

Teaching 20: Heruka Chakrasamvara Teachings

with Geshe Sonam Ngodrup

Twentieth Chakrasamvara teaching – 26.07.2025

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Geshe la says hello to all Dharma friends. First of all, Tashi Delek and greetings to everyone. Geshe la says that he hopes your practices of both sutra and tantra are going well, and that you are relating them directly to your mind.

Introduction

As Lama Tsongkhapa says, and he would remind you, recognize that one is fortunate. Recognize one's good fortune. We are in a fortunate situation and time. There is no more happier time than this, because these studies and practices here will unlock for us our human potential to reach its fullest expression.

In terms of the differences in the sutra and tantra paths, this has already been shared quite extensively, and we have talked about the difference in terms of the kaya aspects of sutra and tantra -the dharmakaya, and in particular the rupakaya, or form body. There are many different scholarly discussions on the differences between the mechanics of sutra and tantra, but lama Tsongkhapa pointed out the main basis of differentiation. This is that a path that is in harmony with bringing forth the aspect of the four purities¹ is considered a tantric path, and a path that does not tap into the aspect of those four purities is considered a path of sutra.

¹ **From the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive:** The Four Purities are also called the four *complete* purities. In tantra, the practice of transcending ordinary appearance and seeing body, place, enjoyments and action as pure. The place or environment is seen as the deity's mandala, the ordinary body is seen as the deity's, the sense enjoyments are offered to the deity and all actions are regarded as the actions of the deity.

1. **Purified Body:** This involves recognizing that one's physical form, including body and speech, is not inherently impure, but rather a manifestation of the deity's form. This challenges the ordinary perception of the body as a source of suffering and instead sees it as a tool for spiritual practice.

2. **Purified Environment (place):** Instead of perceiving the world as a collection of ordinary objects and places, one envisions it as the pure land or mandala of the deity. This practice shifts the focus from mundane appearances to the radiant, enlightened quality of the environment.

3. **Purified Enjoyments:** The practice encourages viewing sensory experiences and pleasures not as sources of attachment and craving, but as expressions of the deity's bliss and wisdom. This helps to detach from ordinary grasping and recognize the inherent joy within all experiences.

4. **Purified Actions:** All actions, both physical and mental, are performed with the motivation of benefiting others and contributing to their enlightenment. This cultivates a compassionate and selfless attitude, transforming ordinary actions into skillful means for spiritual progress.

These four purities are not separate practices, but rather interconnected aspects of a holistic approach to tantric practice, aiming to transform all aspects of experience into expressions of enlightenment.

The differences between sutra and tantra are further elucidated using four points. The first is whether the method practices are obscured or not. That is maybe a “heavy” way of stating it, but this is the way it appears in the scriptures. So, it is said that the method practices of sutra are obscured. Here, obscurity, in Tibetan *mun pa*, is a word that can be translated as ignorance, not like ignorance in a *ma rig pa* sense, but the English word obscurity for *mun pa* is better here. So, the method practices in tantra are not obscured, whereas the method practices in sutra are obscured.

In the sutra practices, for example, when we speak about the supreme form of generosity, we speak about the bodhisattva giving his or her head, or his or her body, for the benefit of others. And of course the practitioner who is able to give his or her head, or body, has already reached a state where grasping at true existence has been very much diminished. They are able to do that without difficulty, so quite a high practice, but when we consider this in the context of the distinction between sutra and tantra, this is still considered an *obscured* method practice. Just to be clear, from the sutra perspective, when a bodhisattva practitioner offers the body in that way, this is not a beginner on the path, but a very advanced practitioner. So, you know, there are the stories of the great beings, for example Aryadeva who offered one of his eyeballs to others, but these are highly realized beings. But Geshe la says that compared to tantra, the method practice here is obscured. Why do we say it is obscured? Because even though these are acts of supreme generosity, they benefit one, or two or at most a few sentient beings. With the tantra practices, as we know, we can use them in a way, we can do the meditations in a way, that they benefit all sentient beings. Whether it is making offerings, or various expressions of generosity, etc., the methods of tantra allow us to unlock the potential to benefit all sentient beings [not just a few]. That is one big difference.

