two the same? Think about it.

SPACED OUT MEDITATING ON EMPTY SPACE

Sometimes it seems difficult to see the I as empty. You do the meditation taking death as the path to dharmakaya, and at the clear light, you have an appearance of space, like a very clear autumn sky at

dawn. It is devoid of the three—the white, red, and dark appearances. It is like the sky before it's completely light but after the dark has gone. Space is often given as an analogy for emptiness because space is already empty of form. So initially, thinking of space helps some people have an idea of emptiness. Space is ordinary emptiness—the emptiness of form and substantial phenomena—but it is not emptiness of inherent existence. You have to go beyond seeing space.

The emptiness of inherent existence is also non-objectifying; it is empty. That intense emptiness is non-dual with you, with no differentiation between subject and object. It is very strong emptiness, totally empty from its own side.

However, many people think they are meditating on emptiness but actually, they are meditating on space. They have not yet touched actual emptiness, shunyata, the pure nature. Instead, their experience is like gazing into space. They meditate on space and label it “emptiness.”

I have not seen what follows in the texts; it is just my idea how to meditate on emptiness during the dharmakaya meditation. Rather than spacing out meditating on empty space, it is more useful to identify the refuted object, the real I appearing from there, the I that appears not to be merely labeled by mind. You have this false view grasping onto the refuted object all the time. You have this hallucination every moment. You are born with it from beginningless rebirth. You have continuously lived your life with this false view, this hallucination. Up until now everything that appears to your senses has been the refuted object. So far, why you have not been liberated from samsara is because you have not realized emptiness, not realized that the refuted object is totally non-existent, totally empty. The reason you have not realized emptiness is because you have not identified the

refuted object.

To realize emptiness you first have to recognize the refuted object. Since emptiness is a lack of something—inherent existence—to realize emptiness you first have to be able to identify what it is a lack of. You have to recognize the false I, the I that does not exist. In the four-point analysis to realize emptiness, the first point is to identify the refuted object. Without first recognizing the refuted object, the inherently existent I, the inherent existence projected onto the merely labeled I, how can you prove it does not exist? The I that exists is the merely labeled one, but something extra on top of it appears to you. That is inherent existence, the refuted object.

At present you apprehend the inherently existent I that is projected onto the merely labeled I as true. It's like there's I on the I. In the view of your hallucinating mind, ignorance, it looks like there's I on the I, an inherently existent I appearing on the merely labeled I. Apprehending inherent existence and believing it to be true obstructs your mind from seeing the reality, or the truth, of the I, the emptiness of the I. Because you are unable to see the emptiness of the I, the real nature of the I, you cannot see the I, how the I exists. You cannot see that the I exists as a dependent arising, as merely labeled by mind. Because you are unable to realize the real nature of the I, you are unable to realize the conventional nature of the I, the dependently arising I itself.

Therefore, the whole problem is not realizing as false that which is false; not realizing that the way the inherently existent I and inherently existent phenomena appear is false, that the I and all other phenomena do not exist in the way they appear. You have to see that which is false as false. Liberation from samsara starts from here.

When you practice mindfulness recognizing the refuted object on the I as false, there is no foundation for any of the delusions to arise, because your wisdom knows the appearance of a real I is false.

Ignorance, on the other hand, apprehends things in the exact opposite way. It apprehends them as true; that this is reality; that inherent existence is the nature of all phenomena. The ignorance apprehending, or grasping, inherent existence creates all delusions, all karma, and all the oceans of suffering in each realm of samsara. That wrong concept is responsible for the entire problem. The opposite of ignorance is the wisdom that looks at the false object as false, that recognizes the refuted object as the refuted object, that sees as a hallucination what is in fact a hallucination.

In this way, you are able to overcome the delusions. The correct view does not give the delusions freedom to arise, to take over your mind and your life, to harm yourself and others. When you can recognize that this is false, it will not be long before you will realize emptiness. It takes just a second to realize that inherently existent persons and phenomena are totally non-existent. Then you have the wisdom realizing emptiness. When you have that, you will have definite, unshakeable faith that you can attain liberation. The wisdom realizing emptiness directly ceases all defilements, karma, and delusions, so you do not have to experience them at all. It ceases the result, true suffering in samsara. By ceasing the subtle obscurations, it enables you to attain enlightenment.

Apprehending the I that appears not merely labeled by mind as true, as reality, creates samsara. Looking at it as false, recognizing it as the refuted object, seeing it as a hallucination—whichever name works better for you—cuts all suffering and its cause at its root,

bringing liberation or enlightenment. A huge difference exists between these two thoughts, these two opposite ways of looking at the object. Which one you follow makes a huge difference to your life right this minute. It also makes a huge difference for the future; it is the difference between being in samsara and experiencing nirvana.

Even if you do not realize emptiness, it is very useful to practice mindfulness that the way all phenomena appear to you and the way your mind apprehends them is not true. What appears to you, what you apprehend, is false. It is the refuted object; it is a hallucination. Look at everything—the I, the six sense objects, the apprehending mind, and the apprehended objects—as false. Just looking at things in this way, which is opposite to the way ignorance apprehends objects, is very powerful, even if you do not actually realize emptiness. This is an unmistakable way to practice and will lead you to understand that phenomena are empty.

It is better to practice this mindfulness than to think you are meditating on emptiness when you are actually meditating on space. Even if you spend a long time concentrating on space, it does not affect samsara because it is not real meditation on emptiness. But using the correct words as taught by the Buddha and Lama Tsong Khapa benefits your mind, even though at present your understanding of them may be superficial. Just repeating the words, “All phenomena are not inherently existent. They do not exist by their own nature. They do not exist from their own side, nor are they truly existent,” puts good imprints in your mind-stream. You benefit from repeating and reflecting on these correct terms, even though you have no image of what emptiness is at present. Although you are not really meditating on emptiness, you are planting the seeds of realization in your mind

by repeating the correct words and concepts of Lama Tsong Khapa's unmistakable, pure teachings.

If you just concentrate on space that is empty of form, you are not meditating on emptiness. In fact, you are focusing on the opposite because you are still apprehending inherently existent space and thinking that it is true. You still have the ignorance holding it to be true. In addition, you do not even have the correct words describing emptiness from Lama Tsong Khapa's teachings, so you cannot leave positive imprints on your mind. Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo explained this in his teachings.

Put effort into looking at things as hallucinations; not merely labeled; false; refuted objects; empty; like a dream; like reflections; like illusions. There are many analogies to choose from, and you can select the one that works best for you. When you reflect in this way, the understanding that they are empty, non-existent from their own side, comes into your heart. This is correct understanding and correct meditation. Even if you cannot experience strong, intensive emptiness, just seeing things as totally empty from their own side, meditating on their being false, hallucinations, refuted objects is very powerful. It becomes correct meditation on emptiness, free of the dangers of incorrect meditation. Whether you use hundreds of logical reasonings from the philosophical texts or not, this is the essential point.

