

Commentary on
THE GENERATION STAGE LIBERATING INSTRUCTIONS OF
BHAGAVATI VAJRAYOGINI
WITH FACES OF THE TWO TRUTHS



by H.E. Chenga Rinpoche
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INTRODUCTION:

MOTIVATION TO RECEIVE THE TEACHINGS

Before engaging in any type of Dharma practice, such as hearing, contemplating, or meditating, we must generate the correct motivation. Even if we do the rest of the practice correctly, it will never become the path to liberation without the right motivation. Motivation establishes the direction that leads your practice. Thus, if your intention is to achieve mundane benefit, you will attain a mundane result even if you follow the path of the Dharma that the Buddha taught.

There is a story that describes Atisha's disappointment regarding one of his disciples. The disciple was a practitioner of highest yoga tantra. Yet, because of his improper of motivation, he only achieved the level of an arhat, which is the lowest result of practice. This teaches us that if we practice the higher vehicle practices but are supported by a lesser intention, we will only achieve a lesser result. Performing the higher practice will not necessarily help you gain the higher result if it is not supported by the correct motivation. For this reason, it is vital that we generate the correct motivation for this practice and for any Dharma practice in general.

You may think that it is not necessary to spend much time on the preliminary practices because you want to focus on the essence of the practice. Many people have this attitude. They say, "I don't want to waste my time here and there with the unimportant aspects. I want to get to the meat of the practice." Such people generally include the generation of motivation as part of the "unimportant" aspects. To counter such thinking, Jigten Sumgön taught, "What others consider not to be profound, I consider to be profound."



The elevated wind and channel practices, for example, are not unique to Buddhism; they are common practices in India for both Hindus and Buddhists. They only become Buddhist practices and part of the Buddhist path if they are supported by one of the three Buddhist motivations: the Hinayana, Mahayana, or Vajrayana. If any of these three support your practice, it is a path to liberation. Otherwise, your practice is a common exercise.

Every time you perform a meritorious activity, first focus on the quality of your intention. Consider, “Why am I doing this? What is my purpose?” Sometimes, a bad intention can turn otherwise good merit into a negative result; at other times a good intention can turn an otherwise bad action into a positive result. Please recognize that motivation is an essential element of practice.

Buddhism can be categorized as three vehicles, the Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, each with a slightly different motivation. The Hinayana path forms the foundation for all of Buddhism, so we will look at that one first.

The primary motivation in the Hinayana is renunciation. When we take refuge, for example, it is based on the understanding that samsara is miserable. No matter how hard we work, we are never satisfied; samsara is permeated with suffering. In order to renounce these sufferings and completely free ourselves from them, we rely on the Three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

The Buddha is the only one who is completely enlightened. Aspiring to this state of liberation from suffering is the core of refuge. Why do we suffer? Because we are deluded. You can clearly see in your own life that our delusions create our suffering. How many times do we make a mistake that we end up regretting? Why? Because we are deluded and confused.



In contrast, the Buddha is someone who has completely awakened from this delusion. The word buddha means the awakened one or the knowledgeable one. Being thus motivated by renunciation of samsara, we look for a way out and find the practice of taking refuge. This is fundamental to Buddhism.

Once we have taken refuge, we can work to extend or improve our practice through bodhicitta. We can see that all sentient beings have, in one lifetime or another, been beloved—as a mother, a spouse, a child. We are motivated to free them from suffering, too, because there is no other way to return their kindness other than by liberating them. When we generate bodhicitta, we are saying that we want to liberate ourselves and all sentient beings from suffering. We extend our wish for personal benefit to include every being.

Sometimes people think that because someone exhibits compassion they are a true bodhisattva. However, compassion and bodhicitta are not the same; they are not interchangeable. Compassion means that you have some degree of sympathy for someone's misery, whereas bodhicitta means that you don't just sympathize with their suffering, but you also want to bring them to buddhahood.

There is a slight shift in motivation between the renunciation of the Hinayana and the bodhicitta of the Mahayana, with the Mahayana being more expansive. For example, if you wanted to go on a vacation, that is like the Hinayana goal of individual liberation. If you wanted to go on vacation and take everyone with you, that is like the bodhicitta of the Mahayana. So the difference between the two approaches is whether you go alone or take everyone with you. The destination is the same for both, a permanent vacation to nirvana.

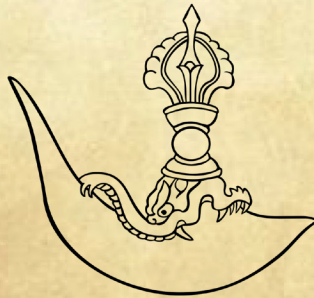


The essential difference between the Mahayana and the Vajrayana motivation is in method. In the Vajrayana, you bring the buddhahood that you are trying to reach here to you. Instead of traveling to Hawaii, you turn your place here into Hawaii. The buddhas are not admired from a distance, but rather you practice transforming yourself into the deity. That is the only difference; otherwise the underlying concepts are the same.

To summarize, the three different motivations are:

- ❖ renunciation (Hinayana)
- ❖ bodhicitta (Mahayana)
- ❖ the five “excellences:” excellent place, excellent teacher, excellent Dharma, excellent retinue, excellent time. The method is to transform samsara into the mandala of the deity through the practice. (Vajrayana)

It really doesn’t matter which motivation we choose because the goal of all three is achievement of nirvana. Our practice will be a path to liberation with any one of the them.



INTRODUCTION:

VAJRAYANA

Some people have the mistaken impression that Vajrayana practitioners are less disciplined than the other two, that they are allowed to do things that are not allowed in the Hinayana or Mahayana. This misunderstanding can lead them to think that the three paths are completely separate. This is untrue. Before Atisha came to Tibet, the Vajrayana practitioners did act that way. But his teachings made clear that no one has special permission to do anything that could not be done by everyone. No one can by-pass the results of their negative actions. Jigten Sumgön said, “Even tenth-level bodhisattvas will be reborn in the lower depths of hell if they create the cause to be born there.” Padmasambhava said, “Externally, I practice Vinaya; internally, I practice bodhicitta; and secretly, I practice Vajrayana.” This shows that we must learn to practice all three together.

There are many divisions and categories within Vajrayana. The Hinayana also has many different vows, and the Mahayana contains many types of practice. Why is this? We don’t all have the same capacities and abilities. Each individual has his own specialization, his own way of training. Some do better with the Hinayana method, others will join the path through the Mahayana, and still others with the Vajrayana. None is better or worse. Again, it doesn’t matter which path you take to the destination so long as you don’t lose your way.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama takes this a step further and says, “Generally, there is no “best” religion. Some people’s best religion could be Buddhism, and someone else’s best religion could be Christianity or Islam or any other religion. So long as it makes you a better person, that is the best path for you.” Therefore, you must find a path that is suitable to your elements and personality, the kind of practice that is really comfortable for you.



