

Teaching 16: Heruka Chakrasamvara Teachings

with Geshe Sonam Ngodrup

Sixteenth Chakrasamvara teaching – 19.10.2024

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Welcome and Tashi Delek to everybody. Our main task in these sessions is to try to clarify the sadhana, the text of the self-generation, as much as possible. Geshe la said that he doesn't know very much about this topic, but what little he does know he will share with you, and hopefully as we go on this learning journey together, what you understand we get better and better. And of course, if you notice something out of place, something that perhaps may be mistaken over the course of the commentary, feel free to email us a question, and this gives us the opportunity to clarify and whatnot.

When we speak about the practices of sutra and tantra, and the necessity of tantra, one thing does become quite clear, that if we wish to be able to reach the state of Buddhahood, not only for ourselves, but for others, indeed for all sentient beings, there is no way to do that other than eventually engaging in the practices of the Vajrayana. Why is this the case? It is because if we wish to reach the state of complete and perfect Buddhahood, we need to get rid of the very most subtle object of abandonment, and that object of abandonment is the subtle obscurations to knowledge. Also, from the perspective of tantra, we know that as part of reaching Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings, we must achieve the rupakaya, or the form body. And it is only by using the teachings and techniques of tantra, that one is able to bring forth the form body for the welfare of others.

Also, we have talked about different sorts of objects of abandonment that are part of the tantric path, and things that are necessary for us to abandon. An object of abandonment in tantra, is the imprint left behind by the ordinary experience of the final three stages of dissolution in the death process – white appearance, red increase and black near attainment. So, what keeps beings traveling or circling within samsara are the subtle imprints or latencies placed within the mind by the ordinary experience of white appearance, red increase, and black near attainment.

And we also know that without tantra, the object of abandonment, ordinary appearance and the clinging to that ordinary appearance, cannot be abandoned. In a capsule, we could say that the reason is that without tantra, we cannot get rid of the subtle imprints or latencies that are blocking our full enlightenment, because this is only possible by employing tantric techniques which make use of the extremely subtle wind and mind. This would be like an overview understanding.

So, at this moment, we are not able to tap into that extremely subtle wind and mind, we are not able to bring forth that subtle wind and mind like an object within our consciousness. Because we are not

able to bring these forth consciously, we are not able to utilize them fully. To tap into these at the most subtle level, we talk about the joining of the male and female partner. and so we also do not find a discussion of that, and its representation as “yab” and “yum”, in the sutra path either.

So, we have the five winds, which are said to possess the five color radiances which are connected to the five consciousnesses. And through our cultivation, these are purified into the five dhyani Buddhas. And so, in terms of the five Buddha families, we also have the five wisdom mothers, or consorts of the five dhyani Buddhas, and we can increase those until we come to a total of twenty-five deities associated with the five the dhyani Buddhas as the root. And, so don't worry. We will get to a more complete explanation of that later.

First we need to think about those beings within samsara. We need to bring forth a feeling of love and compassion for them, we need to think of the wish to be able to free them completely, and we need to understand that this is not possible without actualizing Buddhahood. Therefore think, “For the sake of all sentient beings, I will completely achieve the state of Vajradhara in the form of glorious Heruka Chakrasamvara.”

So let us remember the origin narrative of this tantra of Heruka Chakrasamvara: Vajradhara,, seeing that beings were being oppressed by various classes of worldly beings and spirits, and, wanting to benefit sentient beings, manifested as glorious Chakrasamvara and the retinue deities in order to subdue them.

Geshe la says the world is in a very confused state at this time, and when we look around, we see many beings in a position of power who are harming others. How wonderful it would be if we were able to manifest as an enlightened deity and subdue and eventually free them. In this way, we can look at the state of the world and this can be an impetus for our practice. It can be a way to transform obstacles into the path. So let us bring forth the motivation, “I will definitely achieve the state of Heruka Chakrasamvara father and mother and the sixty-two deities of their mandala”.

So then with a joyful attitude, with a joyful motivation, let us continue.

Preliminary Prayers

We will begin by reciting the Praise to the Buddha one time, then the Praise to Lord Heruka and the Dakinis, followed by a mandala offering. We will conclude with the verses of Refuge and Bodhicitta.

