

Heruka Chakrasamvara Teachings

with Geshe Sonam Ngodrup

Thirteenth Chakrasamvara teaching – 23.04.2024

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Tashi delek, greetings to everybody. As we gather here today, we should have the awareness that we are gathered together for something meaningful, something with a great purpose. We are gathered together not just for ourselves, but for both ourselves and others, indeed for all six types of beings within samsara, for the purpose of being able to lead them to the state of ultimate happiness. In order to accomplish this we ourselves must achieve perfect Buddhahood. To do this we need a method, or strategy, by which we can actualize that Buddhahood.

In terms of the strategy for actualizing Buddhahood, if we speak from the standpoint of sutra, there are certainly the complete set of teachings of method and wisdom, bodhicitta, emptiness and many other instructions which are very beneficial. But there is one opportunity that is lacking. With sutra we can certainly cultivate, using the coarse mind, meditation on emptiness and so forth. But if we rely on sutra alone, it does not have the techniques to unlock the subtle mind, and to place that subtle mind on emptiness.

But this isn't just the case with sutra. In fact, we could make the same case for the three lower classes of tantra – that they cannot access the subtle-most level of wind and mind, and use this to hold the object of emptiness in meditation. Without being able to tap into that, even if we use the practices of method and wisdom, we will not be able to realize the final goal (of Buddhahood).

If we think about our teacher Shakyamuni Buddha, he accumulated merit for three incalculable eons (or kalpas), and on that basis brought forth bodhicitta. However, when he was meditating on the profound emptiness, even having generated bodhicitta and being a bodhisattva on the highest level, there came a point where he could not progress any further. At this point there came a blessing, in which the Buddhas and bodhisattvas interceded with a message: you must receive abhisheka (empowerment) and enter into the practice of anuttarayoga tantra. Without this, full enlightenment is not possible.

Of course, because of all the previous work that Buddha Shakyamuni had done, all of the previous imprints of his practice, he did not have to go methodically through all the practices of generation

and so forth that we're exploring, but it is said that through entering into the vehicle of highest yoga tantra, he was actually able to reach enlightenment during one part of the night. So, we could say that that night he was able to receive ripening empowerment, and that by morning he had achieved anuttara samyaksambodhi – complete and perfect Buddhahood. Of course these may perhaps be contentious issues, about what is actually required to complete the path or not. Slowly, slowly Geshela will explain those. But it is important for us to appreciate how rare it is to have the opportunity to enter this supreme and very complete path, and how fortunate it is that we have the opportunity to study and practice these teachings.

Since we have a lot to cover today, we will now briefly do the preliminary prayers (Praise to Shakyamuni Buddha, Short Mandala Offering, Refuge and Bodhicitta, and Praise to Heruka).

Then, on the basis of our having taken refuge and generated bodhicitta, Geshela would like to lead a very concise, brief protection wheel meditation. We'll go through this quite quickly, but hopefully you'll take something away, and you can try this using more time at home.

Brief Meditation:

First, let us begin by placing the body and mind in a state of relaxation.

Imagine that from the sphere of emptiness there arises a beautiful jeweled ground, together with the appropriate seats, upon which are situated glorious Heruka father and mother.

As we hold them in our mind, we do our best to bring forth bodhicitta. Think: in order to be able to meaningfully achieve the welfare of all sentient beings, I myself must actualize the state of the Buddhahood of Heruka.

Think, father and mother Heruka Chakrasamvara, please by this meditation come to the crown of my head, melt into beautiful light and nectars, then dissolve and absorb into me. Think that from their coming to my heart and absorbing there, they become inseparably one with my extremely subtle body and mind, and that in this way I receive the blessings of the yidam, Buddhas, bodhisattvas, dakas, and dakinis, and so forth.

Through this my channels, chakras, winds (prana) and drops are completely blessed. They are without obstacle or obscuration, so that I can use these aspects of the subtle body in the necessary way. All of their potential is activated.

We will pause here.

(Geshela said that, originally he intended to follow this with the meditation on the protection wheel. However, realizing how much he wants to cover today, he wonders whether it may not be better to begin with the teaching now, and if there is a balance of time at the end, we can finish with that meditation.)

So then, in order for the self, or the “I”, to achieve the enlightened state of Heruka, we have to engage in the practice of the generation state, which ripens our continuum, then follow that with the practice of the actual attainment, which is the completion stage.

