

# Vajrayogini Teachings Geshe Sonam Ngodrup

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So, first of all, Tashi Delek greetings to everybody. Geshela hopes that all is going well in your study and practice of the teachings. So, today's commentary is on the practices related to the Venerable Vajrayogini and on the basis of these teachings, Geshela's hope is really that you can come to a good understanding, to progress in your practice.

So, think we're doing something really to sort of seize the meaning of this human life through this practice and therefore as we listen to the teachings, it should be with a mood of happiness and joy. So, to seize the essence of this human rebirth, what are the practical steps that we can take in order to do that? Well, firstly, we want to train in the sutra side of the path and an effective way to do that is to train in the presentation of the lamrim or the stages of the path to enlightenment. But to seize the essence of this human life, we also want to train in the teachings of tantra, Anuttara Yoga Tantra in particular. And the best way to do this is to begin with learning one sadhana of one yidam or practice very, very well and thoroughly.

And if you understand one sadhana, one self-generation practice really well, then after some time, you may want to sort of expand your practice towards other deities. But because you've understood that first sadhana, then that understanding will make everything sort of more doable for you with regard to other practices as well.

And so then, in terms of the practices of sutra and tantra, we mentioned before a little bit about how there are some differences in terms of how the practices of method and wisdom are accumulated in these two systems. And in particular, we could say that there are key differences between sutra and tantra, between the way that the causes for the Dharmakaya, the truth body are accumulated, and the way that the causes for the Rupakaya, the form bodies are accumulated. So I just want to make sure everyone has their mic turned off because I got some feedback, I think.

So one particular point here, which is really important, is that in terms of the Rupakaya, the form bodies, it is the system of tantra which actually lets you accumulate the substantial cause for that. You won't really find this in other systems. And of course, people talk about the importance of completion stage, but one of the great sort of mahasiddhas or adepts in the teachings known as Ra Lotsawa [?], he actually said that out of the stages of generation and completion, generation stage is the main practice. So you do have that argument too. And Ra Lotsawa's reasoning - and Geshela is just clarifying, this is Ra Lotsawa's opinion - was that the actual substantial cause of this Rupakaya or form body is better expressed in the stage of generation than in the stage of completion. So of course, there are many different scholars with many varying opinions. And of course, until we kind of see these systems as a whole, it might be difficult to say which one.

And in particular, when we speak of Lama Tsongkhapa's presentation of the Vajrayana, the tantric systems of practice, he was widely praised by many great scholars of various lineages in Tibet for his presentation, especially within the completion stage of the [Tibetan?], the illusory body. His presentation was considered very sophisticated.

In fact, this is one of the most sort of important praises by other scholars of Lama Tsongkhapa, that before Lama Tsongkhapa's appearance, the sort of essential teachings related to the illusory body had not yet been clarified. And then when we speak about these differences of sutra and tantra, another

angle that we could look at it through is the differences in the object of abandonment, of what should be set aside. And so then within tantra, of course, we talk about ordinary appearance, and we talk about clinging or grasping at that appearance. These are posited explicitly as objects of abandonment, and you will not find those teachings within the sutra systems.

And another observation, and Geshela is just clarifying that actually this is sort of his observation based on understandings, but it might not be stated so explicitly, is that in the sutra presentation of the path, we can stop the causes, or we address the causes of ordinary samsaric birth, sorry, death, intermediate state. Geshela's laughing at me. Death, intermediate state, and rebirth, but we don't actually kind of... So the causes of that ordinary death, intermediate state, and rebirth are posited as objects of abandonment, and with sutra we address those causes. But in terms of the actual death, bardo, intermediate state, and rebirth themselves as objects of abandonment, and kind of directly trying to pinpoint your cut through those, you only find this in tantra.

So this is one of the essential features of tantra. One of the most important distinctions is it doesn't have to sort of trace all the way back to the causes of ordinary death, intermediate state, and rebirth. In fact, it can take the ordinary death, intermediate state, and rebirth as objects of abandonment in that moment, in its practice. And so the praising of this path of tantra and its essential characteristics, one of the praises comes from a great king of ancient India known as Indrabhuti. Indrabhuti was able to maintain his responsibilities to his wife and his children and family, as well as able to honor all of his many kingly duties, and at the same time reach realization through the practice of tantra without giving up any of those other responsibilities. And it is said, actually, that Indrabhuti, he was the main disciple of the teachings on the Guhyasamaja, or secret assembly tantra, and that he received the transmission of the empowerment and the essential instructions of Guhyasamaja directly from the Buddha. And on that basis, in that lifetime, he was able to transform ordinary death, intermediate state, and rebirth, and reach the state of complete and unsurpassed enlightenment.

So if we remember that, then we will see that we have kind of before us access to a path that contains all of those complete instructions and practices. And if we apply those, we can do well, just as Indrabhuti did. So this was through - because of the essential features of the tantric teachings that Indrabhuti was able to receive those teachings from the Buddha and he was able to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime, precisely because, in particular, these instructions on the generation stage allowed him to transform ordinary death, intermediate state, and rebirth.

