

Heruka Teachings Geshe Sonam Ngodrup

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To all Dharma friends wherever you are, wherever you may be, Geshela wishes you Tashi Delek, he hopes that you are all well and happy.

So, as much information as you are going to get today, Geshela's request is that you try to integrate the information as much as possible into your mind. If you are able to integrate the information into your mind, what you will find actually is that you will experience a greater mental peace and happiness. It's one of the benefits of the instructions.

Also really to have the motivation that I am going to practice the visualizations and everything according to the instructions as much as possible. That is what I am striving towards. And also to understand that in the beginning of this we are working on the level of imagination. But as we are able to realize these things, they will become the actuality. And also, as the foundation stone for the house that we are building with this practice, then it's really important to keep this formulation of the 3 bodies according to the level of the basis, the 3 bodies according to the level of the path and the 3 bodies according to the level of the result.

And so our topic actually, and indeed the topic of the self-generation practice, we can look at this as a presentation of the path 3 kayas, or the path 3 bodies. And there is also another way of dividing the path into 2 categories: the path the 3 kayas of generation stage and the path the 3 kayas according to completion stage, and if we divide it like this, of course we are covering the path 3 bodies according to generation stage.

And the foundation or the basis 3 bodies, in the tantric presentation these are actually 3 things to be abandoned, or 3 things that we are trying to get rid of. If we present the 3 bodies of the basis in terms of things to be abandoned, what do people think those might be? The presentation is the things to be abandoned are ordinary, in the sense of being compelled by karma and afflictions – ordinary death, ordinary intermediate state or bardo and ordinary rebirth.

And so, of course when we say abandon, birth – birth can be something that is undertaken to be able to connect with and benefit with sentient beings so we can't say that birth is necessarily an object of abandonment.

So, the Buddhas, other holy beings etc. they take rebirth into this world to benefit others. But the thing to understand is that it is not a rebirth compelled by karma and afflictions, it is a chosen rebirth, with complete freedom.

And this is connected with an aspiration, for example HH the Dalai Lama prays: "may I be reborn in samsara continuously until it is empty of suffering sentient beings".

There was an interesting question that came in, and for those of you – I don't know, maybe Dave can put it in the chat - khedrup@lamayesheling.org – that's my email, you can send questions – so one question that came in that Geshela thought was interesting was about the tathagatagarba or the tathagata essence and this fits in to what he is speaking about right now. Because in terms of this formulation of the 3 kayas according to basis, path and result, what allows us to get rid of those 3

bodies that are the ordinary kind of basis, and what allows us to practice the second type, the path 3 bodies and actually this connects with this topic of the tathagata essence.

So according to the sutra presentation of tathagatagarba or tathagata essence, when we speak of tathagatagarba we are talking about the mind and the mind's emptiness and out of those two, it's the emptiness part that is the most important.

And when we speak of the tathagatagarba or the tathagata essence we have an aspect of that that is impermanent and an aspect which is said to permanent. This is also important.

When we speak about tathagatagarba from the point of view of tantra, it's more speaking about the fundamental innate clear light. And the extremely subtle wind.

So we are talking about the fundamental clear light and extremely subtle wind.

And also, in terms of that fundamental clear light and the extremely subtle wind and the emptiness of those two. So when we talk about the tathagata essence in tantra, it's more towards that.

And in terms of the sutra presentation of this tathagata essence you find it mainly in a scripture known as the Uttara Tantra Shastra which I believe we translate as the Sublime Continuum.

So we know how does this fit to this presentation of the 3-3 and 3. We know it is no the basis of the extremely subtle wind and mind, the mind is connected with the fundamental innate clear light, that is what allows us to practice the path aspect of highest yoga tantra.

So, enough – the answer to the question, now let us take a moment to calm our body and mind and also to settle into our motivation.

Meditation

Think just as the moon or the sun are cleared from clouds we tap into this fundamentally vast and clear nature of the mind.

Think about this I or this self and how we have this misconception that if we were to try to find the essence of this I or self, we would be able to. That if we actually search for it, we see that there is nothing findable there at all.

If we think of the body, if we think of feelings, if we think of thoughts, all of these things arise with the appearance of the fact that they are findable or inherently existent, but if we try to search for them we'll find that they are not.

So, any outer phenomena or any inner phenomena it's important to have this understanding: it doesn't really exist in the way it appears to.

So as that lack of findability arises within the mind we see emptiness, inherent existence and think that as this unfolds within the mind we experience a feeling of bliss.

