

Heruka Teachings Geshe Sonam Ngodrup

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Geshela said Tashi Delek, greeting to all of you, Geshela hopes that everything is going perfectly and that you are all well and happy.

And then if we check out the situation, we should check very carefully, and understand that right now we have the best opportunity, we have this incredible opportunity before us.

And so Geshela said of course we are on this journey together, we might not know perfectly how to express that path to that final state that we are seeking of Buddhahood, but we will do our best to comprehend as much as we can on this journey together.

So, if you - on this basis of the effort that Geshela has put into the research and present these teaching - and then when you listen you are able to clarify even pieces of that path to that final goal, then on the basis of those pieces that you have understood, as you go over again and again you will be able to improve and improve.

So, what is being explained today in the context of these teachings is the path that will take us to the final state of Buddhahood particularly in its ultimate aspects, which is the teachings of the unexcelled or highest yoga tantra.

And of course, this relates, Geshela has explained it before, so we won't go over it again, but the fact that the vajrayana, the tantric teachings have special characteristic that are not available in the sutra teachings.

So, a thing that needs to be explained here is that in terms of the object that we are trying to realize, the object that we are trying to realize there is no difference in this between sutra and tantra. But where the excellent qualities of tantra come in is from the point of view of the object possessor or the subject.

So, in this way, the way that the two accumulations are cultivated, simultaneously, the way in which method and wisdom can be cultivated has some special characteristics in tantra.

And so, some scholars sort of jokingly say that the difference between the sutra and tantra depends upon the wisdom of the practitioner practicing it. So just to be clear, in terms of the object that is being realized we talked about the similarities, and then in terms of the object possessor or the subject we talked about the differences between sutra and tantra from that perspective; and we also understand that in tantra there are also different characteristics depending on the class of tantra.

And so we will see that actually because of these differences in terms of the methods of practice or cultivation this is where we will see that there is a different approach.

So for example in sutra it is proposed that there cannot be consciousness without an object that that consciousness is holding. So all consciousnesses are necessarily apprehending or upholding an object in the sutra presentation. So Geshela said, he is giving you the gist, but there are some scholars who refute that. But let's just take that as an argument for now.

However, in tantra, there is an exploration of consciousness that is not holding an object, that is not apprehending an object.

And so why is that? Because the subtlest manifestation of consciousness that is abiding with the extremely subtle wind and mind it is dormant; because it is dormant, it cannot be cognizing an object or phenomena, and because of that in tantra we speak of consciousness in the absence of an object that is apprehending.

So in tantra, in fact, our main task is to use the methods of the vajrayana to unlock the possibility of being able to work with this extremely subtle wind and mind.

When a person is newly approaching tantra, they will see talk about transforming attachment, they will see the outer manifestations of the yab and yum, the father and the mother deities. So when you look at that from the outsiders perspective, this can seem strange at first.

From the ultimate perspective Glorious Heruka and Vajravarahi they have already achieved the final state of Vajradhara, complete Buddhahood. So actually, in a way they don't need to arise as father and mother and cultivate the various methods of tantra. The reason that Heruka and Vajrayogini appear in this way, although they have already achieved that final state of enlightenment and they don't need to, is of course to manifest in a way that we, as practitioners, know that these are the things that we need to cultivate, that these are the methods we need to work on.

The main obstacle in our practice here actually is that there is this extremely subtle wind and mind that we possess but at the moment we cannot access it. It is dormant. So, we first have to try to access it. Once we are able to open up the channels and the wind and the prana is able to flow freely, then we will be in a position to work with more subtle levels of consciousness.

If we talk about for example of the tsa uma, the central channel or chakra, which is where the extremely subtle wind and mind are abiding, part of the problem is that there's said that there are two knots sort of on either end of that central channel and this kind blocks the flow of the prana or wind. What we need to do, is we need to loosen those knots so that the central channel becomes more malleable and the wind can flow. And in the teachings on Heruka and Vajrayogini – the first step of being able to work with the channels, the wind and the drops is to loosen those knots so that the channel becomes more malleable. This is the first step.

And so to be able to do that, sometimes the practitioner has to work with attachment and so it is for that purpose, if we understand this, we can understand why the deity of anuttara yoga tantra appear in the form of father and mother and how and why we work with attachment etc.

Actually, as we work with tantra, one of the things that we need to do, we need to consider those channels winds or pranas and drops and we need to loosen those knots and make things malleable so that we can have the flow of the prana.

As a beginner, when we approach these various aspects of tantra, if we have this in our mind, this will help us to understand. And so the very essence of highest yoga tantra actually comes down to working with these [?].

Geshela said, sorry, too long the preliminary remarks, but he wanted to start with that.