So with this kind of in mind, then think that we will do our best to strive well in the practice. And to begin today's session, we will just recite very briefly some preliminary prayers. So today we'll just do the praise to the Buddha, the mandala offering, and refuge and bodhicitta. Geshela's asking me to chant it a little bit quickly. So I won't chant, we'll just, we'll try to recite quickly.

### *Prayers*

So I'm sorry, Dave, in my announcements blathering on, I forgot to mention to you that I sent you an email. I sent it to Manoshi as well. The title of the email is the Eight Stages of Disillusion. So in that email, you'll see an image which Geshela and myself might thought might be helpful for people today as we go through the Eight Stages of Disillusion.

So we'll take a moment to bring forth the motivation. And we'll do this on the basis of placing our body and mind in a state of peace.

### *Meditation*

*Self, others, mountains, the environment, buildings, all of these are completely lacking in inherent existence.*

*There's no pinpointable existence at all.*

*From this sphere of emptiness, then think a beautiful ground, flat, soft, made out of precious substances manifests in the space before me. And then upon that jeweled ground, there's a wonderfully ornamented throne held up by eight snow lions, two in each of the directions.*

*And then upon that, there is a beautiful lotus, kind of separated into four quadrants. And then in the middle of that, there is a beautiful sun cushion. And then on that is the two deities trampled by Vajrayogini.*

*So they're the two deities, the red deity and the smoky colored deity, Jigje and Dutsema. And standing upon them is actually Chakrasamvara, Heruka Chakrasamvara. Embracing Vajrayogini as his consort.*

*And think that Heruka, father and mother, they are encompassing all of the lamas, the spiritual teachers, all of the yidams, the various meditational deities.*

*And then think down at our own level, on either side of us, our mother and father, then behind us, all six types of beings within samsara, including those who are strangers and so forth, but in the aspect of being a human being. And with faith and confidence, they look toward the objects of refuge, Heruka, father.*

*Bring forth a very specific type of bodhichitta, thinking that I will achieve the state of Chakrasamvara so that I can lead all sentient beings to also become Chakrasamvara.*

*Think on the basis of this visualization and bringing forth heartfelt refuge and bodhichitta, lights and nectars emanate from the central deity and fall like a nourishing rain upon all the assembled sentient beings.*

*Think through being showered by these blessings of nectar and light rays, all the assembled sentient beings, difficulties and negativities related to body, difficulties and negativities related to mind are completely washed away, just like a layer of dirt is completely washed away when you take a shower.*

*And think that through this purification, any positive mental quality that I want to achieve through using this newly purified body and mind, I can achieve it.*

*So we'll pause there.*

Geshela had a vast visualization planned today, but he also has a lot of material within the sadhana that he wants to cover.

So he's not sharing the vast visualization today, we will do it another time.

And so this particular visualization, it actually involves, there's a central deity, but also going around, I believe Geshela said counterclockwise around the various petals of the lotus, like in a circle are the various lineage masters, the various lineage lamas.

Going sort of, sort of surrounding the petals or the leaves of the lotus. And then sort of sitting, and then sort of towards the middle is Vajrayogini, Venerable Vajrayogini, then surrounded by the various meditational deities of the four classes of tantra.

And then on the right side, is Shakyamuni Buddha surrounded with various, I guess we could say sutric Buddhas for lack of a better word in their Sambhogakaya or enjoyment body aspect.

And then on the left side, there's actually, I guess, an assembly of deities with Manjushri as the central figure. And then, Geshela said, understanding that there are emanations of Buddhas, but in aspect surrounded by various Bodhisattvas, heroes and heroines, Dakas and Dakinis. Oh yes, and hearers and solitary realizers.

And you can imagine sort of at the bottom layer of that visualization, all of the Dharma protectors, but specifically those Dharma protectors that are beyond the world. So the wisdom Dharma protectors.

And sort of towards the back of all of this, there are beautifully illuminated texts, which one can understand are the root tantras of Chakrasamvara, which of course include the teachings of Vajrayogini. So these in Tibetan, they're called the Tsagyü [?]. These root tantras, you know, they're understood to be the teachings of the Buddha himself, where the practices of Chakrasamvara, Vajrayogini and the other various deities are revealed.

The pages within these texts, which are kind of illuminated in the nature of light, the pages themselves are said to be made of vaidurya, which is like a beautiful blue sapphire. And the letters written upon these blue sapphire pages are said to be gold in color. So this is a vaster visualization, is a bit of an expansion, but sort of taking as its root, the vaster visualization in many of the sadhanas.

And it kind of honors each of the various facets of that longer verse of refuge that we find within the practice. So then, on the basis of bringing forth that refuge and bodhicitta, just a reminder that we are practicing to, for the benefit of all sentient beings, achieve the state of Vajradharahood, in this context, achieve the state of Venerable Vajrayogini.

And so then, in order to be able to achieve or actualize this state of Vajrayogini - this is often spoken about as achieving the state of Dakini land. And when we speak of achieving the state of Dakini land, or Dakpo Kachö, we can speak of an outer Dakpo Kachö, as well as an inner Dakpo Kachö.

So one way of understanding this, the outer and the inner Dakini land, or Dakpo Kachö, is the self-generation practice is the methodology for achieving the outer Dakini land, so the practices of the generation stage. And the practices of the completion stage is the methodology for achieving the inner dakini land, or Dakpo Kachö.