We can understand that there are many different types of teachings because there are many different types of people. This demonstrates how skillful and knowledgeable the Buddha was. He offers many different options because no two individuals are the same. There are divisions within the Vajrayana for the same reason. The four main categories are:

- ❖ action (*kriya*) tantra
- ❖ performance (*carya*) tantra
- ❖ yoga tantra
- ❖ highest yoga (*anutara*) tantra. Marpa divided this group into four subcategories: mother tantras such as Mahamaya, father tantras such as Guhyasamaja, non-dual tantras such as Hevajra, and essence tantras such as Chakrasambhava. This Vajrayogini practice belongs to part of the Chakrasamvara tantra.

Our text is called *The Generation Stage Liberating Instructions of Bhagavati Vajrayogini with Faces of the Two Truths*. As explained by H.E. Chenga Rinpoche, this text originated when Marpa visited Naropa in India. Naropa instructed him to go to the Sotali cemetery, which may be near the Shavari cave close to Bodh Gaya. There, an ordinary woman approached Marpa and asked him whether he wanted to see the Vajrayogini mandala. When he accepted, she took out a crystal drigung and opened her chest with it. Inside was the mandala. This is called a “sign empowerment” and we understand the story to mean that Marpa received it directly from Vajrayogini herself. Marpa then proceeded to Bodh Gaya to see the Buddha’s large tooth as Naropa had instructed, and the text that we are using manifested from that relic. Marpa recorded the text on the smooth bark of a palm (*shing tala*) tree in the Sinhalese language, and later translated it into Tibetan when he returned home.



This sadhana is usually used within the Drigung Kagyu as a preliminary to practicing the Six Yogas of Naropa. For that reason, it only includes the generation stage; the completion stage is not part of this text. The completion stage is done later as a part of the Six Yogas of Naropa. Thus, it is called the Outer Practice or the Generation Practice of Vajrayogini.



TEXT COMMENTARY: PRELIMINARY VERSES

In this sadhana, we have four preliminary verses: aspiration bodhicitta; action bodhicitta; refuge; and the four immeasurables. The Dagpo Kagyu tradition is composed of the two traditions that Gampopa combined: the Kadampa and the Mahamudra traditions. The Kadampa tradition placed a great deal of emphasis on training the mind in bodhicitta. For that reason, the Kagyupa generally, and especially the Drikung Kagyu, place a meditation on bodhicitta first in every practice, before any other preliminaries.

There are two kinds of bodhicitta: aspiration and action. We don't place any limitation on our aspirations. In fact, we strive for the greatest aspiration of all—to liberate every sentient being, including those who directly harm us. That is the meaning of the following prayer of altruistic motivation.

*All mother sentient beings limitless as space,
especially those enemies who hate me, obstructors who harm me,
and those who create obstacles on my path to liberation and omniscience:
may they experience happiness, be free from suffering, and swiftly
may they attain precious, unsurpassed, perfectly complete enlightenment!*

We can generate an aspiration prayer without limitations because there are no limits to our imagination. We can image the greatest of imaginings, yet, our aspiration does not end there. The aspiration we recite is the wish to liberate every sentient being. Don't think, "I could not possibly do that. I am not good enough for such an undertaking."

It's true—you will never become good enough if you do not start out with a great aspiration. If you limit yourself, you will never become capable of doing it. Right now, our methods, skills, and courage are not developed yet, but understand that our inner capacity has no limitation. The Buddha was just like us at the beginning, yet he was able to reach complete buddhahood. If we work to develop our abilities, we can, too.



At the same time, we must also develop action bodhicitta, the practical side of things. In practice, we have to do what is within our capacity to accomplish. We can't just do what others are doing; we have to find what is best for ourselves. The action bodhicitta prayer gives us three options.

*For that purpose, until I attain buddhahood,
I will apply my body, speech, and mind to virtue.
Until death, I will apply my body, speech, and mind to virtue.
From today until this time tomorrow,
I will apply my body, speech, and mind to virtue.*

The first, applying everything toward buddhahood for as long as it takes is one of the great, courageous commitments. Maybe we cannot all actually do this one, and that's OK. There is a second choice. In the second one, we commit ourselves to practice throughout this one lifetime. For some of us even this is difficult, so we look at the third choice. This commitment lasts one day, which is good for those who are reluctant to take a lifetime vow. I believe most people can do this one. When it comes to practice, we must perform based on our own abilities. We may not be able to help every sentient being now, but if you can help one person, do it sincerely. If you can help ten, then do that. Do your best based on your capability.

I say this because I see so many people start out with great enthusiasm. Then after a few weeks or months, they burn out and give everything up. They try to do too much. In Tibet, we have a saying, "If a fox tries to jump where a lion can jump, the fox will only break its back."



It would be better to make a small commitment and keep it. Whatever you are committed to, keep going without fail. Start small, and after you become good at something you can extend it. By gradually increasing your capacity for action, one day you will become great. It doesn't matter where you start, just start by doing what you can without giving up and then increase little by little. If you can't increase, at least continue within your capacity without losing your commitment. But most of all, don't decrease your action. It's easy to say, "I'll do it later." This leads to gradual deterioration, not improvement.

The refuge prayer that we recite here is not a common component of Vajrayogini texts. This particular verse was written by Atisha as a refuge and bodhicitta prayer together. It says:

*Until awakening, I take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma,
and the Supreme Assembly!*

*By the merit of generosity and other good deeds,
may I attain buddhahood for the benefit of all beings!*

Since this is a Vajrayana practice, we accompany the recitation with a visualization. Here, we visualize Vajrayogini as being inseparable from our root guru, the Three Jewels, and the Three Roots. This is known as the jewel tradition, because it is like a wish-fulfilling jewel composed of all the enlightened qualities that appears as the deity field in front of you. Vajrayogini's body is the sangha, her speech is the Dharma, and her mind is the Buddha. You can also say that her body is the guru, her speech is the deity, and her mind is the dakini. Thus, the Three Jewels and the Three Roots are inseparable within her. We take refuge in Vajrayogini while reciting the refuge prayer from the text.





The final preliminary verse is a recitation of the four immeasurables:

*May all mother sentient beings, limitless as space,
have happiness and the causes of happiness!
May they be free from suffering and the causes of suffering!
May they not be separated from the happiness that is free from sorrow!
May they rest in equanimity, free from attachment and aversion!*

In the Naropa tradition, the four immeasurables and bodhicitta are understood to be different expressions of the same thought; there is no difference between them. The four immeasurables include loving kindness and compassion, and it is important for us to understand their meaning. As discussed earlier, compassion and bodhicitta are often confused but they are not the same. Loving kindness is a wish for someone else to be happy. In everyday language we might say, “I love my car” or “I love flowers.” That is a type of love, but not the kind we are generating here because the object of that focus has no feelings. You can’t wish for a car to be happy. Loving kindness is a pure thought that is related to others’ happiness and not just your own. Others’ happiness comes from bodhicitta, so for that reason we say they are inseparable.



TEXT COMMENTARY: POSTURE

Namo Guru Vajrayoginiye!

This is the daily practice of the arising stage and mantra recitation of Vajrayogini.

Tantric practices in general are composed of two parts, the generation and completion stages. This daily practice is based mainly on the generation or arising stage. In the generation stage of deity yoga, we introduce ourselves to a deity by establishing a visualization. The purpose is to liberate the mind from ordinary conceptions, which frees us to experience what it means to be enlightened.

With the body in the seven-fold posture of concentration . . .