Geshela's original plan was to meditate on the protection circle together as a group, but he sees that if we do that then there won't be so much time for explanation. So what he would like us to do is just develop a motivation and then we will recite some short preliminary prayers for refuge, bodhicitta etc. So actually, just one thing to say about the protection circle, is that normally, when we meditate upon the protection circle we are doing it for ourselves. But, especially when we look at the world today and all of the problems and conflicts, one of the things that we can imagine is that actually this protection circle is something that is really vast. Emphasize this vastness that is encompassing all the world. So when we speak about the purpose of meditating upon the protection circle, some people call it the protection wheel, it is so that from the various kayas, of the peak of samsara through the lowest realms of samsara – so from the peak of samsara to the very depth that through meditating upon the protection circle, all beings can be free from obstacles, hindrances and difficulties.

So we start, depending on where we are sitting in the eastern direction, visualize the eastern direction behind us

OM SUMBHA NISUMBHA HUM HUM PHAT

with the attending colors and then the other three of the mantras in each of the direction. So, those four mantras of the four directions is all in the sadhana, if you wonder where it is. So these four mantras in the four directions, each have their particular color. And those mantras there in their attending colors they kind of [?] us this radiant light which arises the very, very vast all-encompassing wall. And from that wall of light there is a manifestation of fence of impenetrable vajras in each of the directions.

So, we can imagine as we meditate on this, that meditating on this protection wheel, the vajra fence etc. this is going to include within its enclosure all sentient beings in this way, in this way all sentient beings are completely protected from various obstacles and hindrances and they can work towards a lasting happiness. Geshela said, in the session on Vajrayogini next month we will start with a longer meditation on the protection circle.

So just take a moment to relax and settle the mind:

So imagine from emptiness in the space in front appear glorious Chakrasamvara Heruka father and mother surrounded by the various lineage teacher and all of the holy beings.

Until I achieve complete enlightenment with faith and confidence I will continually go for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, to lama Heruka.

In order to be able to completely benefit sentient beings in the best possible way, I must bring back that I call the self or my "I" to manifest the nature of complete Heruka; there is no better way to benefit sentient beings than through achieving the resultant state of Chakrasamvara. Meditate on bodhicitta.

If I do my best to bring forth the necessary effort, I can definitely achieve this. There is all of the afflicted minds and connected obstacles are merely adventitious, they are things that can be removed.

So we will pause there.

Just because Geshela has a lot to share, and we want to be able to get there – not because the prayers are not important, because of course they are very important, but we will just do the refuge and bodhicitta verse along with the mandala verse today. So. let's start with the mandala.

Some people actually say that there is more feeling to these practices when we meditate on the motivation first and then recite the verse of refuge and bodhicitta for example.

In terms of what we are trying to achieve this is the final attainment of Buddhahood, this is expressed in terms of three kayas or bodies.

And to achieve those resultant three bodies we need to traverse the path of three bodies.

And in order to be able to traverse the path of the three bodies we need to traverse the path of the three bodies of the generation stage and the path of three bodies of completion stage. Ultimately, we come to completion stage, but to get there we need first to do generation [stage].

And so, in the practice of the generation stage, taking the three bodies or the three kayas into the path it involves transforming ordinary death, ordinary intermediate state and ordinary rebirth into the three kayas. And to be able to practice transforming ordinary death, bardo and rebirth into the three kayas or bodies of a buddha, this is a unique practice that only has this kind of complete presentation in anuttara or highest yoga tantra.

So, for example in krya tantra we see, or in the three lower classes of tantra for example, we see speaking about the yoga of signs, the yoga without signs – they have stages that are maybe similar to aspects of the generation stage practice but they don't have the transforming of the three bodies into the path.

And the reason that we don't see this in the three lower classes of tantra is related to the two things that are required, that anuttara yoga tantra has. So the first of these two things, both anuttara yoga tantra and the lower classes of tantra have this, which is the completely purified phenomena – the four

aspects of the completely purified phenomena or the 4 purities, taking that from Buddhahood into the present time – that is available in all classes of tantra.

So these 4 purities, this is something that we need in our generation stage of highest yoga tantra as well but just those 4 purities are not enough.

We need to meditate on a path to enlightenment that is congruent with and able to transform ordinary death, ordinary bardo or intermediate state and ordinary rebirth. This is not available in lower classes of tantra.

So that's very important to know and also when you look at grounds and paths of tantra, you'll see how the different classes of tantra they have their own unique characteristics and paths and differences.

The three lower classes of tantra they have something that is a replacement for transforming these three bodies into the path, but they don't have the complete practice of this available in those systems.

What we have to do, or basis of purification, the basis of purification is ordinary death, intermediate state and rebirth.

And it's called the basis for purification because the main difficulties as they manifest in samsara or in ordinary death, bardo and rebirth, so we need to purify and transform these.