So in this presentation, it's understood that what allows one to actualize the state of Vajrayogini oneself is ultimately the practices of the completion stage systems. But the ripening, the essential ripening agent that allows those completion stage practices to kind of work is the practice of training in the generation stage.

And so then, in terms of where we are in our discussion, it was mentioned that the practice of Vajrayogini is spoken of in terms of 11 yogas. We are now on the sixth of those 11 yogas, and this is in many ways we could say the beginning of the actual or the main body of the practice.

So, just to mention something here, there are some kind of nominal differences between the systems of Chakrasamvara and Vajrayogini practice. But a key similarity is that the actual session, the actual practice is transforming these three bodies into the path of Buddhahood.

And you will find this in the case of other yidam systems as well, right? Transforming the three bodies into the path is so essential. And when we speak about these three bodies or these three kayas, we can speak of the three bodies of the base, the three bodies of the path, and the three bodies of the result.

And the base three bodies, and Geshela said, you know, three bodies can be a little bit misleading, right? We're not, it's a turn of phrase, but it's not actually bodies in a true sense. So, the **base** three bodies is the process of death, bardo, or intermediate state, and rebirth. If people just want me to say bardo instead of intermediate state, I'm happy to do that. Just let me know in the comments.

So, those are the three that are the base.

And the path, which actually allows one to abandon the base of ordinary death, bardo, and rebirth, is this practice of the three bodies.

And we can speak of the practice of the three kayas or the three bodies connected with generation stage and also connected with completion stage.

So, the three path bodies, which allow one to overcome or defeat the three objects of abandonment expressed in the base, what actually defeats those objects of abandonment on the path level is the practices of the three bodies related to the completion stage.

However, preceding those, we must have the ripening factor of training in the three bringings or taking the three bodies into the path according to generation stage.

So we did the base and we did the path and now the result. And the result of course is the three kayas, the three bodies of Buddha, the Dharmakaya or truth body, the Sambhogakaya or enjoyment body, and the Nirmanakaya or emanation body.

And so that's a kind of a brief recap and expression of those aspects of the teaching. But in fact, these essential elements are actually the base that we need to have in our mind to really be competent with this. So everybody turn to the text of the self-generation quick path to great bliss. And we are on outline number six, just at the beginning of outline number six, the yoga of generating oneself as the deity. I'm like reticent to give page numbers because I think there's like different editions of this. In my edition, it's 36. That might not be the case in your edition.

And so, of course, there are going to be many similarities here. And we're actually kind of coming together in the two commentaries in terms of like where we are. So there's a lot of similarities here you'll see with the Chakrasamvara practice. And also the starting off point as we start with this section of the sadhana is one has already gone through the practices of accumulation related to the merit field or related to the field of accumulation. So then, in order for everything to be in place, to practice this sixth section successfully, what we need to do preceding this is to petition the lama to bestow their blessings and then kind of dissolve that into us.

And this is preceded by with a mind of confidence and faith, petitioning all of the lamas of the lineage to dissolve into that figure of the central or root Lama. And so, when one makes this final petition, so all of the various lineage lamas and so forth dissolve into the figure of the root Lama, and then one with a mind of great confidence or faith makes a sincere petition to the root Lama, please bless my mind - the feelings that are coming forth between this figure of the root Lama and yourself are like that of a child and its mother who want to meet. On the basis of this, then the figure of the root Lama decreases, decreases inside. So he becomes smaller or she becomes smaller and smaller and then become in the nature of kind of like red lights and nectars and then this absorbs into you. Yes, and it is actually said that at that moment it's very important to recollect that you've done the instantaneous self-generation.

So actually you recollect this aspect of yourself as Vajrayogini when absorbing the Guru.

And then after that Lama becomes dissolved at your heart, one imagines that one's mind is in the essence of the great bliss, exalted wisdom, but in the aspect of the letter BAM. So I'll use BAM here, the Bengali pronunciation as Geshela has reminded me, all these great adepts, BAM, but I think in the Sadhana you'll see it as Vam, V-A-M.

So as you're going through the practice of this visualization, and the Lama is coming in and dissolving into you and into your mind, one recollects that the lama is also, because of those previous absorptions, the essence of all of the lamas, the yiddams, the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. So the essence of all of those minds is mixing until it becomes one essence with the nature of your mind. And at this moment too, one is experiencing great bliss, emptiness, or great bliss, wisdom, realizing emptiness.

And so the emptiness here, one imagines that one is perceiving that emptiness perfectly clearly, just as if you were holding a flower right in front of your face. And the bliss that one is experiencing is a feeling of blissful ease and happiness, so much greater than anything one has experienced before.

A great Lama, the previous Khyabje Chöden Rinpoche [?], expressed that with this visualization, actually, one imagines that one's mind has become inseparably mixed with the exalted holy minds of the three-time Buddhas, the Buddhas of the past, present and future.

On the basis of one's mind becoming mixed with the essence of the minds of the three-time Buddhas, Chöden Rinpoche expressed that this is a powerful counter force to the objects of abandonment of ordinary appearance and the clinging to that ordinary appearance.

