

Six Session Guru Yoga with Geshe Sonam Ngodrup

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Introduction & Preliminaries

First of all Geshe-la says greetings to all of my Dharma friends, I hope that you are all well, and I hope that you are all happy.

Today, we have this opportunity to be able to learn about this practice, which is aimed at helping us together to strengthen our practice of both the Sutra and Tantra teachings. So at the beginning, Geshe-la would remind you of the words of Lama Tsongkhapa, to be able to recall your good fortune, how fortunate we are to have this opportunity.

Because we have this good fortune, not just any kind of good fortune, but the supreme good fortune, we really want to be able to recognize this. And then accordingly, from the very depths of our mind, or the bottom of our heart engaged with the practice with both happiness and joy.

It's very important that whatever study and practice we are doing that we identify the things that can help us improve and strengthen that practice. And in addition to that, that we understand that in order to flourish our practice, what are the things that we need to set aside or abandon? And what are the things that we need to take up and embrace?

Geshe-la said he won't do much by way of introduction today, but just with that joyful approach that he mentioned, let us begin the session.

We'll begin with the common prayer of the praise to the Buddha. And then after we recite the praise to the Buddha just to kind of fill in for the preliminary practice of the common path, we will recite the foundation of all good qualities. This acts to fill in the requirement of the preliminary for tantric practice, which is the common or Sutra teachings.

[Recite Praise to the Buddha and the Foundation of All Good Qualities]

So we think about how we are fortunate that not only having achieved this precious human rebirth, but in addition to that we have been able to meet the Buddha's teachings. Not only that, but we have been able to meet complete Buddhist teachings in the form of the union of both Sutra and Tantra. So in this respect, we are indeed extremely fortunate.

This isn't just some kind of like sectarian nattering to make us feel better about ourselves. But this is a deep understanding of the Buddhist teachings that the Buddha's teachings were propounded so that all of us practitioners could have a feeling of closeness to every sentient being all of the six types of beings within samsara.

We spoke about sort of the good fortune of having many teachings which are a union of Sutra and Tantra. And so we understand that as tantric practitioners, we receive various vows, we receive various samayas, commitments and so forth. And so nominally, one could definitely say that while it is definitely easy these days to receive a Highest Yoga, tantra initiation, and to receive these commitments, in terms of maintaining the commitments and pledges correctly, this is something that is much more difficult.

Geshe-la was just saying that many lamas were giving these tantric initiations and they were a little bit perturbed that they may give these Highest Yoga, tantra initiations, but then often because of time and so forth, then there's not maybe the opportunity to explain all of the Vows, the commitments and so forth that go along with that.

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In many cases, what happens is we receive the empowerment. And then also there are things that we have to do we have to do the meditation on the deity yoga and we have to keep the vows and commitments. And so if we are not able to do a best practice of the meditation on the deity yoga, then, you know, perhaps that's not so great. But the thing to really think about here is in terms of those vows and commitments that we have received, if we are not maintaining those vows and commitments to the best of our ability, then is our tantric practice a profit or a loss. This is something that we must be mindful of.

Of course, if we are reciting all of our commitments and so forth, this is absolutely wonderful. We are supposed to do this, but if for some reason you encounter obstacles where you're sure of time, life situations and so forth. Whatever you set aside, it is said that the practitioner should not set aside the six session Guru Yoga, that's the last thing one should set aside.

Of course, ideally, we are reciting the full six session guru yoga or the long six session Guru Yoga, that is the best thing to do. If we aren't able to manage that, then we can recite the middling six session Guru Yoga and then get shortlisted that if you are absolutely in a bad situation, so in really, really, really difficult circumstances, then at minimum, one must recite the extremely abbreviated six session Guru Yoga, which is one shloka or one verse.

[16:16]

We are supposed to recite the six session guru yoga the correct number of times a day and a night. That's a total of 24 hours. If we go 24 hours without a practice of the six-session guru yoga, this becomes a tantric transgression, which is known as a bom-po. So a tantric transgression known as a bom-po. Geshe-la said these bom-po tantric transgressions -- by the way, it's bom-po (བོམ་པོ་), not bun-po. It's an M sound, just to be clear. These bom-po tantric transgressions are said to be more serious than if a monk or a nun incurs a pārājika offense, a defeat offense, even hundreds of times.

In terms of the vows and commitments, and particularly the commitments known as the samayas, the samaya commitments are mainly expressed using the formula of the five Buddha families, the five Buddha family.

If you see that we talked about the sort of disadvantages of not keeping those commitments, but if you make the habit of looking at these commitments of the five Buddha families and reciting them, you see that there are actually many benefits, many profits, that you come to as well.

[18:27]

Geshe-la is explaining the different types of responsibilities we undertake as tantric practitioners. So I'm just gonna use the word. We speak about vows and some people translate samaya as commitments. However, I'm just going to say samaya because I think that makes the distinction clear. So Geshe-la was saying that when lamas indicate the difference between vows and samaya, they say that the vows are like outside the border of the country with the soldiers and the immigration officials who kind of protect the country and decide who is allowed in. The samayas are the commitments or rules of laws that are undertaken once the inhabitants get inside the country. So this is one example that is given.

These are just to be clear, these samayas and vows are measures to help protect our perfect happiness. They are there to protect our happiness.