So Geshela said that actually – he looked at the scriptures and he put this presentation that he is going to give you together about the basis of purification etc. because it will be useful especially for beginners.

Last time we went quickly through the words of the sadhana but we did not go through the meaning and reasonings so Geshela is going to do that.

When we take the three bodies into the path, this is also called by some people the three bringings, the first is taking ordinary death into the path of the Dharmakaya, this is the one we need to do first. The first thing that we need to understand about this relates to how the death process is experienced, and we speak of the death process as being experienced as various dissolutions. So the first of those is the dissolutions of the elements: the earth element, the water element, the fire element etc.

So, earth element dissolves into the water element, dissolves into the fire element, dissolves into the wind element and then dissolves into consciousness. So, this is how things actually happen and these various state of dissolutions of the elements etc. are something that is experienced by every sentient being.

If we just leave it at that, this is the dissolutions and this is how they happen, when we actually have to undergo this process, this can be something that causes us problems, that causes us difficulties.

But the paradox is that if we are able to use the methods learning here, to transform this process, what ordinarily is very troublesome or upsetting process of death and the dissolutions can actually become a path to ultimate happiness.

So, as we are meditating on the dissolutions as part of our practice of bringing the three bodies into the path, when the dissolutions are happening for the ordinary person, it is said there's some difficulties with that. We don't have to imagine the difficulties, we are not trying to experience the difficulties when we meditate on these dissolutions. So, what we want to do as a practitioner of highest yoga tantra is be aware when we are meditating.

We imagine the earth element is dissolving into the water element, what is the attending sign of that?

So, for example the mirage-like appearance and then on that basis we want to experience that dissolution. We want to have, experience that dissolution as being empty and having a feeling of bliss.

So the way to meditate on these dissolutions as a tantric practitioner isn't like, OK, I am dying the earth element is going into the water element, that's so scary, I am experiencing all these problems. That's not how you are supposed to meditate on this. So, as we come to the last stage, once all the dissolutions have been completed, we come to what is known as the clear light of death. The clear light of death is also known as the mother clear light.

And so, this clear light will manifest, will dawn for every single sentient being who has reached that point of the death process.

So, if as a vajrayana practitioner we are able to be mindful of this experience of the clear light of death and contemplate that the appearance of this clear light is empty, this is known as the child clear light. So the clear light of death is the mother, this aspect is the child clear light.

So, as a beginner to understand one of the things that we need to do in our practice, the very necessary steps, it's this particular step.

If as the tantric practitioner we are able to have an awareness and bring forth the union of the mother and child clear light, we have started to unfold this practice of bliss or happiness.

And actually, because we have been able to recognize this clear light etc. it is said that we have started the journey and from lifetime to lifetime the practice, the cultivation, will only become better and better.

So, it is said if the practitioner is someone, for example like Lama Tsong Khapa, who meditated thoroughly on emptiness again and again in his life, then at the time that these dissolutions happen and one reaches the clear light of death, instead of the bardo manifesting, one is able to arise the illusory body of a Buddha.

It says in some scriptures that Lama Tsong Khapa achieved the state of Vajradharahood, full enlightenment in the bardo, but we should actually understand that he actually did not enter the bardo, as the end of this process described he gave rise to the illusory body. So the experience of the illusory body was kind of the substitute in the case of realized practitioners, the substitute of the experience of the bardo or in between state. So, when they speak of bardo in the case of advanced practitioners, is not really a bardo, they just use that name, but we are talking about the illusory body.

There is an experience even beyond that, which is where through the practices of tantra the practitioner is able to recognize and meditate on the union of the mother and child clear light in that very lifetime. And then in that body, in that lifetime they are able to reach the state of Vajradharahood, full enlightenment – and we can think of Lord Milarepa, Gyalwa Ensapa, Khedrup Losang Gyatso as examples of practitioners who did this.

So actually, in terms of these practitioners, they didn't even need to wait until the death process began to unfold to have these tantric realizations, they practiced bringing the three bodies into the path in that very lifetime as a result of that they were able to bring forth realization and enlightenment in that same body in that same life.

We can talk about how these realizations are unfolding for a practitioner sort of a beginning quality, a practitioner of middling quality and then this final one that Geshela gave us for the most advanced or supreme of practitioners.

So even if we aren't able to kind of realize emptiness, if we are able to meditate on these stages, this will be something that is of very great benefit to us.

So, of course it is not easy to do and to actualize this. Because it is not easy to do and actualize this, this is the reason why we need to hear explanations like the one that Geshela is giving right now.

Last time towards the end, in the last installment of Chakrasamvara we came to going through of taking death into the path of the truth body; we just went through the words of the sadhana, we did not explain the nuts and bolts of the meditation. This is what Geshela is going to do here.