The second point, the second difference between sutra and tantra, is related to the [different] amount of method practices – a smaller versus a greater amount of method practices. When we speak about sutra for example, you would of course think that the method practices are vast – the six paramitas, the perfection practices are many. But when you compare those practices of the paramitas, of the Mahayana perfection vehicle, to what is available in the tantra vehicle, it seems that there are fewer, or that they are more limited. With tantra, we can speak of the tantra of the generation stage, there are vast and extremely profound methods through which we can benefit and connect to others. Similarly, when we come to the completion stage, there are a vast number of methods to bring benefit. So, that is the second point, the second main difference.

The third point regarding the difference between sutra and tantra, is connected with the difference between the disciple of limited faculties, in contrast to the disciple of sharp faculties. We say that compared to tantra, which is the vehicle for disciples of sharp faculty, the sutra is for disciples of limited capacity. Why is this? In the sutra system, the disciple must accumulate the equivalent of three great eons of merit, or strive for three great eons, to accumulate merit [sufficient to attain enlightenment]. The tantric practitioner is considered “jewel-like”, in the sense that in the short span of this human lifetime, have the capacity and the merit to reach enlightenment.

Finally, the fourth point related to the difference between sutra and tantra whether the disciple possesses greater or lesser good fortune. Within the sutra path, we see that as the disciple progresses along the various grounds and stages, there are certain practices that the allowed to engage in, and certain practices they are advised against pursuing. There is a difference based on

the level of advancement of the practitioner. In the tantric path, it is considered that the disciple is of greater good fortune, in that they are capable of using every aspect or tool of the tantric approach. Everything is open to them.

This is one way of delineating four key points or differences between the sutra and tantra paths. Also, we often speak of the sutra vehicle and the *causal* vehicle, and the tantra (or secret mantra) vehicle as the *resultant* vehicle. Though, to be very clear, whether sutra and tantra, the final object of attainment of each vehicle, the goal practitioners are striving for, there is no difference. Where there is a difference between the two, is in terms of the causes one accumulates, and the particular details of the path. This is a method Geshe la is sharing with you just to understand some of the differences between sutra and tantra, which will hopefully make it easier to relate to this in our study and practice. And we can start with this using the four points just mentioned.

This session there are quite a few new people who are joining for the teaching, so some of the things Geshe la is sharing in terms of the visualization may not be immediately apparent to you. But don't worry, things will become clearer to you in time.

So, Geshe la now wants to do the motivation using the visualizing of the various objects of refuge, using mainly the deity Chakrasamvara father and mother, and the five wheels of mandala deities. So that is what we will be doing today. When we do the front visualization, this may actually be easier than other visualization we do in the practice, because we can visualize the various levels of the deities stacked kind of like a vast stupa or mandala in front of us. But it gets a little bit trickier when we do the self-generation because you are visualizing yourself within all these configurations. So, Geshe la is advising for the front generation, we are visualizing at about the level of the eyes, but slightly downward. Not glaring, but slightly below the level of the eyes.

How we're going to do this meditation is, Geshe la used an image for "stack" (Tib. *brtsegs*), like a wedding cake which has layers smaller, then bigger and bigger (i.e., from top to bottom). At the top of this stack, you have Heruka father and mother, then the next layer down you have the four heart dakinis, then, the next layer down the eight (yab/yum) deities of the mind wheel, then the next layer down the eight yab/yum deities of the speech wheel, then the next layer down the eight yab/yum deities of the body wheel, and finally, the next layer down the eight guardian deities. This is called the "assembly of the five wheels" visualization, or the "deity assembly of the five wheels."

To reiterate, first we have at the top Heruka father and mother, then directly below the four heart dakinis. Then we have the eight deities of the mind wheel, but what bears repeating here is that if we count the father/mother yab/yum deities in union as two, then this would be a total of sixteen deities in the mind wheel. Likewise, next we have the speech wheel with a total of sixteen deities, then the body wheel, also with a total of sixteen deities. Finally, we have the eight female guardian, or protector, deities. These are kind of like the body guards, or security people. When we are meditating on the body mandala, we can visualize these eight guardian deities in three different ways.