If space that is empty of form appears to your mind while you are meditating on the dharmakaya, examine, "How does that space appear to me? Does space or clear light appear to me as merely labeled by mind or not merely labeled by mind?" If it appears not merely labeled by mind, that is exactly the refuted object; that is the hallucination; that is what does not exist at all. Continuously focus

on it being the refuted object or a hallucination. Concentrate on that. At the same time, reflect on the meaning of hallucination—that it is non-existent. Then there is no choice but that the object of ignorance becomes non-existent for your mind.

In summary, you can meditate on emptiness in different ways. Sometimes meditate by focusing on the I, as I described before, and try to get an idea of the emptiness of the I. You may have the experience of everything dissolving. There is nothing there—no color or form—but it is still just ordinary emptiness. In the middle of this space, you may have the feeling of me; that there is an I in space meditating on dharmakaya. That I who is meditating in space is what has to be negated or destroyed. That is the target to hit with the atomic bomb of dependent arising. Identify that as the refuted object, false, hallucination, totally non-existent.

Sometimes you can meditate on emptiness by applying the same analysis to the eight visions as the elements absorb. There is no other way for the visions to appear except the false way, as existing from their own side. For example, the black near-attainment vision appears as inherently existent, that is, as something real from there, as existing there on the base. Then you meditate, “A real black near-attainment vision appearing from there does not exist there.”

If you are familiar with the refuted object and can recognize it easily, you do not need many words. Simply saying, “This is the refuted object” will facilitate your understanding that it is empty. If you can do this, you get into emptiness quickly. If you are not as familiar or cannot identify the refuted object properly, using logical reasoning is helpful. Whether you use many words and many logical reasons is up to you. It is your choice and depends on your familiarity with meditation on

emptiness. See which way is most effective for you and do that.

After meditating on emptiness for a while, think that the wisdom seeing this emptiness experiences the greatest bliss non-dual with emptiness, and meditate on that experience a little bit. Then think, "This is my future, resultant holy mind, dharmakaya, the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness of Yamantaka." Make the determination, "This is me."

MINDFULNESS

The most important meditation is practicing mindfulness of emptiness as described before. You can spend a weekend, a week, or even a month just practicing mindfulness in sitting meditation and in break times. It is extremely powerful. Break time does not mean a break from meditation but a break from sitting. You should continue your mindfulness in the break. In the morning, practice guru yoga and at the beginning of each meditation session do strong preliminary practices. Then focus on the different methods of analysis in your sessions. You can recite the *Heart Sutra* each session or even do retreat on the *Heart Sutra* or on the Perfection of Wisdom. If you really try to do this, your view of yourself and the world will change. Due to that, your attitude towards life will be totally different. You will see the interesting movie of your own mind.

The vipassana people do very strict, intensive retreats and always practice mindfulness. It would be good if you could practice with this intensity and strong focus, but your object of mindfulness should be different. Theirs is just walking, breathing, and sensations in the body. I have not heard of common vipassana meditation related to

emptiness, where you are aware of the false appearance and the false view. If you could meditate as intensively as they do but use the methods described here, you would definitely cut the root of samsara.

In our courses, we tend to have many teachings and less meditation, and people lack the time to digest or experience the Dharma. You need to continue to meditate after the course. On the other hand, if we had less information and more meditation, people would not get a broad view of Buddhadharma. They might have some experience, but their general knowledge would be limited. When time is short, people cannot get much of an idea about the path to enlightenment. Learning the Four Noble Truths is good, but it is also limited, and so the purpose of your life becomes limited. Hearing teachings on bodhicitta and the Mahayana path makes the goal of your life profound and vast, like the sky. This is the idea behind the Kopan courses. People get a broad view of the path, depending on how much of the lam-rim is covered. In addition, they get some philosophical teachings and do some meditation. Many different types of people come to the courses. Some need more information, some need more meditation.

NINE

THE PROTECTION WHEEL

As a Yamantaka practitioner, you want to practice the generation stage and the completion stage of Yamantaka with the four yogas—mantra, commitment, shape, and wisdom. However, at the beginning, you often encounter obstacles. Meditating on the protection wheel is an effective way of dispelling them.

Meditation on the protection wheel can also be done in practices other than the Yamantaka sadhana. For example, if you experience obstacles while doing retreat on Heruka, you can meditate on the protection wheel to counteract them. Or, you can visualize the protection wheel before you go to sleep so that you will not experience obstacles while you sleep.

In the sadhana, meditation on the protection wheel follows meditation on the dharmakaya. Within emptiness, your blissful wisdom manifests as the protection wheel. To meditate on this perfectly, continuously keep your mind in the dharmakaya experience, the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness, without losing your perception of emptiness. Your main focus is the dharmakaya experience, while a part of your mind visualizes the protection wheel and so forth. Your dharmakaya mind manifests into all the forms you visualize, and at the same time you recognize that all these forms are

empty of inherent existence.

MEDITATION ON THE COMMON PROTECTION WHEEL

Within emptiness, from YAM comes a smoke-colored, bow-shaped wind mandala marked with victory banners. On top, from RAM comes a red, triangular fire mandala forming a garland of flames and adorned by vajras. On top, from BAM comes a white, circular water mandala marked with a vase. On top, from LAM comes a yellow, square earth mandala marked by vajras. On top, from HUM comes a crossed vajra whose hub is marked by HUM. From this, light rays emanate along the bottom, forming the vajra surface. Emanating sideways, they form the vajra fence. Emanating upward, they form the vajra roof. On the fence and below the roof, they form the vajra ceiling. All these are the nature of flaming vajras forming a single unit without any spaces in between. Outside, a conflagration of five-colored blazing flames, like the fires of the eon of destruction, emanates in the ten directions.

MEDITATION ON THE UNCOMMON PROTECTION WHEEL OF THE TEN FIERCE DEITIES

In the center of the fence, from BHRUM comes a fiercely blazing, yellow command wheel that can revolve clockwise. Inside the center of the wheel and slightly above and not touching each of the spokes, are triple seats of variegated lotus, moon, and sun. On top of the central one, from HUM, I arise as dark-blue Sumbharaja crowned by Akshobhya. I have three faces—dark-blue, white and red—and six arms. The first two embrace a consort similar to myself, the other two right hands hold a jewel and a

hook, and the other two left hands, a lotus and a lasso. I stand in the pose of right leg bent and left outstretched.

Rays of light from the HUM at my heart, with us in union as lord and consort, hook the ten wrathful ones and draw them into my mouth, where they melt and enter the consort's lotus womb through the path of my vajra organ as ten drops. These become ten long-voweled HUMs which transform into the ten wrathful ones.

Blue Yamantaka crowned by Vairochana has three faces—blue, white, and red—and six arms. The first two embrace a consort similar to himself, the other two right hands hold a jewel and a vajra-hammer, the other two left, a lotus and a sword. HUM, from the lotus he is sent forth and takes his place with left leg outstretched on the seat above the eastern spoke.