And that counteraction to ordinary appearance and grasping at ordinary appearance is the factor that is going to let you generate that genuine divine pride of being the deity, without trepidation. So in this way, we've just closed up some of the aspects of section number five, and now we really are on section number six.

So Geshela, sharing with some of his Dharma friends about their practice of the self-generation, they've said that this practice of the self-generation is very joyful, because one, in the context of this practice, travels to a place that one has never been before, and one becomes a version of themselves that is so much better than what one has ever experienced before. And for this reason, the practice is very joyful.

Of course, bringing forth this feeling for the practice for the sadhana immediately is maybe not so easy, but on the basis of consistent and gradual practice, this will be possible.

And not doing the visualizations passively, like looking at a TV screen, for example, but feeling like these are real experiences that are unfolding, that you are really there. This is very important to develop a genuine engagement with the practice.

So this brings us to section number six, the yoga of generating oneself as the deity. And in most of the commentaries, it says that this is where the section of the actual practice begins.

*This very syllable BAM expands  
and becomes equal to the extent of space,  
whereby the entire environment and all its inhabitants  
become the nature of bliss and emptiness.*

And don't be passive about the visualization of this VAM or BAM letter. One must have the awareness, it's not so easy to do, but one must have the awareness that this BAM is the essence of all of the holy minds of the Buddhas of the past, present, and future, three time Buddhas.

But so as this BAM expands, right, it begins at the heart level, and it gradually expands outward and outward. And at that point, it encompasses your body. And so my question to Geshela was, one is in the aspect of Vajrayogini, right? He's like, yes, we covered that. I always like to check. So it expands and expands, and one's entire body is within that. And then one's body becomes in the essence of BAM.

So your body actually dissolves. Geshela said it's a little bit like when you have snow, and all of a sudden a big rush of water comes, so it just dissolves into that BAM. And then one thinks that this BAM continues to increase in size until it encompasses the entire world and its inhabitants.

Indeed, the entire universe becomes encompassed within this BAM, which is in the nature of great bliss, wisdom.

And if you have the time, ideally within your practice, you will spend a few minutes here until your mind really becomes mixed with this meditation.

So we think that, remember, as that BAM reaches its maximum size, the worlds and their inhabitants have become the essence of this BAM, have transformed because the essence of this BAM is through realizing emptiness, the nature of great bliss, wisdom.

And so now you have this sort of massive, all-encompassing BAM. So then the next practice of that is that the BAM again becomes smaller and smaller, begins to shrink. And here you will find a big difference between the Gelug and Sakya presentations of the Vajrayogini practice.

So in the Sakya system, the BAM just dissolves into emptiness, like a rainbow into the sky, at the point that it's that full size, that it's that massive size. In the Gelug tradition, one shrinks it and then one moves on to the meditation of taking death into the Dharmakaya. To be very clear, not stating that one or the other, that the Sakya or the Gelug presentation is good or bad, just drawing attention to all of you, that there are different ways of doing this. And of course, each of these lineages will have reasons for that instruction.

Lama Tsong Khapa in his presentation, it is very clear that our training in the generation stage ultimately is preparation for meditating on the completion stage. And in the completion stage, of course, ultimately what we want to do is to be able to gather the subtle prana, the subtle winds, into the central channel at the heart.

For this reason, it's important too, once the BAM has become very large, to then shrink it in size, because this is a visualization that is a ripening agent for being able to gather those winds at the central channel.

So Geshela will continue now with reading through the sadhana and then he'll pause again to make some comments.

*So once again, it gradually contracts from the edges,  
becoming a minute syllable BAM.  
From the bottom, it gradually absorbs up into the nada.*

So the nada, Geshela said, is that configuration that sits at the top of the BAM letter. So you'll see this, I think, in the image that hopefully Dave has shared with you in the chat. If he was able to find it, my fault. If not, I sent him the email last minute.

So in the Chakrasamvara practice, as one goes through the dissolution of the nada, if I understood Geshela correctly, it's like - Sorry. So it wasn't easy. So in the nada practice of the Chamkrasamvara, but Geshela says you can apply it here to the Vajrayogini, one, as one does the dissolution of the nada, that the nada is made out of like tiny particles that are about the size of the tip of the finer hairs that are growing on your head. And that these particles kind of are almost in a way coagulated and then separated out and then decrease in number. And that in this way, the nada dissolves.

So what is this meditation symbolizing? It's symbolizing that we talk about when we're trying to meditate on emptiness, we look for some pinpointable essence, but we can't find it. But really what's happening in the beginning stages is that, that appearance of that pinpointable essence is getting more and more minute, just like in that visualization.

So then the BAM has dissolved into the nada, and then the nada dissolves. And at the time that the nada dissolves, it becomes that Dharmakaya of individual bliss and emptiness. We could also say the clear light of death is manifesting at that point. So you actually see that in terms of the words and the practice, it's very brief, this first meditation taking death into the Dharmakaya.

And if at this moment, as much as possible, one can recollect that one's empty, that it has not even a trace of inherent existence, this is very helpful and meaningful. And this is one of actually the main purposes of this meditation is to help us visualize and meditate in a way that we understand that there is not even an atom of true or inherent existence.

So, there are sort of four features related to the generation stage that are very important.