Correct physical posture is an essential support for meditation. So long as the mind functions within the body, we have to train both. In the sutra tradition, this is called the essential point of the body because, in order for the mind to meditate, physical support of the body is necessary. For this, you must develop some physical discipline, which will bring the mind some degree of concentration or meditation. If you just sit in whatever manner is comfortable, you cannot train the mind successfully. For example, if you straighten your leg when it hurts a little, you will become lazy. You will spoil your mind that way and will not develop discipline.

The mind and body are closely interrelated and must work together. How does this work? The body is full of nerves, many of which have air flowing within them. The consciousness can access wherever air can flow. If the circulation in a portion of the body is cut, that area can be removed without pain because it is dead. Without air flow, the body cannot be maintained or kept fresh. As long as we have air, we can survive; without any internal winds, we die.



Wherever the air circulates, the mind can feel. The body then reacts to whatever the mind feels. For example, when the mind is sad, you don't have to ask the body to produce tears. The body produces them naturally. On the other hand, when the mind is happy, the body naturally reacts with a smile. The body responds to whatever the mind feels. The reverse is also true—the mind reacts to whatever the body feels. Thus, we can see that physical support is an important support for meditation.

This story from ancient India illustrates the importance of body posture:

A group of Buddhist monks lived in a forest and meditated all the time. A troupe of monkeys lived in that same area, and they delighted in seeing the monks meditating so diligently. They brought fruit to the monks every day, so the monks didn't have to stop their meditation to find food. After continuing this way for many years, all of those monks passed away and achieved mahāparinirvāṇa. Later on, some non-Buddhist practitioners noticed that the location was pleasant and, as a bonus, the monkeys brought food. So they moved in and meditated in their own posture of meditation. The monkeys were not pleased to see this and stopped bringing them fruit. The non-Buddhist practitioners did not know the Buddhist meditation techniques, but they saw that when they adopted the Buddhist posture the monkeys came back. They continued that way for many years. By merely using the Buddhist posture and no other Buddhist-related practices, they achieved a high level of samadhi and were eventually reborn in the form god realm.

This story shows that even if we don't know the mental techniques of absorption, just learning how to sit in the proper posture of meditation will help us bring the mind into the state of meditation.



The correct posture is called the seven-fold posture of Buddha Vairochana. Why is it named after Buddha Vairochana? Buddha Amitabha is always pictured sitting in this way, so why isn't it named after him? Among the five buddha families, each buddha is said to embody or specialize in a particular aspect of the enlightened qualities:

- ❖ Buddha Vairochana embodies enlightened form
- ❖ Buddha Amitabha embodies enlightened speech
- ❖ Buddha Akhshobhya embodies enlightened mind
- ❖ Buddha Ratnasambhava embodies enlightened qualities
- ❖ Buddha Amoghasiddhi embodies enlightened activity

Since Buddha Vairochana represents the enlightened form of all the buddhas, he is most closely associated with physical posture.

The seven factors that support the body are:

- ❖ *Legs positioned in the vajra posture.* Sit flat with the legs crossed, the left leg inside and the right leg outside. Alternately, use the bodhisattva posture and sit in a chair in a relaxed manner with both feet flat on the floor.
- ❖ *Straight spine.* Hold your back erect from the tail bone to the base of the skull. If your spine is not straight, your central channel will not be straight, so hold your entire back upright. This is the most important element of the posture, for both spiritual and health purposes. If you don't keep a straight spine, your vertebrae will progressively dislocate or misalign. Later on, this will generate health problems for you. Thus, sitting with a straight back on a daily basis is very beneficial.
- ❖ *Shoulders open and relaxed.* The shoulders should be spread slightly back, not slumping forward in order to open up the chest. This also helps keep your spine straight.
- ❖ *Hands flat on your lap.* The hands should be held in the meditation posture four finger-widths below the navel. Palms up, the right hand is on top of the left with the thumb tips touching.



- ❖ *Eye gaze.* In shamata meditation, the eye gaze is set at a yoke's distance, neither too close nor too far from you. The distance of about a yard is just close enough to reduce distractions and to allow you to remain focused. When your eyes see less, you generate fewer conceptual thoughts. The monkey mind has a bad habit of following wherever your gaze goes, which leads to the rising of conceptual thoughts. You may also allow your eyes to naturally close.
- ❖ *Tongue lightly touching just behind the front teeth.* Your mouth is slightly open and the tip of the tongue touches the palate.
- ❖ *Neck bent slightly forward.* The chin is slightly lowered.

In the sutra tradition, the main reason for learning the seven-fold posture of concentration is that doing so brings the mind into the meditation state. When the channels are straight, the winds flow evenly, which allows the mind to become calm. Ordinarily, the various winds are uncontrolled and flow throughout the body. The elements of the seven-fold posture block some of their pathways and force them to flow through the central channel instead. Once a wind element enters the central channel, it becomes the wisdom wind that frees us from samsara. In the sutra system this is called the first bhumi.

In Vajrayana, posture is also related to the winds and channels. In fact, one of the main purposes of Vajrayana practice is to direct the various wind elements into the central channel. As in the sutra system, the positioning of the body sets the position of the channels within the body. The winds flow within the channels, so if the channels are seated properly the winds will flow properly. This is similar to the way water flows through plumbing. If the water is blocked from its intended route, it will be forced to flow somewhere else—generally somewhere undesirable. In the same way, when a wind is blocked from entering the central channel, it is forced to flow elsewhere in the body.



In Vajrayana, it is said that when the wind element flows outside of the central channel, it becomes an afflicted wind. This means that it is responsible for our experience of afflicting emotions. Likewise, when the wind element enters the center channel, we are freed from afflicting emotions. This is called the wisdom wind, known as “wind entering the central channel,” also called first bhumi in the sutra tradition.

When babies are first conceived in the womb, the wind element stays in the central channel until the body is completely developed. Once the body is fully formed, all of the elements begin to function and move. At that point, the central channel doesn’t have enough space to move the winds so the winds exit and become afflicted winds. For this reason, we have to forcefully bring the wind into the center channel.

The more that we can control the wind and use less of it, the greater our life span becomes. We have a limited amount of the wind element or oxygen. When we use too much of it, it shortens our life. So, that is a practical reason to learn to control the wind flow. Another reason is that by controlling our wind element, we can control all of the other elements.

As we practice directing the wind element into the central channel, the wisdom wind builds and becomes more powerful. It will rise and progressively open up all of the nodes that block the central channel until, one day, your mind will completely open and you will achieve complete buddhahood. By directing the wind element into the central channel, containing it within, and building its strength, we achieve our ultimate goal. Thus, we must understand how to use the seven-fold posture:

- ❖ *Vajra leg position.* The vajra leg position is said to block the downward wind and force it to flow in the central channel. This wind is responsible for pushing downward and out the lower orifices in processes such as defecation and urination. The vajra leg posture overpowers the downward wind and forces it to flow in the central channel.