Think from an understanding of emptiness and the congruent great bliss that arises, that bliss becomes so powerful that it allows us to completely clear away ordinary appearance and the clinging at ordinary appearance.

Think this contemplation on emptiness and the subsequent arising of bliss allows us to access that bliss connected with the extremely subtle mind and when that bliss is perfected it is the great bliss experience by a fully enlightened Buddha.

And think from that mind of great bliss focusing on emptiness from that sphere of emptiness we arise like a fish out of water as the deity. First this deity appears like a pillar of blue light.

And then that pillar of blue light becomes like a deeper hue of blue and it starts to take on the shape a little bit of Heruka's holy form.

And so think that if we stay in this form, we won't be able to fully benefit beings, so take on the complete aspect of Heruka's holy body and it is through this that I can benefit all sentient beings.

And so think at your heart in the form of Heruka – that can be the Sahaja, the simple or the complex form – there is, at the heart level, a yellow PAM and that PAM transforms into a white lotus.

And upon that lotus appear an AH and that AH dissolves into light and transforms into a moon cushion.

And then upon that moon cushion in the nature of Vajradhara appears a blue letter HUM.

So think then from that HUM at the heart, light possessing five radiant colors goes out to the 10 directions and transforms the surrounding environment into the pure land of Chakrasamvara, the inhabitants into the heroes and heroines of the 24 places. It calls upon all of the holy beings, the buddhas and bodhisattvas who arrive in the aspect of glorious Heruka Chakrasamvara.

And then think that amongst this vast assembly of holy beings we invite our root lama, our root teacher to take a seat in the center like on an elevated [?] and s/ he is in the form of Vajradhara[?]
And so think that all of these light rays absorb back into oneself.

And then think as we gaze towards the field of accumulation, the assembly of holy beings, down at our level, surrounding us, our father and mother on either side, behind us the 6 types of sentient beings within samsara in a human form.

Think, on the basis of making the praises and the requests to the holy beings that now ourselves and all sentient beings on the basis of the praises and requests light rays and nectars emanate from those beings of the field of accumulation completely clearing away all our physical and mental difficulties.

Think in this way I have been able to accomplish in a meaningful way the meaning or the welfare of other beings.

Until I have achieved the state of resultant Heruka, of resultant Chakrasamvara for the benefit of all beings, I will continuously go for refuge to the glorious Chakrasamvara and his attendant deities.

I must achieve this resultant state of Heruka so that I can lead all sentient beings to the final state of happiness. Meditate on bodhicitta.

In order to be able to achieve that state of resultant Chakrasamvara, on the basis of the merit field I will engage in the practices of accumulation and purification.

So we'll pause there.

So that's the preliminary meditation, first of the deity arising and then also of the field of accumulation. Geshela said, it's a little bit long, but it's something important.

So last time we talked a little bit of the field of accumulation, this time hopefully we went into a little more detail.

And so actually when we arise the field of accumulation, we do this first on the basis of ourselves arising as Heruka. So that's actually a trick here, it might be a little bit of a confusing point. So don't get confused. You first arise as Heruka, and then you bring forth the Merit Field and then you can go back and engage in the activities of accumulation. So this is very important.

And so, the other thing that you'll notice as you go through the sadhana, when we come to the point of the field of accumulation, it says oneself as Heruka, and then it talks about the various letters, and the HUM emanating light etc. you can do this. Why? Because, don't forget, in the earlier part of the sadhana you already did the instantaneous self-generation as Chakrasamvara, that's why it works. And so, you'll find actually that all of the Chakrasamvara's sadhana's have a similar progression up to this point. The one notable difference, which Geshela mentioned previously that the placement of the wheel of protection will be mainly different in the various traditions of Chakrasamvara.

And so in terms of where we are within the sadhana, we are in the practice of accumulating merits, so Berzin calls that strengthening one's network of positive force. So if you are wondering where we are, we are on page 28 of the Luipa sadhana.

We want to be able to actualize the wishes, the aims for our practice within our mind and we need to be able to accumulate the conditions for that, which are the 2 accumulations and then so you will see this section on accumulating merit in all of the different Chakrasamvara's sadhanas: whether Luipa, whether Ghantapa 5 deity, whether Ghantapa body mandala.

And so, also we can talk more generally in the section about the accumulation of the collections. So that means the accumulation of collection of merit and the accumulation of the collection of wisdom. If you ask, where does the accumulation of wisdom come here, this begins when we actually do the 3 bringings, bring the 3 bodies into the path of the 3 kayas.

