

Teaching 15: Heruka Chakrasamvara Teachings

with Geshe Sonam Ngodrup

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First of all, tashi delek and greetings to everybody. Geshe la hopes that you are all well and happy, and that your study and practice is flourishing.

All of us, day and night, have a natural wish within us, to be able to achieve happiness - not just any happiness, but lasting and perfect happiness. And, in order to attain that state of perfect happiness, it is definitely certain that we have the perfect foundation, that we have all the potential we need in order to achieve that within us. In short, in terms of achieving one's own welfare, and of working for the welfare of others, if one is able to actualize the three bodies of a Buddha, the three kayas, then one has been able to achieve that. As for the three kayas, don't think of this as something completely external, because this happens through the actualization of potentials we have internally. That is why some say we are already the Buddha, but we would say that it is rather all of the capacities, the potentials necessary for actualizing Buddhahood, that we possess right now.

So then, we could say that it is possible that the three bodies of a Buddha can be actualized through the practices of both sutra and tantra, but it is through the practice of tantra that we are able to actualize these using the most subtle aspects of the mind. This is because it is through tantra that we can access or unlock these most subtle aspects of the mind. That extremely subtle mind that we tap into in the practice of tantra is known as the mind without beginning or end. But is that extremely subtle mind the only thing we tap into? No, we also access and make use of the extremely subtle wind, inseparable with the extremely subtle mind, in our practice. So, we are using both the extremely subtle wind and mind in our practice. These are the components we are referring to when we say "mind without beginning or end." However, if the extremely subtle wind and mind are stained, if there are defilements which obscure their nature, then we will not be able to use them to actualize the three kayas.

If we think about an ordinary example of this, consider fire and water. Fire's nature is heat, so wherever there is a fire burning, it will naturally be hot. Water's nature is wet, so wherever there is water, that place will naturally be wet. This is how it is with the nature of the subtle body and mind that are *not* stained, or obscured, by defilements. Therefore, it

is important to understand that while at the moment, our extremely subtle body and mind are covered or hindered by stains, these stains are not their true nature, their natural way of being. Rather, their true nature is stable and pure like the sky. We know that, like the vast and encompassing nature of the sky can be obscured on a cloudy day, the true nature of our extremely subtle body and mind is hidden by the obscurations of samsara.

So, in terms of our ordinary mind, abiding in samsara we have these adventitious, cloud-like defilements which block its vastness, its true nature. Because the true nature of our mind is obscured, all types of (confused) appearances are arising.

And so, what are some of the main faults that mark this experience of samsara? We could posit three. We could say they are birth, intermediate state and death. And so, the *ordinary experiences* of death, bardo and rebirth are what fashion our experience in samsara, and what keep us unhappy. If we are not able to tap into the potentials of the extremely subtle body and mind, we will continue to be bound to this ordinary experience of death, bardo and rebirth, and to circle continuously within samsara.

To free ourselves from the ordinary experience of death, bardo and rebirth, we need to practice the *path three kayas* of a Buddha, and we need to achieve the *resultant three kayas* of a Buddha. And when we speak about Anuttara, or highest yoga, tantra, especially in the context of the generation stage, the main practice is that of the path three kayas, or taking the three bodies into the path. And because we need to achieve that result to bring great benefit to both ourselves and others, then we should proceed in the practice with a very joyful mind.

So, we'll begin with just a short meditation to set our motivation.

Meditation

We place our body and mind in a peaceful, relaxed state.

Think that we are not in our ordinary house or flat, or the abode where we dwell. In fact, this is dissolved and we imagine we are sitting in the celestial palace of glorious Chakrasamvara, and that this palace is the embodiment of his primordial wisdom.

From this palace, this magnificent abode, which is in the nature of his primordial wisdom, we imagine that glorious father Heruka, in his Sahaja form of one face and two arms, embracing mother Vajravarahi, appears in the space in front of us. We think that this form of Chakrasamvara is the embodiment of all lamas, spiritual teachers, yidams, and tutelary deities, and is the essence of the three jewels of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Think that, surrounding us, beginning with our own mother and father on either side, are all six types of sentient beings, but in human form. Think that they possess the wisdom of those who wish to enter and complete the Mahayana path. Together we all gaze upon Heruka father and mother.

Now think that, for achieving my final happiness and enlightenment, and also in order to be able to benefit all of the six types of sentient beings within samsara, I, myself, will take that self, that I will use that self, to actualize the completely enlightened state of Heruka father and mother.

Due to this aspiration, think that Heruka father and mother become pleased with us. They come to the crown of our head, then dissolve into lights and nectars, which descend our central channel to the heart level, where they become one with our own extremely subtle body and mind, and that of all sentient beings surrounding us as well.

Think that from the father and mother being absorbed into the extremely subtle body and mind of myself and of all sentient beings, that we all become inseparable in nature from the guru, the yidam, and achieve all realization and happiness. Think that the great bliss which arises from this is inseparably one with our engagement with any object, any phenomenon in our experience, and that as a result we are able to realize directly the emptiness of inherent existence of all phenomena.

Think that through this meditation, I have been able to establish a profound imprint for transcending ordinary death, intermediate state and rebirth, and purifying the experience of samsara. Through this potential I have established in my mind, think that I will definitely be able to achieve the hold body, hold speech and holy mind of Heruka Chakrasamvara.