Meditation

So, as we form our motivation, we will do a visualization of the principal deity along with the four dakinis. So let us first begin by placing our body and our mind in a peaceful state.

Let us think that our ordinary environment, and also any unhealthy thoughts, mental projections and so forth, like a rainbow that gradually disappears, dissolve into the vast expanse of space.

We can think of the dissolving of this ordinary environment by thinking that we ourselves, other sentient beings, the mountains, rivers, and so forth all lack even an atom of inherent existence. None of them exist independently from their own side. In this way they are empty.

Think that from this sphere of emptiness comes the abode of Heruka Chakrasamvara and the four dakinis. It is a four-sided, beautiful celestial palace.

Imagine that in the center of that beautiful mandala palace, there appears on a seat of lotus, sun and moon disc, the father and mother, Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi.

And then imagine that within the celestial palace in each of the four directions, are the four heart retinue dakinis: in the east, black Dakini, in the north green Lama, in the west red Khandarohi, and in the south yellow Rupini.

As we gaze upon the assembly of these deities, think that together with us, in human form, are all six types of sentient beings. We gaze upon the deities with faith, confidence, and we go for refuge.

Now, we bring forth a very specific bodhicitta by thinking: for the sake of all these six types of sentient beings within samsara, I will actualize the state of Chakrasamvara father and mother, and the four dakinis. I will achieve that.

Think that, pleased with this altruistic motivation, and the mind of faith and refuge, Lord Chakrasamvara father and mother, together with the four retinue dakinis, dissolve into lights and nectar and then that these lights dissolve into myself and the assembled sentient beings.

Think that these lights and nectars manifest as a powerful rain falling upon the assembled sentient beings, so that all of their physical and mental sufferings are completely purified and cleared away.

Think that from receiving the blessings in this way, I and all of the other sentient beings bring forth a feeling of great bliss.

Think that through my concentration and this visualization, I have been able to do something which contributes to the welfare of others. Feel a sense of rejoicing at that opportunity.

So that was a brief visualization and motivation to begin. Just keep in mind that what we have imagined in this visualization is actually the purpose of the session, to be able to achieve resultant Chakrasamvara for the benefit of all six types of sentient beings within samsara. Also, as we approach these teachings, keep in mind that you want the stages of the practice of Chakrasamvara to be available to you, to go through as a glance meditation, just as you would do a glance meditation on the lamrim, the stages of the path. So, you want to remember, and have those outlines available to you as you carry out the practice.

So, by way of review, let us begin with the first stage, supplicating the lineage lamas; second, the instantaneous self-generation; third, blessing of the vajra and bell; fourth, blessing of the inner offering; fifth, the way of offering the preliminary tormas; sixth, blessing of the offering to the self-generation; seventh, meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva. Next are the meditation on the three purifications, the blessing of the aggregates, constituents, and the sense bases, and meditating on the protection wheel. These are the main stages (of the preliminaries). Then following these we have an auxiliary one, which is establishing the conditions for accumulating the collections (of merit and wisdom). Regarding the accumulation of these collections, we talk first about accumulation and purification by means of the meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva. The activity of accumulating

these collections is known (in Tibetan) as “*thun rkyen tsho bzo ba*”, or establishing the conditions for the session, in this case for the main practice.

And so, when we speak of accumulating the collections of course we are referring to the collections of both merit and wisdom. Then, when we generate the field of accumulation with the visualization, and we practice the seven purities (which are similar to the seven limbs), this is the accumulation of merit. We can view the accumulation of merit and so forth as the preliminaries to the actual practice. The collection of wisdom, on the other hand, is when we put aside the preliminaries and come to the main practice. In fact, if we cultivate any part of the sadhana with the awareness of emptiness, it can be a practice of the accumulation of wisdom as well. But the accumulation of wisdom is especially associated with the three bringings – the bringing of ordinary death into the path of the Dharmakaya, of ordinary bardo into the path of the Sambhogakaya, and of ordinary rebirth into the path of the Nirmanakaya.

In terms of these three bringings, the first two (bringing ordinary death into the path of the Dharmakaya, and ordinary bardo into the path of the Sambhogakaya), we have more or less covered in the sessions up to now. So, where we are in the sadhana now is actually bringing ordinary rebirth into the path of the Nirmanakaya, or the emanation body.