We are coming to page 31 of the sadhana, for those of you who would like to follow along and we are looking at taking death into the path of the Dharmakaya.

So the first thing that we need to know when we look at the beginning is that taking death into the path of Dharmakaya is a little bit different in the various systems of Chakrasamvara, for example the Luipa and the 2 Ghantapa systems.

If Geshela said that the differences are not extremely significant, but there are differences. Mostly on the level of appearance, so for example we talk about the 3 signs or appearances of those three letters, that is one of the difference characteristics.

Whether we speak of the various systems of Heruka and Vajrayogini, specifically in the context of these teachings, Geshela is referring to the Chakrasamvara system of Luipapada, like the sadhana, and then the Chakrasamvara system of Ghantapa body mandala and Ghantapa 5 deities. So in all of these systems, before this meditation one has arisen into the instantaneous self-generation, one is arisen as the deity.

And when we come to this point in the sadhana, we have already done the instantaneous self-generation as Heruka and we presented blessed and made all of the offerings etc. We have done quite a few things actually.

So, at this point in the sadhana, we are starting this meditation on the first of the three bringings, so we are in the form of Heruka, with a HE syllable at the heart [probably K. meant the head], white in color, a RU syllable at the throat, red in color, and a HA syllable at the heart, blue in color.

And as we meditate on sort of those three luminous, brilliantly luminous letters, we can also think that we are engaged in profound meditation on emptiness. Specifically, it's two aspects: the selflessness of phenomena and of persons.

So of course, you know, on one aspect we are imagining this, we are not really Heruka, but in the context of the sadhana, we really want to imagine that we actually are. And also we might not really know how to meditate on the profound emptiness of the two selflessnesses, but we want to imagine that we are.

And as we meditate on emptiness, then we bring up the next: it is because of not understanding these two types of selflessnesses that the 6 types of sentient beings continue to circle and circle within samsara and experience problems. It is because they have not comprehended the three doors to liberation.

So, in the context of this meditation on death into the Dharmakaya, in all the three Heruka traditions, there are two extremely important mantras. The first of these mantras is

OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHAH SARVA DHARMAH SVABHAVA SHUDDHO 'HAM

and the next one is:

OM SHUNYATA JNANA VAJRA SVABHAVA ATMAKO 'HAM

So, Geshela is explaining that within the sadhana text itself, these two mantras are quite far apart. We see the first mantra OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHAH SARVA DHARMAH SVABHAVA SHUDDHO 'HAM on page 33 and the next one OM SHUNYATA JNANA VAJRA SVABHAVA ATMAKO 'HAM at the bottom of 33.

But actually, when we meditate on the meaning of these mantras, it's good to meditate on them together. So, when we think about meditation on this first mantra, OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHAH SARVA DHARMAH SVABHAVA SHUDDHO 'HAM, we should think that it is due to beings not being able to experience appearances as being illusions, not understanding that they are empty like true existence, like illusions that keeps them circling within samsara.

And so, this is connected with a referential compassion, in other words the compassion that has phenomena as an object.

And so, Geshela said, another aspect of this referential compassion, is compassion that has an object, not in this context, but we often speak of that in terms of it's because sentient beings have not been able to comprehend impermanence that keeps them circling within samsara, how sad is that and then bringing forth compassion.

But if you have that understanding you can actually insert that here. Just because that's not specifically how it's done here, doesn't mean you can't do that.

So then, one way to approach this is to meditate on this first type of emptiness, illusion-like, thinking that beings have not realized it, developing that referential compassion for them and then beginning the meditation on emptiness etc. That's one approach.

But, actually, even better, is that after we have meditated on this mantra OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHAH SARVA DHARMAH SVABHAVA SHUDDHO 'HAM, and its meaning, you then meditate on a meaning of this mantra OM SHUNYATA JNANA VAJRA SVABHAVA ATMAKO 'HAM which thinks: self, others, all beings continue to circle within samsara because of not understanding that the various appearances are empty of existing in the way that they appear, that they lack inherent existence. And then one thinks: how terrible is that and develops compassion; and this is what is known as the non-referential or objectless compassion, which is said to be the very most powerful type of compassion.

Then, in terms of meditating with this first mantra in the way that Geshela described, this is the meditation on the emptiness of appearances. This is an uncommon emphasis in the Chakrasamvara tantra. That is something unique here.

When we do the meditation on the emptiness of appearance, if you take an object, for example the flowers that Geshela was holding up, and you can say I am going to meditate on the emptiness of appearance of this, you don't actually try to dissolve the appearance of the flowers at all. You are just contemplating the ways in which they lack inherent existence.