Now we'll do short preliminary prayers. [Preliminary prayers]

So, then, not much in terms of preliminaries, as we've already done the preliminary visualization. Even according to the sutra tradition, Geshe la is explaining that sometimes, in some commentaries, it encourages us to do the visualization of the refuge object, and then recite the prayers for refuge, bodhicitta and so forth. But wherever we place it, the main thing is that we need to bring forth these meditations *in the mind*.

Achieving Buddhahood via the Tantric Path

And so then, our motivation here is of course to be able to achieve the state of Vajradharahood, anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, perfect and complete enlightenment, which is, in this particular context, to achieve the state of Heruka Chakrasamvara, mother and father. And in order to achieve that we are going to need a combined practice of both sutra and tantra, but these particular teachings are dealing with the tantra side of the path. Here we have to achieve this resultant state of Vajradharahood on the basis of the practice of the generation and completion stages of highest yoga tantra. So, it is said that the stages of the path of the generation stage are those that allow us to ripen our mental continuum, but, the actual thing to be realized is the completion stage itself. That which allows us to defeat (or, purify) ordinary death, intermediate state and rebirth, is the practice of bringing death, bardo and rebirth into the path of the three kayas in the context of the generation stage, which allows us to relinquish *grasping at* ordinary appearances. But the practice which allows us to *eliminate* ordinary appearances is that of the completion stage.

And so, for most of us (no offence to anyone, but with “most” here meaning “with extremely few exceptions”, so that likely, we are not exceptional in this particular case), we’re going to need to train in the ripening practices of the generation stage before we begin the completion stage.

So, that said, there have been a few who did not need to do this. One example, Geshe la points out, would be the Buddha Shakyamuni, on the eve of his enlightenment. This would be a specific exception. Remember that as Buddha Shakyamuni was meditating under the Bodhi tree, when he reached the tenth bhumi, or the tenth ground of the bodhisattva path, the previously enlightened Buddhas aroused him from his meditation, saying that one-pointed samadhi on emptiness alone is not going to get you to the state of enlightenment. You must enter the path of tantra. So, he entered the practice of tantra that night and by the next morning he was a completely enlightened Buddha.

Geshe la says that you can think about it like this: at 1:00 am he was bestowed the empowerment by the wisdom mother, and by dawn he had achieved complete and perfect enlightenment. In other words, by entering into union with the wisdom mother, he was able to access the extremely subtle body and mind to directly experience profound emptiness. He was able to actualize deity yoga by manifesting as the deity, and to realize emptiness with the extremely subtle mind, in the same instant. Of course, this means that he was able to perceive both the relative and the ultimate truths in the same moment. And if you are able to build on that experience of the two truths in a single moment, then you will be able, with relatively little effort, to directly achieve complete realization. So, we could say that, according to tantra, somewhere between the hours of 3:00 and 5:00 am, Buddha Shakyamuni achieved complete and perfect enlightenment.

To summarize, receiving empowerment by the wisdom mother, the Buddha had the initial realization of emptiness with the extremely subtle body and mind. In the following stage, abiding in that wisdom, he attained the tantric path of seeing. Then in the final stage he went beyond the tantric path of seeing to achieve full enlightenment by the early hours of dawn, say 5:00 or 6:00 am.

So, we can understand this in the context of the Buddha, who, during many previous lifetimes, having perfectly trained in and put great effort into the sutra path, this is the reason why for him the realization on the tantric path occurred so quickly. There is an important point to be made here, which is that in sutra and tantra the object to be realized, emptiness, is the same. But the object possessor, the subject realizing that emptiness, is different. The difference is that in tantra this realization occurs by utilizing the extremely subtle mind, which is not actualized on the path of sutra.

General Points Regarding the Generation Stage

So now we return to our discussion of the generation stage. If we were to ask, “what is the essence of the generation stage?”, it would be the three bringings, that is, bringing death, bardo and rebirth into the path. If we consider the generation stage in outline form,

first we have the common or general preliminaries, followed by the uncommon or extraordinary preliminaries, then the actual session, and finally the conclusion. And so, in particular for this practice of Chakrasamvara, when we have the preliminaries, the actual session and the conclusion, here the preliminaries are two: the common or ordinary (or, we could also say the common or *general*) preliminaries, and the uncommon or extraordinary preliminaries. So, the common or general preliminaries, if you learn them in the context of the Chakrasamvara practice, this is going to be very useful for you, since they are very similar to the common or general preliminaries in Guhyasamaja, Vajrabhairava, and so forth.

Actually, if we are engaging in a *short* practice of the generation stage, as someone engaging in the short sadhana, it's very important that we have at least a brief outline of the practice in our mind. For the category of common or general preliminaries, recall that there are seven:

- 1) Supplicating the lineage
- 2) Instantaneous self-generation as the deity
- 3) Blessing the vajra and bell
- 4) Blessing the inner offering
- 5) The way of offering the preliminary tormas
- 6) Blessing the offering to the self-generation
- 7) The meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva.

Next, we come to the uncommon or extraordinary preliminaries, which are four in number:

- 1) Purification of the three doors, and meditation on the four immeasurables
- 2) Blessing the aggregates (skandhas), sense bases and constituents (elements)
- 3) Meditating on the protection wheel
- 4) Establishing the conditions for accumulating merit and wisdom.