This brings us to the point in the sadhana (top p. 37 of Berzin’s translation), where there is the recitation of three “instantaneous” mantras, beginning with “OM AH HUM”, followed by “OM SARVA VIRA YOGINI KAYA VAK CITTA VAJRA SVABHAVA ATMAKO ‘HAM”, and then by “OM VAJRA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA VAJRA SHUDDHO ‘HAM”¹. Having recited these three mantras, what must one think? So, the visualization of the lotus and moon, vowels and consonants, together with the letter HUM which we hold as we recite these mantras, these are in the nature of light; they are radiant. We can think that the recitation of these three mantras are what allow the following, or subsequent, visualizations to be established.

Simultaneously with the recitation of these three mantras, we imagine that the moon, vowels and consonants, together with the HUM, which are of the nature of radiant light, instantaneously transform into the complete supporting and supported mandalas. And with this, then, there is the Dharmadhatu deep awareness of the sphere of reality. We speak of this as the wisdom of the Dharmadhatu. At this moment, it is really important to think that “I am in the coarse manifestation of the nirmanakaya.” This is an important step in the meditation on the three bringings. Also, having meditated on the five manifest enlightenments (and the associated five wisdoms) as we kind of come to this point in the sadhana, it is said by all the holy beings to be extremely important. Meditating on these five manifest enlightenments, as the means of bringing forth, in a very stable way, transforming rebirth into the path of the nirmanakaya, is emphasized not only in Chakrasamvara, but also in Vajrabhairava and Guhyasamaja practices as well.

¹ The significance of each of these mantras is: OM AH HUM – invoking mindfulness of Heruka’s vajra body, speech and mind; OM SARVA VIRA YOGINI KAYA VAK CITTA VAJRA SVABHAVA ATMAKO ‘HAM – invoking the divine pride of being one with the nature of the vajra body, speech and mind of all the heroes and yoginis; OM VAJRA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA VAJRA SHUDDHO ‘HAM – invoking the divine pride of being one with the resultant dharmakaya, inseparable bliss and emptiness. This explanation is from “A Practical Instruction on the Two Stages of Heruka Body Mandala in the Ghantapa System given by Je Phabongkhapa”, commentary by Lati Rinpoche, p. 106, translated by Geshe Thubten Jinpa, www.chakrasamvara.com.

[Emphasizing and expanding on this last point, Geshe la adds that “part of the magic of the generation stage is, as we go through the five manifest enlightenments, really believing that they are, in actuality, the five resultant wisdoms. We think, ‘through the five manifest enlightenments I have actualized the five wisdoms of Glorious Heruka’.”]

Geshe la says that when these sadhanas are being performed in the tantric colleges, the umze brings forth his voice, chanting in a rhythm. Then, when you come to the point of these five manifest enlightenments, there is a pause, and then the umze once again brings forth his voice as a way of emphasizing these five manifest enlightenments. So, it is said that stopping the voice, pausing, then bringing it forth again, is a reminder for the members of the assembly to meditate on the five manifest enlightenments and the associated five wisdoms in an unmistakable way.

Returning to the sadhana, at that moment, then, having manifested as the nirmanakaya, we also have brought forth the supporting and supported mandalas in the visualization. What that means practically is that the mandala deities, and the celestial palace with all its attributes is there, surrounded by the charnel grounds and so forth. Here, the charnel grounds (cemeteries) represent renunciation, or definite emergence; the vajra fence represents bodhicitta; and, the vajra fire encircling the enclosure represents the correct view of emptiness.

And so, this way of connecting the cemetery to renunciation, the vajra fence to bodhicitta, and the surrounding fire to the correct view, is a reminder of the importance of the three principle aspects of the path to the practitioner. So, Geshe la says, some people who are familiar with the commentaries may say, “well, I saw that the cemeteries actually represent the correct view of emptiness.” That is true, you will find some commentaries that say they represent the correct view. However, when you understand this visualization in terms of the three principal aspects of the path, the cemeteries represent renunciation, or definite emergence.