And so then, Geshela said that in terms of his presentation of this accumulation of merit, he would like to emphasize this base upon 3 key points. And these 3 key points are important to keep in mind. So then, the first point here is that the practice is in accordance with the basis of purification. So, this is the accumulation of merit in accordance with the basis of purification which is a human being of this world with the 6 elements of a womb born being.

And so, then the basis of the purification is a human being of this world with the 6 elements of a womb and so in order for that basis of purification in human being of this world with the 6 elements etc. to be able to continue in the practice, they need this accumulation of merit so that they can ensure a good future rebirth. That's one thing to note here.

And then along with that this is congruent with – So the basis of purification, so we'll go from the beginning just so that I can be clear, I am sorry. A womb born person of the world endowed with the constituents, the 6 elements etc. and having taken such a birth, the way to gather the accumulations in accordance with the dharma. That's the first point.

And so actually this is something to keep in mind all the time, because it is something that is really important to remember when we are engaging in the accumulation of merits.

And we can say that this basis of purification, the understanding of that the womb born person etc., that this is kind of like the basis for us to be able to accumulate the merits effectively.

So Geshela said that we did prepare these notes, which is true, but the problem is there's 2 presentations that are very similar and so I wasn't clear on which presentation we were doing, now I am. So this first point about this being endowed with the constituents, elements, etc. this is related to the accumulation of merit. The next one is related to the accumulation of the collection of wisdom and so this is the gradual dissolution of the skandas etc. the actualization of the clear light of death and the yoga of bringing death into the Dharmakaya. So that is the way to accumulate the collection of wisdom.

So we can understand that this yoga of bringing death into the path of the Dharmakaya or the truth body is a very effective way to accumulate the collection of wisdom.

And so then what follows that? What follows that is achieving the bardo from merely the subtle wind and mind of the clear light of death in accordance with the dharma, then this is the yoga of bringing bardo into the path of the enjoyment body, or Sambhogakaya.

So Geshela wanted to give you these 3 points just as they relate to the 3 bringings of birth, bardo and death into the path of the 3 kayas.

And actually, it is through these 3 bringings or these 3 yogas that we can achieve the resultant state of Buddhahood but of course that is something that is not easy.

Because that is not easy, we can't be sure that we are going to be able to finish these accumulations before we reach our next life and that's why it's important especially to accumulate merit so that we can assure a fortunate rebirth and we can continue our practice.

So then, we accumulate the merit first on the basis of that visualization of the field of accumulation, and then on the basis of the 7 points.

And so the condition, the initial condition for the accumulation of merit is this visualization of the field of accumulation and by now Geshela says we pretty much covered that. So that's something you want to familiarize yourself with again and again actually.

So just as we want to plant an apple seed in the ground to be able to harvest that result, then we understand that the meaning of the symbolism here, this HUM letter which is in the nature of Vajradhara, which possesses the 5 radiant lights, which are connected with the 5 wisdoms etc. It's really important to kind of recollect this symbolism.

And so, one way of referring to this letter HUM is as the cloud sound. It's called the cloud sound. So why do we call – why is one word for the letter HUM the cloud sound letter? So, it's actually important to know this because if you are reading tantric commentaries you'll sometimes come to the cloud sound letter, it won't actually specify HUM but you can understand when they speak of the cloud sound letter they are talking about the letter HUM.

So why is it called the cloud sound letter? This is interesting. It's because the HUM letter can emanate many, many, many different lights, like heaps and heaps of clouds appear in the sky. That's actually why it's called the cloud sound letter.

And another word that is given for this letter HUM is the glory supreme original letter.

So why is it said glory supreme and first or original? It's the original letter because HUM is the seed syllable of Vajradhara, who is said to be the primordial or the first original Buddha.

And another way to understand it being called first or original is that this HUM letter is said to abide since beginningless time.

And actually this also connects with when certain schools of Buddhism speak about all of us already possessing the Buddha, possessing the Buddha within us.

The supreme refers to the fact that the HUM represents the fundamental mind, which is in the nature of clear light and the fact that any defilements are adventitious, meaning they are things that can be removed.

So, these kind of notes about the meaning of this letter HUM they are all really describing the qualities of this precious seed letter.

And so, when we are bringing forth this field of merit, how do we kind of invite the lama to take his or her place within us? And this brings us to the next one which is inviting from the abodes.

I was saying to Geshela, we both have these notes that we have prepared with the numbers and I asked him if he can give me his so that he can give me the page number, right? But of course it's all in here [pointing to the head I think] so he'd rather not but I think it would make it a bit easier.