Geshe la says that more or less to this point in the teachings, we have completed the common and extraordinary preliminaries. Although there is more to discuss, we have completed an overview of both of these.

A Comment on Meditation on the Protection Wheel. So, one of the points to expand on here is the meditation on the protection wheel, which can be done in a brief, middling, and an extensive way.

Up to this point we have only covered the brief meditation in any detail. Geshe la is saying that one of the things we mentioned previously in the context of meditating on the protection wheel, was whether the eastern direction was behind you, or in front of you. Geshe la had a little bit of a debate with Dave and myself about this. So Geshe la said that if you think it's like a pillow behind you, supporting you in the mandala, the pillow behind you is the eastern direction. Geshe la says that he thought of himself as in the mandala, so that the eastern direction would be behind. But, having looked at the commentaries, most of them say that the eastern direction is visualized as being in front of oneself. But when we're visualizing these four mantras that are in the four directions, his thinking was that we want ourselves and all sentient beings inside the four walls, so he so was visualizing the eastern direction behind him, like a pillow supporting you, or a wall you're standing against. So, in this way, you and all sentient beings are within this four-sided wall of the four mantras.

Another point to mention is that when we are speaking about the protection wheel, sometimes it is described as a circle, but here it is described as a square. This is something to pay attention to as well. Later on, when there is any opportunity, we'll meditate on that.

Accumulating the Two Collections of Merit and Wisdom. Now, consider the fourth of the uncommon preliminaries, which is establishing conditions for accumulating the two collections of merit and wisdom; this is the most important of these uncommon preliminaries. This is because we could say that, within the common preliminaries, with the seventh, the meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva, we've been able to confess and purify negativities. Then, when we come to the uncommon preliminaries, that fourth point, having purified in this way, we now can accumulate the collections of merit and wisdom. We also know that accumulation of merit and purification of negativities and stains are core things we need to do in terms of our practice. So they are included here in the sadhana.

And so, in terms of the two collections, the collection of merit entails inviting the field of accumulation, or the refuge objects, to come before us, making various offerings, requests and so forth, as a means of collecting merit. Also, in the sadhana there is a lot of meditation that involves the HUM letter, and emanating the five-coloured light rays, which are the essences of the Lords of the five Buddha families. Many meritorious activities are also accumulated in this way. It is also important to keep in mind that these five Buddha families are connected to the five exalted wisdoms as well.

Accumulation of Wisdom: Taking Death into the Path of the Dharmakaya. So now we come to the accumulation of the collection of wisdom, specifically death into the path of the Dharmakaya. In terms of taking death into the path of the Dharmakaya, wisdom is accumulated by meditating on the eight stages of dissolution and so forth. These eight stages are connected with eight signs that arise during the ordinary death process. So, very important advice here: when meditating on these eight dissolutions, you don't have to actually think, "I am dying. My life force is decreasing. I am becoming weaker, etc."

That is not what you are doing in this meditation. Instead, you are doing a visualization with the corresponding sign related to that particular dissolution. This is very important, Geshe la says. However, that said, we do have to understand the ordinary process of dissolution that occurs at death - how this works, how these stages are related to various degenerations of the body and sense faculties - so that you know and are familiar with that information. But again, this is not the meditation here. If we consider one particular stage of these eight as an example, perhaps this point will become clear.

When the earth element “dissolves into” the water element, you have the mirage-like appearance that arises. As the meditator, your main concern here is reproducing that mirage-like appearance. That’s what you are actually meditating on. As we are able to successfully bring forth that mirage-like appearance in the mind, if you are someone who is familiar with, who has trained in emptiness, then we want to bring forth a meditation on emptiness that is even more vivid than the mirage-like appearance, by giving rise to a genuine experience of emptiness in our mind, in our meditation. This is important. And, together with that, even if one doesn’t feel that one has necessarily experienced it, one should try to bring forth their best approximation of the experience of *great bliss*. We want to bring this into the meditation experience as well. So, this is very important. It’s one of the most important of the points to keep in mind as we meditate on the eight dissolutions. Its significance is that it is actually an antidote to many of the faults of samsara. So, wishing to achieve that final understanding of emptiness, and being able to hold that understanding, we think that, “I need to bring that into the meditation” as much as possible during each step of those eight stages of dissolution.

As we meditate on the each of eight inner signs associated with the eight dissolutions, we must remember that *it is not a meditation on the dissolutions, but rather on the signs*. Together with this meditation on the signs, we also want to incorporate, or give rise to, the experience of emptiness. This is very important. And we also want to bring forth this bliss, the idea that we are increasing bliss, so that with this bliss we are able to rest firmly, or meditate with more stability, on emptiness. This is the very essence of practice we can incorporate here. It is very useful to contemplate that.

Most of us have not experienced (once again, no offence if you have experienced!), that extremely subtle, refined emptiness we associate with realization. Nonetheless, we may have experienced some moments of refined *samsaric* bliss, which is still contaminated but refined, so we can incorporate that into the picture here. In this way, by recalling such moments of refined samsaric bliss, we can gradually approach closer and closer to the experience of subtle, refined bliss/emptiness in our meditation on taking death into the path of the Dharmakaya.