Just to speak for a moment about the generation and completion stages, if we consider all sentient beings as a group, within that group probably ninety percent must absolutely proceed through the generation stage before engaging in the completion stage. And it is in fact for this reason that among other scholars, when Lama Tsongkhapa talks about the generation and completion stages, he says that it is very important to first proceed through the generation stage. So, we need to ripen through the generation stage, a little bit like a fruit. If we don't make sure that the conditions are there for the fruit to be ripe, then when we bite into it, it won't have a sweet and pleasant taste, for example. In other words, the point is that we need to proceed through the generation stage before we reach the completion stage. And so therefore we need to have the aspiration to be stable in both the practice of the generation and the completion stages. And we could add to that if one engages in the generation stage well and is successful in that, then actually one will be able to work successfully with the completion stage.

And so, then, when we spoke about how we divide the generation stage, we spoke about the preliminary practice, the actual session, and the practice which comes at the conclusion. Furthermore, when we speak about the division of these practices, for example, we talk about the beginning and the activities of the beginning of the session. Now that phrase might be specific to Chakrasamvara, but of course the general idea of the preliminary, you'll find in all yidam systems. And so within that we understand that we're talking about the preliminary practices, which are divided into the common general preliminaries, and the uncommon, extraordinary preliminaries.

Geshela says that in terms of the common general preliminaries, we did a pretty good job of going through all of those. In the Luipa system, the second set are called "uncommon, extraordinary preliminaries", but in the other systems of Chakrasamvara they are called the "branch yogic practices". The essence of these is the same when we look at the Luipa and Ghantapa systems, except for the differences in the names "uncommon, extraordinary" and "branch yogic" practices.

In addition, Geshela believes that in the Luipa system four "uncommon, extraordinary" practices are enumerated, whereas in the Ghantapa system branch yogic practices there are only three. Within these two systems, the third point of the Luipa system is the meditation on the protection wheel. We did previously briefly cover this meditation, but Geshela would like to come to a more extensive presentation of this. So, his idea is to take some aspects of the meditation on the protection wheel as it occurs in the practice of Vajrabhairava, and apply these to the protection wheel practice in the Luipa Chakrasamvara system. And then, also, in addition to that, we didn't discuss extensively the blessing of the aggregates, "cognitive stimulators", and senses bases (i.e., the skandhas, dhatus and ayatanas). We just did that briefly as well.

Now we have seen that the uncommon, extraordinary preliminaries are placed by Luipa in the context of the accumulations, of which there are two, that of merit and that of wisdom. As we have discussed previously, in the sadhana the collection of merit occurs through the visualization of the field of accumulation, engaging in the seven branch practices, and so forth. And then the collection of exalted wisdom is accomplished through the practice of the three bringings – of ordinary rebirth, death and bardo into the path of the three kayas of a Buddha.

So, going back to where we are in the Luipa Heruka sadhana, we can confidently say that, in terms of the commentary on this practice so far, we have completed the preliminary parts of the sadhana. And, having reached this point, we are ready to begin the actual practice.

In terms of the actual practice, where we are is, where we have reached in terms of the commentary, is taking bardo into the path of sambhogakaya. But that being said, we really first need to begin by placing our attention and effort on bringing death into the path of Dharmakaya. We have covered that, but Geshela is saying that actually we need to revisit that again and again and again, and also that there are many important additional details he will continue to share with you about this important topic.

So why is it so important to engage in this meditation of taking death into the path of the Dharmakaya? Because if we do not practice this meditation, then at the time of death, when the spontaneous, fundamental clear light is arising, we will not be able to use that for a Dharma purpose. We will not be able to use the experience of clear light at that time to go in a positive direction, a direction of attainment. And this is true generally, in that this fundamental, innate clear light is actually experienced by all sentient beings.

So, as part of the meditation on bringing death to the path of Dharmakaya, when the various elements dissolve into each other, culminating in the experience of clear light, this is something that is very similar to emptiness. In other words, it is certain that in the context of the experience of clear light unfolding at this time, an experience which is very similar to emptiness will arise, as the extremely subtle wind and mind unfold at the time of death for all sentient beings.