One thing that we should mention in general here is that most of the deities in this visualization are looking inward, towards Heruka father and mother. But these eight guardian deities are looking

outward, in the mode of protecting. This is because of course the forces which represent hindrances and obstacles will be trying to enter the mandala from the outside, so the guardian deities are on the alert, ready to stop them. However, some holy beings dispute this. They say that the point of having all the deities looking inward, is to create the cause, at the generation stage, of the completion stage practice of all of the winds entering the central channel. Therefore, even the eight guardian deities shouldn't be looking outward, but rather inward, toward Heruka father and mother. Geshe la says that either way, it is interesting to hear these different essential instructions. So, Geshe la came across a third opinion, and this is actually the method he thinks is best, in the sense that it is a personal preference. This is, we visualize these eight guardian deities facing outwards for the majority of the practice, but when we come to the conclusion, and specifically when we are getting ready to dissolve the deities in the mandala, we visualize them facing inward. That is a good way to approach this. It is a beautiful way to reconcile the first two. But, in any case, he is just sharing that any one of these three is totally acceptable. You can see what works best for you.

As we think about that, and as we try to visualize the deities in the front generation, slowly, slowly, we will become more familiar with these details. Now, just take a moment to bring the body and mind into a state of peace.

Preliminary Meditation

The four elements are in balance. The body and mind are at ease. First, let us think about emptiness – how the self, others, the environment, mountains, houses and so forth, none of them have a pinpointable, findable essence. They do not exist in the way they appear.

Imagine that slowly, from this sphere of emptiness in the space in front of us, on the base, the vajra ground, the celestial palace, is glorious Heruka Chakrasamvara, father and mother.

Next, what we want to do, is, together with Heruka father and mother, visualize each of those five wheels of deities in the space in front of us.

Imagine that, gazing toward the assembly of mandala deities in front of us, are all six types of sentient beings of samsara, but in human form, so that we can connect with them and their suffering. Together with them, with a mind of faith and confidence, we all look toward the objects of refuge.

Think, to be of benefit to both myself and others, the only way to do this is to achieve final enlightenment. Therefore, may I actualize the resultant Chakrasamvara and the deities of the five wheels through my practice.

Bring forth the courageous attitude, thinking that with this precious human body and intelligence, I can definitely actualize the resultant Heruka.

We will pause there.

We have a lot to cover, so we will just do the praise to the Buddha, along with the short mandala offering and refuge today.

Continuing the Teaching on the Body Mandala

First, in terms of motivation for listening to, understanding and practicing these teachings, we brought that forth earlier.

As a practitioner of the sadhana, especially as a beginner, one of the most important things is to be familiar with the various outlines. When we speak about outlines, this is something we see this with a lot of different texts. We can look at them as like a map, or a table of contents, which helps us to navigate and retain information in the texts. Also, particularly with the sadhanas, they help us to conceptualize and retain key points of the practice. So, these outlines are very useful.

Most of you are familiar with the sutra teachings when we talk about a practice being complete in the beginning, in the middle and in the end. If we do this with the practice of glorious Chakrasamvara, the wheel of supreme bliss, we can have two main outlines to start with: the practices of the generation stage, and the practices of the completion stage. In terms of the generation stage, it is the various meditations related to the practice of the self-generation. Because it is not easy to bring these forth right away, there are many “branch” outlines within the self-generation practice. The essence of the sadhana practice can be expressed in a very concise way, but to help us learn in the beginning [Khedrup la discusses with Geshe la]... So, the essence of the practices of the generation stage [described] in the Chakrasamvara tantra are actually quite brief and pithy, in fact. So, we can think of those as like the “roots” in the beginning.

When we look at the outlines of this particular sadhana, we have them divided into the common, general preliminaries, the uncommon, extraordinary preliminaries, and the actual practice and concluding activities. These are similar to sections on the beginning, middle, and end. So, in terms of the preliminary practices, we have these two, the common, general and the uncommon, extraordinary preliminaries

So, first, why does the word “common” appear here? The reason is because the practices categorized in this way, will be common in many other practices of highest yoga tantra. The common general preliminaries are seven in number. First is the supplication to the lineage lamas. Second is the instantaneous arising. Third is the blessing of the vajra and bell. Fourth is the blessing of the inner offering. Fifth is the way of offering the inner offering tormas. Sixth is blessing the offerings to the self-generation. Finally the seventh is the meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva. If you are familiar with these, then if you are reciting the sadhana, you can think, “on, now I am at this point, which relates to this particular outline,” etc. It is like a map which helps us navigate the practice.