Also, an additional point regarding meditating on and the experience of bliss/emptiness, is that with emptiness itself we can have two modes of contemplation here. We can contemplate according to the Cittamantra, or Mind-Only School, or we can contemplate according to the Uma pa, the Madhyamika or Middle Way School.

Actually, it is said that many of the practitioners of the Cittamantra school, when they have finished the generation stage, when they come to the third path of the completion stage¹, there is a very easy way in which their Mind Only view will transform into the profound Middle Way view. (Remember that the Cittamantra view should not be dismissed. It is also very profound, and is also something that can be very useful in our practice of tantra.) Fundamentally, the Mind Only school maintains that all apparent phenomena are appearances of the nature of the mind. Interestingly, it is actually said that most of the important eighty-four mahasiddhas, or Vajrayana adepts, of India held the Cittamantra, rather than the Madhyamika view. So, they did understand that the Cittamantra view was something beneficial, and also that maybe it was easier to bring forth in the mental continuum of Vajrayana practitioners.

The Actual Practice

Having completed the common and uncommon preliminaries, we now come to the actual practice, which has two parts. The first is taking bardo (the intermediate state) into the path of the Sambhogakaya. To avoid confusion, it is important to emphasize that transforming death into the path of the Dharmakaya comes at the end of the (common and uncommon) preliminaries, as part of the uncommon preliminary of accumulating the collection of merit and wisdom. Geshe la is explaining that this is an uncommon feature of Chakrasamvara, because in most of the highest yoga tantra practices, taking death into the path of the Dharmakaya is included in the actual practice, rather than as part of the preliminaries. But we don't have to make a big thing about that, because we understand that in any of the practices of highest yoga tantra, the three bringings are a main aspect, as discussed above.

Taking the Bardo into the Path of the Sambhogakaya. To explore now a little bit about the first part of the actual practice, taking bardo into the path of the Sambhogakaya, one of the things that we could think about is the nada, the squiggly line that appears on the top of the HUM syllable. (The rest of the HUM syllable is not visualized at this point, just the nada at the top).

So, there is an objection that can be raised here. One could say that according to the presentation of Abhidharma, the bardo being has an appearance similar to the being it is going to be born as – if as a human, it will have a human form; if as a dog, it has a dog's form. But here in the practice, we have this nada form. Why is that? It is said that the nada representing the bardo being is a kind of general visualization, in order for us to have the understanding that a bardo being can take on any form, shape or color. It is not something fixed. Also, the three curves of the nada are said to represent the body, speech and mind of the bardo being. The other thing to understand is that the extremely subtle wind and mind enter into, or manifest as, the nada as part of this process. For an ordinary

¹ The six practices of the completion stage are body isolation, speech isolation, mind isolation, illusory body, clear light, and union. "Isolation" here refers to the yogic practice of isolating body, speech and mind from ordinary perception by bringing the winds into the central channel. See, e.g., Lama Tsongkhapa's "A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages", Teachings on the Guhyasamaja Tantra, Library of Tibetan Classics, ed., Thubten Jinpa, PhD, translated by Gavin Kilty, Wisdom Publications (2013).

being, our experience of the bardo happens on the basis of the extremely subtle wind and mind. This is something that Geshe la wanted to add to the explanation of the bardo which he presented in the last teaching.

Generation of the Seats upon which the Immeasurably Magnificent Palace Stands. Next, having meditated on the nada, is clarifying the meditation on the supporting and supported mandalas, and then the immeasurably magnificent (celestial) palace, as Berzin calls it.

Before the arising of the palace, of course, we understand that there is the arising of the mandala of the four elements. Upon that is glorious Mt. Meru, and upon that a vast, an extremely vast, lotus – very, very vast, Geshe la is explaining. Upon that is a variegated vajra (Tib. *sna tshogs rdo rje*), at the center of which is a smaller lotus. So, this (visualization of the four elements) is the support mandala for the immeasurably magnificent palace. We understand that the visualization for the celestial palace is done on the basis of the coming together of the four elements (i.e., on the “seat” of the four elements, per Berzin), together with Mt. Meru, et cetera.

Here we could have a qualm, again someone could express a doubt, saying that in the *Abhidharmakosa*, when it discusses of the formation of the world (Tib. *jig rten chags tshul*), there are only three of the four elements, with the fire element not mentioned explicitly. So why is the fire element included as a specific element here? There is no fault, because there is also the formation of the world according to the Kalachakra Tantra, where the fire element is explicitly mentioned. Other scholars add that, even putting aside mention of the Kalachakra Tantra, there is no fault, because within each of the water, earth and wind elements there are aspects of the fire element.²

Geshe la is explaining that if applied externally, there are ways of relating the four elements, Mt. Meru, and so forth described in the sadhana to elements of the practice. For example, Mt. Meru symbolize the holy bodies of the father and mother. The lotus symbolizes the chakras, the white-coloured vowels the white substance in the left channel (rkyang ma) associated with the father, and the red-coloured consonants the red substance in the right channel (ro ma) associated with the mother.