Some say that this experience is *actually* the direct experience of emptiness, but in our system what we say is that it is not emptiness itself that is experienced, but rather something similar to emptiness. Nonetheless, because what is experienced is close to, or is a semblance of, emptiness, if one is able to settle in that experience, one may also experience this as an appearance of the “object of negation”. Then, from that one may unfold emptiness. And so, at that time, the “non-affirming object of negation” (asking for a clarification on this difficult point, and continuing) If one is able to unfold that experience which is similar to emptiness, as an actual road to emptiness itself, this is like the mother meeting the son. From this experience, some people can actually have a Pramana, or an actual valid cognition of emptiness. But even if the meditation does not result in that in this life, one will be still well-placed to continue toward that realization, that Pramana, in subsequent lifetimes. So, because these points are very important, we have to revisit them again and again.

So now we come to the main body of the practice, or the actual practice. This can be divided into three points: first, taking ordinary bardo into the path of the sambhogakaya; second, generation of the magnificent palace, and third, the way to meditate on the four yogas. (If you have the Berzin translation, this is actually included and he gives some extra detail to the outline as well.)

Now we will look directly at the sadhana and explore the first point, taking bardo into the path of the sambhogakaya. The self-generation relating to this point is explained with the short verse beginning of p. 34:

*Within voidness into which all appearances have been gathered like this,
My mind takes the form of a nada squiggle
Standing upright, very thin, white with a tinge of red,
And remains up in the air.*

At this moment when the clear light of death is manifesting, as one is about enter into the intermediate state, the extremely subtle wind and mind have manifested. On the basis of these, one will “go to” this place of the bardo, the in-between state. So, at this point in the sadhana, as part of bringing ordinary death into the path of the Dharmakaya, we have already dissolved the element of earth into water, water into fire, and so forth, and having completed the “eight dissolutions” there is this sphere of emptiness, also known as the *appearance factor*. We are now talking about the first of the four qualities (or factors) of the generation stage, which produces a sense of mental ease and happiness (at the beginning of the self-generation). If one does not have the appearance factor, this clear emptiness, then the clear light of death cannot arise. So, this appearance factor, and the experience of that, is something that is very important.

The second of the four, the *ascertainment factor*, is firm recognition of the lack of inherent existence. Without the ascertainment factor in place, then this meditation cannot become the opposing factor to inherent existence. It will not become the antidote to samsara. Actually, many different scholars have taken issue with Lama Tsongkhapa’s presentation of the generation stage, arguing that the generation stage itself cannot become an antidote to samsara. Lama Tsongkhapa replied that it actually can become an antidote to samsara, because the generation stage begins from within emptiness, or from the sphere of emptiness. And also, in the generation stage there is this ascertainment which affirms the lack of inherent existence.

The third, or *objective factor*, is the experience of great bliss. If one does not have this objective experience of great bliss, the practice cannot become an actual practice of anuttarayoga. So, for the practice to become one of highest yoga tantra, the objective experience of great bliss is necessary.

And then, finally think that this mind which has been achieved, that has abandoned the obscurations to liberation (the kleshas), and to omniscience (ignorance), together with their imprints, that this mind arises is the resultant time glorious Heruka, the actual Chakrasamvara. Without this fourth factor of *divine pride*, this practice will not become an actual process of bringing rebirth, death and bardo into the path of the three bodies of a Buddha. And so, this fourth factor of divine pride is an actual cause for achieving the resultant time Heruka.

But, to keep these four factors in mind when one is engaged in the meditation on bringing death into the path of the Dharmakaya can be a challenging thing. To become familiar with this, we can contemplate in the following way. Think that, as we are experience the clear light of death at the end of the eight dissolutions, we also simultaneously experience the appearance of voidness, or emptiness – so that the clear light of death and emptiness are both present at the same time. Then, have the ascertainment that this emptiness is actually the *lack of inherent existence*. Understanding

this gives rise to the experience of great bliss. Finally, cultivate divine pride that “I am the inseparable union of this great bliss and emptiness. I am the resultant time Heruka”.

What we have presented here is very brief explanation of the four factors and their vital importance to the meditation on bringing ordinary death into the path of Dharmakaya. These four factors as an integral part of the meditation should, because of their importance, be contemplated extensively.

Also, regarding this meditation, it is helpful to consider the following. If we have an important thing to achieve in the morning, then the night before we’ll think “I have to wake up, arise from my slumber at 5am – it’s an important day.” For a lot of people, just as one is about to fall asleep, having it in mind that I have this important thing to do, I must wake up at 5am, that is enough to enable you to arise at the correct time. So, in a similar way, as you are meditating on taking death into the path of the Dharmakaya, if you set up the intention that when I arise, when I do this meditation on taking death into the path of the Dharmakaya keeping in mind the four factors, I am going to ultimately give rise to this factor of divine pride of being the actual Dharmakaya, then this is very important.