So that's that first type of meditation which is the [Tibetan name] the meditation on the emptiness of appearances, but if we really want to have the full profundity of the meditation of taking death into the path of the Dharmakaya we need to do the second type of meditation, which is the meditation on emptiness devoid of appearance [Tibetan names explained] = meditation on emptiness devoid of appearance.

Really what is going to allow us to do this meditation properly and arise [?] the experience of the clear light of death are these two types of meditation. The first with the mantra OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHAH SARVA DHARMAH SVABHAVA SHUDDHO 'HAM, meditation on the emptiness of appearance and the second with the mantra OM SHUNYATA JNANA VAJRA SVABHAVA ATMAKO 'HAM the meditation on the emptiness devoid of appearance.

The difference here, with the second type of meditation – the meditation on emptiness devoid of appearance – is whatever object we contemplate and its emptiness, self, others, phenomena we imagine that its appearance completely dissolves into emptiness. And as it dissolves into that emptiness – from this dissolving into emptiness then ordinary appearances are also completely dissolved.

So in the context of this meditation of taking death into the path of Dharmakaya, these are two really important things: the first the two sets of compassion – the referential compassion, and the second the non-referential or objectless compassion – and then these two types of meditation on emptiness: meditation on the emptiness of appearances and meditation on emptiness devoid of appearance. So it's not just like you say, I am Heruka and that's the end of the story; actually we work towards actualizing that, these two things, which are the most important.

So we can think about it in terms of these two compassions - referential and non-referential or objectless compassion – we can think of the two mantras - OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHAH SARVA DHARMAH SVABHAVA SHUDDHO 'HAM, and OM SHUNYATA JNANA VAJRA SVABHAVA ATMAKO 'HAM – and then we can think of the two emptinesses: the meditation on the emptiness of appearances and the meditation on the emptiness devoid of appearances.

So from meditating like this, and from one's previous kind of exertion in the stages of the path of Heruka, then we have this manifestation He Ru Ka – then the He, the Ru and the Ka then transform into the OM, the AH and the HUM. You see this on page 32.

And so, when we arise the syllables of OM, AH and HUM – we are in the middle of page 32 – this isn't kind of a path[?] of process, we arise the syllables OM, AH and HUM thinking they are very powerful and meaningful.

So, the lights etc. that emanate from the white OM, these are mainly going under the ground of the three lowest realms of existence and purifying those and liberating beings there.

And so from them being purified in this way, all of those beings inhabiting the three lower realms of existence, whether male or female, from this they are liberated and they manifest in the form of Chakrasamvara father and mother.

So, this OM is not just any ordinary OM, it is the nature of great bliss-wisdom that manifests in the sublime holy form of Heruka. We need to really have a feeling that this OM is this manifestation of great bliss-wisdom, because the visualization is extremely important, it has great meaning. So we really need to feel that.

And so just like the OM letter has that aspect, it is also important to understand that manifold light rays that it emanates are also in the ultimate nature of great bliss-wisdom.

And because of the nature of that, when those light rays touch sentient beings, they are able to completely purify them. And the profound ultimate nature of that radiance allows it also to bring beings to the essention[?] of the deity father and mother.

And so then, from the AH letter, these red radiant lights manifest and they are above the earth, so all the beings that are dwelling upon the earth – the humans and the animals – these light rays touch them are able to completely clear away all of their suffering and ripen them to the state of Heruka father and mother.

So then, from the HUM it's a similar process, except that this is going to the peak of samsara, to the devas and the asuras, to the god and demi-god beings in those realms and freeing them.

Basically, we go through these stages so that the complete meditation is that through the power of these letters OM, AH, and HUM and their radiant light, which are the aspect of great bliss-wisdom, we are able to completely purify all of the various abodes in all realms of samsara and bring the concerned beings to that state of Chakrasamvara, complete Buddhahood.

So we talked about these OM, AH and HUM, the profundity of these letters and therefore the profundity of the lights that manifest and also the profundity of the deity, Shri Chakrasamvara with whom they are connected in this case, we have confidence that this allows this meditation and function to unfold.

So, generally speaking because of the state that Chakrasamvara has achieved, he is completely able to protect sentient beings from the fear of samsara in general and the three lower realms in particular and lead them to liberation, he is capable of that.

So to think like that as way of bringing forth a feeling of confidence is something that could be useful here.

From meditating like this then all the liberated sentient beings are in the aspect of Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi, Heruka father and mother, from them entering in union they bring forth a profound great bliss. From that great bliss manifesting they melt into the form of radiant light and then all of them melt back into the attendant letters of OM, AH and HUM.

And so Geshela said, one very important point here, because we have imagined this process of all the sentient beings being lead to ultimate liberation and due to their experience of great bliss they are melting back into the OM, AH, and HUM, we ourselves have also melted into the letters. Specifically AH, because in this context we think of ourselves, we classify ourselves as human beings, so we melt into the AH letter.