In terms of the name of this practice itself, the འཇམ་དུག་ལ་མེ་འཇམ་ལོ་རྒྱུ་ (thun-druk-la-me-nel-jor), or the Six Session Guru Yoga, this also has some particular meanings.

When we think of the six, we can think of those six within two (as in: two sets of six).

The two sets of six within the six-session guru yoga:

1. practicing the guru yoga, a union with the spiritual master six times
2. recollecting the transgressions and downfalls of the various vows and samayas six times

So we have the guru yoga six times and the recollection of the vows and samayas six times. It's two sets of six. So when we speak of the six-session guru yoga, it's practicing the guru yoga six times, but it is also recollecting the transgressions to the various vows then Samaya six times.

Within the vajrayana teachings, we have what are known as the four classes of tantra. And these four classes of tantra are action tantra, performance tantra, yoga tantra, and highest yoga tantra.

If one has received an initiation into one of the first two classes, so the action or *kriyā tantra* class, or the performance tantra or *caryā tantra* class, one needs only practice the first part of the six-session guru yoga and not the second set of six, which is the commitment of the two later classes of tantra.

For practitioners of action or *kriyā tantra* or *caryā* or performance tantra, they are required to recollect a guru yoga six times a day, but they are not required to recollect the vows and samayas because they haven't received them.

[22:44]

However, if one has received an initiation into either the yoga tantra or highest yoga tantra, then in addition to the guru yoga, one receives what is known as a vajra master empowerment within those two classes of tantra. Because of having received that empowerment, then one has the vows of the five would have families and the other commitments connected with that.

Geshe-la said today this is a preliminary teaching. So we are quite pressed for time. We're not going to have time to cover every aspect of this practice. Geshe-la also wants to share that he has given teachings which are definitely available on our Facebook page on the on the Bodhisattva vows. So the 18 root Bodhisattva vows, so he has given teachings but he actually does hope that after this preliminary teaching sometime in the future, he can give a more in depth teaching on this practice.

Geshe-la said he is going to cover as much as possible of the particularly important points today.

[24:27]

We have the activities that are important at the beginning and at the end. The activity that is important at the beginning is the motivation. And so when we speak about the motivation, we need to consider two things that which helps us discern a correct path and set aside an incorrect path, which is the practice of the refuge and specifically with the uncommon Mahayana refuge. We also have that which helps us abandon a limited path in favor of a vast path through the practice of bodhichitta.

We won't go into much detail on this, but just know that we are now talking about the guru of yoga section of the text. And one of the things that we can do in the beginning of practicing this guru yoga section of the text is to visualize a field of accumulation, or sometimes called a field of merit.

Five Preliminary Points in Six-Session Guru Yoga

To be clear, at the beginning of this practice of the six-session Guru Yoga, we could say that there are five points to pay attention to:

1. going for refuge
2. generating bodhichitta
3. the four immeasurables
4. aspiring bodhichitta with the comittment
5. engaging bodhichitta with the bodhisattva vows

After that, Geshe-la said you can think of it in two sections. After you've gone through those five preliminary points, then there is the meditation on the lama as Dorje-chang or Vajradhara, as well as the meditation on oneself becoming inseparable from Lama Dorje-chang.

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If when you hear the words “six-session guru yoga,” you can immediately reflect on this, and you're like: okay, so there's two sets of these six and you know the various components of the practice that fit into those outlines, then you have sort of like a map in your mind for this practice, which will be very useful.

If there's time, I will read you the explanation of how to do this. There is a way to practice the long six-session guru yoga and in the second and third recitations, you leave out various paragraphs, making the practice a little bit shorter. Many of you will be will be familiar.

Even if you follow that, leaving out certain of the schlokas of the verses, but you recite three times in the morning and three times in the night, then this is like the ideal practice of the six-session guru yoga.

However, some lamas have an even higher standard, and they say okay, reciting it three times in the day and three times in the night. That's actually not exactly how it's supposed to go. Ideally, those six sessions happen every four hours. So you should be reciting the practice once every four hours till you get up to 24. If you're able to do this every four hours, Geshe-la said, this makes you mindful of the Dharma every four hours, mindful of the various commitments and also receiving those blessings every four hours. And by practicing this every four hours, one's practice becomes more and more stabilized and vast.

[29:15]

Short Meditation

Geshe-la said he will begin the session with a very short meditation to settle our body and mind, to relax the body and mind.

Just like you set down a glass of water and the particles settle to the bottom, think: I'm going to relax the mind and allow whatever discursive unbeneficial thoughts to be set aside.

When we think of that that we call the I or the self and the fact that we label it as “mine” or “I,” understand that part of that experience is all of these appearances corresponding discursive thoughts that arise.

And whatever things you're seeing from that mind including objects such as mountain, trees, and so forth, but indeed, any appearance whatsoever, it appears that there is some pinpoint double essence to that experience, but actually there is nothing that is pinpointable at all.

When we say there is no form, no sound, and so forth, as we know from the Heart Sutra, we understand that what this is saying is that there is no pinpointable form, no pinpointable sound whatsoever. In other words, they all of that natural or inherent existence.

So then thinking about this, thinking about the sphere of emptiness. From within the sphere of emptiness, appears a beautiful smooth ground made out of precious jewels and substances. In addition, this environment has beautiful lakes, beautiful jeweled trees, and so forth, peaceful animals, deer and so forth. Imagine a very beautiful environment.