And so, when we talk about inviting the lama from the abode, what we can think about one way to do this, is we think about inviting the lama from a particular realm and the Dharmakaya is the natural abode and inviting him in the aspect of his form body. And then we can also invite the lama in the Sambhogakaya form and then think that it actually transforms into the aspect of the Nirmanakaya. So this related to how we invite the guru to take the seat in the field of accumulation.

So we often speak about this also in terms of Buddha Shakyamuni being present in the Sambhogakaya form and then taking on a Nirmanakaya or emanation body form to come into this world and interact with beings.

And so, in the Chakrasamvara practice, we imagine that we are inviting the guru from the realm of Akanishta, so the pure land of Akanishta. And then he appears or she appears in the form in our merit field.

And so after we visualized the lama together with the merit field, you remember from the meditation that Geshela was guiding we imagined all of the radiant lights that we had been using dissolving into ourselves. So why is this important? Because it places an imprint for the completion stage within our mind, specifically to be able to gather all of the winds into the [?], into the central channel and on that basis bring forth clear light.

So all of these visualizations actually they are helping us to bring forth a ripening to be able to practice the completion stage in a way.

And another thing that we should mention here is that when we are kind of visualizing the guru within that field of accumulation, the guru can be visualized in 2 forms: either in the form of Vajradhara, just the more common, but also can be visualized in the ordinary human form.

When we dissolve the merit field and absorb it within us, which we will see as we continue within the sadhana, if you have visualized the lama in the form of Vajradhara, then it is acceptable to visualize the lama melting into those lights and then dissolving into yourself. This is OK.

However, if you visualize the lama in his or her ordinary form, rather than in the form of Vajradhara – for those of you who practice Yamantaka/Vajrabhairava this is the most common way to visualize the guru, you actually visualize him in human form – so if you do that, it's considered inauspicious or something to melt the guru into light while they are still abiding in their body. So what you want to imagine in this case, is that the guru shrinks, and shrinks and shrinks and shrinks until they are a tiny size and then they dissolve into that tiny form into your body.

If you were practicing the Chakrasamvara but visualizing the lama in human form, one way you could do this, you could visualize the entire field of accumulation dissolving into the form of the lama, and then that form of the lama shrinking and shrinking and shrinking into a very very small – and entering and absorbing into you.

But if you are visualizing the lama in the form of Vajradhara, then you can imagine that he simply melts into lights that enter your body or that he comes to the crown and then melts into lights that enter your body.

And so, generally you could say that you can – we talk about these different colored lights, so you can imagine Vajradhara dissolving into different colored lights, like blue, red, whatever.

But actually, when we are practicing Chakrasamvara it's a little bit better to imagine that the lama is dissolving into blue colored lights.

But of course if we are mainly practicing Vajrayogini then, we know that the lama is visualized in the form of the red colored Vajradharma, then you would visualize red colored lights etc. dissolving. And so, in the Vajrayogini the guru is visualized in Vajradharma's form, because Vajradharma is red, which is the color of Amitabha, which is especially connected with the holy speech of an enlightened being.

And so we also gave this presentation of visualizations in terms of how it might be different, according to the different systems of Vajrabhairava, Guhyasamaja and Heruka Chakrasamvara – so that's also something to learn and get familiar with.

And so, also this visualization of the guru has some different aspects depending upon which system of Chakrasamvara you are practicing. So in the Luipa system you imagine that the lama is kind of s/he has that little space around them and so you imagine that that kind of space around them is the cemetery.

And you can imagine that the guru is within that cemetery, and if you like sitting upon a throne upheld by 8 snow lions and you can visualize that.

But in the Ghantapa system you will see that this is not mentioned, like the cemetery or whatever as an abode. So Geshela thinks you can keep your visualization more simple here.

So in the Ghantapa system you just imagine it's all this kind of beautiful like Sukavati, Western Pure Land like environment. But in the Luipa system, around the guru there's this aspect of a cemetery.

And so, in terms of this practice of visualizing the field of accumulation, it's really good to maybe listen to this again and to read about it again until we can get really firm in our visualization.

So now we will turn to our self-generation text, so the sadhana, and so you will see that now we are engaging in the 7 point practice, which remember is similar to the 7 limbs but without requesting to remain and requesting to turn the Dharma wheel.

And so then, in terms of what is been shared within the sadhana:

The light-rays dissolve back into my heart.

That's the point in the sadhana where we are, halfway down page 28. The light-rays dissolve back into my heart.