White Aparajita crowned by Akshobhya has three faces—white, dark-blue and red—and six arms. The first two embrace a consort similar to himself, the other two right hands hold a jewel and a club, the other two left, a lotus and a sword. HUM, from the lotus he is sent forth and takes his place with left leg outstretched on the seat above the southern spoke.

Red Hayagriva crowned by Amitabha has three faces—red, dark-blue and white—and six arms. The first two embrace a consort similar to himself, the other two right hands hold a jewel and a lotus, the other two left, a wheel and a sword. HUM, from the lotus he is sent forth and takes his place with left leg outstretched on the seat above the western spoke.

Blue Amrita Kundalini crowned by Akshobhya has three faces—blue, white and red—and six arms. The first two embrace a consort similar to himself, the other two right hands hold a jewel and a vajra, the other two left, a lotus and a sword. HUM, from the lotus he is sent forth and takes his place with left leg outstretched on the seat above the northern spoke.

Dark-blue Takkiraja crowned by Akshobhya has three faces—dark-blue, white, and red—and six arms. The first two embrace a consort similar to himself, the other two right hands hold a jewel and a hook, the other two left, a lotus and a sword. HUM, from the lotus he is sent forth and takes his place with left leg outstretched on the seat above the fire spoke (southeastern).

Blue Niladanda crowned by Akshobhya has three faces—blue, white, and red—and six arms. The first two embrace a consort similar to himself, the other two right hands hold a jewel and a staff, the other two left, a lotus and a sword. HUM, from the lotus he is sent forth and takes his place with left leg outstretched on the seat above the non-truth spoke (southwestern).

Blue Mahabala crowned by Akshobhya has three faces—blue, white, and red—and six arms. The first two embrace a consort similar to himself, the other two right hands hold a jewel and a trident, the other two left, a lotus and a sword. HUM, from the lotus he is sent forth and takes his place with left leg outstretched on the seat above the wind spoke (northwestern).

Dark-blue Achala crowned by Akshobhya has three faces—dark-blue, white, and red—and six arms. The first two embrace a consort similar to himself, the other two right hands hold a jewel and a sword, the other two left, a lotus and a vajra. HUM, from the lotus he is sent forth and takes his place with left leg outstretched on the seat above the power spoke (northeastern).

Yellowish-green Ushnisha Chakravartin crowned by Akshobhya has three faces—yellowish-green, white, and red—and six arms. The first two embrace a consort similar to himself, the other two right hands hold a jewel and a wheel, the other two left, a lotus and a sword. HUM, from the

lotus he is sent forth and takes his place with left leg outstretched on the seat above and slightly before myself, the main figure.

Dark-blue Vajra Patala crowned by Akshobhya has three faces—dark-blue, white, and red—and six arms. The first two embrace a consort similar to himself, the other two right hands hold a jewel and a vajra, the other two left, a lotus and sword. HUM, from the lotus he is sent forth and takes his place with left leg outstretched on the seat below and slightly behind myself, the main figure.

All eleven have bared fangs and each of their faces has three round bloodshot eyes. Their orange hair and moustaches blaze and swirl upwards, and each is adorned with wheel-shaped crowns, earrings, the eight various snakes, and so forth. They have the power to destroy all demons and interferers. Standing in the midst of a blazing mass of wisdom flames arising from their bodies, they emanate into the ten directions cloud-like formations of flaming, fearsome vajras, annihilating all evil ones.

(If abbreviated as “These become ten long-voweled HUMs which transform into the ten wrathful ones”): From these arise the ten wrathful ones. HUM, from the lotus they are sent forth and take their places, each above one of the ten spokes in the manner of destroying evil beings.

Your wisdom of great bliss sees everything as empty. While the mind is in that state, it manifests as light blue YAM. That transforms into a smoke-colored wind mandala, which is bow-shaped, with the flat side in front of you. Its corners are adorned with banners. These are the round banners with three-pointed flags that are put on the temples.

Above the wind mandala, red RAM transforms into a red, triangular, blazing fire mandala adorned with vajra ornaments. All these

things that you visualize are your dharmakaya mind, your resultant Yamantaka's holy mind, the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness. This wisdom manifests as these various forms and colors. In dependence upon each base, your mind makes up the label "fire mandala," "ten wrathful deities," and so forth.

Above this, white BAM transforms into a white, circular water mandala, like an inverted mandala base. In its center is a vase filled with water and submerged in the water mandala.

Above this, yellow LAM transforms into a square, yellow earth mandala. The color yellow signifies stability. It is adorned with three-pronged vajras in the four corners.

Above this, blue HUM transforms into a variegated double vajra. The east spoke is white, south yellow, west red, north green, and center blue. It is adorned with a blue HUM. Light rays radiate downward from the HUM to become the indestructible vajra ground. Light rays radiate sideways and become the vajra fence, while the light rays going upwards become the vajra tent. Between the vajra tent and the vajra fence is a vajra canopy. The whole construction is the nature of radiating vajras, with no intervening spaces between them. They form one impenetrable unit, although when you look at it you can clearly see many big vajras with many small vajras between them. It is very smooth, yet extremely strong, so even the most powerful winds that exist, those at the end of an eon, cannot destroy it.

All of this is the appearance of your wisdom, your dharmakaya. Around this is a conflagration of five-colored raging flames, like the destructive fire at the end of the eon. The flames are the fire of your five wisdoms and burn in all ten directions. They too are your dharmakaya. Sixty-four conflagrations violently blaze and go to the right

in a circular way, with many sparks flashing into the ten directions. Within the fire are three-pronged vajras, like bullets, and arrows flying in all directions, like a blizzard. These stop the interferers that cannot be harmed by fire. Interferers are negative forces, such as malign devas and so forth, who interfere with people's effort to practice and spread the Dharma. The forces of goodness are worldly beings as well as some beings beyond samsara. They help Dharma practitioners to develop and spread the Dharma. Not only can the negative forces not go inside the mandala, but they even find it unbearable to look at. However, these things that appear so fearful to the negative forces appear like beautiful rainbow lights to the forces of goodness. This is the explanation of the common protection wheel.

To generate the uncommon protection wheel, imagine in the center of the vajra a yellow BHRUM which transforms into a yellow, radiating command wheel that can rotate to the right, that is, clockwise. It is called a command wheel because you, the principal deity, command the ten wrathful deities to catch and destroy the interferers.

The command wheel is shaped like two cones—the lower one upright and the upper one inverted—joined in the middle, so one tip is at the zenith and the other at the nadir. The wheel has ten spokes, which are like double-edged swords. Eight spokes extend horizontally from the center portion in each of the four cardinal and four intermediate directions; one is the zenith, and one is the nadir. Inside the center portion where the two cones join are a variegated lotus, moon disc, and sun disc. Similar seats are above each of the eight spokes, slightly to the front of the upper one and slightly behind the lower one. On the central seat, blue HUM transforms into yourself as dark blue Sumbharaja, crowned with Akshobhya. You have three faces—

central dark blue, right white, left red—and six arms. The implements are described in the sadhana so I will not repeat them here. You are in union with the Mother. From the HUM at your heart, light radiates and hooks the ten wrathful deities who enter your mouth. There, through the fire of great desire, they melt into ten bodhicitta drops. The drops descend through your vajra path and enter the Mother's lotus. They go up to her heart where they transform into ten long HUMs corresponding to the colors of the ten wrathful deities. These ten HUMs become the ten wrathful deities,¹⁷ which then descend through her lotus and the point of union into you, Sumbharaja, and come up to your heart. From there, they are emitted one by one and go to their seats. In the sadhana it sounds like they are emitted from her lotus, but the visualization is as described above.