From there, the moon, being white with a reddish hue, symbolizes the combination of the father’s and mother’s reproductive substances. Then the nada, entering the center of the moon correlates with the extremely subtle wind and mind of the ordinary bardo being

²Generally, this interdependence of the four elements is said to hold true in its various permutations for all of the great elements: Buddhaghosa’s “Visuddhimagga” (XI, 109.11), translated from the Pali by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli as “The Path of Purification”, (Buddhist Publication Society online edition, 2011) states “As to condition: **the earth element**, which is held together by water, **maintained by fire** and distended by air, is a condition for the other three great primaries (elements) by acting as their foundation. The **water element**, which is founded on earth, **maintained by fire** and distended by air, is a condition for the other three great primaries by acting as their cohesion. **The fire element, which is founded on earth, held together by water and distended by air, is a condition for the other three great primaries by acting as their maintaining.** The **air element**, which is founded on earth, held together by water, and **maintained by fire**, is a condition for the other three great primaries by acting as their distension.”

entering into union with the combined substances of the father and mother. The nada, expanding in stages to form the complete letter HUM, represents the growth of the ordinary fetus within the womb. Then, the HUM forming the body with its resultant chakras, accords with the completion of the body in the womb, and exiting the womb corresponds to ordinary birth.

In general, there is a presentation of these various factors (four elements, Mt. Meru, etc.) and what they symbolize, in terms of *the basis, the path, and the result*. Here, Geshe la has presented the symbolism in terms of the *basis*. How this symbolism is related to the path and the result is something we will explain in a later teaching.

Discussion of the Four Yogas: 1) Yoga and Anuyoga. Finally, this bring us to the next part of the outline of the actual practice, which is the four yogas. These are the first, *yoga*; the second, *subsequent, or anuyoga*, the third, *ultimate, or atiyoga*, and the fourth, *great, or mahayoga*. So, this division of the four yogas (first, subsequent, ultimate, and great) as applied to the Luipa Chakrasamvara sadhana, is according to the great commentator Akhu Sherab Gyatso, but it is presented in different ways by different commentators and when applied to different highest yoga tantra practices. Akhu Sherab Gyatso was a great master from the Amdo region of Tibet, and it is said that his understanding of the three highest yoga deities of Guhyasamaja, Chakrasamvara, and Vajrabhairava is unparalleled.

In yoga, the first of these four, we have the visualization of the moon, the vowels and the consonants. From the sadhana, (p. 36):

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.

On it the thirty-two vowels and forty consonants

Appear like the arising of a reflection (in a mirror).

The vowels and the white-colored aspect of the moon are mirror-like deep awareness;

The consonants and the red-colored aspect of the moon are equalizing deep awareness.

Hold the pride of mirror-like and equalizing deep awareness.

Then we come to the second, or anuyoga. So, when we speak in terms of the five types of exalted wisdom in the actual practice, the first four types of exalted wisdom are accomplished in the first two yogas: mirror-like wisdom and the wisdom of equality, in yoga (as indicated in the passage above), and the wisdom of differentiation (Berzin's "individualizing deep awareness"), and the wisdom of accomplishing activities, in anuyoga (again, from 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 in the nature of the white and red bodhichittas

of the fatherly and motherly Buddhas,

And then shall work for the benefit of limited beings,"

*The nada descends to the center of the moon.
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.*

Hold the pride of individualizing deep awareness.

*From the HUM, rays of light in the five colors emanate out,
And from their tips emerge the groups of deities
of (Chakrasamvara's) five wheels.
They secure wandering beings in the topmost state
of these deity groups of the five wheels,
And invite them back before me, simultaneously with
The viras, yoginis, and so forth, abiding in the areas
and realms in the ten directions,
Who have previously been established
(in that state) without any beginning.
Preceded by entering into union, they melt
and dissolve into the nada squiggle of the syllable HUM.
The syllable HUM takes on the nature of simultaneously arising joy.
(This is) accomplishing deep awareness.*

Hold the pride of accomplishing deep awareness.

So, this wisdom of accomplishing activities (Berzin's "accomplishing deep awareness") is very important, because now we want to visualize the multi-coloured lights radiating out into the different realms of existence, accomplishing the purpose and the benefit of all sentient beings. As we visualize the multi-coloured lights emanating out to benefit and transform beings and then being absorbed back into the HUM (the enjoyment body), it is very important to reflect on the lack of inherent existence of those lights.

These points are very important to recollect and incorporate into our practice. In addition, because these emanated lights are sometimes referred to as the *enlightenment* of the five wisdoms. When we say "enlightenment" here, Geshe la says that it refers to the *actualization* of the four (or five) wisdoms. That is how we can think about it. This is important to point out, because when he was first reading the commentary, Geshe la says he was confused by what was meant by the "enlightenment" of the four wisdoms. But here, what this means is, that it is the "actualization" of the four wisdoms (in the form of the emanated lights), which accomplishes the benefit all sentient beings.

Discussion of the Four Yogas: 2) Atiyoga. So, then, the next yoga is the ultimate, or *atiyoga*. This is very important. And so, within this "ultimate" yoga there are actually six

parts. The first is a brief presentation of the way to generate the support (the “immeasurably magnificent palace”, in the sadhana, p.37). Second is an extensive description and explanation of this palace. Third is recollecting and meditating on the body mandala. Fourth is donning the armour, descending of the wisdom beings (“yeshepa”), and receiving empowerment from the deities of the mandala. Fifth is offering and praises. Then, sixth is meditating on the deity and recollecting the purity.