And so we understand that what is coming before that is this visualization of the field of accumulation. Also remember when we do the 7 point practices, in sutra we refer to the 7 limbs – and in tantra we talk about the practice of the 7 purities, but they are very similar.

So in sutra why do we call it the practice of the 7 limbs? Because we imagine the limbs of a person, if a person possesses all of his/her limbs, then they engage in whatever task they need more easily. Similarly if one has all of the 7 limbs in place, then the accumulation of merit and the purification of negativities can be engaged in very effectively.

As we continue down page 28

Making Prostration to the Figures in This Field

*I bow to your lotus-feet, Vajra-Holder,
O gem-like Guru:
Through your kindness, I can attain, in an instant,
The abode of great bliss.*

This first verse of prostration is a prostration to the lama or the guru. And then the next one:

*I bow to you, glorious Shri Heruka, great heroic vira,
Powerful lord of the purified vajra,
And to you, Vajra-varahi:
Your affection (generates bliss in) those with great desire.*

This is a verse of prostration to the father and mother deity, so to Heruka and to Vajravarahi.

*Respectfully, I prostrate to all
You heroic viras and powerful heroic lady virinis,
Who dwell in the locations and neighboring locations,
The local areas, the gathering places, and the charnel grounds*

That is talking about the holy beings of the 24 holy places.

I bow to your lotus-feet, Vajra-Holder

Vajra-holder we are speaking about the lama in the aspect of Vajradhara.

And it is actually said that when we prostrate to the lama it specifically mentions that they are sitting on a lotus and we prostrate at their feet. This is an extra attitude of reverence, guru Vajradhara is so precious that we want to place our crown right at their holy feet sitting upon that lotus.

So, why do we need to prostrate to the lama here? Because it is through the kindness of the lama and their instruction that allows us to achieve great bliss instantaneously because of that extraordinary kindness we offer prostration.

So when we talk about instantaneous, that's like a pretty lofty word, so how do we understand instantaneous here actually? One way of thinking about it is that if we think of just this short life that we are here, right here right now, that's like just one instant compared to our countless previous lifetimes in samsara. So, if we practice this method correctly, we know it's possible to achieve great

bliss and to achieve the result in one short lifetime. And so that one short lifetime is what is meant by instantaneous in this understanding. Instantaneous compared to countless previous rebirth.

So, who achieved this instantaneously in one short lifetime? We have examples, right? Lord Milarepa, Gyalwa Ensapa, Khedrup Losang Gyatso – these are all beings who went from being completely ordinary to this realization in one lifetime.

And these three are famous, Geshela said there are many more, but these three are famous because their stories were well-known, and from the stories it's very clear that they started out as ordinary beings and achieved the resultant state in one lifetime.

So it's not that there is only three, it's just that these three are the most well-known. Geshela doesn't want you to get discouraged – oh my gosh, only three people have ever done that can be discouraging, but these are just three well-known ones.

So that's what's meant by in an instant here, in this first verse of prostration.

Another way of thinking about instant or instantaneous here is, when we think about the three eons of accumulation that the Buddha engaged for his enlightenment, the accumulation that based on his instruction can be complete in one lifetime, is just like an instant.

And so, that is why – because of all of these amazing kindnesses that is why the guru is like a gem, the most valuable thing in this world.

And so, in Lama Tsong Khapa's presentation of these verse of prostration, there is this kind of narrative of like who are we prostrating to, what is the object of prostration? What are the qualities and why do we prostrate. We have this discussion.

When a commentary is being given, the way of explanation is said to have 3 possible strategies, or ways to explain.

So these three ways of explanation, are the mode of explanation like a lion, the mode of explanation like a turtle, and the mode of explanation like a frog.

So the lion mode of explanation is a vast one, because when the lion first gets up in the morning, the first thing the lion does kind of perch somewhere high and look around the surrounding landscape.

That is kind of an overview style of commentary or presentation. The next one, the turtle, we know that the turtle sits very low on the ground, and moves very slowly, that is a word by word explanation, following the order of the text. That's the mode of explanation that's like a turtle.

The frog, has a different style of presentation. Just like a frog jumps from lily pad to lily pad to lily pad, it's not necessarily in a progressive order, so it might look at a verse like this and instead of going from the first word to the last word, it will mix up the order a little bit, choose the right lily pad, like who are we prostrating to, what are the qualities and why do we prostrate. That's the frog like method of explanation.

Geshela said, can you say what his style of explanation is? It's the frog style of explanation Geshela's commentary.

As we go to the next verse,

I bow to you, glorious Shri Heruka, great heroic vira,

Powerful lord of the purified vajra,

And to you, Vajra-varahi:

Your affection (generates bliss in) those with great desire.