So the object of bliss is emptiness. First recollect this, and then there's these four features that the appearance factor is clear emptiness, and the ascertainment factor is the lack of inherent existence. And then those are together with this third, which is the objective experience of great bliss. And the fourth point or the fourth characteristic is the resultant time deity.

So in this case, we are thinking in terms of Vajrayogini, so the resultant time Vajrayogini, whose mind has completely abandoned the two obscurations and their imprints.

So these four characteristics of the generation stage are very important. And in particular, with this context of the meditation of bringing death into the path of Dharmakaya, right?

So:

- 1) the appearance factor of clear emptiness,
- 2) the ascertainment factor of the lack of inherent existence.
- 3) the objective experience of great bliss.
- 4) the resultant time, in this case, Vajrayogini, whose mind has completely abandoned the obscurations and their imprints.

So really, as we meditate, we want to try to have a feeling for those four points as well.

And so in terms of that first point, this appearance factor of clear emptiness, we can think of that appearance of clear emptiness as just a clarity understanding that there is no true or inherent existence whatsoever.

And so as one kind of trains in this, when we say clear emptiness, it means that the emptiness that one apprehends, that one is comprehending, is so much clearer than that that was ever seen before.

So if one doesn't have this appearance factor of clear emptiness at the time of death, then the type of death one experiences will become an ordinary death. If, as the practice is unfolding, one is able to kind of recollect the aspect of this appearance factor, then that death can be transformed into the path. So there's a significant opportunity here.

And actually, if one is able to really kind of fully bring forth that experience within the generation stage, one will also be able to practice the completion stage here. And if this is done completely correctly, and if one is really able to experience this, actually one can bypass having to go through the bardo and directly sort of begin that process of reaching enlightenment.

And there's also some disagreements as to where these four features of the appearance, ascertainment, experience, and resultant time are supposed to be recollected.

But Geshela thinks actually at this point, kind of at the beginning of this practice of the three bringings is a good time, because one is not yet sort of in a meditative equipoise on the other points.

And also, in order to be able to kind of cultivate these four characteristics at the correct time, it's very important to be familiar with them and to develop a motivation to be able to practice them completely at the beginning of the practice. And so, in terms of remembering these four characteristics or features of the generation stage and recollecting them at the appropriate time, if one does [has] a firm motivation to do that, it will unfold naturally.

Just like some people, if before they fall asleep, they develop a strong determination, I'm going to get up at 4 a.m. or I'm going to get up at 5 a.m., they are able to do that.

And so now we are going to go through these stages of dissolution with the eight signs.

So an interesting thing to know here too is that in terms of these eight phases of dissolution with the BAM syllable, it is said that the system of the dissolution and what it represents in Vajrayogini is actually exactly the same as it is expressed in the five deity Heruka or Chakrasamvara practice. And in fact, when we talk about these various, the eight dissolutions and their signs and so forth, it is very important – there are 25 coarse factors of the body, for example, the five aggregates and so forth that are also quite important.



And so in terms of these eight stages, they have their eight signs or appearances. So the first of these is the appearance of mirages. The next one is the appearance of smoke. The next one is the appearance of fireflies or sparks within the smoke. The next is the appearance of a sputtering butter lamp. And so these four of the signs of the mirages, the smoke, the fireflies, and the butter lamp, they're connected in this process to the dissolution of the four elements.

And then as one continues, one meditates on the white lights and red lights, and these bring one to meditations on the white, red, black appearances, and finally, the clear light of death. And so these eight signs and so forth, these are something that we should familiarize ourselves with if we want the stages of the death process to unfold in a relaxed way when that time comes.

If we're able to, although before we reach the stage where we're dying, when we're passing away, if we're able to train in these eight dissolutions and the corresponding signs, what will happen is at the time of death, we'll be able to recognize them, and then that can become an opportunity for practice. And if we're able to use these kinds of methods to actually be able to tap in to our extremely subtle mind right now, even before the time when one's death is becoming more imminent, right n this very life, just like Lord Milarepa, just like Gyelwa Ensapa, and just like Khedrup Losang Gyatso we will be able to achieve the enlightenment in this body, in this lifetime.