So, not just all of the sentient beings including ourselves, that have dissolved into OM, AH and HUM but also all the abodes, the environments where these sentient beings dwell, these have also dissolved into the OM, AH and HUM. So at the conclusion of this process, there is just empty space. There is the sphere of emptiness. There is just this experience of empty space, with these 3 letter of OM, AH and HUM.

And as this OM, AH and HUM are abiding within this sphere of empty space, we think of them as incredibly blessed and powerful, because they have not only led sentient beings etc. to the state of enlightenment but also those enlightened sentient beings have dissolved back into those three letters. So, according to the Luipa system of practice, it is at this point in the sadhana that we meditate on the 8 signs related to the 8 stages of the death process.

Geshela said, this is based on his understanding of one way to approach the Luipapada Heruka practice, there may be others.

Now we meditate upon the OM, AH and HUM and when we meditate upon the OM letter dissolving into the AH letter, we imagine the earth element has dissolved into the water element.

Geshela said that at that moment there is a related appearance that manifests, which is known as the mirage-like appearance. So think, earth dissolves into water, there is the mirage-like appearance.

Geshela said, remember we are not meditating on it, thinking – Oh my gosh, I am dying this is so difficult – so that's not happening, we are just focusing on that appearance.

Think if we are able to meditate on bliss and emptiness properly, we will be able to see how this mirage-like appearance, indeed all of these appearances are empty and blissful.

That experience of them being empty and blissful as we kind of continue practicing this path, that experience should become stronger and stronger.

And then after the earth element and the mirage-like appearance then the water elements starts to dissolve; there is a smoke-like appearance. So the second appearance that manifests is the smoke like appearance.

What we want to do as we go through these various dissolutions, we want to think: by the end of the last stage, the 8th stage, the mind of black near attainment, that happens just before the clear light, we want to think: when that clear light of death manifests I want to be able to recognize it.

Geshela said, that in terms of these 8 stages and their 8 signs we have spoken about the first mirage-like and the smoke-like appearances.

When we say something like the earth element is dissolving into the water element, how we understand this on the personal level is that the functions of the body which are related to earth, those dissolve into the water element. When we think about the functions of ourselves as related to these different elements, we can think that they are like four strong people, that are together carrying a heavy object. So if one of those persons goes away, just like when one of the functions of those element dissolves, you are left only with three people; so you are less able to hold that heavy object. Because the earth element has dissolved, the water element is responsible for carrying more of the burden, for carrying more of the functions. Another thing that we should mention here, for those of you who are practicing different sadhanas or systems of Chakrasamvara, here we speak of the OM, AH and HUM but if you look at the practice of Ghantapa five deities, or the Ghantapa body mandala, you actually don't do this meditation on the basis of OM, AH and HUM – you imagine instead yourself as Heruka with a HUM at your heart and that this manifests the light rays etc. touching the sentient beings then everything is dissolving back into that HUM. So it's a bit different.

Geshela said the symbol used and the mechanics are a little bit different, but in terms of the purpose and the meaning of it it's exactly the same as in the Luipa system.

And when we speak about different types of tantra, it is said that in the secret assembly, in the Guhyasamaja tantra, it has the vastest explanation of taking death into the path of Dharmakaya. So these visualizations are very extensive.

But when we look at how this particular meditation unfolds in the systems of Heruka, Vajrayogini and Vajrabhairava/Yamantaka, we see that it is very similar.

Then, as we think that the OM dissolves into the AH – it's a recap – the earth element dissolving into the water, as the AH dissolves into the fire element one imagines – sorry, as the AH dissolves into the HUM one imagines the water element dissolves into the fire element. And at that moment, in terms of the appearance – we talked about the mirage-like and the smoke-like – but this one it is the smoke-like appearance.

So one way to think as we do this visualization is that from that dissolution then this experience of emptiness and attendant bliss becomes even stronger.

And so one thinks that the mirage-like appearance has completely dissipated and now we are experiencing the smoke-like appearance. And as we experience the smoke-like appearance, we know that the next appearance that is going to manifest is the firefly-like appearance. And as I note the dissolutions and appearances happening, may I also be able to be mindful and recognize the clear light of death when that manifests.

So, at this point we talked about the two types of clear light – the mother and the child – at this point we still aren't sure we are going to be able to recognize the mother clear light. So we are training in being able to recognize the mother clear light. So the view is to help us recognize this mother clear light.

And so then, after the OM dissolves into the AH, dissolves into the HUM, we begin to break down the parts of the HUM. So the shabkyu, which is like the U shaped hook that is at the bottom of the HUM, this first dissolves into the latter.