Yamantaka comes out of Sumbharaja's heart and stands on the seat of the eastern spoke. All the wrathful deities are similar in embracing a Mother like themselves, standing with their right leg bent and left extended, and emanating from Sumbharaja's heart to stand on the seat on top of a particular spoke. The second wrathful deity, white Aparajita, goes to the seat on the south spoke. The third, red Hayagriva, goes to the west spoke. The fourth, blue Amrita Kundalini, goes to the north spoke. The fifth, dark-blue Takkiraja, goes to southeast spoke. The sixth, blue Niladanda, goes to the southwest spoke. The seventh, blue Mahabala, goes to the northwest spoke. The eighth, dark blue Achala, goes to the northeast spoke. The ninth, yellowish-green Ushnisha Chakravartin, goes to the seat just in front of the tip of the upper spoke. The tenth, dark-blue Vajra Patala, goes to the seat just in back of the tip of the lower spoke.

All eleven wrathful deities bare their fangs. They have three round,

red eyes. Their orange hair and moustaches blaze and curl upwards. They are adorned with a wheel, ornaments, and various snakes. Extremely powerful, they are able to destroy completely all maras and interferers who disturb you and others. They stand in the midst of a fire of transcendental wisdom emitted from their holy bodies. They radiate hooks that bring back the evil doers who are then destroyed in one second by the clouds of terrifying blazing vajras radiating from the bodies of the ten wrathful deities. Evil doers are those who harm Dharma practitioners and sentient beings in general and who interfere with people's Dharma practice. In fact, it is the delusions of these evil doers that cause the harm. Think that they are burned entirely and the evil doers become enlightened. This is the basic visualization.

Other visualizations can be done when you or others face obstacles. Generally, there are five important points. In brief, they are:

1. *The wrathful deities face outwards.* Usually the ten wrathful deities face inwards, towards Sumbharaja, but when you experience heavy obstacles, they turn and face outwards to ward off all harm.
2. *Sumbharaja and Ushnisha Chakravartin change places.* Generally you are Sumbharaja in the center. Now Sumbharaja and Ushnisha Chakravartin, the wrathful one in the zenith, change places, and you hold the divine identity of yourself as Ushnisha Chakravartin. When you experience many obstacles, recite the mantra of Ushnisha Chakravartin as much as possible: OM AH USHNISHA CHAKRAVARTIN HUM.
3. *Turning the wheel.*
4. *Hiding those whom you want to protect.* You are Sumbharaja.

On top of the HUM at your heart is a crescent moon, with a drop above it. The drop is round, like a rainbow, and not solid. Inside it, visualize yourself as an ordinary person. Above you are your gurus, and around you are your family, relatives, friends, servants, possessions, and anything else that needs to be protected.

5. *Doing the four actions: pacifying, increasing, influencing (controlling), and fierce (wrathful) actions.*

The fifth point has several aspects. Light radiates from HUM and invokes the wisdom beings of the ten wrathful deities and the mandala from the natural abode. They absorb into the commitment beings of the ten wrathful ones, becoming non-dual as you recite DZA HUM BAM HO.

Make offering to the ten wrathful ones with OM VAJRA MAHA KHORTA RADZA SAPARIWARA ARGHAM, PADYAM, etc...PRATITSA SOHA, and offer the inner offering. The eight offerings are in their usual order with GANDHE sixth, not third, as when offering to Yamantaka. Countless offering goddesses carrying bountiful and various offerings for the ten wrathful deities emanate from your heart as Sumbharaja. The color of the offering goddesses corresponds to the color associated with the action you are going to perform—pacifying, white; increasing, yellow; influencing, red; and fierce, black. The ten wrathful deities are extremely pleased and satisfied by uncontaminated bliss.

Then offer praises:

HUM. The light of wisdom blazing like the fire of the eon consumes all the dark realms of desire born from ignorance. All threats of the angered

lord of death are destroyed.

Your magnificence shines like the great fury of the fire at the eon's end. Your fangs gnash, and your wrathful wrinkles flicker like a thousand lightning bolts. You thunder like a thousand dragons' ferocious roar. I bow to you, the kings of fury who destroy all masses of hindrances.

Having garlands of snakes and eyes like lightning, you laugh with blazing fangs. I bow to you ten wrathful deities abiding in the midst of the conflagration at the end of time.

In response to your offerings, praises, and requests, the ten wrathful deities do the four actions—pacifying, increasing, influencing (controlling), and fierce (wrathful). To do the pacifying meditation, visualize countless white goddesses emanating from the hearts of the ten wrathful deities. They carry vases overflowing with milk-like nectar with which they initiate everyone inside the drop on top of the HUM at your heart. You, your family, friends, servants, and so forth are filled with this white nectar, which purifies all karma, disturbing attitudes and emotions, and defilements.

In general, the pacifying meditation is for purifying negative karma and obscurations, but it can also be done if you or someone else is sick, to aid in your healing. Obstacles, such as health problems, arise because you have created the karma to experience them. Without your having created the karma, there is no reason for you to experience obstacles. This meditation pacifies and purifies that karma; thus, you become free from obstacles such as illness and spirit harms that affect your health. You can also use this meditation to heal others who are sick or to help those who have other problems because the karma causing those disturbances needs to be purified, or pacified.

To do the increasing meditation, visualize innumerable yellow goddesses emanating from the hearts of the ten wrathful ones. They hold vases filled with yellow nectar and initiate you and everyone you have visualized inside the drop at your heart, increasing your life span, merit, wealth, and the three wisdoms of listening, reflecting, and meditation. All good things—wealth and the Dharma—are increased and developed. Expressing it in this way is normal in Tibetan, but it may sound strange in English, as if Dharma and politics are mixed together. It means that holy beings, such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, need to obtain materials in order to skillfully guide and benefit sentient beings. For example, funds are required to establish monasteries and goods are needed to hold large Dharma events. This meditation is a means of acquiring what holy beings need to benefit others.

You can do the increasing meditation if you need the means to practice Dharma—money, food, and so forth—or if you need things to help other sentient beings or to serve the Buddha's teachings. You can do it when you want to develop or increase your wisdom. Tailor the meditation to correspond to what you need. You can also do this meditation to help someone who needs wealth or Dharma understanding. In that case, do the increasing meditation while visualizing that person inside the drop.