Now, we come to the uncommon, extraordinary preliminaries. Here it is “uncommon” because they are particular to the Chakrasamvara practice. The first of these is, through purifying the three doors, meditation on the four immeasurables. Other yidam practices will have methods to purify the three doors, but conjoining this with meditation on the four immeasurables is likely unique to Chakrasamvara. The second of these uncommon practices, is blessing the aggregates, or skandhas, the constituents, or dhatus, and the sense bases, or the *ayatanas*. An important point here is that

blessing the aggregates, constituents and sense bases is explicitly laid out in the Luipa tradition of Chakrasamvara practice. You will not find this in the Five Deity Chakrasamvara practice of the Ghantapa tradition, or the Body Mandala practice of the Ghantapa tradition. But, scholars advise that you should take this blessing practice and insert it into the appropriate place in these other practices. In addition, the method of receiving the four empowerments as it is outlined in the Luipa practice is described as especially profound, and therefore many holy beings have advised taking the expanded method of receiving the four initiations as it is found in the Luipa tradition, and applying it to the Ghantapa Five Deity and Body Mandala practices. So, just to be clear, the blessing of the aggregates, constituents and sense bases does not appear at all in the Ghantapa Five Deity and Body Mandala practices. The method of receiving the four empowerments *does* appear in the Five Deity and Body Mandala practices of the Ghantapa tradition, but a much more abbreviated way than we find it in the Luipa tradition.

Now the third of the uncommon, extraordinary practices is meditating on the protection wheel. This is an extremely vast practice, and we haven't examined this in detail, but we have covered it in a brief way in Geshe la's commentary. And, Geshe la also says that the blessing of the aggregates, constituents and sense bases was also covered briefly, but not in any great detail. Maybe slowly, slowly we can return to a discussion of some of these points.

The fourth of the uncommon, extraordinary preliminaries is establishing the conditions for the accumulations of the two collections [of merit and of wisdom]. The accumulation of the collection of merit is done through the practice of the seven purities, which are, you will remember, similar to the seven limbs. In the context of this practice, the collection of wisdom is very vast. We can do this in terms of relating the eight stages of dissolution of the process of death to various aspects of emptiness, and aspects of emptiness meditation. The other interesting thing about the Luipa practice is that, when we come to taking the three bodies into the path, taking death into the path of the dharmakaya is usually considered to be [part of] the main practice in most sadhanas. But in the structure of the Luipa sadhana, taking death into the path of the dharmakaya is actually considered part of the preliminaries. The other beautiful thing about the structure of the sadhana is that, in terms of the Vajrasattva meditation and recitation, this is what allows us to purify negativities and obscurations. That comes, and then we can bring in the collection of merit practices.

Then, in terms of all these preliminaries, Geshe la says that he did his best to go through all of those as much as he could. He said that he has only covered all of these points very briefly, in the roughly thirty hours of teachings he has given so far.

Now, after the preliminaries, we come to the sections of the actual practice. The first of these is taking the bardo into the path of the sambhogakaya, or enjoyment body. This involves generating the supports for the celestial palace. Then, following this, is the way to generate the four yogas. We are now in the part of the sadhana involving the generation of these four yogas. These are expressed as the first, yoga, second the subsequent yoga (or, anuyoga), the third is atiyoga, and finally the fourth is maha (or, great) yoga. Of these four yogas, the third, atiyoga, is the most extensive. Within this third ati (or, perfection) yoga, there are six points. The first of these is the way to generate the mandala of the support, and the mandala of the supported. The second is the vast way of visualization, and this refers again to the mandalas of the support and the supported.

The third point is recollecting the purity and meditating on the body mandala. We have already had quite a bit of discussion about the body mandala.

Concerning the body mandala, there is one question Geshe la would like to put to you. So, here is his question for you. The deity of the body mandala – is it within the body mandala, or is it within the outer mandala? I will say the question again. The deities of the body mandala – are they within the body mandala, or are they within the outer mandala? Geshe la said that for him, when he was less familiar with this practice, when this question was put to him, he was actually a little bit stumped. He was not sure how to answer. We will leave this with you to contemplate, and will return to it later. He is not going to give the answer right away. This is not Geshe la's way.