We know that in the Shrivakayana traditions, the Theravada for example, it is very common for the shramana, the cultivator, to go to the charnel ground to gaze upon the bodies, and to develop a sense of renunciation informed by that. Also, however, when one is looking at the charnel grounds, seeing the bodies in that state of dissolution, this can also be a very profound way to meditate on the selflessness of persons, such as thinking “there was once a self, an I, associated with that body, they are now separated, the body is decomposing, etc.” This can also be an effective way of meditating or contemplating selflessness.

So, the vajra fence representing bodhicitta connects with the fact that the mind of bodhicitta, rooted in love and compassion, like a vajra fence, is so powerful and impenetrable, that the self-cherishing mind cannot enter to disturb it.

And the fire, surrounding this configuration, is connected to the correct view of emptiness. Just as a fire can burn through any fuel, leaving a place sort of evaporated, in that same way, the view recognizing emptiness can completely eradicate self-grasping ignorance, and all the associated afflictions.

And so, instantaneously bringing forth the supported and supporting mandalas with the recitation of the three mantras, reflects the actuality of when that enlightenment is achieved – the abode and its

inhabitants are achieved in an instant. And so of course, for most of us, these visualizations encompass a lot within them, so to bring everything together all at once in our mind is not realistic for us. Therefore it is important to go through all of the important components and their meaning, and that is the point where we are in the commentary today. Therefore, as much as is possible, we will proceed quickly.

So, returning to the sadhana, p. 41, there are two outlines: Clarifying the Visualization of the Inside of the Palace, and Visualizing Clearly the Principal Deity, Heruka. Some of these we have actually covered in the last session, so he'll go through those more quickly. So, visualizing clearly the principal deity Heruka necessarily entails visualizing both components of the deity, the father and 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.
Who has four arms: his first two hands with palms
pressed together, His other right holding a damaru-drum
and the left a sword.*

Actually, regarding these four faces of Lord Chakrasamvara, the radiance of the four directional dakinis, i.e., the colours black, green, red and yellow, are absorbed into the deity, giving his four faces the corresponding hue, or that particular colour. Geshe la is not going to explain the significance of each of these four colours here, because he wants to get through more of the sadhana first.

*I have twelve arms and around my forehead is fastened a garland of five-
spoked vajras.
With my extended right leg, I stomp on the head of black Bhairava,*

So, to re-emphasize an important point covered previously: Black Bhairava is not part of the self-generation of the deity, rather Black Bhairava is the mount, almost like the cushion of the that particular leg of the deity. The same holds true for Kalarati, the cushion of the left leg of Chakrasamvara.

*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.*

Now when we talk about the significance of stomping on the head of black Bhairava, that may be uncomfortable for some of us, because Bhairava is of course a manifestation of Shiva, and it may be

uncomfortable to think that here is this deity doing something to Shiva. The point is, though, that Chakrasamvara has already brought this manifestation of Shiva to complete and perfect enlightenment. Because of this, Bhairava is pleased to manifest as an offering to Chakrasamvara, as a mount for his foot. Again the same is true for Kalarati.

And so now we come to a discussion of the various features of Chakrasamvara's holy body.

*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.*

Geshe la says that, as an aid to learning these visualizations and their details, it is very important to have a visual support, a good visual image, a statue or a picture of Chakrasamvara, so that as a beginning-stage practitioner, you can go through and identify each of the features being discussed with the visual image.

The elephant-hide cloak is said to represent ignorance. The fact that Chakrasamvara is able to hold and to manipulate this elephant cloak, signifies that the ignorance grasping at the self, as well as the imprints left behind, have been completely subdued. They are under control.

Continuing with the sadhana, p. 42:

*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.*

Here, the damaru is said to have two different significations. Commonly, it can be associated with the gtummo practice, and it is also known as producing the sound which is able to summon the dakinis. Then, the fourth right hand holding an axe, the fifth a cleaver, and the sixth a trident – these should all be clear in your mind, and you should be able to visualize them.

*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.*

And so, in this way, when we come to this point, we have covered all twelve of the hands of Chakrasamvara, and what each is holding. Don't worry about the meaning of each of these individually; they will be shared in a later teaching.

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.*

Concerning the rosaries of black vajras, there are two things to mention here. So, the rosaries of black vajras appear as an ornament on the (forehead) of each of the four faces of Heruka Chakrasamvara. That is the first point. The second point to keep in mind is that the vajras are vertically oriented.