The third activity is controlling or influencing. Countless red goddesses carrying vases filled with red nectar emanate from the hearts of the ten wrathful deities. They initiate you. Generate the strong faith that you have gained the ability to control or influence all other living beings in a positive way. An example of the controlling activity is expressed in the requests I make when we make the wealth vases for

the Dharma centers. Elaborating on what is written in the text, I request to be able to control all good things in samsara and nirvana, so that the centers can immediately receive what they need to benefit others. I also request to have control over the most evil beings in order to lead them on the path. Once Pabongka Rinpoche's incarnation was at Kopan and saw the monks writing these requests. He was very surprised to see the request to control the most wicked, evil people, and said, "Oh, that's a good one!" You might think it strange to pray for this, but if you cannot control and influence those who are wicked and evil, you will not be able to help or guide them. To lead them on the correct path to enlightenment, you have to be able control them so that they will listen to instructions and teachings. In that way, they will attain enlightenment quickly.

After the goddesses initiate you, generate strong faith that you have the ability to influence and control all living beings. Red goddesses carrying many hooks radiate from the red nectar that is poured into you. They hook back all those beings you wish to control or influence. Think that you have complete control over them and that they will listen to whatever you advise. Then teach them the Dharma, showing them how to abandon harmful attitudes and behavior and how to practice the path. By listening to you, their minds change from negative to positive, and in this way, you lead them to liberation.

The fourth activity is wrathful, or fierce. This is used, for example, if someone is harming your meditation practice, damaging a Dharma center, or impairing your or your center's abilities to accomplish Dharma projects to benefit others. You can do this meditation if someone is interfering out of jealousy or if someone is harming His Holiness the Dalai Lama or your virtuous friends. If someone is

harming many sentient beings, you can use either the pacifying, controlling, or wrathful meditation to stop them from causing suffering to themselves and others.

Extreme care is required when doing controlling or fierce meditations. For these meditations to become Dharma, your motivation must be to benefit other sentient beings. You may succeed in controlling a person due to the power of your meditation and your samaya vows, but if your motivation is not pure, if your motivation is not to benefit other sentient beings, it does not become Dharma.

The following visualization can help people who are experiencing much misfortune or many catastrophes, for whom nothing is going right in their lives. You can also do the wrathful visualization for someone who is ill, possessed by spirits, or being harmed by black magic. Spirit interferers are called *dön* and *geg*. *Dön* cause possession. Why do people receive harm from spirits? Their negative karma makes them receive harm; it makes them receptive to the actions of those spirits.

To do the wrathful, or fierce, meditation, visualize that black wrathful goddesses carrying black vases filled with black nectar emanate from the hearts of the ten wrathful ones. Visualize the person you want to help—either yourself in your ordinary form or another person or people experiencing spirit interference—inside the drop above the HUM at your heart. The black fierce goddesses initiate the person to be helped with radiant black nectar, and all his or her contagious diseases, spirit disturbances, and harms from black magic are completely purified. He or she becomes very healthy and looks glorious and magnificent. Imagine that the ten fierce deities eat all the interferers and drink their blood.

If you have strong refuge in the Triple Gem and strong faith in this

meditation technique of the ten wrathful deities, doing this meditation for someone who is crazy due to spirits or experiencing many troubles due to black magic can be very useful. It could help a schizophrenic or paranoid person as well, because these conditions are often due to spirit harm. The spirits are able to harm because from the person's side something is wrong. The person broke samaya vows or created some kind of negative karma in either this or previous lives. Because of the person's having created negative karma, the spirits can find a way to harm them; for example, by causing them to suffer from paranoia. The person hears voices criticizing him even though the people around him have not said anything. He may even hear animals complaining about him. All this is due to spirits.

Many methods—such as meditation techniques and pujas, especially in the Vajrayana—are useful for dealing with spirit harm. This wrathful meditation can help if you do it with strong faith. After doing the purification visualization for the person, purifying their negative karma, then do the wrathful visualization to stop the spirit harm.

Visualize the person you wish to help inside the drop on top of the HUM at your (that is, Sumbharaja's) heart. From the nada countless tiny vajras radiate and completely fill the person's body with vajras. All pores of his or her body are completely covered with vajras, with no space between them, so that he or she now has a protective armor of vajras.

These are the basic visualizations for the four actions. Some more wrathful visualizations exist, such as the meditation of putting in the triangle; hooking back the evil beings and constraining them with a stake; and dispelling them by expressing the truth of the gurus, Yamantaka, the Triple Gem, and the ten wrathful deities. The ten

wrathful deities catch them in their hands. This dispels all their bad thoughts, the negativities of both the interferences and the person or people experiencing interference. The text explains other visualizations. If someone is interested in them, we can go through them later.

Now I will give you the oral transmission of the mantra of the ten wrathful deities. Think, “I am going to receive the oral transmission of the ten wrathful deities’ mantra in order to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible for the benefit of all my kind mother sentient beings.”¹⁸

NAMA SAMANTA BUDDHANAM, NAMA SAMANTA DHARMANAM, NAMA SAMANTA SANGHANAM, OM SIDDHA DAVATE, OM BIMALA, OM SHANGARA, OM PARTANG GIRANDZA, UNIKA CHARKAWATI SARVA YANTRA MANTRA MULA KARMA BANDANAM TRATANAM GILA NAMPA MAMA KIRTAY YENA KENNA SITTRA KRITAMTATA SARBENTU SHINDA SHINDA BINDA BINDA TSIRI TSIRI GIRI GIRI MARA MARA HUM HUM HUM HUM HUM HUM HUM HUM HUM HUM HUM HUM PEY PEY PEY SOHA

This mantra is extremely powerful. If someone is receiving harm from spirits, other human beings, or black magic, this mantra is one technique to counteract the problem. The tormas offering to the ten wrathful deities can also be used.

Normally, practices to destroy evil doers—in other words, killing them, stopping their life—are done only by very highly realized yogis because only they are capable of doing this. We ordinary beings can meditate on wrathful actions by thinking that the evil beings and interferers are our own self-cherishing thought and delusions, which appear in the aspect of evil doers. After the ten wrathful deities

destroy and eat them, feel that you are free from the tyranny of the self-cherishing thought and delusions. When doing the practice for another person, think that the ten wrathful deities eat their delusions and self-centeredness. Meditating in this way is not dangerous for you, and for this reason, the masters advise thinking in this way. On the other hand, doing controlling or wrathful activities with an angry, arrogant, or selfish motivation is not Dharma practice and creates negative karma. Your motivation when doing the controlling and the wrathful actions is extremely important. Please be attentive to this.

If you like, you can do all four actions in one session, one right after the other. During Yamantaka retreat, you can do one visualization in one session and another in another session. If one visualization appeals to you more or if one meditation helps you more with what is happening in your life, you may emphasize that one. You need not do all of them.