So this environment that we're visualizing in front of us – it is similar to a pure land. Every aspect of this environment brings forth bliss; there's nothing that brings forth suffering.

In front on this beautiful ground, there is a beautiful throne-like platform. This beautiful throne-like platform is made out of precious metals, substances, and so forth, and is very beautiful and vast.

On this raised platform throne-like surface there are five individual, smaller and higher, thrones: one that is larger in the center and a smaller one in each of the four directions.

Each of them have a beautiful, jeweled table in front of them, like a table for reading texts.

Into this throne in the middle, we imagine that we invite from his abode the fundamental teacher Shakyamuni Buddha.

To the right and to the left we imagine that we invite Maitreya and the lamas of the lineage of vast conduct and Manjushri and the lamas of the lineage of profound view.

Together with Manjushri when we say the lamas of the profound view, this is lamas such as Nagarjuna, Chandrikirti, and so forth.

In the throne that is behind Shakyamuni Buddha, we imagine the main figure seated upon the throne as Vajradhara, Dorje-chang. You can imagine that surrounding him are the lineage of lamas of blessed tantric practice, such as Tilopa, Naropa, and so forth.

At the throne in front we can imagine the central figure seated on that is whoever we see as our root guru, our *tsa-way-lama* (རྩ་བའི་ལྷ་མ་). We can also imagine together with him or her all your lineage ??? as well as your other teacher.

[36:51]

Surrounding these main figures are all of the other Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Dakas, Dikinis, and so forth.

As we look toward this field of accumulation that we have visualized, we imagine that sitting with us on our left and our right, our our father and our mother, and then we imagine behind this a vast assembly of all sentient beings, but in this particular instance, imagine that those six types of beings within samsara are manifesting ??? despite maybe experiencing the sufferings of their particular realms.

And then we imagine that us together with all sentient beings, we are visualizing the refuge objects in that field with accumulation and bringing forth the mind refuge – faith – filled with confidence.

So we imagine that we go for refuge based on the causes of refuge, faith and fear, with that sincere refuge. All the beings of that field of accumulation are pleased with us. And we can imagine that there are straws of light, which enter our crown and the crown of the assembled sentient beings and various lights and nectars travel [through the straws to the crown of our heads]

We imagine that from this pipe and the nectars and so forth entering our crown that these lights and nectars fill our body. Through these lights and nectars filling our body the body is completely pure. We can either visualize it as ascending negativities, top or leaving at the bottom, but all of the negativities, the various afflictions and so forth, are purified.

We think: until each and every last sentient being has reached that state of enlightenment, I will return and go for refuge ??? correct, deep profoundly to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

We think just as those beings and that field of accumulation, those holy beings, have achieved Buddhahood and are always working for the sake of all sentient beings. All sentient beings, I myself in the same way, can achieve that state of Buddhahood, must achieve that Buddhahood, to serve all sentient beings. Meditate on bodhichitta.

And think: if I engage in this practice as much as possible, achieving the state for all sentient beings, it's not totally in fact, because I have this precious human rebirth, this human life, this human intelligence and this capacity. So I definitely can achieve that if I set my mind to it.

[42:29]

So the great Bodhisattva Shantideva says that there is nothing that does not become easier with familiarity. So if we think you know those thoughts in the mind, they don't exist inherently, and neither do those positive mental qualities. So if we familiarize ourselves with what is positive, we can definitely achieve progress.

Geshe-la said that was a brief preliminary meditation.

So Geshe-la said that in the context of this practice, of course, it's good to do it in this fast way. But it's not absolutely necessary to go through this meditation with the field of accumulation and the objects of refuge and so forth every time.

However, if you do take the time to think about the field of accumulation, visualize the objects of refuge and go for refuge really deeply right? There's definitely a reason and a benefit to doing that.

We will now begin looking at the text. So let us begin with the joyful mind.

[43:51]

In terms of the explanation of the the various visualizations of the lights and nectar, we can imagine gathering, fillings, scattering and so forth. There's different ways of doing this. We don't have time to get into it all all today, but he thought he would just mention.

So the descending one which is the easiest ones do actually is where the lights and the nectar from those holy beings, they fill your body and then you imagine they push out any negativity towards the bottom of your body and then each of us.

And then the ascending purification visualization, those lights and nectars fill your body and they push the negativities *up*, like those visualize negativities *up*, from the top of your head, like you fill a bottle.

The scattering purification visualization, Geshe-la said, you can imagine, like some dust or sand on a plate, you just imagine that you kind of keep it together and then you blow on it, scattering into emptiness, and in this way, one is purified.

And if we do this with faith, confidence, and attention, then we definitely will come to benefit from purification.

[45:47]

Starting on Text

A1 – Refuge and Bodhichitta

So we are beginning right at the beginning of the text with the verse of refuge. I'm not going to read out every word of the text because I want Geshe-la to get as much teaching time in as possible, but I will direct you to the verses. So we're in the refuge verse beginning: I go for refuge until enlightenment to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

So when we go for refuge to the Buddha, one of the ways we can think about going for refuge to the Buddha is if we need to travel to a place that we've never been before, if it's a place we've never been before, then we need somebody who can guide us along the path. And so we can think of going for

refuge to the Buddha as like going for refuge to this being who can guide us on the path to Enlightenment.