I just want to read out these four yogas and their outline again, because we presented these quite quickly. So, the four yogas: first yoga, subsequent (or “anu”) yoga, ultimate (or “ati”) yoga, and great (or “maha”) yoga. Within the third of these four, atiyoga, there are six parts: 1) a brief presentation of the way to generate the support, 2) an extensive explanation, 3) recollecting the purity and meditating on the body mandala, 4) donning the body armour, descending the wisdom beings, and conferring empowerment, 5) offerings and praises, and 6) meditation on the deity and recollecting the purity. Now we have actually covered the whole sadhana! So, we’re finished...Geshe la is just kidding.

Actually, though, this outline does contain the most important essence of the sadhana. So, if you wanted to have an easy outline of the entire sadhana in your mind, the following general points (and their outlines) are the ones to remember: the common and uncommon preliminaries, together with the actual session of these four yogas.

The Five Exalted Wisdoms. Another thing we wanted to share today is a definition of each of the five exalted wisdoms, or prajna, because they are very important. The totality of, or complete aspect of, these five wisdoms is possessed by a Buddha, but we ourselves have a similitude (Tib. *rje su mthun pa*) of them, especially as we practice various parts of the path.³

First, “mirror-like wisdom” is so-called because of its function of realizing that all phenomena are like reflections in a mirror. Second, the “wisdom of equality” is defined by its function of realizing the equality of all phenomena and of samsara and nirvana. In other words, Geshe la says, samsara and nirvana, all phenomena, have no inherent existence. Third, the “wisdom of discrimination” is defined by its function of distinguishing between the thoroughly afflicted and the fully purified classes of phenomena. We can also think of this as discriminating between what should be abandoned and what should be taken up. Fourth is the “wisdom of accomplishing”, and this is defined by its function of mastering spontaneous enlightened activity. And fifth, the “wisdom of dharmadhatu”, the

³ The five similitudes of the five wisdoms are described in *Death, Intermediate State and Rebirth in Tibetan Buddhism*, by Lati Rinbochay and Jeffrey Hopkins, Snow Lion Publications (1979); see also Berzin’s “Buddha Family Traits and Buddha Nature Factors” Section in *Study Buddhism* online: 1) a basic *ordinary mirror-like awareness* to which many objects appear simultaneously, as objects in a mirror, 2) a basic *ordinary awareness of equality* that is mindful of pleasure, pain and neutral feelings as being of one type, i.e., “feelings”, 3) a basic *ordinary wisdom of analysis* (or discrimination) which knows individual names of persons and things, or the “individuality of something”, 4) a basic *ordinary wisdom of accomplishment* which is mindful of ordinary worldly activities, purposes, etc. and how to achieve them, and 5) a basic *ordinary wisdom of reality* which knows the conventional truth of objects and persons.

sphere of reality, is defined by the meditative equipoise never arising from (or separating from) the sphere of reality (the union of bliss and emptiness).

Each of these five types of exalted wisdom and their meaning is something important to be familiar with. So, we come to possess these or actualize these after enlightenment, but as we cultivate the paths we experience a similitude of them.

Generating the Supporting and Supported Mandalas. Now we come to generating the supporting and the supported mandalas. On p. 37 of Berzin's translation of the Luipa sadhana of Heruka Chakrasamvara, we find:

*The moon, vowels and consonants,
Together with the HUM, transform
Into the (complete) supporting and supported mandalas,
Establishing them all at one time.
(This is) the dharmadhatu deep awareness of the sphere of reality.*

When we come to this point, we have completed the meditation on the five types of exalted wisdom. We've completed the generation of the support and the supported. So, the next thing we are going to do in the context of the sadhana is to generate the visualization of the immeasurably magnificent celestial palace as well as the main and the retinue deities. Geshe la is saying that in terms of all of these parts of the sadhana related to the (detailed description of the) generation of the celestial palace, he is not going to cover these in detail today.

*Moreover, the multi-storied immeasurably magnificent palace
Is square, has four portals, and walls of five gradations (in thickness):
In order, from the outside, white, yellow, red, green, and blue.*

Just so we understand, this is a square-shaped, four-walled palace, and the walls are made up of different layers, which are touching each other. They are white, yellow, red, green and blue (from the outside to the inside). Geshe la is pointing out that these layers are touching each other just like those texts on the shelf you see behind him.

*Atop the walls is an encircling red jeweled molding as a basis,
Resplendent with gems, triangular and square.
On top of the molding is a golden quadruple colonnade.
Over its outer face, hanging (between and) from
The mouths of sea-monster gargoyles,
Are loops and strands of pearls.*

All of these are just beautiful features ornamenting the palace.

*Sticking out through (the upper half of) the face (of the quadruple colonnade) are eaves,
From which (triangular) pendants hang, made of gems,
And on top of which (a parapet of) dentils (rises) in the shape of half lotus-petals:*

*It is embellished with banners and pennants, eight on each side,
Jutting up from golden vases resting (on the roof),
And adorned with four umbrellas, one atop each of the outer four corners.*

Here you have the banners and pendants, which are eight signs of glory.