- ❖ *Straight spine.* The most important elements of the seven-fold posture are holding your spine straight and opening your shoulders. Straightening the spine straightens the entire central channel. Sometimes the winds will flow into the central channel but do not remain there. According to Phagmo Drupa, maintaining a straight spine will contain the winds within the central channel.
- ❖ *Open Shoulders.* Phagmo Drupa teaches that this posture helps reduce stress and decrease the wind diseases. Wind diseases often manifest as psychiatric problems such as seeing and hearing things that are not actually present. When people are sad, they often fold their bodies in forward and close up their chest. If you open up your chest when you are stressed, you can feel an immediate release of tension.
- ❖ *Hand meditation posture.* The hand meditation posture brings the water wind into the central channel. The water wind, or life force wind, is the vitalizing wind at the heart.
- ❖ *Eye gaze & tongue.* The eyes gazing at the tip of the nose and the tip of the tongue touching the palate serve to strengthen the wind element within the central channel. This helps unblock nodes within the central channel.
- ❖ *Mouth.* Keeping the lips and the teeth slightly open helps to maintain our vital essence.
- ❖ *Neck position.* Holding the neck slightly forward with the chin slightly lowered is associated with the fire wind. It moves upward like a blazing fire, and is sometimes called the upward wind. This wind is active when we exhale or speak. It is forcefully brought into the central channel with this posture.

Phagmo Drupa taught the seven-fold posture as a nine-fold posture of concentration. He considered the generation and completion stages as additional supports for concentration. These two additional elements help us to experience bliss, luminosity, and non-conceptual thought.



TEXT COMMENTARY:

MEDITATING ON EMPTINESS

The generation stage can be done in several different styles which often correspond to purification of one of the four types of birth (from a womb, from moisture, from an egg, and miraculous birth). Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa, a famous Kagyu master who was a student of the 8th Karmapa, mentions in his commentary on Vajrayogini that the generation stage style called the four vajras liberates from womb birth, the one called the five manifestations of enlightenment (emptiness, moon and sun-disk seats, seed syllable, hand implements, and complete form of the deity) liberates from egg birth, the three ritual generations (seed syllable, implements marked with the seed syllable of the deity, and complete form of the deity) liberates from warm birth, and instantaneous visualization liberated from spontaneous birth.

This practice uses the style called the “four vajras,” which liberates from rebirth generally. The four parts of the four vajras generation stage are:

1. meditation on emptiness
2. meditation on the seed syllable
3. meditation on a complete body
4. meditation on placing the mantra.

This can be as simple as placing an OM at the forehead, AH at the throat, and HUNG at the heart. Later, we will present a more complex version.

Alternately, this sequence of visualization can be categorized as the Five Manifestations of Enlightenment, the Five-fold Truth Perfection, or the Five Awakenings. In that system, the five elements are:

- ❖ *meditation on emptiness.* This occurs at the beginning with the recitation of the three mantras and the meditation on emptiness.
- ❖ *meditation on the moon and sun-disk seats.* The visualization of the sun and moon disks makes up this step.



- ❖ *meditation on the seed syllable.* Visualizing the seed syllable (here, the VAM syllable) on top of the sun and the moon disks comprises this element. The seed syllable is your consciousness. The seed syllable is actually more like a sound than a form. There is some form, but the sound is more important, which is why this is sometimes called the manifestation of speech.
- ❖ *meditation on the hand implements.* The seed syllable, your own consciousness, transforms into a characteristic attribute of the deity. The syllable blazes with light that sprays out, gathers elements together, and returns to start forming into different shapes. Here, the VAM transformed into Vajrayogini's drigug with the syllable at its center.
- ❖ *meditation on the complete form of the deity.* This is discussed in detail later on.

We will continue for the rest of the commentary using the four vajra categorization, which corresponds specifically to liberation from womb birth. After death and traversing the bardo, a baby is conceived by combining the consciousness with the male and female elements of the future parents. This process is carefully described in the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, which accords completely with modern science. How does this meditation liberate us from experiencing repeated births from a womb? Transforming into the pure appearance of the deity creates a kind of energy that purifies defilement. This meditation, this practice of deity yoga, generates a power that purifies impure phenomena, which are merely temporary defilements. Samsara is impure and this practice purifies it.



Meditation on emptiness. This is more than just a meditation on emptiness. It is the union of appearance and emptiness that is characteristic of all deity yoga practices. It is also called the yoga of union or the union of the generation and completion stages. Completion starts with the recitation of the three mantras, and generation starts when you manifest the deity within the emptiness. The two, generation and completion, appearance and emptiness, are practiced inseparably this way.

There are two categories within the completion stage: with a sign and without a sign.

With a sign. This refers to practices such as the recitation of a mantra, meditating on the winds and channels, and the Six Yogas of Naropa. Some degree of mindfulness and concentration on the deity's form is still needed even though your main concentration is on the recitation. In that way, generation and completion are united.

Without a sign. Here, the union of generation and completion is seen in inseparable luminosity and emptiness, as in the dissolution portion of the practice. The outer universe dissolves into the sentient beings; the sentient beings dissolve into the mandala; the mandala dissolves into the deity; and so on until the seed syllable dissolves from the bottom to the top. The topmost nada becomes so tiny as to be invisible, but a bit of luminosity remains. From that, we experience luminosity and emptiness as inseparable, the illusion of form and emptiness as dharmakaya. Without the element of luminosity, you will be in darkness, and this misunderstanding will lead to rebirth in the formless realm. There are no characteristics in the formless realm. People who think emptiness is just blank space are born there because they have become accustomed to that experience.



The mind has a bad habit of conceptual grasping of existence. That habit has existed within us for a very long time. To cleanse it we need to apply a strong antidote, which is the meditation on emptiness through the recitation of three mantras:

Om svabhāvaśuddhah sarvadharmāḥ svabhāva śuddho 'ham

Om vajraśuddhah sarvadharmāḥ vajraśuddho 'ham

Om yogaśuddhah sarvadharmāḥ yogaśuddho 'ham

According to H.E. Chenga Rinpoche and His Holiness Gyalwa Kunga Rinchen (the 16th Drikung throneholder), these three function to purify body, speech, and mind respectively. The first mantra serves to purify the physical body, but also addresses the true purity usually associated with the completion stage.

There are two types of purity: the primordial or natural purity; and the removal of obscurations and defilements. Primordial purity refers to our essential nature that is always pure. However, our defilements don't allow access to this purity and, so, they must be removed. The word "shuddho" (and its grammatical variation "shuddha") appears twice in this mantra as a reference to the two purities. A great Karma Kagyu Karma master, Chagme Rinpoche, said that the Buddha wrote this particular mantra because we are caught in the web of the conceptual, dualistic mentality of subject and object. To free ourselves and remove these defilements, we use this mantra as vajra armor or as a weapon. By meditating on emptiness, we are freeing ourselves from duality. The second mantra purifies speech, and is also the union of emptiness and great compassion. The third mantra represents the nonduality of the samaya beings and the wisdom beings. In other words, the beings that you visualize and the true buddhas are inseparable; your visualized deities exist primordially as actual enlightened beings.



The point here is that, through recitation of these three mantras, you are meditating on emptiness. As you recite them, dissolve everything– yourself and all that surrounds you–into the empty nature, like empty space. This is like clearing the land before you start to build a new house; you have to tear down the old one in order to make room for the new one. Our body is like the old house that must be cleared away. That is why we dissolve into empty space before we start to build up the deity's form.