So, we talked about these five vajras that are an ornament on (each of the four faces) the head. Behind each of those vajras is like a wheel with an individual spoke. So, each vajra has an individual spoke. So how this works is that there is a wheel embedded somewhere in the hair. It has these five spokes jutting out. Towards the end of each of those five spokes is a kapala. In the front of the skullcup, we have those individual vajras.

[Note added by Khedrup la as clarification of this passage, after further discussion with Geshe la: “There is a large wheel made of bone that rests directly on the central part of Chakrasamvara’s head. It has twenty spokes going out to above each of the four faces. So, five spokes above each face, and at the end of each spoke, a dried human skull is affixed. In addition, Geshe la says that there are actually three vajra rosaries: one behind the skulls, one in front, and one like a string intertwining them.”]

*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.

Another interesting thing here concerns the “crescent” moon. This is slightly incorrect, because Geshe la said that there are actually two types of moons – one is an ornament of Lord Shiva, and one is an ornament of Lord Chakrasamvara. Lord Shiva’s moon is in the form of a crescent, i.e. only partially full, and Lord Chakrasamvara’s moon is actually a “half” moon, and that is the ornament referenced here.

And then there are four faces with changing expressions. They are not static. The mouths of these faces show four fangs, which are terrifying. So, when we gaze upon the images of Chakrasamvara, we should have an awareness that the faces are not static. They actually express nine moods. It is important to understand what those nine moods are. We have the three physical, the three verbal, and the three mental moods, for a total of nine.

The first of these moods is flirtatious. Geshe la says that Chakrasamvara is handsome, and he is confident. So that handsome, confident demeanor is what is meant here by “flirtatious”. The second of the physical moods is heroic, which here means that he is able to overcome all that needs to be overcome. This is represented not only in his facial expression, but also in his stance, trampling on one standing on, Bhairava and Kalarati. Before their enlightenment, Bhairava and

Kalarati were harming many sentient beings, but Heruka was able to overcome them, subdue them, and lead them to enlightenment. This is reflected in the iconography, and this is what is meant by “heroic”. And then the third physical mood is “repulsive”. Geshe la says that rather than “repulsive”, here, he would express it more like “intimidating”, because the wrathful expression that Chakrasamvara can bring forth is intimidating.

So now, we have the three verbal moods, the first of which is “laughing.” “HA, HA” is said to be one of the sounds that Lord Chakrasamvara utters, so that this is a manifestation of laughter here. Geshe la says, it is kind of like a laugh of victory, because he has been able to subdue all of these beings causing harm. So Chakrasamvara is not sitting around kind of bored, he’s not a dull, un-charismatic person. On the contrary, he manifests these moods that have deep meaning. The second verbal mood, “ferocious”, is indicated by these four bared fangs, which as indicated previously, signify defeat over the four maras, or demons. The third verbal mood, “terrifying”, is represented by the curling of his holy tongue. This means that with the curling of his holy tongue, he terrifies, or discourages, any harm doer from hurting sentient beings. These are the three verbal moods.

Now we come to the three mental moods. The long shape of Chakrasamvara’s eyes - he has the kind of long, sliver-shaped eyes - these are said to represent his compassion, the first of the mental moods. Geshe la says that when you look at His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s eyes, he has long eyes like this, and those are considered to be an auspicious sign for holy beings. So, the second mental mood, “majestic”, is indicated by the fact that these eyes of Chakrasamvara are unblinking, they majestically and continuously gaze at all sentient beings. This means that he is always ready to help. He always has his eyes fully open, seeing where harm may be coming, ready to intervene to help sentient beings. Also, because these eyes are wide, they can take in many things at once. They can simultaneously be looking at all sentient beings in samsara, while also having the consorts in his field of vision, and by gazing at the consorts, this is a peaceful feeling, the third mental mood.

So, if someone were to ask you what are the nine moods of Heruka Chakrasamvara, you should be able to explain something like that. A lot of people these days claim that they are Chakrasamvara practitioners. Putting the suitability of publically claiming that aside, if someone says that to you, you should be able to ask them “what are the nine moods”, and how are they represented? Then if they can’t answer you, then you can scold them, saying that you’re really not looking at Chakrasamvara that seriously!