We see here, the first two lines of the four to the father and the second line of four to the mother.

So, there's a lot to explain here, Geshela is not going to explain everything, but when we talk about great heroic vira, why is Heruka heroic? He is heroic because he has overcome the four maras, that is why he is heroic.

And, completely purified vajra – we talked about Heruka as the completely purified vajra, why completely purified? Because this enlightened being has completely cleared away the obscurations of the afflictions and the obscurations to omniscience.

And so, manifesting that realization in a way that benefits us is a great kindness, so we offer prostrations due to that.

And so, why do we offer prostration to the mother? Because the mother, if we think of ourselves in the context of this male deity, so the mother allows the arising of the great bliss which we can use to meditate on emptiness. So for this kindness we offer prostrations to the mother.

So, we understand that from the point of view of the enlightened being, this is the great bliss wisdom, so it's this bliss connected with wisdom. But we understand that if we approach this from the perspective of an ordinary being, the mother is helping us to transform our desire, that's why we see desire is mentioned here. And it's connected with bringing forth that great desire or transforming that attachment that in some presentations of the completion stages it is said, when the practitioner comes to a very high level, one again, we are saying a very high level, they will take on a wisdom mother, a consort.

And in fact, to engage in that practice too soon, is really dangerous it can cause obstacles. And if we look at the story of one of the great Chakrasamvara adepts, Krishnacharya for example, it is said that because Krishnacharya took on a wisdom mother too early he was actually not able to achieve enlightenment in that lifetime.

So Krishnacharya was a little bit of a cheeky chappy I guess you would call him, so he went to his guru twice to ask if he could take a wisdom mother, and his guru told him both times, "no you shouldn't do that". So the third time he didn't ask his guru at all and took one without even checking, so that led to an obstacle, right? But of course, finally we know, that he later, subsequently practicing in the future he did achieve the state of Buddhahood.

So the next one,

*Respectfully, I prostrate to all
You heroic viras and powerful heroic lady virinis,
Who dwell in the locations and neighboring locations,
The local areas, the gathering places, and the charnel grounds*

These are basically, it's a verse of prostration to those holy beings of the 24 holy places. Actually, if we kind of practice very well and we come to an advanced state in our practice as a practitioner of Chakrasamvara we can actually go to these 24 places and directly receive the blessing of the viras and virinis, the heroes and heroines abiding there.

Also, we can see how these verses of prostrations are prostrating to the body, praising the speech as well as recollecting the qualities of these different [?]

Next, we come to (at the bottom of page 28)

Making Them Outer Offerings and the Offerings by the Sixteen Knowledge Ladies

*From the HUM at my heart,
Offering goddesses go forth
And make the offerings.*

So we imagine from the HUM there is all of these light rays and it's from the light rays that the appropriate goddesses appear.

So, this practice of making the offering in the context of the self-generation some people are a little bit uncomfortable emanating these offering goddesses to make offerings to themselves, because it's like "who am I?", you are in the form of the deity, but it's still a little bit uncomfortable.

And so actually you see differences in traditions, so Lama Tsong Khapa really insisted on the importance of making offerings to the self-generation, to yourself as the deity. But if you look at the Sakya text on this practice you will actually see that it doesn't include offerings made to the self-generation, so that's just something interesting to be aware of.

So that's kind of a difference between how the traditions present it.

So Geshela said, he's just doing this hand motion and you do outward snap when you are sending the goddess out, and then you do the inner snap when you are bringing the goddess back in.

Geshela said you'll notice also that you hold up the hand like this and in action tantra you would hold up the hand like this, especially for the last one, the shabda, so why is that case? Because the offering goddesses have four arms in most of the highest yoga tantra presentations but in most of the kya or action yoga tantras presentation they only have two arms, that's why you'll see that the mudras are sometimes different between kya and anuttara yoga tantra. The other thing that Geshela mentioned is that you can do the sending and bringing back finger snaps for each of the offerings, or you can just do it once at the beginning of the offerings and then when it comes to the end of the offerings you can snap them back.

So you have – the way, if you look at the section of the outer offerings at the top of page 29, there can be a way of dividing this where you talk about the two waters, the main offerings and the music. So that's just the 2 waters, then you have flowers, incense, butter lamp, cologne and food main offerings, and then the music.

And so, you will see the first

OM SHRI HERUKA ARGHAM PRATICCHA SVAHA

this is water for drinking, but really Geshela said it's more like water for rinsing the mouth.