Now we come to the fourth point, which has three points within it: 1) wearing the armour, 2) descending the wisdom beings, and 3) bestowing the empowerment. So, this is actually where we are, where we left off in the sadhana, in the middle of a discussion of these three subpoints of point number four. Keep in mind that as we practice these various points, we are actually in the self-generation. One is in the form of Heruka with the mother Vajravarahi. So, we are Heruka Chakrasamvara mother and father; they are us, and surrounding us are the various deities of the mandala [of Heruka Chakrasamvara]. Also, keep in mind that these deities of the mandala are mostly in the form of yab/yum, father and mother. Regarding this, in terms of the eight guardian deities, there is an additional point to be made [about how their yab/yum character relates to the appearance of the deities], but Geshe la said that we have discussed this extensively in a previous class, so he will not go into this again. And we see that the eight guardians, the eight protectors, are quite important. They are mentioned at various points in the sadhana.

Then, in terms of where we left off in the fourth point, specifically we were at the point where we were descending the wisdom beings and bestowing the empowerment. In terms of conceptualizing these sixty-two deities, Geshe la would like to propose a way of dividing this into four units, which might make it a little bit easier to think about. We can think there is this outer mandala, and we are in this outer mandala in the form of yab/yum Chakrasamvara father and mother, and surrounding us on various levels are the sixty-two (actually, *sixty* if we consider ourselves as yab/yum in the center). And, of course, within oneself as Chakrasamvara, there are the sixty-two deities of the body mandala. Those are considered by the mind to be *within* our body as Chakrasamvara. And these sixty-two deities of the body mandala come from the twenty-four places. This was explained extensively by Geshe la. So, in this section we have 1) sixty-two deities of the outer mandala, 2) sixty-two deities of the outer mandala, and 3) sixty-two wisdom deities. We can think that these wisdom beings that we invite to descend and perform various functions are in essence these sixty-two deities again. So, here that brings us to three configurations of sixty-two deities.

Generally, it is perfectly acceptable, when we think about the three configurations of sixty-two corresponding to the outer and body mandalas, together with the mandala of wisdom deities, to think of the mandala of wisdom deities containing, as was indicated, sixty-two wisdom deities. But instead, if we think about sixty-two multiplied by a million each and that the resulting sixty-two million deities completely fill the expanse of space, this is considered more auspicious. One suggestion here is that we can consider these sixty-two million deities filling the expanse of space and sky, and slowly those sixty-two million dissolve into sixty-two wisdom deities, and that is one

way to visualize it. Concerning this, Geshe la says, the holy beings kind of joke that if you had a pitcher into which you were pouring water, would you rather have just a little at the bottom, or would you rather have it filled completely to the brim? So, if we could do this visualization with a really vast number of wisdom beings, this is going to be more powerful and inspiring, and therefore more beneficial to sentient beings.

Where we left off, we had descended these wisdom beings (based on what Geshe la said you could conceptualize these as sixty-two in number), and we invited the sixteen offering goddesses to make various offerings to them. So, after that is completed, we come to the *fourth* assembly of sixty-two deities, which are the empowerment bestowing deities, the deities who bestow abisheka. If you think about this, Geshe la says its almost like an entertainment. It is almost entertaining and inspiring to watch this unfold.

We will now continue with the sadhana, p. 60 of Berzin's translation. Just as a reminder, we spoke previously about the mantras "*VAJRA ANKUSHA JAH, VAJRA PASHA HUM, VAJRA SPHOTA BAM, VAJRA GHANTA HOH,*" and that these extensive versions that can be condensed into the ones most of us are more familiar with "*JAH, HUM, BAM, HOH.*" (Here, Geshe la demonstrates the four mudras which accompany these mantras). So, following this, with the mantra "*OM YOGA SHUDDHAH SARVA DHARMAH YOGA SHUDDHO 'HAM*", Geshe la points out here that it is very important to accompany this mantra with the embracing mudra (Geshe la demonstrates.) This corresponds to the merging of the wisdom and commitment beings, and is very important in bolstering our divine pride of being the deity. So with the recitation of this mantra and with its accompanying mudra, we think "I am the essence of the sixty-two deities of holy Chakrasamvara, as well as his holy body, speech and mind."

Now Geshe la continues with the recitation of the sadhana in Tibetan:

*The close-bonding (commitment) beings and deep awareness
(wisdom) beings*

Merge to become of one taste.

*The very nature of reality of all phenomena
and the deep awareness of great blissful awareness*

Are inseparable in essential nature;

And it is that itself that has arisen as

the supporting and supported mandala.