In some of the heavier explanation, some of the lamas say that it's like a blind person who is not able to see in front of them. So they need some sort of guide who's going to be able to guide you safely. Without that they won't know where to go.

The next one is actually used for the Sangha, for the spiritual community. And so when one goes for refuge to the spiritual community, one can think of those sangha members as being like the people who would accompany you on a business trip, they would accompany you on a business trip as a helpers to like help you fulfill your aim.

These are known as the helpers or the companions along the path of refuge, the Sangha, the spiritual community.

When we go for refuge to the Dharma, which is the teaching or the actual refuge, we can imagine that this is the friend who if we don't have enough to eat, if we don't have enough to drink, and so forth, they actually help us receive that medicine, of food and drink to nourish ourselves. That's the Dharma, is the nourishing.

Gehse-la said when you think about these little examples when you recite those verses it just makes it a little bit more fulfilling a little bit more meaningful, doesn't it?

When we talk about the common refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, there are two causes. We'll talk about the uncommon Mahayana refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, there are three causes.

The next one: through the virtues of generosity, and so forth, may I achieve buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. And so here Geshe-la is talking about the aim or the cause, and the aspiration of the result. The aim of the cause and the aspiration of the result.

If we talk about the causes, in an easy way, we can talk about the causes of these three types of merits.

And when we talk about these three types of the accumulation of merit, it's the accumulation of the merit through the practice of generosity, the accumulation of merit through the practice of ethics or morality, and the accumulation of merit through the practice of meditation itself.

Of course you know on the side with that you have all the other practices like patience and so forth you know, of course those also count.

And also Geshe-la said the beauty of this practice is that it covers those commitments when you take the refuge vows themselves to continuously go for refuge. So it covers all of that.

A2 – Four Immeasurables

So once again, I'm not going to recite every verse in the interest of giving more time to Geshe-la to explain. So we're at the four immeasurables and we are glossing the meaning of the four immeasurables.

So these four immeasurables are:

- immeasurable equanimity,
- immeasurable love,
- immeasurable compassion, and
- immeasurable joy.

Geshe-la said that he is going to share in the class later an easy way to think about all of these commitments of the five Buddha families, but he's just going to go through them briefly here the first time.

So in terms of these four and measurable or four boundless thoughts Geshe-la was saying that to empower this practice of the four immeasurables more fully, you can imagine four points within each of these four immeasurables. So each one has four points within it.

So within each of these four immeasurables, you'd have these four points of:

- aspiration,
- aim,
- pure superior intention, and
- supplication.

And also it is said that when, for example, you think of immeasurable love, and you say me all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness. We want to think even a little bit beyond that and think

right now, beings are experiencing contaminated happiness. May they give rise to the causes of uncontaminated happiness and be able to experience that.

We're thinking of like, may they be happy, but it's some sort of contaminated happiness there that they're experiencing. We understand contaminated happiness is in the nature of suffering. So it's almost like there's a suffering element that happiness that you're wishing them. Geshe-la said that he's not saying that we don't need those moments of temporary happiness of the contaminated happiness that we experience in samsara. Of course, you know, like we do need that nominally, but we want to go beyond that to strive towards uncontaminated.

Similarly, when we come to a measurable compassion, and we think "may be separated from the from suffering and the causes of suffering," we don't want to just think of like that those ordinary minor sufferings, but we want to think "may they be separated from the all-pervasive or compounded suffering, may they be separated from the all-pervasive or compounded suffering."

[55:01]

A3-4 Aspiring and Engaging Bodhichitta

Now we are generating the wishing or the aspiring bodhichitta. So in order to free beings from the extremes of both samsara and peace.

So then in terms of generating this wishing bodhichitta, we have the aspiring or the wishing bodhichitta with the promise. So here we can also just recollect abandoning the three causes of that aspiration in the present life and abandoning the three causes of that aspiration in the future lives.

Why do we recollect this again and again? And why is it important in the context of this ritual, because it is trying to get us to identify and to reduce, to really target and try to get rid of self cherishing, anger, attachment, aversion and so forth.

In terms of the parts of the six-session guru yoga that he mentioned initially, we have talked about going for refuge, bodhichitta, the four immeasurables, and we have also gone through aspiring bodhichitta with the promise. So that just leaves the engaging bodhichitta, the last of those five preliminaries.

So as you can see, we are trying to get through as quickly as possible. So I will just say we are on engaging bodhichitta and receiving the Bodhisattva vows. So "Lamas, victors and your spiritual sons, I request you listen to me," that's where we are.

So His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, he demonstrates the example of taking and renewing these Bodhisattva vows six times each day. So by reciting this verse, in the context of the practice, we are doing the same thing.

[57:55]

So if our Bodhisattva vows have degenerated, this allows us to kind of bring them forth purely. And even if we've had a transgression of our Bodhisattva vows. This allows us to repair it.

When we are taking this reciting this verse, this is not such an easy promise, we are promising to vow to generate bodhichitta and practice those trainings just as those beings who are bodhisattvas now did, and also to avoid the 18 root downfalls as well as the secondary downfall. So this is actually quite a commitment.

Really actually when you receive this, when you recite this verse, you should have this idea that you really received or revive the Bodhisattva vows and that should be based on the understanding that you have gleaned from your own study from learning those 18 root downfalls and those 46 secondary transgressions related to the Bodhisattva vows.