And at that moment one imagines that the fire element is dissolving into the wind element. Once the smoke-like appearance has dissipated and the firefly-like appearance is manifesting. So just as I am able to recognize this firefly-like appearance when I arrive at the point of the clear light of death may I be able to recognize that.

So the shabkyu has dissolved into the HUM, so the next step is the HUM letter itself, the bottom part of the letter dissolves into the line on top, so the body of the HA dissolves into its head. Actually in Tibetan they say [Tibetan] so the bottom of the HA dissolves into the head of the HA.

And at that point we should think that the wind elements has dissolved into consciousness.

And this is happening we think the firefly-like appearance has dissipated and the sputtering butterlamp appearance is manifesting. We have gone through 4 of these 8 dissolutions and it's important to understand that these first 4 of the 8 are known as the coarse death state. So this is like the coarser death process. So you can say the coarse death state.

Then as we go through and reach the second half of these dissolutions, these are known as the [Tibetan] the subtle death state. So you can say the subtle death state [Tibetan] – sorry Geshela said there is two ways to say [Tibetan] subtle death safe[?] state and [Tibetan] the subtle mind of death. And when you come to the subtle part of the process, this is something that is beyond the capacity of explanation of modern science, they are not able to explain this. So, according to modern doctors and scientists you are death at this point, the story is over. But we see that for many lamas and realized practitioners actually, the story is not over at that point.

It's at this point that we speak of them abiding in that state of tukdam, like the post-death meditation. And Geshela said you even have the great lamas who were able to stay – and recently there was someone who was able to stay in this state for more than 20 days.

And so, really, in a capsule, that tukdam is them abiding in this clear light of death.

So now we are at the level where the wind element has dissolved into consciousness and so the head of the HA dissolves into the half moon shape. And then at that point we have – sorry, with consciousness then the butterlamp sputtering appearance is going into the background and we have the burning lamp appearance, like a space filled with white light.

And at this point for the practitioner of generation stage is very important to think at this point: I have achieved the body vajra of an enlightened being.

And so then the butterlamp sputtering and the burning lamp has kind of stopped, and so next we need to think that the 80 conceptions have dissolved into the mind of white appearance and then after the mind of white appearance has manifested, the mind of red increase will manifest.

And so, the mind of white appearance and the mind of red increase, how this is explained in terms of like why it is white for example, is that this is related to – as the death process unfolds – the white drops are going to descend to the location where the red drops are. So this is related to the mind of white appearance and red increase. And so, at that point there are two sorts of appearances that happen: there is like a burning lamp which is like a space filled with white light and then you have a space filled with red light. So the space filled with white light, Geshela said, is like last night – at least last night if you were in Ontario, and Geshela and I went for a walk after dusk, there was snow on the ground, and because of that snow you could see very clearly where you were going. Everything was illuminated, even though it was night time.

And so, one thing other to be clear is that as the death process unfolds for us individually, we will experience all of these, but our job as a practitioner here is to do this on the level of imagination. And so as we go, if we do really a thorough meditation of going through these 8 stages, as we imagine the dissolutions, we recollected the appearance, at the end of each step we always have to think: may I be able to recognize the clear light of death when that point comes.

Why do we have to do that? Because we are meditating here. *Gom*[?] the word for meditate also means to familiarize. We want to be able to familiarize ourselves with recognizing the clear light of death, because if we are able to do that, that is an extraordinary kind of springboard for realizations.

So then, the half moon shape dissolves into the tige, which is like the squiggle on top of the HUM and then that means that the mind of white appearance has now dissolved into the mind of red increase. And then there is an appearance of space filled with red light. Why is this the case? Because what has happened is the white drop has descended, the red drop now begins to ascend and before they meet each other there is kind of red luminescence, so that is the reason. Geshela is naming as these drops etc. descend the various channel wheel we talked in the beginning about those knots at various points in the chakra and channels. I cannot remember the names of all of those, but when we get there I will have the names.

And so then, when the tige dissolves into the nada, the very top part of that squiggle, then we imagine that the mind of red increase is dissolving into the mind of black near attainment.

So that represents the union of the red and white drops, then this mind of black near attainment – then the white and red drops, which are the constituents of the father and mother, these dissolve into each other and then this mind of black near attainment manifests.

And so then, one thinks, just as I recognize this mind of black near attainment arising, so at the end may I recognize this mind of the clear light of death.

So at the end of this dissolution process, when these two are mixed together, like milk and water, one feels finally the clear light of death has manifested.

And the attended part of the death process is related to at this point, the indestructible drop which contains the subtle wind and mind at the heart, these two red and white constituents which is normally very very steady, this has opened up. So at the time that the indestructible drop separates, then that is the time where the extremely subtle wind and mind manifest out.

So at the end this clear light of death manifests – this is the most important step of the process, to recognize that clear light.