*By purifying with these three mantras,
all phenomena subsumed within grasped and grasping
become emptiness.*

When you recite the first mantra, realize that whatever is grasped is devoid of self-entity. When you recite the second mantra, realize that the act of grasping is devoid of self-entity. When you recite the third mantra, realize that the union of the two first mantras goes beyond the concepts of grasped and grasping. At this point, take some time to meditate. Firmly establish awareness of your true nature, the union beyond concepts.

Purification will be further explained in four parts:

1. the basis of purification
2. what is being purified
3. what purifies or the antidote
4. the result of purification

The basis for purification, that is, that which makes purification possible, is buddha nature. Buddha nature exists equally within all sentient beings. There is not one being who does not have it. The Uttaratantra says that all phenomena, from the most elemental form to the omniscience of buddhahood are naturally pure. Like the center of space, the essence of phenomena is free of duality and other defilements, and unchanging.



What is being purified. Buddha nature is always pure, yet it is obscured by temporary defilements; they are what we purify, not buddha nature itself. These defilements are adventitious; they come and go, but they do not belong. They are not intrinsic to buddha nature. For example, space itself is naturally clear, yet today it's cloudy. Once you realize the truth of buddha nature, you can see that there was never anything to purify. All the defilements, their antidotes, and even the result of purification are sudden appearances that do not really exist. The unchanging buddha nature was never itself defiled; it remains pure.

What purifies. To effect purification, we recite three mantras, as mentioned before. After the recitation, rest in the union of appearance and emptiness, which is actually the state of dharmakaya. This is a supremely important meditation (samadhi), called the "supreme capacity for manifestation." If you can realize this state, you will be liberated and then the rest of the practice will not be necessary. If you cannot abide in this state, then you have to proceed gradually through the practice.

The result of purification. Samsara will break into pieces when we meditate on emptiness, even if we don't gain direct realization. Just by thinking of the meaning of emptiness, the body of self-cherishing and self-grasping starts to come apart. Atisha said, "Just by thinking about emptiness, even if you don't have a direct realization of it, all of the temporary defilements are purified. One naturally reaches the advantageous state of purity." The Tantra of the Union says that all of the sentient beings can purify all of the defilements; contemplating emptiness with an intelligent mind will plant the seed of realization. Thus, a great benefit will result from this practice.



TEXT COMMENTARY:

VISUALIZATION

In general we visualize the mandala of Vajravarahi as an antidote that cuts attachment to our place or environment. We visualize the deity's form as a way to cut attachment to our body. Before we continue with the four vajra visualization of the deity, we establish a safe enclosure, a secure area within what is known as the wheel of protection. It begins with:

From that state, by expressing HUNG HUNG the vajra foundation, enclosure, tent, canopy, and arrow net arise.

First is the vajra foundation. As you recite HUNG HUNG visualize that the mantra is huge—the bottom of the mantra reaches to the golden ground at the bottom of the earth and the top reaches the four Brahma realms. The mantra transforms into two crossed vajras that are completely sealed by different sized vajras filling in all space. This seals the earth and makes a foundation that not even air can penetrate. It is so extremely solid that not even an earthquake could destroy it.



Next, enclose the foundation in an enormous wall. Again, this is huge, reaching from the bottom of the earth to the very top of the desire realm and beyond. Light radiates from this wall and forms a vajra tent within the wall. The tent has four sides and a peak in the middle, high above the foundation. Inside is a large canopy, similar to those found in a temple hanging above the lama's seat when he is teaching.

The tent is composed of a net of arrows. These are not the kind of arrows we would use with a bow. Rather, they are open-ended vajras with points so sharp that no one would want to come near them. They fit together in different sizes so that the tent is completely sealed off; not even air can penetrate.

*Around the outside of that is the great protection circle of
blazing primordial wisdom fire.*

An unquenchable fire of wisdom blazes outside the wall.

We visualize the wheel of protection so that external harm cannot disturb our practice and internal factors will not cause us to lose our siddhi. Obstacles like these come from the maras. The most disturbing mara is called devaputra, son of the gods, who is an embodiment of desire and temptation. He is constantly disturbing Dharma practitioners. He doesn't like people to meditate or engage in other Dharma practices, because they will rise above him through their practice and he doesn't want anyone to best him. This wheel of protection protects you from his distraction. If he were able to distract you, your negative emotions (attachment, hatred, jealousy, and so on) would increase. As your negative emotions become stronger, your siddhi grow weaker. In short, your accomplishments would deteriorate.



This is the reason that long term retreats are often closed-door retreats. This means that the doors and windows are closed so that the retreatant cannot see outside and no one can look in and see the retreatant. This protects the retreatant's accomplishments from distractions. Here, we visualize the wheel of protection to bring about the same sort of physical protection.



The best mental protection is compassion. When the Buddha meditated under the bodhi tree, Mara tried to disturb him in many ways. Mara brought his entire army to throw weapons at the buddha-to-be. In response, he meditated on compassion, which transformed all those weapons into flowers. He didn't use a wheel of protection, he used compassion. For our spiritual sake, this is how we need to meditate. If you can truly meditate on compassion, you will have no enemies. Why? Right now, we see an enemy as an enemy. However, as we progressively develop strong compassion, we will increasingly view that enemy with patience. As a result, we will no longer have any resentment for them. Therefore, by increasing our compassion, we will eventually eliminate all our enemies.



Meditation on the seed syllable. This section resumes our discussion of the four vajras, starting with the second one, meditation on the seed syllable.

*In the center the syllable É transforms into a dharmodayā
with its pointed root thrust downward.*

It expands at the top like the hood of a cobra.

The *dharmodaya* consists of two horizontal triangles, the lower one being the base or seat, and the upper one being the support for the palace or mandala. This is very much like us building a house—the earth is our base, then we build a foundation, and on top of that we build a house. The tent is clear, like a domed greenhouse, so you can see inside without obstruction. Where our earth is round, this base is shaped like a double triangle. The top surface is vast, much larger than our planet, and the lower extreme comes to a sharp point. The *dharmodaya* and seed syllable are pictured on page 5 of the text. If you struggle to visualize the tent, wall, and so forth, generate great bodhicitta. Strong loving kindness and compassion will be a more solid protection than a vajra tent.

The outside is blue, the inside red, and it is vast and immense.

On the center the syllable Pam transforms into a multicolored lotus.

The deity and the seed syllable are inseparable. Because of this, you can either visualize the PAM syllable or the deity's form transforming into a lotus. The syllable and lotus are pictured on page 6 of the text. This multicolored lotus, along with the moon disk, the sun disk, and hooked knife described below, are all visualized as being enclosed within the borders of the upper triangle of the *dharmodayā*, which rests on the vajra foundation.



*The syllable AH transforms into a full moon.
The syllable RAM transforms into a sun seat,
upon which lays a human corpse*

The syllable AH is the moon syllable and RAM is the sun syllable. The white moon and red sun are set horizontally, with the sun disk above the moon disk. They symbolize the father's white semen and the mother's red blood that come together at conception to provide a place for the consciousness to arrive later. In this case, the consciousness is represented by the VAM syllable. A human corpse is stacked on top of the seats. The body is of someone who just died at that moment. Their outer breath has stopped, but they still have the inner breath. So it is very fresh, not rotting or decomposed at all.