A5-6 Rejoicing & Refraining

Gheshe-la said the nice thing too is that after we recite this now we think so we're in rejoicing. We're in the section on rejoicing now we think you know, this human life has some been given great meaning and then we are able to bring forth a feeling of joy. Right? So this verse is really here to encourage us actually.

[59:55]

So: “from now on, I will act in accord with this lineage not bring it disgrace,” continuing on...

Next we come to ????. In this way, we have finished those five sections that he mentioned as the preliminaries.

At this point, before we engage in the next part of the practice, visualizing Vajradhara and so forth, you can dissolve, if you did that visualization of the vast merit field with Shakyamuni, Maitreya, and so forth, you can actually dissolve that, or you can keep that in the space above for the duration of the practice. That's up to you.

A7-8 – Visualizing the Merit Field of Vajradhara

Now we have the visualization of the merit field in relation to Dorje-chang, in relation to Vajradhara.

So with within this section where we visualize our Vajradhara this contains one of the very profound components of the six-session guru yoga, the uncommon component, which is not so easy to practice.

[1:01:42]

So again, I'm not going to read that so that gives us more time to comment but we imagine on the jeweled throne is the guru in the nature of Vajradhara. And then at the end of this verse, we recite “dza hung bam ho,” so that's where we are in the text.

What we do here is we first visualize Dorje-chang or Lama Vajradhara in the space in front of us. Then we imagine that from this hung (???) it comes in to a light and then we imagine eventually that what happens is this Vajradhara will actually come to our head and then he will dissolve into us.

So that comes later, but here we are visualizing him in front of us.

Geshe-la said that in the space in front of us we are imagining the commitment beings, and when we recite “dza hung bam ho,” what we imagine is those wisdom beings descending, and when we recite “dza hung bam ho” the wisdom beings and the commitment beings become one essence.

As you visualize this, you can imagine that they are in four parts, that those wisdom beings are descending into the commitment being. So they are arriving at the forehead, they are then entering into the body, they are dissolving, and then the wisdom beings and the commitment beings are mixing like milk and water.

[1:04:07]

Just to be clear, we're not yet at the point where the guru dissolves into us. I'm sorry, I raced ahead. We are still at the point where we're visualizing Vajradhara and so forth in front of us.

“So you whose kindness,” and so we're prostrating to the lama, so Geshe-la said this fulfills the sutra commitment of the shay-nyen-den-tshul (བཤེས་གཉེན་བསྐྱེན་ཚུལ་), the way to rely on the virtuous friend, but it also covers in this aspect, how to rely upon the lama according to Tantra to the 50 Verses and so forth.

And so then, from “Dza Hung Bam Ho” and then visualizing and recollecting the guru, this helps us to offer respect to the Buddha which is one of those commitments.

[1:05:34]

A9 - Eight Line Praise to Heruka and Vajrayogini

So we're gonna go quickly through the eight lines of praise to Heruka and Vajrayogini. Geshe-la said there's not time to explain these praises to Heruka and Vajrayogini but these will be explained in the future installments.

These eight lines of praise are really useful to help us to address any temporary obstacles that we encounter. Very, very important to recite when we're having obstacles. But they also help us to reflect and flourish our practice at a high level, so lots of meaning behind these praises. Geshe-la said during the Chakrasamvara commentary we'll have more time to explain all the meaning.

A10-11 Inner, Outer, and Secret Offerings

So we have now in the next session making the outer, inner, and secret offerings. So offering the outer, inner, and secret offerings, things owned and not owned, as well as the mandala offering, ending in IDAṂ GURU RATNA MAṆḌALAKAṂ NIRYĀTAYĀMI.

A12-14 Requests and Supplication to the Guru

So we have those verses of supplication you are each and every Buddha of the three times in the 10 directions manifesting in the form of the saffron robed monks, and Geshe-la recited that verse and also “having seen that every supreme and common attainment depend upon devotion to you oh Lord,” and that's the second.

[1:07:37]

Four Empowerments (optional)

If you have time when you are reciting these verse of supplication to the guru and you are accomplishing the victors activities in countless realms, precious lamas to you I pray. When we say, “Having seen that every Supreme and common attainment depends upon dedication to you. Please bless me to strive only to please you giving up all concern for life and limb,” where we say, “Please bless me,” if you have time, and know the brief way to take the four empowerments, you can insert the brief way to take those four empowerments here.

Various practices for example, if you're a practitioner of Vajrayogini, the Vajrayogini practice has a beautiful and very brief visualization for receiving the floor empowerments and you can do that here.

So it would be for example, imagining that there are white light rays and nectars and that these come to the head and on the basis one receives the vase empowerment and so forth.

So similarly those that with a white nectar enters the OHM at the crown and one receives the vase empowerment. And then one can imagine a red AH the throat, red lights and nectars made from the deity dissolve into the AH at the throat. One receives the speech empowerment and so forth.

And similarly, those blue light rays and nectars enter into the HUM at the heart, and in this way one receives the exalted wisdom empowerment, and so forth. There are things that one can add in at these places.

According to the teachings of the previous Kyabje Dzong Rinpoche he said you can visualize white, red, and blue nectars coming in all together and dissolving into those three places. At that point one reflects that one has received the fourth empowerment.

B1-2 - Dissolution and Definitive Guru Yoga

Now we come to a brief verse, but it's actually outlining one of the more difficult but also the most profound practices of the six-session guru yoga. In fact, we could say that the very essence of the practice is kind of held here.