DRUG CHUMA

Drug Chuma—the sixty-four-cut tormā offering—is offered to the fifteen directional guardians. It is a common practice in the large monasteries such as Sera, Ganden, and Drepung, and I believe it is done daily when doing the three-year Yamantaka retreat. This practice has the power to heal illnesses, stop black magic, and pacify obstacles to benefiting sentient beings and to spreading the Buddha's teachings. It can help make successful your Dharma practice and your projects to benefit others. Thus, offering Drug Chuma is effective if you are being harmed by black magic or have many obstacles to your practice, or your health or life is declining. It is also useful to do when harmful

devas interfere with your Dharma practice or your realizations—for example, you are trying to be pure, but they do not allow it and harm you in various ways. They can also interfere with your receiving Dharma realizations. Also, when you are stuck or in a difficult situation when nothing else works, offering Drug Chuma is useful.

Drug Chuma is done according to the Ensapa tradition. The benefit or power of purification from doing it once equals the recitation of 100,000 Vajrasattva mantras. This is due to the visualization that is done during the Drug Chuma offering.

I have heard many stories of how effective this practice can be. One time the mother of the Italian monk, Antonio, had a lot of obstacles. Nothing was going right in her life and she faced many blockages and much confusion. She went to see a clairvoyant who told her someone was doing black magic on her. The clairvoyant said that Antonio's mother would meet this person and described this person to her. But the clairvoyant did not have the power to help his mother stop the black magic.

As predicted, one day near her house, his mother met the person that the clairvoyant described. At this point Antonio asked someone for a *mo*, after which the tantric college did a few hundred Drug Chumas. Even a small number of Drug Chumas—for example, two hundred or three hundred—takes one or two days for the tantric college monks to do. People generally ask the tantric college monks to do this puja because they know how to do the visualization and meditation; they don't just recite the ritual. After those Drug Chuma offerings were completed, all her problems and confusion stopped completely.

One time during a retreat in Dharamsala, I could not lift my bell

very well. My hand was partially paralyzed and kept dropping down. That day Lama Pasang, the tall monk who worked so hard for many years at Kopan, arrived at Tushita, and I asked him to make a huge Drug Chuma torma, which he did. I enjoyed not only the big torma but also the meditation, and the next day my hand was much better. This was not due to the medicine but to the Drug Chuma practice, because it is extremely powerful purification. I hope this story will remind you to do Drug Chuma in case you get this kind of disease or paralysis. As long as your mind is able to function, even if you are lying down, you can do the meditation for the Drug Chuma torma offering.

When I was building the monastery at Lawudo, Lama advised me to do Drug Chuma every day. At that time I was not too lazy. During the day I would often visit the villages, and almost every night I did Drug Chuma for success with the building. It was easy, not a burden at all. Another time we wanted to buy a Tengyur from Tibet. We had financial problems, but I very much wanted to get those texts. So I did Drug Chuma and we were able to get them.

Usually this practice is taught privately to just a few people, not publicly to many. I have received it a few times. The first was from Kyabje Ling Rinpoche in Bodhgaya, then from Kyabje Tsenshab Serkong Rinpoche at Kopan. Both times it was with the rituals, the puja. Kyabje Ling Rinpoche drew the different tormas and emphasized that it was very secret. I also received it from Kyabje Song Rinpoche in South India, but without the rituals, just with the torma. [Rinpoche did not give the Drug Chuma teachings at this time.]

TEN

DEDICATION

Dedication prayers are extremely important. Each time we pray and generate a wish, it builds power because everything—hell, enlightenment, and everything in between—comes from the mind. For example, let's say each day you pray to have the same qualities as Lama Tsong Khapa and to offer benefit to sentient beings and to the Buddha's teaching just as he did. This makes preparation so that in all future lifetimes you will be able to practice correctly and offer extensive benefit like Lama Tsong Khapa did by having his same qualities within you. If you want to make your life most beneficial, pray like this. Prayers bring results because everything depends on the tip of the intention; everything depends on your mind, your attitude.

Begin each of the following dedications with "due to the past, present, and future merits created by myself, the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and sentient beings..." so that you make the dedications as extensive and meaningful as possible.

"May the precious bodhi mind not yet born arise and grow. May that born have no decline but increase forever more. May we actualize bodhicitta, the loving-compassion thought renouncing self-happiness and cherishing the happiness of others, as quickly as possible.

"In the snowy mountain paradise, you are the source of good and

happiness. Powerful Tenzin Gyatso Chenrezig, may you stay until samsara ends.

“May the glorious spiritual masters live long and may all beings throughout limitless space have happiness. By purifying our defilements and accumulating positive potential, may I and all others be inspired to attain Buddhahood quickly.

“May all our virtuous friends and other holy beings, whose only thought is to benefit sentient beings and the Buddha’s teachings, have stable lives and may their wishes be fulfilled immediately. May the glorious spiritual masters live long and may all beings throughout limitless space have happiness. By purifying our defilements and accumulating positive potential, may I and all others be inspired to attain Buddhahood quickly.

“May all the father and mother sentient beings have happiness. May the lower realms be empty forever. May all the bodhisattvas’ prayers succeed immediately. May I be able to cause all this by myself alone.

“May anyone who merely sees, hears, remembers, touches, talks to me, talks about me, or harms or helps me never be reborn in the lower realms. May they immediately be liberated from all disease, negative karma, and obscurations. May they generate the entire path, especially bodhicitta, in their mind-streams and attain enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“May no one experience war, famine, drought, earthquake, or any other natural or manmade disasters. By generating love, compassion, and bodhicitta, may everybody live their lives without harming one another. May they help each other as much as possible, and may everyone have inner development, the realizations of the path.

“May we actualize within our minds the complete teachings of Lama Tsong Khapa, the unified path of sutra and tantra, without even a second’s delay. In all future lives, may we be able to offer extensive benefit, limitless like the sky, just as Lama Tsong Khapa did by having the same qualities as he did. May we spread Lama Tsong Khapa’s teachings in the minds of all sentient beings and lead them to enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“May whatever action I do with body, speech, or mind benefit sentient beings. May whatever I experience in life—health or illness, wealth or poverty, comfort or problems, financial gain or loss, gain or loss in my spiritual life, life or death, rebirth in the hell realm or rebirth in the human or god realms—be the most beneficial for all sentient beings. May I cause them to attain enlightenment as quickly as possible by myself becoming enlightened.

“Like the Compassionate White Lotus, Chenrezig, may my presence make the suffering of the sentient beings in the area or realm where I live naturally and instantly come to an end. May they and all other sentient beings receive perfect happiness. May those who are having difficulties finding a job find a job. May those who are ill—especially those with illnesses that are difficult to cure, such as cancer, AIDS, leprosy, arthritis, spirit possession, and so forth—immediately be healed. May the blind be able to see and the deaf be able to hear. May those who long to hear the Dharma, receive the Dharma. May those who need a guru meet a guru. May those who need a friend find friends. May those who wish to have children have children.

“Due to the past, present, and future merits created by myself, Buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, who are like a dream or an illusion, may I, who is like a dream, attain Yamantaka’s enlightenment,

which is like a dream, and lead all sentient beings, who are like a dream, to that enlightenment, which is like a dream, by myself alone, who is like a dream.