*(Fitting flush) up to the backs of the portals,
The walls are encircled by red ledges for offering desirable objects.
On them, goddesses of assorted colors and stances
Are ready to make offerings.*

*(On the ledges) at the junctures where, outside,
The entrances and sides of the entrance halls (meet),
And at the bottom corners (of the palace),
inside and outside (on the floor and ledges),
Are crescent moons adorned on top with vajras on top of red gems.
An archway having eleven layers of segments,
(Stands) before each of the four portals,
With each one erected on four pillars that rest
in vases on top of a cubical pedestal.
On top (of each archway) is a Dharma-wheel,
Flanked to the left and right by a male and female deer.*

So, Geshe la is actually explaining, I'm not so sure of the English translation here, that the "archway" may be more like a station where you keep your horse before entering the palace. I'm going to have to check the translation of that, because it's not matching up to what Geshe la is saying. So, when you approach a king's palace, for example, there would be various stations where you could place your horse, and these stations would be arranged by the level of importance of the guest. So, the most important people would be allowed to place their horse close to the entrance, and the more ordinary you are, the further back your place would be. These days this would correspond to the location of your assigned parking space.

*(The grounds) to the right and left of each archway
Are embellished all around
With the seven precious fixtures of royalty
on wish-granting trees, growing from excellent vases
And, in the areas in between (from one archway to the next),
Accomplished mahasiddhas and gods are emerging from within clouds,
holding garlands of flowers.*

*Outside (all this) is the protection circle
Of the surrounding crossed double-vajra fence and so on.
And outside that are vajra flames in the five kinds of colors,
like the fires at the time of the eons of destruction,*

*Swirling counter-clockwise and blazing,
As they pervade everywhere, above and around.*

So, a question may arise here, “It looks like we are visualizing the protection circle. Is this the protection circle we generated earlier in the sadhana, or is this something else?” It’s actually the same protection circle, but we have to generate it again, because in the previous meditation (bringing death to the path of the Dharmakaya) we have dissolved it into emptiness. That’s why we need to generate it again here, as part of the “Clarifying Meditation”⁴.

General Comment on the Charnel Grounds. So Geshe la says he’s going to leave the detailed visualization of the charnel grounds (cemeteries) for later. We do need to talk briefly about the significance of these, but as we’re pressed for time, Geshe la will give a more complete description in subsequent sessions. For example, each of the charnel grounds is said to possess eight particular qualities, but we’ll have to go over those at that time. However, there are some general comments to make at this point.

So then, you find the visualization of the charnel grounds in both the Vajrabhairava and Chakrasamvara practices, but not in the Guhyasamaja practice, because King Indrabodhi of Oddiyana, who requested this practice (Guhyasamaja), was attracted to the concept of purity in tantric practice. Actually, the visualization of the charnel grounds serves as a reminder of renunciation, or definite emergence, and the correct view of emptiness. So, what we think about charnel grounds, what you see if you go to such places, is definitely something which would bring forth some renunciation. And then, in terms of selflessness and the correct view of emptiness, when we look at a corpse, we see the form there, but it is not possessed by the consciousness of any person.

Visualization of the Deities. When we come to the visualization of the deities, there are two points to note here: the generation, or visualization, of the principal deity, and the generation and visualization of the retinue deities. For the principal deity, this is further divided into two: the visualization of the father, and of the mother.

*On a sun-cushion on the seed-head of the (variegated) lotus,
I arise as a glorious Heruka,
a Vanquishing Master Surpassing All,
With my body dark blue and having four faces:
My central face is black, my left one green,
My back one red, and my right one yellow,
With each of my faces having three eyes.
I have twelve arms and around my forehead is fastened
a garland of five-spoked vajras.*

⁴ This point in the transcript was clarified by Geshe la.

*With my extended right leg, I stomp on the head of black Bhairava,
Who has four arms: his first two hands with palms pressed together,
His other right holding a damaru-drum and the left a sword.
My bent left leg stomps on the breast of red Kalarati,
Who has four arms: her first two hands with palms pressed together,
Her other two holding a skullcup and a khatvanga-staff.
They each have one face, three eyes, and are adorned with the five ornaments.*

So, we want to visualize that in the center of the palace, there is a sun cushion, which is placed upon a lotus support. Then one has arisen, very importantly, one's self as glorious Heruka Chakrasamvara (father and mother). And the blue colour – it's dark blue – that dark blue is the colour of a dark cloud. There are four faces, and these four faces represent the four doors of liberation: the lack of essence of the cause, the nature, the result, and of all three. Geshe la says he is giving these in a very simple, easy way. There are other ways to enumerate these four doors of liberation, but this will come later.

The main part of the body of Heruka is dark blue in colour. The central face is black and the left face is green, the back is red, and the right is yellow. Each of these four faces has three eyes, which means that they see (or can perceive) the three times - past, present and future, just like we can perceive a flower directly in front of us.

Then, there are twelve arms, which indicates that through thoroughly purifying the twelve links of dependent origination, one has achieved the state of the deity. The forehead has on it a garland of five-spoked vajras, which represents having actualized the five wisdoms.