We visualize, as we said, our root guru in the form of Vajradhara or Dorje-chang according to the verses.

Then we are on: “after being so entreated the supreme lama comes to the crown of my head.” So we imagine that our lama in the aspect of Vajradhara comes to head. When we imagine Lama Vajradhara coming to our head, Geshe-la said, it's important that his face is facing the same way that our face is facing.

It can get confusing, right? Because when we visualize the merit field and so forth, we're usually visualizing them in front of us. It'd be weird if their back was turned to us. Right? But it's just when he gets to our forehead, he has to be facing the same way as us this is important.

Before he absorbs into us, Guru Vajradhara or Lama Dorje-chang, we imagine that he is pleased with us, is the cause, he is pleased with us and then he dissolves.

Then he joyfully dissolves into me and we become of one essence.

At this point, it's not so important that you're reciting. **It's important that you're meditating.**

We imagine that he has arrived here and that the lama has entered into us and is becoming one with us on the basis of the previous requests and praises that we made.

[1:13:12]

So then the **Guru Vajradhara dissolves into light and enters our central channel**. We can imagine also that at the point that he dissolves into us and is coming into our central channel that he is in the nature of light.

He dissolves into light, he goes down our central channel, and he comes to the indestructible drop at our heart. And the indestructible drop is the combination of the white substance of the father, the red substance of the mother. And then he enters that indestructible drop, where our extremely subtle wind and mind abide.

And so, Geshe-la is going fast, but I'm going to go slow because I think maybe people haven't heard this before and it's really important. So the lama has entered the central channel and then in the form of lights, he is descending down our central channel. He goes on into that indestructible drop at our heart. And that is where our extremely subtle wind and mind abide. **By that essence of the lama entering the indestructible drop at the heart, then our extremely subtle wind and mind, these are combining with the holy body and mind of the lama. The movement of that extremely subtle wind, it is combining with the holy speech of the lama. This is very important.**

We also imagined that as this is happening, as these are mixing together like milk and water, when the lama's holy mind becomes one, becomes inseparable, with our subtle mind, we can imagine at that point we bring forth exalted wisdom, and then through all three – body, speech, and mind – becoming of one essence we bring forth perfect method and wisdom.

So **this is definitive guru yoga**. The definitive guru yoga is at this moment. One also achieves the definitive vajra and bell at this point.

It is said that if one is a meditator – Geshe-la said that nominally we should all be trying to be meditators – that this is really the point at which one should be taking time to meditate.

Because the lama's perfect holy mind has become mixed in separately with our mind then we can meditate on a number of points here: we can feel great joy, we can experience a meditation on great bliss, and we can also meditate upon emptiness.

After one has completed this meditation, one can imagine a HUNG at one's heart and from the wound at this heart it pervades all environments, completely purifying all environments, and things within

them. From the light rays emanating from the HUNG at the heart, it purifies all of the six types of sentient beings and so forth.

The color of the lights emanating from that HUNG, they're not the color you would think, it is said that in this meditation they are a color of kind of like a brilliant red, the same color of the sun just as it's about to set.

We imagine that as that red light emanates from that wound purifying the environments and things within it, it's like when rain falls on snow, right? Those light rays touch that and everything that is impure kind of just dissolves and falls away.

Once it becomes that form of water, we know that water, we can purify, and we can make into any color we want. So we imagine that everything impure has been dissolved.

Geshe-la said if you're uncomfortable with the HUNG radiating this red colored light, he said another common visualization is radiating blue light. You can stay with what you're comfortable with.

So then those light rays they absorbed back into the HUNG and we imagine that that reabsorption is just like you breathed on the surface of mirror and the condensation immediately pulls in.

Dissolution of Elements and Death Process

And so then if we have time we imagine that these light rays dissolve back into ourselves, who has become inseparable from the lama. And then, at this point, if we have time, we can do the visualization of imagining that the earth element is dissolving into the water elements.

And then as we imagine that as the earth element dissolves in to the water element, we have that mirage-like appearance, right? We're going through the death process.

And then at that moment we think as we experienced that mirage-like appearance, the next thing I'll experience is that smoke-like appearance.

When we're experiencing that mirage-like appearance already, we want to have in our mind that mindfulness of "I'm going through the death process. The *last* point is going to be the eighth point of the meaning clear light. I must be able to embrace that meaning clear light and hold it within my mind."

For the next part of the visualization, we said that we are already in one with our lama and we imagined those light rays absorbing into ourselves. Right? The next thing that we imagine is we ourselves dissolve into the HUNG. And then as we imagine ourselves inseparable from the lama absorbing into the HUNG, we we imagine that the water element absorbs or dissolves into the fire element.

And at that moment, the appearance that we have, we are finally not just thinking the smoke appearance is coming, we are thinking “I am experiencing that smoke-like appearance.”

We can think in this way: the mirage-like appearance ceased and the smoke-like appearance manifests. And as we experience that smoke like appearance, we have an awareness that the next thing that is going to be coming, is the firefly or the spark-like appearance.

We also remember that I am going through this process and when I come to that eight stage, I will see the meaning clear light and I must embrace that light with mindfulness. I must prepare to receive the clear light.

Geshe-la said we don't have time to go through each of these eight stages. But you've seen how it works with each of the steps. So now we're talking about this point of clear lights.