And the second is the foot washing water. These are considered actually preliminary offerings in the grand scheme of all the offerings that you are going to make, these are the preliminary offerings.

One of the uncommon characteristics of the Chakrasamvara practice is that it's very clear what the main offerings are, because "vajra" appears in each of the offerings incantations or mantras. So you see it says, OM VAJRA PUSHPE, OM VAJRA DHUPE, the "vajra" coming after the OM shows you that is the main offering.

So then, when we talk about the various qualities of the offerings, we talk about the various offerings as being in nature empty, in the aspect of the individual offering substance and object to bring pleasure to the 6 senses; behind that we understand is the arising of bliss when we are making offerings.

Another thing to talk about here, differences between various yiddam systems: when we talk about the nature of the offerings, in Guhyasamaja and Vajrabhairava/Yamanataka for example, we talk about them being in the nature of bliss and emptiness and that is connected to the fact that those systems are father tantras mainly aimed at bringing forth the illusory body. When we speak of the nature of these offerings in mother tantra, Heruka and Vajrayogini, we only say that they are in nature emptiness, and this is connected with the emphasis of mother tantra on clear light. So, it's just like a reminder that the clear light is sort of the main focus in this practice of mother tantra.

And also we talked about the offerings to the 6 senses or the 6 sense doors and so when we talk about offering the flowers, this is offering to the kind of body or tactile sense, because you would put that flower garland around the person.

Geshela said, actually in the old days, the flowers garland in India would actually been placed around the head, more like a crown garland. Then you might ask, why did they offer it specifically to the head, the body is like the whole body, you can put it in the hands or put it on the shoulders, why offer to the head?

So the reason is because the skull is considered the most important base of the body because within the skull we have the source of the white drops which are the most important kind of constituent of the body, so when you offer to the crown in this way, this represents offering to the whole body.

Another thing that you'll see is – actually Berzin's really great because he puts this all in italics in the offering verses – but what you will notice is that with these first offerings from the waters down to the music the offering goddesses often they are having a damaru but here they are not, they are just holding a vajra and a bell in addition to the offering substances.

Because of that, actually, very important thing here, when you are practicing at home and you see the shabda here for the music, you do not sound the damaru drum you sound the bell only, because the offering goddesses are only holding the vajra and bell.

And there's another reason for this: because in the field of accumulation that we've visualized, we have not visualized exclusively the meditational deities of highest yoga tantra, we have visualized the meditational deities of all the 4 classes of tantra, including krya or action tantra as well. So, in this particular instance, to honor all of those meanings you sound only the bell, you don't sound the bell and the damaru.

Another thing Geshela's mentioning here, in the different tantric monasteries there's different traditions as to how sort of open or elaborated the practices in the group context. In some of the tantric monasteries you'll see the monks doing the hand mudras etc. and in other of the monasteries you'll see that they are not engaging publicly in the hand mudras.

Now we come to the

Offerings by the Sixteen Knowledge Ladies

Each knowledge lady has four arms. The first four goddesses hold the musical instrument they play in their first two hands, while their lower two hold a vajra and bell.

OM VAJRA VINE HUM HUM PHAT vina lute

OM VAJRA VAMSHE HUM HUM PHAT flute

OM VAJRA MRITANGE HUM HUM PHAT mridangam double-headed drum

OM VAJRA MURAJE HUM HUM PHAT muraja large drum

These are classified into a category according to the first offering that appears in the set of 4, so this is the category of the flute goddess.

A little bit of a difference here, in that the first two hands of these goddesses are holding the instruments that they are playing, like the lute or the drum etc. And then the bottom two hands are holding the dorje and bell, whereas you noticed in the previous it's in the reverse order.

Geshela said that actually when you are visualizing it's good to be precise here, so that we know in which set of arms the dorje and bell are being wielded by the offerings.

So we go to the next one:

The next four knowledge ladies make the appropriate hand-mudra with their first two hands for what they offer, while their lower two hands hold a skullcup and a khatvanga-staff.

OM VAJRA HASYA HUM HUM PHAT smile

OM VAJRA LASYA HUM HUM PHAT flirt

OM VAJRA GITI HUM HUM PHAT sing

OM VAJRA NRITYA HUM HUM PHAT dance

So you'll notice that Geshela gives "vajra" as "benza" – it's perfectly OK to do either, you do that which you prefer. Geshela said "benza" is better. Why is Geshela advocating for "benza"? Because Nagarjuna and many of the great practitioners of this Chakrasamvara tantra for example, were Bengalis and Bengalis pronounce the "V" as a "B" sound, so that is Geshela's argument for saying "benza" instead of "vajra".