It is said that if one is able to meditate on taking death into the path of Dharmakaya in this way, it is the ultimate protection. In fact, if one is able to do this meditation correctly, one doesn’t need to rely upon different protector deities, and so forth, because one has already achieved ultimate protection. Also, if one has the benefit of this meditation, if one has not previously had an understanding of emptiness, one will newly bring forth an experience, an understanding of emptiness. It also stabilizes the view of emptiness you may have previously had if it wasn’t totally refined. Finally, it will help us to give rise to the object of our meditation, such as the deity and so forth, with a knowledge that this is a display of indivisible bliss and emptiness.

In the Luipa system, taking death into the path of the Dharmakaya is actually included as part of the “Preliminary” outline, as is indicated in Berzin’s translation). But we can see from what has been pointed out, that it is actually a very essential practice. In fact, Geshela says that some people argue (maybe they are joking, here) that in terms of these meditations, especially the three bringings, that all you really need is the practice of taking death into the path of the Dharmakaya. So, given its importance, we must engage in it again and again. The people who are making this joke say that if you are able to bring forth the Dharmakaya, then the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya naturally unfold from that. So, there’s no need to do a special meditation for these other two.

At this point, having reviewed bringing death into the path of Dharmakaya, we continue with bringing bardo into the path of Sambhogakaya.

The transition from the meditation at the end of bringing death into the path of Dharmakaya, to meditating on bringing the bardo into the path of Sambhogakaya, occurs when we arise from the clear light. This is described in the sadhana in the verse quoted above, “Within voidness ...,” Berzin, p.34). Here, the extremely subtle wind and mind, take the form of (i.e., enter the bardo as) a minute, very fine nada squiggle, suspended in space, nothing more than that. This squiggle has three curves, which are said to correspond to the body, speech and mind of the ordinary bardo

being. The color of the nada squiggle is white, with a tinge of red. It is said that this white color corresponds to one of the essential winds, the “life-bearing wind”, which is white in aspect. This wind is one of the essential causes of the ordinary bardo being, and it is represented here by the white color. Likewise, the red color of the nada squiggle represents the attachment of the ordinary bardo being to achieving rebirth. However, at the time of meditation (the path), the nada squiggle is the illusory body, so the red color at the time of the path is said to represent compassion, the unbearable compassion one has for sentient beings. (You will recall also from the commentary on Vajrayogini, that her red color has the same meaning.) So, remembering divine pride, the fourth factor at the end of the meditation of taking death into the path of the Dharmakaya, one has the understanding that “I am now the enjoyment body of Heruka”, in the form of this minute, radiant, extremely fine nada squiggle.

We will now explain in more detail the importance and significance of this in terms of three sets of two points, for a total of six, which relate to the basis, path and result mentioned above.

First, think that the extremely subtle wind and mind of the bardo being have the aspect of the nada squiggle in space. It is from that subtle-most wind and mind that the intermediate state is accomplished. Because this meditation has been accomplished, in conjunction with the meditation and the understanding of emptiness, this acts as an antidote for our future, and possibly ordinary, experience of the bardo. In other words, we focus here on the fact that the ordinary experience of the bardo is being *purified* by this meditation. With this in mind, we can characterize the meditation transforming ordinary bardo into the path of the Sambhogakaya into three practices:

- 1) the practice which is in accordance with the *basis of purification*,
- 2) the practice which is in accordance with the *purifier*, and
- 3) the practice which is in accordance with the *purified result*,

Each of these practices has two aspects.

First, there are two aspects of the practice in accordance with the basis of purification:

- a) that which is similar to the ordinary bardo being state, and
- b) that which, at the same time, acts as an antidote to the ordinary bardo.

Second, at the time of the path of the completion stage, there are two aspects of the practice in accordance with the purifier:

- a) the example clear light, which gives rise to the impure illusory body, and
- b) the meaning clear light, which gives rise to the pure illusory body.

Third, there are two aspects of the practice which are in accordance with the purified result:

- a) the divine pride of being the sambhogakaya of the deity, and based on this,
- b) the actual achievement of the Buddha's enjoyment body.

So, the meditation which is characterized by these six points (three practices, each with two aspects) is what constitutes bringing the ordinary bardo through the path of purification to fruition.