And so at the point that you come to this eight disillusion, only the *nada* – that's the little squiggly thing – only the *nada* of the HUNG is left. (The *nada* is the squiggly vertical line at the very top of the HUNG ligature).

At that point, you imagine that *nada* is dissolving into emptiness. At that moment, we have the most profound experience of the meaning clear light and one brings forth emptiness.

B3 – Arising as Vajrasattva

We don't have time to meditate extensively. But then at this point, we imagine that there is kind of like a square of radiant light that comes forth from this emptiness. Geshe-la said, “just like a fish jumping out of water.”

If you are a deity yoga practitioner and you're being a bit mindful at this point, this kind of pillar or square of blue light, it can start to take the shape of what you're meditating on. So Yamantaka, Vajrabhairava, Chakrasamvara, Guhyasamāja, or whatever.

Within the text, it takes the form of Vajrasttva. So we come to the next verse, “I appear as the deity,” and we think with the divine pride of Vajrasttva. Just to be clear, you don't need to arise in the form of

Vajrasattva here. This is absolutely your wish. If you prefer to arise as Vajrabhairava, if you prefer to arise as Heruka Chakrasamvara, if you prefer to arise as Vajrayogini, you absolutely can.

This particular verse, if one is informed and one is able to, one can practice taking birth, death, and intermediate state into the path, all the stages of generation stage, as well, one can do completion stage meditation.

This is one of the most important verses: “With divine pride as Vajrastva, who holds the vajra and bell as symbol of great bliss and lack of inherent existence, I joined an embrace with the blessed one.”

B4 – Practicing Generosity to Benefit All Beings

So the next one is “Practicing generosity in order to benefit all beings, I shall give without hesitation.” And now we come to the section of the six-session guru yoga, which is the recitation of the vows.

B5-10 Remembering the Vows

Geshe-la said the first thing that you’re reciting in the context of remembering the vows is the 18 bodhisattva root downfalls. But Geshe-la has already given extensive teachings on this. Actually, he gave those in the Netherlands and also here in Canada. He’s not going to go through those and that information is widely available.

So we will go to the section of enumerating the tantric root downfalls. So that is where we will go today.

14 Root Tantric Downfalls

One of the main things that Lama Tsongkhapa accomplished, there was some confusion about the various tantric commitments. So Lama Tsongkhapa took it upon himself to really look at the explanations that the texts of the great Indian masters and really determine what are the roots tantric downfalls and what are not. So this list is a result of that endeavor.

As we are Dharma practitioners, we will talk about different types of the basis of the arising of the fault when we talk about these 14 root downfalls. The first of these is: faults that arise based upon something to do with the dharma. And as we are dharma practitioners, the faults within these 14 that arise due to the dharma are the ones that are the most in number.

In addition to the faults that arise connected with the Dharma, there are the faults that arise with connection with the spiritual friends. So it's vajra companions and so forth. And the third is the ones that rely in relation to the lama or the guru.

Three types of basis of tantric downfalls

- dharma
- vajra companions
- lama or guru

Only one of these 14 root downfalls arises in connection with the lama or the spiritual teacher. That is, of course, disrespecting the lama.

Two of these downfalls arise connected with the companions or the friends along the path.

In terms of the faults that arise connected with the Dharma, they are divided into two sections:

- the faults that arise connected with the dharma of scripture and
- the faults that arise with connected with the dharma of realization.

Thus, these 14 Root downfalls arise connected with three things:

- arise connected with the dharma itself,
- arise connected with the friends or companions, or
- arise connected with the lama or the spiritual teacher.

There is another way to divide these 14 root downfalls connected with the Three Jewels. And also, there's another way of dividing these 14 root downfalls according to the holy body, holy speech and holy mind of a Buddha.

And so the Gelongma Palmo, who was a great bhikshuni, she is the one who divided these 14 according to body, speech, and mind.

Gesha-la is going to explain this in an important way and also the way that he thinks is the easiest to divide these 14 into the three categories of ones that arise due to dharma, ones that arise due to the friends or companions along the path, and the ones that arise due to the spiritual teacher.

Disrespecting the lama, this goes into the first category, those tantric downfalls that arise regarding the lama. And so this is the lama from whom we have received the empowerment and the transmission instructions.

The next one are the ones that arise in relation to the spiritual friends. So the ones that arise in relation to the spiritual friends are only two in number.

That's the third one and the 12th one. Number three is criticizing our vajra brothers or sisters and number 12 is destroying another's faith. So those are the two that go into the category of arising in relation to those companions.

So when we say vajra brothers and sisters or vajra siblings is determined by those who have received an empowerment from the same lama. So you have received the empowerment from the same lama.

Also, these 14 are not just accumulated if you just maybe me think or say something bad, right? It's that you do it without shame and consideration. So they have those factors that they need to become a full downfall. So you need really those four binding factors, which are very similar to those of the Bodhisattva vows. So not having any regrets, not having any shame or consideration, not wanting to promise not to do it again. And so all that.

It is said that those with whom we have received the same empowerment from the same lama at the same time, they have become even closer siblings and our brothers and sisters from the same parents, so Geshe-la says, it's a little bit heavy when you think about.

The majority of these 14 come under the category of those that arise connected with the Dharma. And here we can speak of the dharma of scripture and the dharma of realization.

On the basis of the dharma of scripture, there are three that arise.