Continuing,

*I wear a tiger-skin loincloth and have hung (around my neck)
A long garland of fifty moist human heads, strung together with human intestines.
I’m stamped with the mudra-seal of the six bone ornaments,
And my entire body is smeared with the ash of human bone.*

When we speak about these six bone ornaments, we talk about six bone ornaments for the father (yab), and five for the mother (yum). One of the bone ornaments is a crown ornament, which represents Aksobhya Buddha. The ear rings represent Amitabha; the necklace represents Ratnasambhava; the bracelet represents Vairocana; and the belt represents Amoghasiddhi. Those

are the Dhyani Buddhas of the five families. There is a sixth for the father, the yab. Because the white constituent is said to be more prominent in the yab, this is represented by an ornament of the father's being smeared with ashes made from human bone. And, it is said that these ornaments, for example, can be seen as skulls, jewelry made of various skulls. The skulls can be dry, thinking about the mother, because of her gtummo, whereas for the father, we can think of them as wet.

Now we come to the part of the sadhana which is termed "recollecting the purity", or being mindful of the purity, and this is very important. When we talk about recollecting the purity, or being mindful of the purities, we begin with the path purity, and the result purity. What does this mean practically? It means recollecting the meaning or significance of the various features of the deity. Recollecting the purity is also a feature which is more prominent in Chakrasamvara. In Guhyasamaja, for example, you won't find recollection of the purity as part of the sadhana, but rather as part of the initiation into the deity, and the self-initiation as well. And in the Yamantaka practice, you will only find the recollection of purities mentioned toward the end of the sadhana. However, with Chakrasamvara, one of the uncommon features of this practice, is that the recollection of the purities happens at various points within the sadhana. The prominence of recollecting these purities is therefore one of the uncommon features of the practice of Heruka Chakrasamvara.

Now we are continuing with the section in Berzin's outline which is "What Each Feature Represents for Purity for the Path", on p. 42. In the Tibetan version of the sadhana, this is not included, but Berzin has it as a part of the outline, and Geshe la says that from the content related to this topic, you can see why.

*Our mutual embrace of father and mother represents
the mutual embrace of method and discriminating awareness.*

Geshe la said that here this is not just a mutual embrace, but rather the inseparability of method and wisdom. Recall that in sutra we often talk about the father practice being the practice of method, and the mother practice being one of wisdom.

*Moreover, the method is great blissful awareness, produced from white
bodhichitta melting from my head and coming, thereby, to pervade my
entire body,
(represented by my human bone ash).*

This requires some explanation. So, "White bodhichitta melting from my head and coming to pervade my entire body". Here it is very important to understand, because it's not immediately evident from reading it, what it is that is meant by "body". Body here actually means the central channel, or "uma".

And so, pervading the entire body comes about by relying on special methods. So, we can think that pervading the entire body happens when we can take the wind from the left and right of the central channel, and guide them so that they are all abiding within the central channel. On the basis of bringing forth and concentrating this wind, the wind is able to become stronger. From that wind becoming stronger, the gtummo, the inner fire, is ignited. Then, from that inner fire blazing, what

we can do is begin to melt the bodhicitta that is near the crown of the head. On the basis of that igniting and dripping, as the bodhicitta drips down, one is able to experience great bliss. That is what we mean by the vital points of the body: great bliss is pervading the body.

(This is a melting) come about from (relying on) special methods, Such as union with a motherly consort,

For penetrating the vital points of the body.

(Thus, our mutual embrace) represents the necessity

To meditate on the meanings of the four gateways to liberation (represented by my four faces),

With that (blissful awareness) as the discriminating awareness of voidness.

Geshe la is saying that normally we talk about the *three* doors of liberation, but as you see here, we are actually speaking about the *four* doors of liberation. So, the cause as lacking true existence, the nature as lacking true existence, and the result as lacking true existence are the three doors of liberation, while all three of these together becomes a fourth door of liberation. This is what is meant by the four doors of liberation.

That blissful awareness is the meaning also represented by my khatvanga-staff and my skullcup.

From those two (great bliss and discriminating awareness) are also the meanings represented by the vajra and bell.

Geshe la says that here Berzin uses the phrase “blissful awareness”, but it should be read as “great bliss”. The skullcup has the colour white on the outside, and the colour red on the inside, which relates to the fact that on the basis of the red and white constituents coming into union, bliss is experienced.