The meditation unfolds from a point which is similar to the ordinary experience of the bardo (being the most subtle wind and mind which manifests after the eight dissolutions), and which, at the same time, has the dual aspect of acting as an antidote to the ordinary experience of the bardo. Then, in accordance with the purifier (the path of completion), the meditation gives rise to the example clear light, and thereby to the impure illusory body; and ultimately to the meaning clear light, and thereby to the pure illusory body. Put another way, this mind which has manifested as the nada squiggle, and is meditating on emptiness, is the experience similar to the example and eventually the meaning clear light. Meditating in this way in accordance with the purifier is a ripening cause for achieving the illusory body.

The final stage is where this mind is meditating in accordance with the purified result, thinking "I have actually arisen as the enjoyment body of Heruka". This divine pride becomes a cause to be able to quickly achieve the purified result, the Sambhogakaya of a Buddha.

It is important to meditate on bringing the bardo to the path of the Sambhogakaya with a clear understanding of these three sets of points, which are in accordance with the basis of purification, the purifier, and the purified result. Today we have covered the essentials of these points, and we can come back to them in the future.

Now, returning to the sadhana, we are on p. 34, "Generation of the Seats Upon Which the Immeasurably Great Palace Stands." If we are going to build a beautiful palace for a king, we understand that before we do that, we need to have a surface, or a seat, on which it will stand. And because, to bring forth this celestial palace which we are going to generate, it needs to have these four elements in place, that's why we're speaking of it in terms of generation of seats. One of the reasons that we need to meditate on the elements and so forth, as they appear in this part of the sadhana, is to help that which we call the self, the "I" to achieve the state of Buddhahood. To do that we need to actually stop that which we call the self from remaining within the abodes of samsara. So, these meditations represent an antidote, a dissolution of the abodes of samsara.

So, we can think, as we engage in this meditation for establishing the celestial palace, that the first meditation is a meditation on the mandala of the four elements. Then, having established the mandala of the four elements, we bring forth Mt. Meru. On the basis of these elements coming together, the world is arising and we first begin with Mt. Meru. On the top of Mt Meru, we see a huge, a very, very large lotus. On top of the seed head (or stamens) of the lotus is a large double-crossed vajra. On top of that is a variegated, eight-petalled lotus. If we keep this in mind, the visualization will unfold easily.

When we are doing this meditation, it is important to remember that our mind is still that very small, fine nada squiggle suspended in space (emptiness). The main mind has arisen there, with the divine pride of being the enjoyment body of Heruka. We can think also that a secondary, or subidiaary, mind is carrying out the meditation establishing the base of the palace.

So, this unfolds with a meditation on the four elements, where we begin with wind, which develops to fire, which develops to water, which develops to earth.

*Within a state of voidness, transforming from a blue YAM,
Comes an enormous mandala of wind, blue in color,
Shaped like a bow, and marked on its right and left (corners) with victory banners*

*On top of that, from a red RAM, comes an enormous mandala of fire,
Red in color, triangular in shape,
Marked on the three corners with a RAM.*

*On top of that, from a white BAM, comes an enormous mandala of water,
White in color, circular in shape,
Marked in the center with a vase.*

*On top of that, from a yellow LAM, comes an enormous mandala of earth,
Yellow in color, square in shape,
Marked on the four corners with a three-spoked vajra.*

And so these first four verses are the generation of the four elements as the base or foundation. We have reached the end of that. This is actually similar to the arising of the world. When we speak about the arising of the world, or the world systems, it is this kind of unfolding of the elements that occurs.

*On top of that, from SUM, comes an enormous square Mt. Meru,
Having the nature of the four kinds of gems,
And embellished on its summit with eight peaks in the cardinal and intermediate directions.*

So, on top of the base of the four elements there is the stable peak of Mt. Meru itself, which is in the middle, and it is surrounded by eight other peaks. These are not as sharp (or high) as Mt. Meru, but more “bumpy”. And so, you have this central feature surrounded by these eight smaller peaks in a beautiful configuration. Then,

On top of that, from a yellow PAM, comes a huge, thirty-two petaled variegated lotus.

Here the variegated lotus is so large that it seems as if could cover Mt. Meru.