*Above that is the nature of my mind as the red syllable VAM,
blazing with light. This transforms into a drigug knife
with a vajra handle, adorned in center with the syllable VAM.*

The red syllable VAM is your own awareness or mind appearing as the syllable. The VAM transforms into a drigug, which is called a hooked knife. If you look carefully at thangkas, you will see that there are male and female styles of hooked knives. If a male is holding the knife, the hook is sharper, bigger, and more pronounced. The hook of a female's knife is less pronounced, smaller, and less sharp. Here, the hooked knife is in the female style. Please refer to page 6 of the text for a clear picture of the knife marked with the syllable.

*Light emanates from this, making offerings to the noble ones and
purifying the negative deeds and obscurations of all sentient beings,
establishing them in the state of Vajrayoginī.*

Light shines out in all directions from the VAM syllable within the hooked knife (that is, your own consciousness) and makes offerings to all the enlightened beings. You accumulate merit from this offering, so that is called the benefit for yourself.



The light radiates a second time, this time reaching the six realms where it purifies the negative karma of all the beings in the ten directions. At the touch of the light, they all transform into the form of Vajrayogini. This is called the benefit for others

Meditation on a complete body. This section starts the third of the four vajras, meditation on the complete form of the deity. Visualizations like this have five essential characteristics: clarity, purity, divine pride, being empty by nature, and nonduality. Each deity has its own distinguishing features such as color; number of arms, legs, and heads; ornaments; and so on. You must try to visualize them as clearly as possible. One technique to develop clarity is to first concentrate on a specific portion of the deity, an eye for instance. Try to see that clearly and then expand to see the whole face, and eventually you can progress to the entire body. You can also scan from the head to the toes, from the crown to the lotus, gaining more clarity with each pass.

You may need support for this in the form of a picture or statue. Having an expensive image isn't so important; it is more important that the image be clear and have precisely accurate measurements. Having an expensive thangka or statue does not guarantee that your practice will be better. So use whatever image you need to support your generation of Vajrayogini clearly in your mind.

As this light gathers back, it completely transforms.

Like red silk raised into the sky, I myself become Vajrayoginī.

My body is red and shines with the brilliance of a hundred thousand suns.

The light that emanated from the VAM syllable returns from the six realms. As it gathers, all space turns red. Your own body assumes the form of Vajrayogini, red in color and shining with a brilliant wisdom light.



My main face has three eyes, an expression of mixed wrath and passion...

Depending on the angle from which you look at her or your mind set, you will see one of three expressions: wrathful, passionate, or compassionate. Ordinary human beings cannot see all three simultaneously but enlightened beings can.

- ❖ **Her first expression is wrathful.** This one appears to unfortunate beings whose minds are corrupted with negative emotions. This can be beings such as demons, or ourselves when we are feeling angry.
- ❖ **Her second expression is passionate,** which is directed to her consort Chakrasamvara. When we are feeling passionate, we can see this one.
- ❖ **The third expression is compassionate.** Those fortunate ones who are devoted to the Dharma or who are feeling compassionate perceive this one. This face is not mentioned in our text, but it is described in other texts.

... and fangs slightly bared. Behind my right ear is the black head of a sow making a snorting roar.

Someone told me that the boar sow (female wild pig) is an ancient symbol of female power in several cultures. In these mythologies, she is regarded as particularly ferocious and fearsome. In our text, the sow's head is behind Vajrayogini's ear; in other traditions, it appears on top of Vajrayogini's head. It is making a loud grunting or snorting sound. Vajrayogini is sometimes called Vajravarahi (Adamantine Sow) in cases where the sow's head is depicted. Don't be confused by this; both names apply to the same deity and we use them interchangeably.



*I have a crown of five dry skulls.
My hair is unbound. I wear a necklace of fifty-one skulls
and the five types of symbolic bone ornaments.*

You, as Vajrayogini, are adorned with the various bone ornaments:
a crown of dry skulls, a necklace of fresh skulls, earrings, and so on.

*With my right hand I brandish a curved drigug knife,
and with my left I hold a skullcup of blood to my heart.
With the inner curve of my left arm I hold up a khatvāṅga.*

The right hand holds a hooked knife, as described before, in a threatening manner. Her left hand holds a skullcup filled to the brim with blood, with the forehead pointing toward yourself. The exterior of the skullcup is white and the interior is red. The khatvanga is a symbol of her consort Chakrasamvara, who she is holding in her arms. This is called secretly hiding the father. Generally, the measurement of a khatvanga is 12 finger-lengths or as tall as Vajrayogini's body.

*I am naked, joyfully partaking in blood, and [my own] blood drips forth.
I possess the youth of a sixteen year old, and my breasts are aroused.
With my right leg drawn in and my left leg extended,
the expanse of the three realms is transformed into my dance.
I dwell in the center of a self-emanated mass of blazing fire.
Visualize this.*

This visualization involves two fires. The first one was part of the wheel of protection, outside the wall. The second one manifests from Vajrayogini's body and completely surrounds her.

Take your time to establish the visualization clearly, using whatever support you find useful. This practice strengthens your single-pointed meditation, also known as calm abiding meditation or *shamata*.



TEXT COMMENTARY:

DONNING THE ARMOR

Meditation on placing the syllables. Distractions and obstacles come more easily with this type of meditation, so we need armor-like protection. This next section addresses that need. It is also the fourth of the four vajras, meditation on placing the syllables on the limbs of the body.

The purposes of donning this armor are:

- ❖ to make your samadhi more stable by reducing distractions.
- ❖ to reduce outer and inner obstacles so that they will not cause harm.
- ❖ to help you realize the profound meaning.
- ❖ to transform your skandha (aggregates), ayatana (senses), and dhatu (elements) into deities.

According to the Sampa Rodaya, a Chakrasamvara tantra, “Mantra is the form of the yoginis; the yogini herself is also the form of the mantra. If anyone wishes for the supreme siddhi or accomplishment, do not separate those two.” The various syllables are inseparable from the corresponding yoginis’ forms. Thus, you may visualize this as either syllables or yoginis.

At my navel OM VAM transforms into red Vajravārāhī.

At my heart HAM YOM transforms into blue Yāminī.

At my throat HRI MOM transforms into white Mohinī.

At my forehead HRI HRI transforms into yellow Samcālīnī.

At my crown HUNG HUNG transforms into green Samtrāsinī.

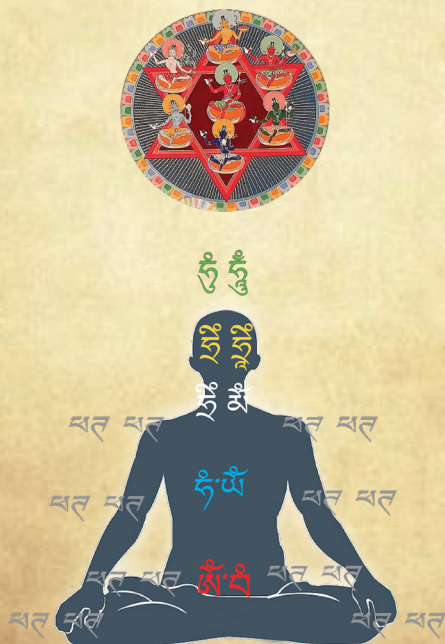
At all my limbs PHAT PHAT transforms into Candikā, smoky in color.