*And that as well that are the parts arisen as the principal
figures, father and mother.*

So, this paragraph is explaining the essence of the three secrets (Tib. *gsang ba sum*), i.e., a Buddha's body, speech and mind, being of one taste.

So, in front of us we have all these deities, all these visualized forms, but we should understand that they are in essence the great, inseparable wisdom of bliss/emptiness. So, we can say that many secret mantra practices are methods which allow us to realize the three secrets to be of one taste. In

contrast to vast implications of this, the current body that we have is limited because of its physical form; we can't just think of a particular place, and be there to help someone, right?

Continuing,

OM AH HUM

OM SARVA VIRA YOGINI, KAYA VAK CHITTA VAJRA
SVABHAVA ATMAKO 'HAM

OM VAJRA SHUDDHAH SARVA DHARMA VAJRA
SHUDDHO 'HAM

These are known as “the three instantaneous mantras” (Tib. *skad cig ma'i ngag gsum*). So, if we know a bit more about what these mantras mean, it will be helpful for us. They are called the three instantaneous mantras because through their recitation, the supported and supporting mandala can be generated instantaneously.

There are different types, or groupings, of mantra. The first is the four precious mantras: the root mantra, the essence mantra, the auxiliary mantras, and the armour mantras. These are the four precious mantras. They are very important in Chakrasamvara, and also in other yidam practices. Then there are the four HUM mantras, the mantras recited by the four holy faces (as in the section of the sadhana relating to the protection circle). These are all descriptive names which help us to conceptualize these various mantras.

So this mantra “OM SARVA VIRA YOGINI, KAYA VAK CHITTA VAJRA SVABHAVA ATMAKO 'HAM” is the divine pride of becoming the rupakaya. The mantra “OM VAJRA SHUDDHAH SARVA DHARMA VAJRA SHUDDHO 'HAM”, can also be explained as the divine pride of the dharmakaya, the *divine pride of the truth body* mantra.

Next, the sixteen knowledge ladies make offerings to the empowerment deities. Before this, of course, before we make the offerings we have invited the various commitment and wisdom beings. Why, after we invite these various deities, why do we have to make all these various offerings? It was the custom of a good host in ancient India, when you invite someone to your house, you first offer some water to clean their feet, to freshen their mouth, maybe some food and so forth, then you ask for [their assistance in] the tasks that you need to complete. And if we don't eat, we're not really able to bring much energy into our work, so it is important to make those offerings.

So, we imagine the sixty-two empowerment deities in front of us as clearly as we can, and we make these various offerings. Geshe la says he is going to do the mantras and mudras for these sixteen offerings, so just follow as closely as you can. The nice thing is that the video of this teaching will be uploaded in a few days, so you can watch this again.

*Imagine that hosts of knowledge ladies, visualized as before,
emanate from your heart, make the offerings and then dissolve
back into your heart.*

OM VAJRA VINE HUM HUM PHAT *vina lute*

OM VAJRA VAMSHE HUM HUM PHAT *flute*
 OM VAJRA MRITANGE HUM HUM PHAT *mridangam,*
double-headed drum
 OM VAJRA MURAJE HUM HUM PHAT *muraja large drum*
 OM VAJRA HASYA HUM HUM PHAT *smile*
 OM VAJRA LASYA HUM HUM PHAT *flirt*
 OM VAJRA GITI HUM HUM PHAT *sing*
 OM VAJRA NRITYA HUM HUM PHAT *dance*
 OM VAJRA PUSHPE HUM HUM PHAT *flowers*
 OM VAJRA DHUPE HUM HUM PHAT *incense*
 OM VAJRA DIPAM HUM HUM PHAT *butter lamp*
 OM VAJRA GHANDE HUM HUM PHAT *cologne water*
 OM RUPA VAJRI HUM HUM HUM PHAT *sights*
 OM RASA VAJRI HUM HUM HUM PHAT *tastes*
 OM SPARSHE VAJRI HUM HUM HUM PHAT *physical*
sensations
 OM DHARMADHATU VAJRI HUM HUM PHAT *embrace*

So, those are the sixteen offerings given by the sixteen knowledge ladies, or offering goddesses. Geshe la says that he explained those offerings and mudras extensively before (see Transcript for Teaching 19), so he is not going to repeat that here. [Just so you know, “vajra” is often pronounced “benzra”. Both are acceptable.]