These are disregarding the precepts, criticizing any Dharma of the Sutra and Tantra teachings, and so forth. The third one is declaring secret teachings to those who are unripe.

So I want to say this again, because I think we went too fast:

- (1) disregarding the precepts,

- (2) criticizing the dharma of sutra or Tantra, and
- (3) declaring secret teachings to those who are unripe

When we come to the dharma of realization, the faults that are connected with the dharma of realization, we have those that are connected with the basis of the dharma. And so, that is number four, (4) giving up love for sentient beings. And number five, (5) giving up wishing and engaging bodhichitta.

Geshe-la said that abandoning love for any being or giving up a wishing and engaging bodhichitta harms the basis of the path, which is other sentient beings.

So, then when we come to be those connected with the dharma of realization, and then those are divided into those connected with generation stage and completion stage.

Connected with generation stage there is only one fault: (6) demeaning ones heaps, sometimes people say *despising your own aggregates*.

When we come to the completion stage, they are those that are related to (7) rejecting emptiness, (8) not recalling right view. So, that's related to the view and also those related to (9) great bliss.

So rejecting emptiness and not recalling right to views.

And then there are those that are related to the Dharma as the branch practices and these include criticizing women and so forth. And not keeping the pledges.

The basis of the path, the essence of the path, and the branch practices of the path violations of commitments related to each of the three of those.

And so this is also when we recollect these we can say that this is a way to help me remember all of those 14 downfalls and also hopefully a way to remember those commitments of the five Buddha families.

Geshe-la said at least we got through a very brief overview of the 18 tantric group downfalls.

Commitments of the Five Buddha Families

We are going through commitments of the five Buddha families. And so the first of these numbers are related to Vairocana, or the Buddha lineage.

These commitments are related to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We fulfilled those by going for refuge as part of the practice as well as the three branches of ethical discipline: gathering virtuous dharma, benefiting sentient beings, and observing proper behavior.

The next one is the Vajra lineage of Akshobhya. That's holding pledging to uphold the vajra, bell, and mudra. And to respect one's teachers.

The next one are those related to the Ratna lineage of Ratnasambhava. That is to engage in the four aspects of giving.

Related to the lotus or padma lineage of Amitabha, there are three. The outer, inner, and secret vehicles. In terms of Amitabha and those three vehicles, that means to study the sutra teachings correctly, and also the various classes of tantra correctly: action, performance, yoga, and highest yoga tantra.

The one related to the karma lineage, the lineage of activity of Amoghasiddhi, is to engage in making offerings as often as possible.

That concludes our brief overview.

A lot of the themes that we've just touched on or that we went through quickly in this section, when we begin to Heruka commentary, which begins October and we'll go once a month for I think, quite a few months, we can touch on a lot of these things again as well.

Geshe-la said he feels like today went okay, because we were able to cover a lot of the most important elements of this practice.

Death Process Addendum – Four Points of Mirage-like Appearance

Okay, so. Geshe-la was just saying that in terms of the stages of the death process, the first one, which is the mirage-like appearance, it has four things connected with it.

There is (1) the mirage-like appearance that is arising, and we think (2) that the earth element is going into the water element. (3) The smoke-like appearance is about to arrive, that's coming next. So that's the third of the four points. And then thinking that (4) when I get to the eighth stage of disillusion, I'm going to recollect and be mindful of the clear light. Those are four points within that first stage of disillusion connected with the mirage-like appearance.

And as we go through the next ones the smoke-like appearance, firefly, butter lamp, and so forth, there are five points that Geshe-la will share. The first four are the same. The fifth one is the recollection that the previous stage of dissolution has finished.

For example, when you get to the smoke-like appearance, in addition to those four recollections, you'll say the mirage-like appearance has ceased and the smoke-like appearances manifest.

Example five points for smoke-like appearance: (TRANSCRIBER'S SUMMARY)

- 1. smoke-like appearance is arising*
- 2. water element is going into the fire element*
- 3. firefly-like appearance is next*
- 4. when I arrive at the eighth stage, I'm going to be mindful of the clear light*
- 5. the mirage-like appearance has ceased and the smoke-like appearance is manifest*

Geshe-la said also that the reminder of those four points, the reminder that when I get to the eighth stage I will be aware of the clear light, that's because the empty clear light, the most subtle manifestation of clear light, that's the main point that we want to prepare for.

The first one, the mirage-like appearance has four points, because there's no preceding stage. There's no stage before that. The other ones have five points each just because as part of the recollections we're thinking that previous stages over.

These appearances and the corresponding disillusionings are extremely important to learn if we want to be effective in bringing the three bodies into the path, the essential practice of the generation stage.

Conclusion and Dedication

Thank you, Geshe-la said, and in this way we've been able to cover important aspects of the text briefly, so with a happy mind we will do some brief dedication.

Geshe-la said, actually, if he had his way about it, we would do two or three sessions on just the six-session guru yoga and go then go to the Chakrasamvara but a lot of the feedback we had was that people are really eager for the Chakrasamvara so we'll start that in October. There's gonna be lots of occasions in the future to go over the six-session guru yoga. So thanks very much we'll dedicate here.

Hear are other materials available for the practice of Six Session Guru Yoga.

[Six-Session Guru Yoga eBook & PDF](#)

[Six-Session Guru Yoga Commentary eBook & PDF](#)