“May all Dharma projects and activities of the centers be successful at once. May the centers become like wish-fulfilling gems for all sentient beings by immediately pacifying their physical and mental suffering and spreading the teachings of Lama Tsong Khapa in the minds of all sentient beings. May the centers and practitioners receive all the necessary conditions to do this successfully.

“May all the Dharma projects to benefit others, including the Maitreya Buddha statue, be immediately successful and of greatest benefit to all sentient beings. May these projects cause faith in the Three Jewels and in the functioning of karma to arise in the minds of all sentient beings. May they cause loving-kindness and compassion to arise in the minds of all sentient beings. May people who hear about the Maitreya statue or see a brochure about it, who talk about it or dream about it, or who contribute their time, energy, finances and so forth to it, never be born in the lower realms. May they be able to receive perfect human rebirths in life after life and attain enlightenment soon. If that does not happen during the present era of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, may they be a direct disciple of Maitreya Buddha and receive a prediction of their enlightenment.”

DEDICATING FOR THE DYING AND THE DECEASED

When people have requested you to make prayers for others who are dying or have died, please do so. At the moment, their life is finishing, but sooner or later yours will as well. Other people will use your

name, “So-and-so is dying.” They will call, write, or meet each other and share the news that you have died. This will definitely happen.

The Stainless Beam mantra can liberate a person in the lower realms if it is recited seventy times. It immediately liberates someone who has died and been born in the lower realms from that misfortune. Unfortunately, I have not memorized that mantra yet. I am just advertising its benefits!¹⁹

In general, you can recite any mantra when someone dies, such as OM MANI PADME HUM, Vajrasattva, or Medicine Buddha mantra. Reciting the Medicine Buddha’s mantra and praying to him is worthwhile, because in the past he promised to actualize whatever prayers were done in this degenerate time. The Namgyalma mantra is another extremely powerful one to recite for dead people. Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche was doing this one time when Lama and I went to have an interview with him in Mundgod. People from all over the world would send offerings and request him to pray for the deceased, but he told us, “People think this mantra is only for long life, but it’s not. It is extremely powerful for purification.” The short Namgyalma mantra is OM DHRUM SOHA OM AMRITA AYUR DADE SOHA, although normally I recite the long one. You can do one mala of the short mantra or a small number of the long one.

When people die, dedicating as follows is especially good:

“Due to all the past, present and future merits created by myself, the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and sentient beings, may all sentient beings be free from pain and torture from sickness or karma at the time of death. May they have a clear mind, generate strong faith by seeing the deity as inseparable from the guru, go to a pure land, and become enlightened there.

“Alternatively, may they receive a perfect human body and meet a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru when they are young. May they generate renunciation, live in pure ordination vows, and do only actions pleasing the holy mind of the virtuous friend. Being guided by their guru, may they train their mind well in the three principals of the path and actualize the two stages of the tantric path—the generation stage, which ripens the mind, and the completion stage, which liberates the mind. By actualizing these two, may they attain the unified state of Vajradhara, the holy body and mind, the precious state of enlightenment with seven features, as quickly as possible. When they die, may all beings who have made a Dharma connection with me experience this.”

DEDICATING TO MEET QUALIFIED SPIRITUAL MASTERS

“May our family members, all the students and benefactors, especially all those who have dedicated their lives to benefiting others through this organization, and all other sentient beings, be healthy and have long lives. May all of us in all lifetimes meet only perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friends, and from our side may we see them only as enlightened beings.”

I would like to comment on this dedication. I am not saying that I am an enlightened being. However, if we practice looking at our teachers as enlightened beings, we disciples profit greatly. Whether from his or her side the teacher is an enlightened being, a bodhisattva; or an ordinary being, still, from the side of us disciples, we receive great benefit by having devotion. Our faith causes us to receive the blessings of the virtuous friend, the guru. Simultaneously,

we receive the blessings of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and this becomes a cause to realize the path to enlightenment. That is why we pray to see our gurus only as enlightened beings, to do only actions that please them, and to fulfil their wishes immediately. May it happen like this in all lifetimes from now on.

Praying to do only actions that please the minds of your virtuous friends is the most powerful purification. It counteracts heavy negative karma accumulated in this and past lives, especially that created with your virtuous friends. Fulfilling their holy wishes is the most potent method of quickly completing the collection of extensive merit, and thus the quickest path to developing realizations and creating the cause for all success, be it temporary or spiritual happiness. Praying in this way also helps you avoid mistakes in your relationship with your virtuous friends again in future lives; it allows you to devote yourself to them properly and makes your practice more effective in this and future lives. If you would like to be able to practice better in future lives, this is one way to bring it about. It is very important to pray like this all the time.

One way to have fewer obstacles and to practice better in this and the next life is to purify negative karma, especially that created in relationship with your gurus. This also stops the karmic result of having the tendency to create negative karma with the virtuous friend again in the future. Another way is to practice correctly, as the Buddha and Lama Tsong Khapa explained in lam-rim. Dedicating your merit for this to happen is also important. By generating the wish, the mind has the power to bring success. It is the nature of the mind that by generating many wishes like this, they will be actualized. For example, if you have a strong wish to be born in a pure land and generate that

wish frequently, when you die, the power of that imprint on your mind will make rebirth in the pure land easier. Any virtuous wishes you generate again and again become increasingly more powerful, and after some time, they are actualized.

NOTES

1. Translated by Sharpa Tulku with Richard Gard as part of the *Yamantaka Cycle Texts*. Available from Tibet House, 1 Lodi Road, Institutional Area, New Delhi 110003, India.
2. See Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent Arising and Emptiness* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1989) pages 799-800. Nagarjuna's *Treatise* says:
I bow down to the perfect Buddha,
The highest of speakers,
Who taught that dependent-arisings [in the face of
uncontaminated meditative equipoise]
Are without cessation, without production,
Without annihilation, without permanence,
Without coming, without going,
Without difference, and without sameness—
Pacified of elaborations, peaceful.
3. The five sufferings of birth are:
 - a. we experience extreme pain in the womb and during the birth process
 - b. we experience unceasing pain after birth
 - c. birth is the basis for all the sufferings of life
 - d. birth is the foundation for all disturbing attitudes, and
 - e. birth brings on death.
4. The five sufferings of aging are:
 - a. loss of beauty and health
 - b. loss of physical strength and vitality
 - c. loss of power in our sense and mental faculties