*On its seed-head, from a HUM, comes a huge crossed double-vajra,
(spanning the area between the lotus petals).*

*On top of its cube-shaped hub, from a PAM, comes a variegated lotus,
the same size as the hub, with eight petals, a seed-head and stamens:*

*The petals in the four cardinal directions are red;
Those in the southeast “fire” and northwest “wind” corners are yellow;
The one in the southwest “truthless” corner is green;
The one in the northeast “powerful” corner is black;
The seed head is green and the stamens are yellow.*

What this is saying is that the southeast is the quadrant of the fire deity and the northwest is the quadrant of the wind deity, and the two petals of the lotus where they are abiding are yellow in color. The green petal in the southwest is the abode of the deity called “truthless”, which is a certain kind of demon. He is known as truthless because this particular being speaks only lies. There is no truth whatsoever in what he says. The petal in the northeast quadrant is the abode of a deity known as “powerful”, or Wangden, and is black in color. The seed head of the lotus itself is green and stamens are yellow. This completes the section on generating the “seats”, or the foundation, on which the immeasurably magnificent palace stands.

Next, on page 35 of the sadhana, we begin the third bringing of taking rebirth into the path of the Nirmanakaya, or, in the words of the sadhana “The Way to Meditate on the Four Yogas as the Method for Taking Rebirth as a Path for Nirmanakaya.”

The meditation on the first of these four yogas is entitled “Yoga: Precursor-to-Enlightenment Mirror-like and Equalizing Deep Awarenesses”.

*In the center of the smaller (eight-petaled) variegated lotus,
In the essential nature of the thirty-two marks of a Buddha,
Stand one set of the sixteen Sanskrit vowels,
White, coiled clockwise.
A AA, I II, U UU, RI RII,
LI LII, E AI, O AU, AM AH,
And again, a second set of the sixteen Sanskrit vowels,
White, coiled counter-clockwise*

Forming one ring.

A AA, I II, U UU, RI RII,

LI LII, E AI, O AU, AM AH,

Forming one ring.

These sixteen white syllables are visualized on the surface of the lotus, and they are circled clockwise around the lotus from the bottom to the top, making a “half-garland”. The other half of the garland is the second set of vowels coiled counterclockwise, again beginning from the bottom and ending at the top. These two sets of sixteen vowels make up the garland representing the thirty-two marks of a Buddha which we ourselves will achieve through our enlightenment.

Around that (ring), in the essential nature of the forty exemplary features of a Buddha,

Stand one set of the forty Sanskrit consonants,

Red, coiled clockwise:

KA KHA GA GHA NGA,

CHA CHHA JA JHA NYA,

TA THA DA DA DHA DHA NA,

TA THA DA DA DHA DHA NA,

PA PHA BA BHA MA,

YA YA RA LA LA VA,

SHA SHA SA HA KSHA;

And again a second set of the forty Sanskrit consonants,

Red, coiled counter clockwise:

KA KHA GA GHA NGA,

CHA CHHA JA JHA NYA,

TA THA DA DA DHA DHA NA,

TA THA DA DA DHA DHA NA,

PA PHA BA BHA MA,

YA YA RA LA LA VA,

SHA SHA SA HA KSHA;

Forming one ring.

Then outside this garland of thirty-two vowels there is another ring, or two half-garlands. It is a similar configuration of one set of forty Sanskrit consonants, red in color, circled clockwise, and another set of forty consonants also red in color circled counter-clockwise.

All of the letters here are standing up, like a butter lamp. So, you visualize them standing up, not lying flat.

*The two (rings) transform into a moon mandala-disc
(the size of the seed-head of the variegated lotus),
White, with a tinge of red.*

These two rings, these garlands of letters, then transform into a moon mandala disc, “white, with a tinge of red”. The white color of the vowels has become the white aspect of the moon disc, and the red color of the consonants has become the red aspect of the moon disc. The color of the moon disc (“white with a tinge of red”) relates to the reproductive constituents of the father (white) and mother (red).

*On it the thirty-two vowels and forty consonants
Appear like the arising of a reflection (in a mirror).*

Here you can think of the way the reflection of these letters appear is as follows. These days you have crystal or glass boxes with a hologram of a deity like Avalokiteshvara, or sometimes it might be an image of a lama such as His Holiness, inside. You can think that these reflection-like appearances of the garlands have the same aspect as those hologram boxes. That is what is being described here when we say “arising like a reflection in a mirror”. That is what it would look like.

*The vowels and white-colored aspect of the moon
are mirror-like deep awareness (wisdom);
The consonants and the red-colored aspect of the moon
are equalizing deep awareness (wisdom of equality)*

So, there are two wisdoms mentioned here: the mirror-like wisdom and the wisdom of equality. How do we think about this meditation?