So now we come to requesting the empowerment. In Tibetan Geshe la has recited, “I request all you Thusly Gone Buddhas, Please bestow the empowerments on me.” We are now at the top of page 61 in Berzin’s text.

Generally, there are three increments of requesting the empowerment. Here we say, “please bestow the empowerment on me”, so we are requesting the empowerment for ourselves. But, there is also requesting the empowerment to be bestowed on the front generation. For example, in the Vajrasattva meditation and recitation, we ask the empowering deities to bestow the empowerment on Vajrasattva, the front-generated deity. And then sometimes we just say, “please bestow empowerment”, and this can mean just bestow empowerment upon all, which means there is no differentiation whether it is the front-generation or self-generation. They are all receiving the empowerment.

Continuing,

Having thus been requested,
The eight dakinis of the doorways and corners drive away any
interfering spirits.

Here, the eight dakinis (sometimes translated as eight guardian deities), are like bodyguards driving away obstructors and obstacle-causers. They have been paid a good wage, since the sixteen offering goddesses have made the sixteen offerings to them. They are well compensated! Within the various types of deities, they do perform a very special function.

*The heroic viras (the deities of the mind, speech and body wheels)
recite verses for auspiciousness;*

So, this means that there are twenty-four deities reciting these verses. Geshe la says that when you have an orchestra with twenty-four members singing and playing instruments, the result can be very beautiful.

And the heroic lady virinis sing vajra songs.

These are the twenty-four partners of the twenty-four viras singing vajra songs, which describe emptiness, so there are many melodies coming together.

*The principal deity then grants permission to bestow the
empowerments.*

So Geshe la says the principal deity, father and mother, are not singing or playing an instrument. Their job here is to bestow empowerment. Geshe la says that the next thing is that the principal deity grants the permission for the empowerment to be given. Something very important to note here and remember is who is actually bestowing the empowerment. It is the deities of the great bliss wheel in female form (the four heart dakinis), together with Vajravarahi herself who are the five deities who bestow the empowerment.

Geshe la and I (Khedrup la) were just discussing that perhaps this is a dated view, but it is in the commentary, so it will be shared: the dakinis are like doing the inner work, analogous to the work that is done inside the home, and the father deities do the work on the outside of the home.]

*The four motherly partners and Vajra-varahi, these five Slightly
tip the skullcups in their left hands.*

*"Just as right at the time of their birth, The Thusly Gone
Buddhas were bathed, We likewise bathe you*

With the purifying waters of the gods.

OM SARVA TATHAGATA ABHISHEKATA SAMAYA
SHRIYE HUM."

*Saying this, they bestow empowerment with a stream of waters
of nectar on the crowns of our heads,*

*Whereby I and the (other mandala) deities Take on an identity-
nature of great bliss.*

This relates to the story of the Buddha Shakyamuni's birth, that when he emerges, the worldly deities offered to hold him up so that his feet would not touch the ground, the offered him libation, the bathing offering. And, also, in some versions, the tutelary deities, the yidams or meditational deities, appeared to perform a bathing ritual for the Buddha.

So, at the time when one is receiving this, it is important to "take on the identity nature of great bliss", as Berzin puts it, but really this means that you are *experiencing* great bliss. You feel that you are experiencing great bliss. And as we receive the empowerment, we imagine that the two obscurations, various illnesses and other types of obstacles, are all purified and cleared away.

Then, this nectar completely fills up your body, with the excess emerging at the crown of your head transforming into Akshobhya and so forth. So, the main crown ornament deity for Heruka here is Akshobhya, but it is Vairochana for the motherly partner Vajravarahi.

Normally, when we have Heruka father and mother together, it is just Akshobhya on the crown of Heruka Chakrasamvara. However, in the Luipa tradition, it is an uncommon aspect that Vajravarahi also has a crown ornament, which in this case is Vairochana.