- d. loss of enjoyments, and
- e. loss of life span.
5. The five sufferings of illness are:
 - a. loss of power and control over the functions of the body
 - b. increasing unhappiness
 - c. loss of enjoyments
 - d. having to experience what you do not want to experience, and
 - e. knowing your sickness is incurable and your life is coming to an end.
6. The five sufferings of death are departing from:
 - a. our possessions
 - b. our friends
 - c. those who live and work with us
 - d. our body, and
 - e. experiencing mental and physical suffering.
7. The self-grasping ignorance and the concept of inherent existence are synonymous.
8. In English, the terms “eternalism” and “nihilism” refer to a view, belief, or doctrine. Here they are used to refer to the object of that view—inherent existence and total non-existence. In English, more correct terms might be “eternity” and “nihility,” but they sound very strange in our language. The point to remember here is that the two extremes are the referent objects (*zhen-yüil*) of the wrong views, not the views themselves, and those objects, in fact, do not exist.
9. See Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent Arising and Emptiness*. This tetralemma is discussed on pages 34-35 and 60-62. Also see Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1983), pages 850-54, note 500.
10. Rinpoche pronounces this “HO HAM,” although the mantra is not written like that.
11. See the previous note.
12. There is a difference between being one and being one nature or one essence. Two things are one only if they are exactly the same, so only that object can be one with itself. Pot is one with pot. Two things are of one nature if they exist at the same time and if

- one does not exist, neither can the other. For example, the white color of the pot is one nature with the pot. A thing and its emptiness are one nature, although they are nominally distinct.
13. Although Rinpoche explains the meditation on the meaning of the mantra here, this meditation, together with holding the divine identity of being the resultant dharmakaya, is done at the conclusion of the eight steps of absorption.
 14. It is helpful to contemplate the ways in which the I is dependent. First, it arises dependent on causes and conditions. Second, it depends on its parts. Third, it depends on being merely labeled by name and concept in dependence upon its basis of designation, the aggregates.
 15. This is according to the short sadhana. In the long sadhana, one meditates on an evolutionary process to arise as the sambhogakaya.
 16. It seems that the problem revolves around how we use the words “hallucination” and “illusion” in English. Does it refer to the appearance of a non-existent object or to that non-existent object itself? The first exists, the second does not. In English we use the word “hallucination” in both senses. The dictionary defines it both as the perception of objects that are not present and as those imaginary objects. For example, if someone on drugs sees flowers in the sky we say, “That’s a hallucination.” That is, the flowers do not exist; they are imaginary objects. On the other hand, if someone who is mentally ill sees things that do not exist, we say, “He suffers from hallucinations” and try to find a cure. Used in this way, the word indicates something that exists—the appearance of non-existent things. If hallucinations didn’t exist, how could someone suffer from them, be diagnosed as having them, or receive treatment for them? In the same way, a mirage exists—the appearance of water exists—but the water does not. The appearance of inherently existent phenomena exists, but inherently existent phenomena do not exist. Only merely labeled, dependently arising phenomena exist. The refuted object of analysis is not the appearance of inherent existence, because that appearance, although false, exists. The refuted object is inherent

existence, which has never existed at all.

17. Note that the ten wrathful deities are distinct from the fifteen protectors that you make offering to at the beginning and end of the sadhana.
18. This was written according to Zopa Rinpoche's pronunciation. It will vary from how the mantra is written in Sanskrit transliteration.
19. See Lama Zopa Rinpoche's *Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat*, (Boston: LYWA, 2000) p. 665.

THE LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

The LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE (LYWA) is the collected works of Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche. The ARCHIVE was founded in 1996 by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, its spiritual director, to make available in various ways the teachings it contains. Distribution of free booklets of edited teachings is one of the ways.

Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche began teaching at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in 1970. Since then, their teachings have been recorded and transcribed. At present the LYWA contains about 6,000 cassette tapes and approximately 40,000 pages of transcribed teachings on computer disk. Many tapes by Lama Zopa Rinpoche remain to be transcribed. As Rinpoche continues to teach, the number of tapes in the ARCHIVE increases accordingly. Most of the transcripts have been neither checked nor edited.

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The work of the LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE falls into two categories: archiving and dissemination.

ARCHIVING requires managing the audiotapes of teachings by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche that have already been collected, collecting tapes of teachings given but not yet sent to the ARCHIVE, and collecting tapes of Lama Zopa's on-going teachings, talks, advice and so forth as he travels the world for the benefit of all. Tapes are then catalogued and stored safely while being kept accessible for further work.

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Should you need to get rid of Dharma materials, they should not be thrown in the rubbish but burned in a special way. Briefly: do not incinerate such materials with other trash, but alone, and as they burn, recite the mantra OM AH HUM. As the smoke rises, visualize that it pervades all of space, carrying the essence of the Dharma to all sentient beings in the six samsaric realms, purifying their minds, alleviating their suffering, and bringing them all happiness, up to and including enlightenment. Some people might find this practice a bit unusual, but it is given according to tradition. Thank you very much.

DEDICATION

Through the merit created by preparing, reading, thinking about and sharing this book with others, may all teachers of the Dharma live long and healthy lives, may the Dharma spread throughout the infinite reaches of space, and may all sentient beings quickly attain enlightenment.

In whichever realm, country, area or place this book may be, may there be no war, drought, famine, disease, injury, disharmony or unhappiness, may there be only great prosperity, may every thing needed be easily obtained, and may all be guided by only perfectly qualified Dharma teachers, enjoy the happiness of Dharma, have only love and compassion for all beings, and only benefit and never harm each other.

LAMA THUBTEN ZOPA RINPOCHE

Rinpoche was born in Thami, Nepal, in 1946. At the age of three he was recognized as the reincarnation of the Lawudo Lama, who had lived nearby at Lawudo, within sight of Rinpoche's Thami home. Rinpoche's own description of his early years may be found in his book, *The Door to Satisfaction* (Wisdom Publications). At the age of ten, Rinpoche went to Tibet and studied and meditated at Domo Geshe Rinpoche's monastery near Pagri, until the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959 forced him to forsake Tibet for the safety of Bhutan. Rinpoche then went to the Tibetan refugee camp at Buxa Duar, West Bengal, India, where he met Lama Yeshe, who became his closest teacher. The Lamas went to Nepal in 1967, and over the next few years built Kopan and Lawudo Monasteries. In 1971 Lama Zopa Rinpoche gave the first of his famous annual lam-rim retreat courses, which continue at Kopan to this day. In 1974, with Lama Yeshe, Rinpoche began traveling the world to teach and establish centers of Dharma. When Lama Yeshe passed away in 1984, Rinpoche took over as spiritual head of the FPMT, which has continued to flourish under his peerless leadership. More details of Rinpoche's life and work may be found on the FPMT Web site, www.fpmt.org. Rinpoche's other published teachings include *Wisdom Energy* (with Lama Yeshe), *Transforming Problems*, and a number of transcripts and practice booklets (available from Wisdom Publications at www.wisdompubs.org).

VENERABLE THUBTEN CHODRON, a graduate of UCLA, has studied and practiced Tibetan Buddhism under the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Zopa Rinpoche, Serkong Rinpoche and other Tibetan masters for many years in India and Nepal. Ordained as a Buddhist nun in 1977, she is resident teacher at Dharma Friendship Foundation in Seattle, WA, and teaches Buddhist philosophy, psychology, and meditation worldwide. Her books include *Open Heart, Clear Mind*; *Taming the Monkey Mind*; *Blossoms of the Dharma: Living as a Buddhist Nun*; and *What Color Is Your Mind?*