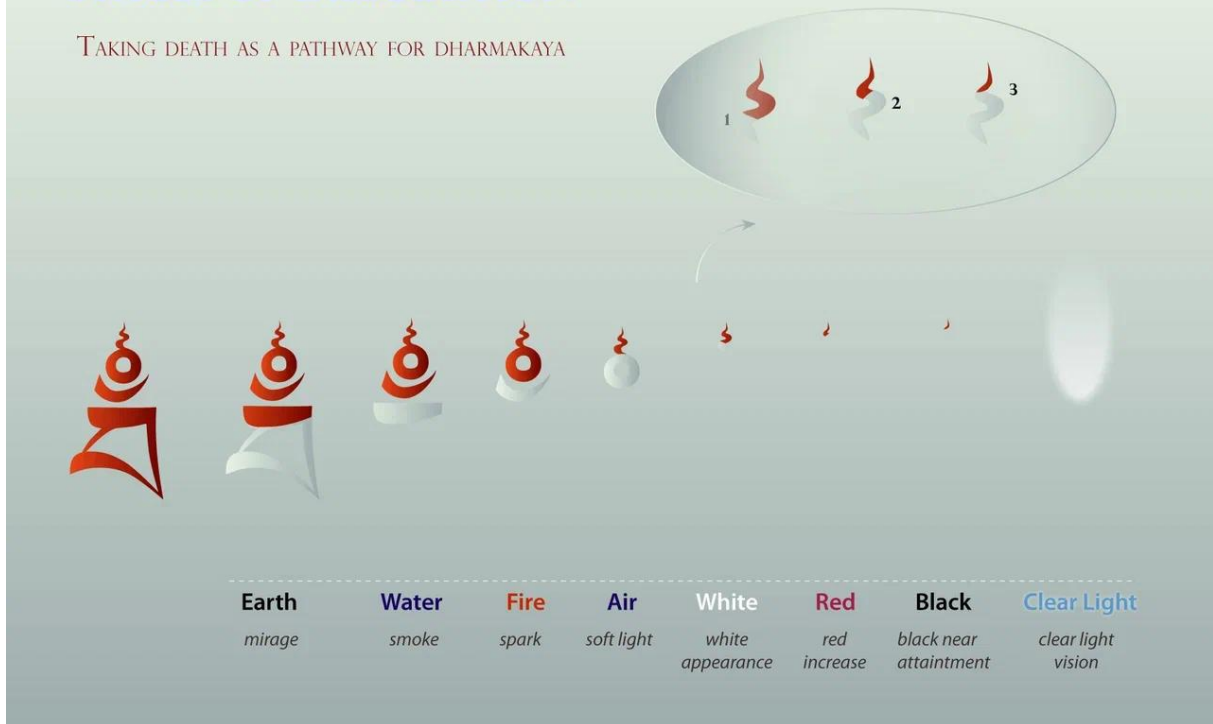
And so, of course, this practice of the dissolutions is tied to different visualizations according to the practice that you are doing, but as today we are doing Vajrayogini, we will describe this in terms of the BAM syllable.

And so, as an ordinary being, normally the experiences of these dissolutions and signs is something that is driven by karma. But then through the power of familiarity, by the time one gets to the completion stage, one is able to actually kind of tap in and unfold these experiences. So, remember, at this point, then, we are having this letter BAM.

We now have this minute letter BAM as the beginning stage of this visualization. Does everybody have that? Maybe we could bring this up on the screen. I don't know if it's possible, of the eight dissolutions.

# STAGES OF DISSOLUTION

TAKING DEATH AS A PATHWAY FOR DHARMAKAYA



And so, at that point, with this minute letter BAM, then one begins to dissolve the bottom parts of that, and then one is thinking the mirage-like appearance is manifesting. The mirage-like appearance is manifesting.

And if one can, at the moment that one is imagining this dissolution, and one thinks the earth element is dissolving, and there's this mirage-like appearance, if one can take a moment to kind of recollect emptiness, this is very valuable.

And, as one is sort of doing that point, one also remembers that the next appearance that's going to come is the dissolution of the water element, and that is tied to a smoke-like appearance. And, from the very beginning, too, as one is doing this meditation, one wants to think that, as I reach the time of death, I will be able to recognize the clear light that manifests. This is also very important.

And so, what's happening here is, as we come to the next stage of the earth, the water, and then the fire, what we see is the body of the BAM, which is describing that sort of bottom part, it is dissolving into the head of BAM. And the head can be understood as that sort of crescent shape, and the circle, and the squiggle above it.

Another thing, too, when we speak about this meditation, and we say that the water element is dissolving into the fire element, it's not literally like water is dissolving into fire. That's a misunderstanding. It's important to clarify. If you read the words of the sadhana, you might think that, okay, like water is dissolving into fire. This is actually incorrect. It's not like the water is literally dissolving into the fire. What's happening is, the potential, or the power, of the water element is becoming completely minute, and then gradually dissolving and because of that, the fire element becomes more prominent. So this is important.

And it's not like when you're meditating, you're going to be worried about, oh, I better not think that it's actually dissolving. It's just, like Geshela was explaining, you just have to know that, right? We need to know what the words actually mean.

So there are a lot of explanations about these 25 components of elements, and also these four elements here, and about how the power or potential of one element completely kind of dissolves, and then that's eclipsed by the next element. And hopefully, we can come to a more detailed discussion of that later.

So Geshela was taking us back to the earth disillusion, and he's explaining that when we say mirage, there's different kinds of mirages. The particular type of mirage that we want to think of here is like when the sun is beating down really strongly on the sand, and it looks like there's a lake or some kind of shimmering water.

That's the kind of mirage we should be seeing.

And then, as we have the body, so again, that's that bottom part, that's what the word body means, of the BAM dissolving into the head of the BAM, then we have that water element as prominent, and there is a smoke-like appearance. And at the moment that one is doing that, one thinks that next is going to come the fire element, and there is going to be a firefly. Sometimes here it says spark, but it's really like a firefly appearance.

So Geshela said that whichever kind of presentation is more comfortable for you, if you think it's like the appearance of fireflies, or if you think it's like tiny sparks above like a campfire or something, whichever of those two you prefer, you can do that. Yeah, so it's just like a tiny kind of aspect of brightness, like a spark.