Continuing, “*From these two are also the meanings of the vajra and bell.*” If you look at a bell that we use in vajrayana practice, you will see that the top is actually a vajra. And if you have a correct bell, there will be five spokes on that dorje element on top, and those five spokes are said to represent the five wisdoms, and the actual body of the bell is said to represent the wisdom realizing emptiness. So, you have the five wisdoms represented by the five spokes of the vajra, and the body of the bell representing emptiness, you could also view this as perfection of wisdom, or prajna paramita. So, some other examples of this include (remembering the meditation on bringing the ordinary experience of bardo to the path of the samboghakaya), the vowels white in colour, and the consonants red in colour, also represent the union of method and wisdom. Ordinarily we have the white colour representing method and the red wisdom. Also, if we talk about the periods of the day, you could say the daytime is method, and the night, wisdom. Another example is, the inner offering, where the five meats represent method, and the five nectars represent wisdom.

The functions (of the deep awareness) of that (inseparable pair on the path – method and discriminating awareness) are:

To cleanse attachment and so on away – (my tiger-skin loincloth); Part naivety away – (my skinned elephant-hide cloak);

Invoke all the Buddhas – (my damaru-drum);

Cut off the faults of the three gateways for action – (my axe);

and conceptual thoughts that grasp for extremes – (my cleaver); Pierce through disturbing emotions and attitudes – (my trident); Bind up with perfect deep awareness – (my vajra grappling-rope); And stomp on both eternalism as the extreme of existence in samsara and nihilism as the extreme of nonexistence in nirvana and thus through the stable realization of voidness, outshine all wandering beings – (my two legs stomping on Bhairava and Kalarati).

So now we come to a discussion of the functions of method and wisdom on the path. The damaru drum being sounded means invoking all the Buddhas of the three times. Cutting off the faults of the three gateways for action, that is represented by the axe, and the conceptual thoughts that grasp for extremes is represented by the cleaver. (Rather than “conceptual thoughts”, here, I [Khedrup] would say “projecting mind.”)

Next you have a trident, which represents piercing through disturbing emotions and attitudes, and the vajra grappling rope representing binding up with a perfect deep awareness. If we are bound up in samsara, this means being bound up by karma and afflictions, but if we are bound up, or prevented from making mistakes, this is perfect deep awareness.

The passage continues: we have Heruka, “stomp(ing) on both eternalism as the extreme of existence in samsara...”, etc. The Mahayana practice of the bodhisattva is beyond both of those extremes, i.e., being trapped by eternalism as existence in samsara on the one hand, and by nihilism as non-existence in nirvana, which is liberation for oneself alone, on the other. So, the “stable realization of voidness, outshining all wandering beings” is represented by the two legs stomping on Kalarati and Bhairava. Having brought forth that wisdom realizing emptiness, he is able to subdue these obstructors.

So now we come to the purity of the result.

*As for the resultant state brought about like that:
My state of riddance that is the depletion of all the faults (of my emotional and cognitive obscurations) – my head of Brahma.*

So, this four-faced head of Brahma, being held in one of the hands, represents overcoming the faults of samsara, specifically the emotional and cognitive obscurations. In some commentaries it will say that each of the four faces of Brahma represents one of the four maras, so this again represents subduing the four maras. You will see both explanations. We can have more discussion about that later.

*From a clear light mind, my arising in a Corpus of Enlightening Forms, which is the state of riddance of the extreme of complacent nirvana – the skulls (that are crowning my heads). My state of having been cleansed of all obscurations of the twelve links of dependent arising – my twelve arms.
My state of having turned away from all distorted views – my changing expressions,
My state of having vanquished the four demonic mara forces – my bared fangs,
The stable realization of my good qualities having expanded to have become increasingly fuller – my hair gathered up (on the top of my head).
My abiding in the five types of deep awareness, having reached*

the culminating point of that – the garland of (five-spoked) vajras (tied across my brow);
My state of seeing the full extent of everything, with that deep awareness – my three eyes;
My working for the benefit of all limited beings, with my four types of enlightening influence – the crossed double-vajra (in my topknot of hair). My state of having brought to completion the six far-reaching attitudes’
entire path is the meaning represented by my six mudra-ornaments;
While my having gathered together the (five) Thusly Gone (Buddha-families) and the (four) Thusly Gone female (partners represents)
my possession of all (nine) moods of stilled and settled shamatha and exceptionally perceptive vipashyana.