So, we've done the body, the arms and the various faces, and now we come to the legs. [Here it is important to mention that the commentator Akhu Sherab Gyatso says that many people make an error in the self-generation of Heruka. You should differentiate between the self-generation of the deity Heruka (the arising of the bodies of the father and mother), and the deities Bhairava and Kalarati, which are beneath the feet of the (self as the father) Heruka. *"Self-generation" applies only to the self as the deity Heruka father and mother, and does not include the deities beneath the feet of the father. They are part of the support on which the deity stands⁵.*]

So, the right leg of Heruka is extended straight out, and he tramples upon four-armed, black Bhairava, who is understood to be a manifestation of Ishvara. The first two of Bhairava's arms have the first two left and right hands pressed together, and the other two hold a damaru in the right hand), and a sword in the left hand. These are implements wielded by Bhairava. The right foot of Heruka pressing on Bhairava represents the overcoming of attachment, and some say it represents the overcoming of ignorance (or, confusion). Likewise, some say that the forehead of Bhairava is the abode of attachment, and others say it is the abode of ignorance.

⁵ This point was clarified by Geshe la.

Then, you have the bent left leg trampling on the breast of Kalarati. She also has four arms, with the first two left and right hands pressed together, the second right hand holding a skullcup, and the second left hand holding a katvanga staff. So, normally trampling on the chest, which is usually associated with attachment, could be understood as suppressing attachment as well.

Both Bhairava and Kalarati have one face and three eyes, and are adorned with the five ornaments. Now we move from the view of Heruka trampling upon Bhairava and Kalarati, back to the details of Chakrasamvara.

*With my first two arms, I embrace Vajra-varahi,
While holding in my right hand a five-spoked vajra
and in my left a bell.*

*In my second two hands, I hold a white elephant-hide cloak,
(dripping) with blood,
With my right hand holding its left foreleg,
My left hand its left hind-leg,
Stretching the hide across my back,
While making the threatening mudra:
The two finger-tips of the threatening mudras
Are at the level of my brow.*

Here is an important point regarding this part of the visualization. “With my right hand holding its left foreleg, my left hand its left hind-leg” is referring to Chakrasamvara’s right hand holding the left foreleg of the elephant, and Chakrasamvara’s left hand holding the left hind leg of the elephant. This elephant hide is fashioned into a sort of cape or cloak. Wearing this represents overcoming confused ignorance (i.e., grasping at true existence).

*In my third right hand, I hold up a damaru-drum,
In my fourth, an axe,
In my fifth, a cleaver,
And in my sixth, a trident.*

*In my third left hand, I hold up a khatvanga-staff,
marked by a vajra (on its tip),
In my fourth, a skullcup filled with blood,
In my fifth, a vajra grappling-rope,
And in my sixth, the four-faced head of Brahma.*

*I have a (two-leveled) topknot of hair,
marked by a crossed double-vajra (horizontally through it),
And on each of my faces, I have an adorning (crown of) five human skulls,
strung together, on top and on bottom, by two (parallel) rosaries of black vajras.
On the left side of my central face (to the side of my topknot),
hangs a crescent moon, slightly askew.*

*My faces have changing expressions, their four fangs bared, and are terrifying.
I express the nine moods (of dance):
The three physical moods – flirtatious, heroic, and repulsive;
The three verbal moods – laughing, ferocious, and terrifying,
And the three mental moods – compassionate, majestic, and peaceful.*

So, this brings us to the third right hand, which holds a damaru, the fourth an axe, the fifth a cleaver, and the sixth a trident, which has three prongs. Likewise, the third through the sixth left hands hold a khatvanga, a skullcup, a vajra grappling rope, and a four-faced head of Brahma.

Now we come to a very important part of the visualization of Heruka father and mother (at the bottom of p. 42), known as the “nine moods”. People who are practicing Chakrasamvara seriously, when we come to these nine moods, this is something you will ask about. These nine moods are divided into three categories of three. Three moods of the body, three of the speech and three of the mind.

Geshe la says that we are coming to the end of our session today, but don't worry. We will explain more about the meaning of the various signs and implements wielded by the deity, as well as the nine moods. Some of the meanings of the signs and so forth we have talked about, but we haven't covered all of them. But, we will cover all of them in future teachings. Geshe la is explaining that next month he will be away, teaching in the Netherlands, so what we are going to do is, for all of the month of August and the first week or two of September, all of the Chakrasamvara and Vajrayogini recordings are going to be available, so you can watch whatever you may have missed, or want to watch again. It is possible that, as you watch these, Geshe la says that it's possible you may see something that is a mistake or whatever, so please do email us about this. We're very happy to answer questions.

So, thank you very much. We will conclude the session here and do a brief dedication of merit.

Through the merit accumulated by myself and others, may all the sufferings and difficulties experienced by migrating sentient beings, temporary and ultimate, be immediately cleared away.

May the lives of all the holy beings abiding in the world be long and stable, may they have good health, and may their activities be accomplished exactly according to their holy wishes.

Through this merit may all of the wars, conflicts, diseases, imbalances of the elements, and environmental degradation be completely pacified.

Think, "I have been very fortunate to have placed imprints for all the various stages necessary to accomplish Buddhahood. May I be able to completely accomplish all of these. May all of the stages arise clearly within my mind, just like the dawning of the sun."

So, we will pause here. Thank you so much everybody. Geshe la says that if you are just going by the outlines, we have covered all of them in the sadhana already! He's teasing you...the main part, anyway. But there is actually a lot left in terms of various offerings, constituents and bases, and so on. There is actually a lot left! And so, slowly, happily, we will come to the completion of the entire sadhana.