And as one thinks about those sparks or those fireflies, one thinks that this appearance is lacking true existence, and one thinks that then the next one will unfold. And then one thinks, okay, we have closed this visualization of the - Okay, I see what he's saying. Okay, sorry about that. So when one comes to that smoke-like appearance, and one comes to that firefly-like appearance, at the time that one is seeing that appearance, one recollects that the previous one has ceased. So, when you see that smoke-like appearance, you think, the mirage-like appearance has ceased.

And also one thinks, when I come to the end of these dissolutions, I will train my mind so that I am able to recognize the clear light.

So then, the next stage is when the head of BAM dissolves into the crescent moon, then that's the fire dissolving into wind, and that is the time of the firefly-like appearance. And when the fire-like appearance is coming clearly into your mind, one recollects the smoke-like appearance has ceased. And one thinks, next, quickly, is going to come the sputtering butter lamp appearance. When I come to the final stage of these dissolutions, I will recognize the clear light when it manifests. That's the things your mind is recollecting.

And so, when we talk about sort of that last part of the body of the BAM dissolving into the moon, the *datse* is the word that is used for the moon in Tibetan. *Datse* means that point when there's just a sliver of the moon and it is waxing. So the sliver of the moon, but not when it's waning, when it's waxing, getting bigger and bigger.

So next, we come to the crescent moon dissolving into the drop, or the *tigle*. So, the crescent moon dissolves into the *tigle*, the sign of wind dissolves into consciousness, and the appearance that manifests is the sputtering butter lamp appearance.

One thinks the firefly-like appearance has ceased, and now there is the sputtering butter lamp appearance, and soon the radiant white appearance will manifest.

When I come to the end of these dissolutions, I will recognize the clear light when it manifests, just like a child will recognize its mother. So next, is the *tigle* dissolving into the drop of the *nada*, and this is the radiant white appearance. Now here is one of the details of, I told you at the beginning, there's some details of the completion stage that will come here. One understands that actually at this point that the *tigle* is dissolving into the *nada*, this means also that the white *bodhicitta*, that white reproductive substance at the crown chakra begins to enter the central channel and descends to the

heart. At that moment, the first emptiness is experienced and the radiant white appearance manifests. So we speak about red and white drops or red and white tige a lot in tantra. One thing that is really important to understand is that these red and white drops have three manifestations, coarse, subtle, and extremely subtle.

The most subtle aspect of the red and white drops is said to be held at the indestructible drop at the heart. And that indestructible drop at the heart, there's many sorts of knots where the important chakras or the important channels are meeting, but that is right in the most central channel. Some of these red and white drops, they are not the very subtle manifestations that is going to absorb into the indestructible drop, but actually aspects of these red and white drops in their coarser expression are said to pervade parts of the body, the blood, and so forth.

And the middling one, so not the coarse, not the extremely subtle, but the subtle, this one is said to kind of abide at the crown chakra. And this is the one that is dripping down and entering the central channel. So at the time when one is approaching the death process, there are a lot of internal processes that are happening, right? And because everything is going to be eventually absorbing into this indestructible drop at the heart, then the middling, sorry, the middling subtle white drops, actually when that process begins, they start to drip from that point at the crown.

So when the white drops that are dripping from that point of the head, so the middling subtle white drops are dripping at the point of the head, reach the extremely subtle white drop that abides in the heart chakra at that indestructible drop, it is said that the appearance that manifests is the radiant white appearance.

And so then, at that time, then it is said that the tige dissolves into the nada. And so then, there is the nada itself, which is left behind as one comes to this white appearance. And that nada has three curves. The first of these curves has dissolved and there's two left. So after that white appearance, then we're talking about that second curve, so the middle curve within that squiggle, that nada, there is this mind of red increase.

Geshela is explaining that this mind of red increase is quite similar – so there's this red drop or element at the navel, as it comes upwards and comes close to the red element at that indestructible drop, then that red increase manifests. At the time that these middling subtlety white drops and red drops have approached this indestructible drop at the heart, at the time that they completely absorb into the most subtle red and white drops at that indestructible drop at the heart, the black near attainment manifests. So this is the seventh of these dissolutions.

And at that point, there is a little bit of mindfulness or like we could say, like kind of self-awareness. In the first kind of part of the unfolding of this experience of the black near attainment.

But as one comes to the end of this experience of the black near attainment, that aspect of mindfulness, or I think we could even call it like a self-awareness that completely dissolves. And is in this particular instance, that lack of self-awareness or lack of mindfulness, a negative thing - we always usually say mindfulness is important in meditation. No, when you're doing the meditation on these disillusionings, it's actually considered a positive thing. [??]

It's said that if you can rest in that state where awareness has fallen away, what this will actually do is help you to recognize and embrace the clear light when it manifests.

And then of course, following this aspect of the black near attainment, we have this fourth emptiness, which is this completely vibrant experience of the clear light. And if we're careful, when the clear light of death manifests at this point, actually, this is a point where emptiness can be held within the mind.

This is a time where one can directly perceive emptiness. And so of course, at this point, right, if you're just sort of in that clear light, and you just like sort of think I'm seeing emptiness in that mind, that won't unfold the experience completely. But if one has previously trained in emptiness, then this can really lead to realization.