Geshe la says that here Berzin’s “Corpus of Enlightening Forms” is really the illusory body. That is represented by the skulls crowning the head. So, the twelve arms here, very clearly represent being cleansed of the twelve links. Having turned away from all views, that is represented by the changing expressions. The four fangs we have already mentioned. The good qualities having expanded, is represented by the hair being gathered up on the top of the head, like a topknot. The achievement of the five wisdoms is represented by the garland of five-spoked vajras. Being able to see the full extent of everything is represented by the three eyes on each of the four faces. Working for the benefit of all sentient beings via the four types of activities (pacifying, increasing, controlling and wrathful) is represented by the crossed vajra in the topknot. The state of having brought to completion the six far-reaching attitudes’ entire path is represented by the six mudra ornaments. Having brought together the (five) Buddha-families, and the (four) Thusly Gone female partners, represents the nine moods of settled shamatha and exceptionally perceptive vipashyana. Here, the five male Buddhas we can think of as the embodiment of method, and the four female partners as the embodiment of wisdom. Also, all the techniques of shamatha and vipashyana can be thought of in terms of the rubric of method and wisdom as well.

So, in this way we have gone through the visualization of the holy father Heruka. Geshe la realizes that we are coming to the end of our time, but he wanted to quickly mention some things about the visualization of the mother Vajravarahi.1.28.26

Facing me as the Vanquishing Master Surpassing All Is the
Vanquishing Lady Surpassing All, Vajra-varahi, With her body red
and having one face.
She has two arms, three eyes, is naked and her hair hangs loose. She wears an
apron adorned with fragments of a (human) skull.
She embraces me, her fatherly partner, around my neck with her left hand,
in which she holds a skullcup filled with the blood of the four demonic mara forces and the like, and
serves it up to my mouth, her fatherly partner;
With her right hand she threatens with the threatening mudra,
as well as with a vajra, all malevolent beings in the ten directions.
Because she realizes the equality in voidness of all wandering beings, She possesses the
brilliance of sunlight
Through having an appearance of totally pure deep awareness That is like the fires
at the time of the eons of destruction.

*She delights in blood and drips out blood,
As she nicely wraps her two calves around me, her fatherly partner, above my thighs.
Since she works for the benefit of wandering beings
Even though remaining in the great blissful awareness That's the
functional nature of an exceptionally perceptive
mind of vipashyana,
She has an identity-nature of compassion.
She is bedecked with the mudra-seal of the five bone-ornaments Has a crown of
five dried human skulls and wears a long hanging necklace of fifty dried human
skulls.*

If we are able to think about the father and mother, and the meanings of the all the aspects of their holy bodies and accoutrements, this becomes a great source of not only the accumulation of merit, but purification as well. It can also help us to understand all the qualities a that Buddha possesses, and in this way to bolster our practice of refuge. Also, when we think of all these attributes, and the positive mental qualities they represent and we rejoice in that, this can also become a practice for extending our life, because this is a manifestation of a resultant being who is able to perfectly benefit and contribute to the welfare of all sentient beings. If we wish to possess these attributes ourselves, of course we must attain that same state, and so thinking in this way also bolsters our bodhicitta as well.

We will stop here. We will also come to a bit of an explanation of the mother, but then we will also talk about the blessing of the secret places, or private parts, of the father and mother in the next session. So, thank you very much, and with a joyful mind, please dedicate the merit.

Concluding Prayers and Dedication

So then, as much as possible, by bringing forth our efforts to study and practice the sadhana of glorious Heruka, through the vast merit we have accumulated, we dedicate these to clearing away all conflicts, all wars in the world, all diseases and other sources of suffering, we dedicate this merit that these are all cleared away.

Through these merits, may all the physical and mental difficulties of all six types of sentient beings in samsara be completely cleared away, and may the sunlight of happiness shine upon all of them without discrimination.

And by this merit, may I be able to increase my understanding, so that my own practice of the sadhana of glorious Heruka Chakrasamvara becomes perfect and complete.