And that's very precious because it is said, that this clear light of death naturally has an appearance of emptiness, so meditation on emptiness at this point is something extremely profound.

So, Geshela forgot one thing: the mind of white appearance we imagine we achieve the body vajra of a Buddha. Mind of red increase we imagine that we achieved the speech vajra of a Buddha; and mind of black near attainment we imagine we achieve the body vajra of a Buddha [probably mind vajra, but K. said body]. And then we reach the end point of these series of meditation on the Dharmakaya and as we reach the endpoint it is so important to meditate single-pointedly on emptiness.

We think that the appearance of this clear light mind is the same as the appearance of lack of inherent existence.

If we contemplate in this way it is extremely profound.

So in the generation stage this is an active process of bringing that ordinary death experience into the path of the Dharmakaya, the truth body.

Geshela said, there is more to share about this, but at least we have covered sort of in rough.

Geshela said that in terms of the meditation here, we should think that these meditations and stages of dissolution that we have done to arise the Dharmakaya, these are the substitute, they are similar to the dissolution and things that will occur at the death process and lead to this ordinary clear light of death.

But because in the context of the sadhana we are meditating on this connected with the process of meditation on emptiness, it is able to purify the ordinary dissolutions of death, purify ordinary death. At the time when we reach the completion stage, the substitute meditation that happens here is that we have actually brought all of the winds into the central channel and it is said that from being able to bring all of the winds into the central channel, we can manifest the meaning and example clear light. So, the stages of the dissolution and meditation that we do in the context of this meditation in the generation stage these are said to allow us to accumulate the cause, the roots of virtue necessary to be able to bring the winds into the central channel of the completion stage and bring forth meaning and example clear light.

And so, the result similar to the path is the Dharmakaya of the holy deity of Chakrasamvara. And this meditation also an important accumulation of the cause to be able ourselves to achieve the Dharmakaya of Chakrasamvara.

So, there are said to be 6 reasons that we need to meditate on the stages of the path – I said to Geshela, he has all of this in his mind, Khedrup does not. How great would it be if we wrote all of this down and numbered everything and you have the same number that I have so that you come to this – Geshela said he forgot to tell me, so look at the pages and tell me the number [laughing]. Anyway, here we are.

Geshela said that this is actually not in the sadhana, so we spent a lot of time consulting the commentaries putting together and writing down the whole presentation of this. But Geshela, because he was worried he wasn't able to finish in the time allotted, we kind of didn't consult the page number. But anyway, here we are.

So, when we think about the stages of the generation stage we want to think about them in terms of 3 outlines:

- 1) the stages in accordance with the basis of purification
- 2) the stage in accordance with the purifier
- 3) and the stages in accordance with the purified result

And when we come to the end of this meditation, and we have reached the clear light of death, there are 3 things that are important:

- 1) The appearance factor which is clear emptiness
- 2) the ascertainment factor which is the lack of inherent existence
- 3) the experiential factor, which is the experience of great bliss

I am going to say them again really quickly, appearance factor (clear emptiness), ascertainment factor (lack of inherent existence), experience factor (experience of great bliss).

So the mind possessing those 3 characteristics of clear emptiness, lack of inherent existence and great bliss, is the Dharmakaya the truth body of glorious Heruka.

Geshela said, in this way we have been able to explain a little bit about taking death into the path of the Dharmakaya – so if you understand how this works for one deity, you can carry that understanding over to any other deity that you are practicing. And then as you meditate on it, the first time, the second time and more and more, we will be able to bring forth the appearances described in the sadhana, very clearly within our mind. And so, really the 3 lineages of Heruka are very similar in how this meditation goes, it's also very similar in the Vajrayogini system and also some similarities with the Yamantaka system.

Geshela said, thank you very much. That ends our session for today and I think we were able to cover a lot, so this brings us to the next one – the next session will be on Vajrayogini, that will be on the 24th of next month. Remember all recordings are unlocked for you, so that you can watch the previous sessions for the next 5 weeks. And then the next session of Heruka we will begin with taking bardo into Sambhogakaya.

Geshela said, an unusual thing about the Chakrasamvara presentation, at least this sadhana, is that taking death into the path of the Dharmakaya is still in the preliminary outline of the sadhana, rather than the actual practice. But Geshela said, really it should be the actual practice, because bringing the three bodies into the path is the very essence of generation stage. And also, really important to understand how the parts of the sadhana in the context of the two accumulations, so in the beginning part, before this we were engaging in the visualizations making offerings etc. which is the accumulation of merit. And here we are really meditating on profound emptiness which is the accumulation of exalted wisdom. So you have the two accumulations fully.

So thank you very much. Geshela is going leave the class here, so with a happy mind let us dedicate.