If you can visualize these syllable being placed within red Vajravarahi, that would be wonderful. If that becomes too complicated, then use your own body: place the syllables ..

*OM VAM at your navel, HAM YOM at your heart,
HRI MOM at your throat, HRI HRI at your forehead,
HUNG HUNG at your crown, and PHAT PHAT at your limbs.*

For the limbs, place syllables at the eight great joints: the two shoulders, elbows, hips, and knees. The syllables are all placed between the skin and the flesh, not outside on top of the skin. The two syllables are facing each other and are the size of a thumb. Each syllable radiates a wave of light that covers the entire body. There is a good depiction of this on page 11 of the text. If all of this is too difficult, visualize a white OM at your forehead, red AH at your throat, and a blue HUNG at your heart.



TEXT COMMENTARY:
SUMMONING THE WISDOM DEITIES AND
RECEIVING BLESSINGS

This portion of the practice makes our meditation on the deity more authentic. Without it, doubt might linger about whether the deity is merely a figment of our imagination. Thus, by visualizing the wisdom beings, we make our visualization genuine.

*Within the secret place of Yoginī there is a red dharmodayā,
adorned in the center with the syllable HRI.*

Light emanates from this.

*The victorious ones of the ten directions,
together with their retinues, are invited to assemble
in the space before me in the form of Vajrayoginī. Vajra samāja .*



With radiating light, we invite the buddhas to come from their pure lands and appear in front of us. Each one is accompanied by a retinue, which could consist of bodhisattvas, arhats, or ordinary beings—whatever occupies that buddha's pure land.



Since our main focus in this practice is Vajrayogini, all the buddhas and their retinues take her form because they are inseparable from her. Vajra samaja is called a “hook mantra” and is part of the invitation, drawing the guests toward you like fish caught on a fisherman’s hook. You can add the mantra DZA HUNG BAM HO here, which unites the samaya beings with the wisdom beings inseparably.

Fathomless enlightened bodies of Yoginī emanate from their enlightened bodies.

These dissolve into my crown, generating bliss and power in my body.

Red vowels and consonants emanate from their enlightened speech and dissolve into my throat, generating force and power in my speech.

A stream of bodhicitta flows down from their enlightened mind and dissolves into my heart, generating the primordial wisdom of bliss and emptiness in my mind stream.

Finally, Yoginī herself dissolves into me, and we become inseparable.

Each member of the assembled group emanates a Vajrayogini body that dissolves into you through your crown. This is the vajra body blessing. From each of their throats, syllables emanate into your throat so that you receive the vajra speech blessing. The many Vajrayoginis emanate the nectar of bodhicitta from their hearts in the form of wisdom light that dissolves into your heart, granting you the blessing of the enlightened wisdom mind. Finally, Vajrayogini herself, the wisdom being, dissolves into you and the two of you become inseparable. Within your mind, you will have more than that which you have visualized.

Cultivate the generation stage visualization as much as possible.

Balance is important here. While we often focus on mantra recitation, in this practice you must divide your time differently. Place as much energy as you are able on the clarity of the visualization. However, at some point you will tire and will not be able to meditate any longer. Then, you must take a break; otherwise, you will burn out and perhaps give up the practice.



TEXT COMMENTARY: PURE RECOLLECTION

Recall that there are five characteristics associated with the generation stage, the second of which is purity. Each deity has various attributes, such as color or number of limbs, and each element represents an aspect of their qualities. This helps us understand and actualize the richness of buddhahood because each attribute contributes some important meaning. Understanding this meaning ensures the purity of the visualization. This is like reading the label on a box of medicine that explains the benefits that you will gain from taking that medicine. If you don't take the time to learn about the medicine, you won't be able to tell one from another and will not know how to heal yourself.

My enlightened body symbolizes the one taste of all manifold phenomena.

Vajravarahi's body symbolizes that all phenomena are inseparable in their essential nature; it is an expression of complete nonduality. She appears red in color, the pure meaning of which symbolizes the great bliss of primordial wisdom. She has the youthful appearance of a sixteen year old, which is symbolic of the sixteen types of joy. The leg posture with one leg bent and one stretched out symbolizes that she is beyond both samsara and nirvana.

The mixed wrathful and passionate expression of my main face symbolizes the pacification of afflictions in the expanse.

The sow's head behind my ear symbolizes the unchanging dharmakāya.

Because she is completely free from conceptual thought, she has one face. The sow's head represents the dharmakaya. This section can also be understood as representing the method of relative truth (her main face) and the wisdom of absolute truth (the sow's head).



Why is the sow used as a symbol of absolute truth or dharmakaya? People often say that pigs have no concept of clean or dirty; they will eat anything they come across. Thus, they have come to represent the absence of conceptual thought that characterizes absolute truth or dharmakaya. These two faces can symbolize the two truths (relative and absolute) or the two kayas (dharmakaya and rupakaya).

*Half of my hair bound and half flowing loosely down my back
symbolizes the blossoming of primordial wisdom into
the expanse, working for the purpose of sentient beings.
My three eyes symbolize knowing the three times.*

This means that, although she has attained the state of nirvana, she still benefits sentient beings continuously through her manifestations. Her bound hair shows her enlightened aspect and the flowing hair shows that she comes down to earth to help sentient beings. Her three eyes indicate that she knows the past, present, and future, and also that she knows of samsara and the beings of the three realms.

*My four bared fangs symbolize severing the four māras at the root
My two arms symbolize the union of method and wisdom.
The drigug knife in my right hand symbolizes overwhelming
evil beings by brilliance.*

There are four maras: mara of the aggregates, mara of the afflicting emotions, mara of death, and the sons of the gods. The four maras can also be seen as the four most powerful figures within samsara: Brahma, Indra, Vishnu, and Shiva. By overpowering them, they are cut off at their root. The drigug is a sharp weapon that is used to cut ignorance, attachment, and aversion—all kinds of negative emotions.

*The skullcup of blood in my left hand symbolizes partaking in the food
of non-conceptuality. The khatvāṅga symbolizes my hidden Heruka consort.*



The skull cup is a symbol of wisdom. Wisdom always needs the support of method, represented here by the *khatvanga*. Atisha said, “Wisdom without method and method without wisdom are limited.” Either one without the other makes for an incomplete practice. When that happens, we are stuck and unable to move forward. Some of us focus too much on wisdom and others too much on method. If you think about it, being evil requires great intelligence. Really stupid people don’t have the ability to successfully commit crimes. Thus, a lack of compassion with too much wisdom leads to really tricky people. On the other hand, too much compassion with a lack of wisdom leads to misery. These people tend to take everyone’s problems into their hands and become miserable because they cannot solve them. Therefore, wisdom and compassion must work together.