First, when we speak about bringing rebirth into the path of Nirmanakaya according to the Chakrasamvara system, we speak about this in terms of five modes on enlightenment of the generation stage practice. In the Guhyasamaja (Sangwa Dupa) system, this meditation on the five modes is actually done during transforming bardo into the path of Sambhogakaya. In the Vajrabhairava or Yamantaka system, meditation on these five modes can be done both during transforming rebirth into the path of Nirmanakaya, and bardo into the path of Sambhogakaya. Geshela gives you points of comparison between these different systems and how they express things, as an impetus for you to study these systems and see where the differences (and similarities) are.

Returning to consideration of the five modes of enlightenment in the sadhana, we have covered the first, which (referring to the words of the sadhana) is seeing the (reflection of the) “vowels, and white aspect of the moon” as mirror-like wisdom. In other words, in the visualization in this part of the sadhana, the moon as mirror-like wisdom, this is the actual mirror-like wisdom that is arising in the meditation. How can we view this mirror-like wisdom?

Basically, in the resultant time enlightened state, we want to see all phenomena as illusory, like reflections. We can think of ourselves looking into the mirror, for example. We know that this image reflected is not really us, but we understand the symbolism of what we are doing. So, the image of the thirty-two vowels and forty consonants appearing on the surface of the reddish-white moon mandala disc is exact in every detail, yet it has no independent reality beyond being just that, a reflection. This is what we need to remember in the practice. Otherwise, the visualization will not be very profound at all. This is the first part of the visualization, the moon as mirror-like wisdom.

The next part of the visualization is seeing the “the (reflection of) the consonants and the red-colored aspect of the moon” as the wisdom of equality, the second mode of enlightenment. So, what does the “wisdom of equality” actually mean? It means that any phenomenon we experience is equal to all phenomena we experience, in that they all lack true, or inherent existence. We can think of it in that way. So, training in this visualization is training to be able, in the resultant time enlightened state, to see all phenomena as empty of inherent existence. The injunction to “hold the divine pride” of these two wisdoms, which is indicated at the conclusion of this section (p. 36) is another way of making the same point about the future resultant time state.

So then, in terms of the practice of the four yogas, we have covered the first, “Yoga.”

Next is Anuyoga, “Precursor-to-Enlightenment Individualizing and Accomplishing Deep Awarenesses”, (Berzin, p. 36).

*As the nada squiggle up in the air,
I look down at the reddish white moon
And propelled by the thought, “I shall take rebirth in the center of this,
Which is the nature of the white and red bodhicittas
of the fatherly and motherly Buddhas,
And then shall then work for the benefit of limited beings,”
The nada descends to the center of the moon.*

Remember that we have two minds working here. The subsidiary mind is doing the visualization of the elements, Mt. Meru, the lotus and all of that, but you still have the main mind in the aspect of a nada suspended in space (emptiness). And so, what happens is this main mind, in the aspect of the nada, is looking down at the moon and all of the rest of the visualization, and is thinking “now I need to take birth there for the sake of benefitting all sentient beings.” Why do I want to do this? Because, if I just remain in this very subtle aspect of the Sambhogakaya, only arya beings and so forth will be able to see and interact with me. In this way I will not be able to interact with the vast majority of beings who cannot see me. In order to benefit all sentient beings, then, I shall now take rebirth. I, as the nada, then descend into the center of the moon.

This visualization is supposed to be similar to a samsaric rebirth, where the consciousness of the bardo being will finally enter into the womb of the mother. (Remember that the antidote needs to be similar to, or in accordance with, the issue at hand.)

From that, a drop comes out from the nada squiggle,

*From that, a crescent moon,
From that the head of the HA,
From that, the body of the HA,
From that, the U below the HA,
And in that manner, I become complete
As a syllable HUM, white with a tinge of red,
Having the nature of a causal Vajra-Holder.
(This is) individualizing deep awareness. (wisdom of analysis)*

It is very important to understand the sequence of what is happening here. So, this bardo being which is the nada, is kind of “jumping into” this moon for the purposes mentioned above. By entering into the moon, which is like a womb, it is arising step-by-step as the letter HUM. So, the drop comes from the squiggle, then there is a crescent moon, then the head of the HA, body of the HA, then the U below the HA. This visualization has five steps, which correspond to the five stages of fetal development in the womb according to the traditional Buddhist presentation.