Notice here also, what the various hands of the offering goddesses are wielding, so the first two are holding the mudra for what they are offering – the smile, the singing etc. And the lower two are holding a skull cup and a katvanga staff. The first set of the 4 offerings is known as the set of flute goddess and we could say that the second set of 4 offerings is the set of the smile goddess.

Geshela said from that first set of 4 we didn't do the last 2 drums

OM VAJRA MRITANGE HUM HUM PHAT mridangam double-headed drum

OM VAJRA MURAJE HUM HUM PHAT muraja large drum

So just the differences here: you have a lute, the second one is a flute and then there's two different types of drums: mritange is actually mrdanga[?] so Geshela asked me to explain how this drum looks: it's a double headed drum. If you have ever seen the Hare Krishna dancing and singing, it's that double headed drum that you can hit from either side.

The last drum, the 4th one, this is a big drum with only one face, you can only hit it on one side.

And so, Geshela actually said that in terms of this very elaborate set of offerings of the 16 knowledge ladies, there is different hand mudras that you can do for this, however on this he does not feel so expert, so what he will do is he will provide me with a video that we can hopefully share with folks. And also to understand that when you speak about hand mudras there is always different traditions of doing them, so this is also something to keep in mind.

And so the next one we have

OM VAJRA HASYA HUM HUM PHAT smile

OM VAJRA LASYA HUM HUM PHAT flirt

OM VAJRA GITI HUM HUM PHAT sing

OM VAJRA NRITYA HUM HUM PHAT dance

We have smile. Here it says flirting but it's more like a beckoning "come here" and then singing and dancing. So the person is smiling in the dance, she's telling you to come and watch, and then singing and dancing.

Next we come to a set of 8 offerings which are the common ones to the 6 sense consciousnesses and then 2 extra.

The next eight knowledge ladies hold the item they offer in their first right hand and a skullcup in the left, while their lower two hands hold a damaru-drum and a khtvanga-staff.

OM VAJRA PUSHPE HUM HUM PHAT flowers

OM VAJRA DHUPE HUM HUM PHAT incense

OM VAJRA DIPAM HUM HUM PHAT butter lamp

OM VAJRA GHANDE HUM HUM PHAT cologne water

OM RUPA VAJRI HUM HUM HUM PHAT sights

OM RASA VAJRI HUM HUM HUM PHAT tastes

OM SPARSHE VAJRI HUM HUM HUM PHAT physical sensations

OM DHARMADHATU VAJRI HUM HUM PHAT embrace

Not a lot that is mysterious here, Geshela said, you recognize the first ones: flowers, incense, lamps etc. those are pretty standard.

But if you are observant, you might notice one thing here: when we offer the butter lamp, but do we usually have? We have Alope. But here it says Dipam. So why is that? And so then it's just a different kind of lamp actually, and so then Geshela said, what are we offering to? We are offering to the sense doors of the eye, nose, ears, tongue, body and finally the mental. And the one that we are offering to the mental consciousness, is actually the final one you are seeing here, OM DHARMADHATU VAJRI HUM HUM PHAT, and what we imagine that we are offering is the phenomena source here.

So the phenomena source, we know that this had a triangle shape within it and you'll note that a triangle shape has 3 sides. So what do these 3 sides represent? These 3 sides represent the 3 doors to liberation.

So we think that from having traversed these 3 doors to liberation, then the wisdom of great bliss can arise.

Geshela said, in this way we've covered very briefly the offerings, but there's more to talk about in terms of the colors of the various offering goddesses and the attending meaning, so there's going to be more on the offerings coming later. He also notes that the offerings are going to appear in the sadhana as well, so there's a lot of the offering to be flashed out.

Geshela offers his apologies – he planned to do the first of the three bringings, bringing ordinary death into the path of Dharmakaya today, but we did not get to that, so we will have to save that for next time.

But Geshela doesn't want to rush, because he wants the sadhana to become a meaningful set of instructions that you can bring forth within your mind in this kind of flow. In this way it is really good to cover things methodically. And it's really worth putting in the effort here, because if you understand the sadhana of one highest yoga tantra deity really, really well, that's going to enrich your practice of all highest yoga tantra deities.

Geshela finds himself really trying to learn these teachings just each verse of the sadhana will suddenly have a meaning that he wasn't aware of before, and so his enthusiasm to practice the sadhana is greatly increased, he is very happy to practice.

So thank you very much, we will end our session here, let us dedicate the merits.