*Entering our bodies through the crowns of our heads,
The overflow liquid remaining on the very tops of our heads
Transform and crowns the Principal Deity with an Akshobhya,
Vajra-varahi with a Vairochana,*

*The four (motherly partners), Dakini and so on, with
Ratnasambhavas, The deities of the mind wheel, with
Akshobhyas,*

*The deities of the speech wheel, with Amitabhas, The deities of
the body wheel, with Vairochanas,*

*And the deities of the wheel of those with close bond, with
Amoghshiddhas. By means of that, I receive the vase
empowerment.*

Receiving the Vase Empowerment

Geshe la says this is very important. We are receiving the vase empowerment through this visualization, where the different deities of the mandala are adorned, or consecrated, with one of the five dhyani Buddhas. This empowerment includes that of the five dhyani Buddhas. The particular deity that is marking the crown, is an indication of the dhyani Buddha family lineage that the mandala deity is associated. So, it is like, Geshe la says, you have the people in the old days who are associated with the cavalry have a special uniform, those in the army another, and those in the navy a different one as well. So, by the colors they are wearing, you can tell to which part of the armed forces they belong. Another scholar said that you can think of it like a conference of many nations, where the different members go around holding the flag of the nation with which they are associated. These are beautiful examples to help us understand the function of the symbolism here.

Then we come to the way of adorning the deities, the three ways of adorning the deity as lord of the family. You could also say..here the Tibetan word is a difficult one, (Tib. *brgyan btab tshul*), you could say this as “adorned” or “crowned”, so “the three ways of crowning the deity”.

The first way is “adorning the cause with the result.” We can mainly associate this with the Akshobhya form at the crown. That can be considered as adorning the cause with the result. Mainly, we understand that all the deities are in the aspect of Dorje Chang, or Vajradhara, who is considered to be a Sambhogakaya aspect, while Akshobhya is considered to be a Nirmanakaya aspect. Therefore, the enjoyment body, Sambhogakaya, is considered to be a causal relation to the Nirmanakaya. It makes sense if you consider it in the context of a cause and effect relationship; we first have to have the Sambhogakaya, the enjoyment body in the pure land, as the *cause*, and this is going to emanate the Nirmanakaya as the *result*.

Now, Geshe la says for a moment we are actually going to skip Vairochana adorning Vajravarahi, and consider first the Ratnasambhavas, which adorn the four motherly partners, the heart dakinis. This is an example of the “lord, or the principal, of the lineage adorning the lineage”, the second of the three ways of adorning the deities. So, the four motherly partners are marked by the lord of the lineage, Ratnasambhava. Because they are adorned with the lord of the lineage, Ratnasambhava, as the result, we can understand that they are of the Ratnasambhava family as the cause. This is the same for the deities of the mind, speech and body wheels. This is the way of adorning the deities with the lord of the lineage.

So, then, why is Vajravarahi adorned with Vairochana? Vajravarahi is an embodiment of wisdom, and the reason she is adorned with Vairochana is related to method. That is the reason for this, the third adornment, reminding us that method and wisdom need to be practiced together.

Another thing that it is important to recollect here, we spoke at the beginning about the practice of tantra as possessing four branches. The first of the four branches is the samaya being. The second is the wisdom being. The third is the empowering deity. And the fourth is the adornment with the lord of the family. So, if someone asks you what are the four branches related to the deities of highest yoga tantra, you should be able to say the samaya being, the wisdom being, the empowering being, and the adornment of the lord of five Dhyani Buddhas. So “adorned with the four branches” in the context of highest yoga tantra refers to this.

Those then are the four branches. Then, what are the “three beings”? They are the commitment being, the wisdom being, and the concentration being.

So, in this way (going back to p.61), one has received the vase empowerment. Therefore, all of the obscurations of the body have been purified, one has received all of the potentials related to the practice of the generation stage, and one has received the capacity to bring forth the nirmanakaya, or emanation body.

We will stop here. We have received the vase empowerment. We weren’t able to finish all the four empowerments, but we were able to finish the first of the four. So, we will continue with the other three in the next session.

Thank you very much. With a joyful mind, let us conclude with dedication prayers.

Concluding Meditation

Through the merit we have accumulated in these virtuous activities, we dedicate this to the perfect fruition of all our study and practice, so that we may benefit sentient beings exactly as we wish.

Keeping in mind that in the tantras of glorious Heruka, it is promised that as the times become increasingly degenerate, more dangerous, and evil, their power and efficacy only increase. For this reason we request glorious Heruka to bestow the blessings of the holy body, speech and mind of father and mother, to dispel all the wars, disharmony, conflicts, injustices, disease and other disasters in this vast world.

May this be a cause for the sun of attachment to shine without discrimination on every single being in samsara.