So, a simple way of describing the individualizing deep awareness (which is actually the wisdom of analysis) is that the “analysis” here is of what is to be rejected, and what needs to be accepted.

So, the bardo being, which we identify as “I”, or my mind, appearing initially as the nada squiggle, has undergone an evolution (analogous to ordinary womb rebirth) into the syllable HUM. This syllable HUM, in the words of the sadhana, has the “nature of a causal Vajra-Holder”. This (HUM, with the nature of a causal Vajra-Holder) is individualizing deep awareness” (the wisdom of analysis). This statement is followed by “Hold the pride of individualizing deep awareness”; i.e., hold the divine pride that at this stage my mind (as the letter HUM) has the nature of not only the first two modes of enlightened wisdom (mirror-like and equality), but also that of the wisdom of analysis as well.

So, at this point, in terms of the five wisdoms (or five modes of enlightenment), we have covered three: mirror-like wisdom, the wisdom of equality, and the wisdom of analysis.

These five modes of enlightenment are very, very important, and you will find these in all the practices of anuttarayoga tantra deities. Sometimes the five modes of enlightenment, all those five are there, but they may be described using different terminology depending on the particular deity. So, in different systems for example, these five modes of enlightenment might be described symbolically as arising from the moon, from the sun, from the seed syllable, from the deity’s implements, or from the entire entity of the deity’s body. Whatever the particular description, these modes always occur in the context of generation, i.e., arising as the deity.

Then we can also reflect on how there are different ways to arise as the deity. We have the spontaneous self-generation, and we have the arising of the deity according to the five modes of enlightenment, and the arising according to the “three points of the ritual”. We will come to a description of all of these later.

Now, some comments on what we have covered. We have discussed some important aspects of bringing death to the path of the Dharmakaya, as well as the arising of the bardo being as the Sambhogakaya. We’ve also done the preliminary meditation of establishing the ground for the celestial palace of the deity, and most of the first two of the four yogas. While quite a lot has been

covered, Geshela says that if you divide it according to the *points* of the ritual, this will help you not to be overwhelmed by this practice.

So, for example, if you have it in your mind that we have the squiggle, right, which is the bardo Sambhogakaya being, and this being will be reborn in this moon in the next part of the meditation, how do we unfold that? First, we have the wind element, then the fire element, the water element, and finally the earth element. Following this we have Mt. Meru, then the lotus and petals arising. This is the first part of the practice known as the four yogas.

Also, when we describe the celestial palace and the deities within it at a later point in the sadhana, a lot of these are detail-oriented things. To go into every detail just for detail's sake might not be the most beneficial strategy in terms of the practice. So, what Geshela is going to do is talk about the symbolism, or the deeper meaning of the most pertinent details. We'll explain the most important parts that relate to the deeper meanings and symbolism, but might just simply read through the extremely minute visualizations in the sadhana, since the detail isn't the most important thing.

Other important points regarding the sadhana practice, some things we need to pay particular attention to are bodhicitta related to the two types of compassion, and the two types of emptiness connected with the two mantras OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHAH SARVA DHARMAH SVABHAVA SHUDDHO 'HAM, and OM SHUNYATA JNANA VAJRA SVABHAVA ATMAKO 'HAM. These two mantras relate to the emptiness of appearance (OM SVABHAVA..) and the emptiness of non-appearance (OM SHUNYATA..). This is very important, since the emptiness of appearance is the antidote to the extreme of inherent existence, and the emptiness of non-appearance is the antidote to the extreme of nihilism. Emptiness of appearance relates to the fact that because things lack inherent existence, they are able to arise conventionally. When we're focusing on the emptiness of non-appearance, here "non-appearance" means that we're just single-pointedly resting in emptiness without any reification.

We also have discussed other points that are very important, for example the eight signs accompanying the eight dissolutions of the death process, the four factors of the generation stage, the three practices (or six points) related to bringing bardo into the path of Sambhogakaya, and so forth.

So, this concludes what Geshela wanted to share today. With a happy mind, let us dedicate the merit.

Brief Dedication

Through the roots of virtue of our study and practice here, may the power of this be able to clear away all the wars, conflicts and sufferings in the world.

Through the blessing of glorious Chakrasamvara, may those beings possessing evil thoughts be able to bring forth kind thoughts.

May the sun of happiness shine upon all six types of sentient beings without differentiation.

From these merits, may I bring forth the determination that starting now, from this place, I will continuously improve and perfect my practice.