So if we can recollect this emptiness, if we can recollect this emptiness, this great bliss on the level of experience, thinking I am the Dharmakaya, then one has the divine pride of being the Dharmakaya, the truth body of the Buddha.

And also, the clear light that manifests on the level of realization, it is very similar to the clear light of death that is experienced by ordinary beings. So the mind in generation stage that is directly experiencing that clear light, this is said to be similar to that mind that ascends to the example clear light, and the meaning clear light as expressed in the completion stage.

And in terms of the resultant aspect, the resultant aspect that is being experienced at this point in the meditation is like the Dharmakaya, the truth body of Venerable Vajrayogini. So in this way, one has taken death into the path of the Dharmakaya in this meditation. So it's not stated clearly perhaps in the commentaries or in the sadhana, but how can this meditation kind of overcome ordinary death? What's the actual reason for that?

Geshela would say that the reason is because normally when we come to the clear light of death and we're resting in that experience, what is going to compel one into the bardo and then into subsequent rebirth? It's karma, right? It's karma that is pushing one into the bardo and then the subsequent rebirth. But that karma needs to be kind of sprouted or nourished; the fertilizer for that has to be an experience of an affliction, like attachment, and then that attachment will act as like the water and the fertilizer which has that sprout

At the time that one is meditating on taking death into the path of Dharmakaya as in this practice, because one is focused on that transformation attachment has nowhere to come forth, so it can't ripen the karma that is going to propel one into bardo and rebirth.

So why can't the attachment come forth that will ripen that karma which will compel into bardo and rebirth? Well, because we know that attachment is connected with the root of all of the afflictions, which is the ignorance grasping at the self, but when one is doing the meditation on taking death into the path of the Dharmakaya, one is meditating holding within the mind emptiness, which is the direct antidote to that ignorance grasping at the self. So, therefore neither attachment nor any other affliction can manifest.

Geshela said you won't find that in the commentary, but this is the reason why from his thinking about it, why he thinks that this is an effective antidote.

Because we have to say the reason, like how can we defeat ordinary death through this type of meditation, right? We want to know that so that's what Geshela thought about that.

Of course, there's many branch practices like maintaining divine pride of oneself as the deity, and doing the visualizations and so forth, but he thinks that this is the main reason.

In this way Geshela said we've covered these stages of disillusion and the eight signs and so forth very briefly, right? We went through it quite quickly, but of course as we go on we'll come to more discussion of these because it's very important.

So in terms of where we're leaving off in the sadhana, we're leaving off in the sadhana just at the point where one has achieved the incomparable Dharmakaya of Venerable Vajrayogini.

And to reiterate, as one trains in the practices of the generation stage before one arises in the deity as the deity, it is extremely important to imagine that one's samsaric body, one's contaminated body has dissolved into emptiness, and then from that emptiness one arises as the deity. You cannot superimpose the deity sort of on top of this ordinary body.

Some scholars sort of from training in these meditations, they've reflected that it's quite easy to dissolve one's ordinary body into emptiness - like I've got that meditation. But then just from that state of emptiness to kind of spontaneously arise as the deity that seems like something that's a little more difficult.

Because there's just this sphere of emptiness, right? And we're trying to arise in something a little bit like a physical form of a deity.

And if you've got no stuff to make that physical form out of how do you rise as the deity, right?

So there's this kind of qualm that can arise. So some scholars say that actually at that moment that one has a completely dissolved the coarser body, one has the manner of bringing forth that appearance of emptiness.

So at the time that there is that emptiness, there is also that mind which is experiencing that emptiness and also that mind's aspect of emptiness.

So the mind is kind of cognizing emptiness. But that mind cognizing emptiness can that necessarily dawn as a deity and if it can't what is actually the basis for arising as the deity?

Some scholars say that there's a - so in the Tibetan it's [Tibetan words] = so there is actually an appearance of the mind realizing emptiness It is that appearance of the mind realizing emptiness that is like the seed or the basis from which the self-generation can arise

This is not an easy point at all in fact it's a source of some discussion So from the sphere of emptiness one arises as the deity. We see this in so many sadhanas or rituals, but to actually arise the deity within that context is not such an easy thing

So there's two great scholars related to the tantric teachings Changcha Ropay Dorje [?] and Yongzeng Yeshe Gyaltzen [?] So Changcha Ropay Dorje asked Kachin Yeshe Gyaltzen [?] about this particular point and he wasn't satisfied = so it's not Losang Yeshe Gyaltzen[?] it's another lama called Kachin Yeshe Gyaltzen [?] He wasn't satisfied with Kachin Yeshe Gyaltzen's answer. And his holiness has pointed this out at his holiness the 14th Dalai Lama has pointed this out at several teachings and of course Yongzeng Yeshe Gyaltzen [?] is a great master I'm not trying to criticize him but just a contention about this particular point.

**So then in terms of what is actually arising as the deity from that emptiness we talked about the appearance of the mind realizing emptiness as the basis for the arising of that deity.**

So then accordingly that concludes Geshela's explanation so please pay attention accordingly.

Thank you that is where we shall leave the brief presentation for today. Let's do a quick dedication