The skullcup being held in her left hand symbolizes freedom from attachment. It is full of blood, which symbolizes the end of samsara, the cutting off of cyclic existence. The external white color is the great bliss of method, and the internal red color is the wisdom of emptiness. The skull’s forehead is pointed toward oneself, indicating the accomplishment of the common and uncommon siddhis. The back of the head faces away, indicating that sentient beings are being liberated by the four ways of gathering disciples (giving what is needed, speaking nicely, acting meaningfully, acting consistently with the meaning). Even the name in Tibetan, *kapala*, is meaningful. The syllable KA represents the dharmakaya, PA represents the sambhogakaya, and LA represents the nirmanakaya. By receiving nectar from skullcup, the mind is filled with undefiled great bliss.

The *khatvanga*, also on the left, represents not only Chakrasamvara but his entire mandala as well. The consort himself is the blue vajra on the top. Underneath that are three skulls; from top to bottom, they are dry, medium, and fresh to indicate the three kayas. Moving downward, next is a crossed vajra of four colors standing upright: white in the east, yellow in the south, red in the west, green in the north.





This symbolizes the four enlightened activities (pacifying, increasing, subduing, and magnetizing). The center of the double vajra is blue. Under that is a vase full of nectar, which is the bodhicitta of the father and mother and symbolizes that their bodhicitta is not lost. Beneath the vase are tied five-color ribbons for the dakinis of the five families. Small musical instruments such as damarus and bells are affixed throughout the ribbons to show that the three places (underground, on the ground, and in the air) of the dakas and dakinis are under the power of the practitioner. The staff itself is made of water wood; its white color is Chakrasamvara's nectar of bodhicitta. On the bottom is a half vajra, pointing down, again showing that the bodhicitta is not lost. This description is according to His Eminence Sing Drak of the Drukpa Kagyu.

*My crown ornament of five dry skulls with the nature
of the five families symbolizes the purity of the five poisons.*

The impure five poisons constitute samsara. In their purified form, they become the five buddha families which are represented by the five dry skulls.



Head of the Family	Seed Syllable	Purified Poison
Buddha Vairochana	DRUM	ignorance
Buddha Ratnasambhava	OM	aversion
Buddha Amitabha	HRI	jealousy
Buddha Amoghasiddhi	HO	attachment
Buddha Akhshobhya	HUNG	greed

My necklace of fifty-one skulls symbolizes the purity of the fifty-one types of mental formations.

The skulls in the necklace are freshly cut, unlike the dry ones in the crown ornament. Appendix 1 contains a list of the fifty-one mental formations for your information.

My five symbolic bone ornaments symbolize the six pāramitās.

According to Sing Drak Rinpoche, the five bone ornaments are the crown decoration, earrings, a necklace, arm bands, and a belt (Skt.: *sasha*):

- ❖ The crown decoration is a wheel (Skt.: *chakra*) with eight spokes, laying flat on her head. Five of the spokes are in the front supporting the five dry skulls. Her loose hair comes out through the three spokes at the back of the wheel. This ornament represents her perfection of perseverance.
- ❖ The arm bands represent her perfection of moral ethics.
- ❖ The necklace represents her perfection of generosity.
- ❖ The earrings represent her perfection of patience.
- ❖ The belt represents her perfection of meditative concentration.

The sixth paramita is wisdom and is represented by her body. Taken together, they show that Vajrayogini has perfected all of the paramitas, and is completely enlightened.



A slightly different interpretation is given by Rinpoche:

- ❖ The wheel on her crown is Buddha Akbhobya and meditative concentration.
- ❖ The necklace is Buddha Ratnasambhava and represents generosity.
- ❖ The earrings are Buddha Amitabha and represent patience.
- ❖ The arm bands are Buddha Vairochana and represent moral ethics.
- ❖ The belt is Buddha Amogasiddhi and represents perseverance.
- ❖ A sixth element is Vajrayogini's body, which is Buddha Vajradhara and represents wisdom.

It is good for us to see various interpretations of the same material. Sometimes our minds are too rigid and inflexible. Seeing various interpretations can help us to avoid the error of making things too solid.

The human corpse symbolizes the display of the ultimate meaning of dharmatā.

The sun symbolizes conquering the darkness of afflictions.

The moon symbolizes dispelling the feverish torment of saṃsāra.

The sun symbolizes the heat of the afflicting emotions and the moon represents the cooling freshness of compassion. The sun disk can also be seen as luminous wisdom that is shining like the sun to dispel the darkness of ignorance, with the moon disk symbolizing the great compassion that dispels suffering.

*The lotus seat symbolizes abandoning saṃsāra's faults,
without forsaking saṃsāra.*

The lotus symbolizes a mother's womb. This means that even if Vajrayogini appears in saṃsara, she remains without its faults.

The self-luminous fire symbolizes burning conceptual afflictions.

The fire that manifests from her body is a wisdom fire that completely destroys the grasping at existence without leaving any residue.



In short, the appearing aspect of my mind is the illusion-like form of the deity, and the emptiness aspect is the luminous dharmakāya nature.

To summarize, the pure meaning of the visualization is the inseparability of appearance and emptiness. Appearance is there in the illusory form itself and emptiness is the dharmakaya.

Practice pure recollection with conviction.

When weary of that: . . .

Read the text repeatedly to train yourself to establish a pure visualization of the deity's form and attributes. As before, practice the pure meaning as long as you are reasonably able. When you can't continue, go on to the next section where divine pride, the third of the five characteristics of the generation stage, is the focus.

Divine Pride.

Om vajravārāhī mahāyoginī ātma ko 'ham

The meaning of this mantra is:

- ❖ *Oṃ vajravarāhi* is a reference to her name.
- ❖ *mahāyoginī* means great yogini.
- ❖ *ātma* means consciousness or the nature of the mind; it is a reference to your own nature as Vajrayogini.
- ❖ *ko 'ham* means, "I am also that." The nature of her wisdom mind, the dharmakaya, is not different from your own mind.

This mantra contains the essential meaning of divine pride: that you and the deity are inseparable. You do not suddenly turn into Vajrayogini because you received an empowerment or because you completed her practice. You and she have been one from beginningless time; you just haven't recognized that fact yet.



Some misunderstand their own nature and think, “I am not really like Vajrayogini, but I will continue because my guru instructed me to meditate this way.” These people meditate without confidence, and are actually trying to make something that is not real. This is like thinking that a piece of ordinary rock is gold; they can think that way but it will never become a reality. In the same way, no true result will arise from the practice without confidence in oneself as the deity.

We are overpowered by ordinary conceptual thoughts. These delusions hide reality from us. Consider the example of a treasure hidden under your house that is completely unknown to you. Then some wise person comes along and tells you how to find the treasure that already belongs to you. You will be so happy! Like that, your wise guru has come along and told you how to recognize your own nature as a deity. Primordially your body has been inseparable from the vajra body of the deity, your speech has been inseparable from the vajra speech of the deity, and your mind has been the vajra mind of the deity. These three are within us, but we cannot recognize this fact by ourselves. In this life, we have met the holy lama, received the four empowerments, and entered the mandala of the Vajrayana. You have received the instructions on how your own body, speech, and mind are inseparable from the deity's. With this as a basis, develop divine pride that you are naturally indistinguishable from Vajrayogini. Recognize that whatever actions you perform with your body, speech, and mind are her enlightened activities. This is how to meditate on divine pride.

*Firmly establish intense pride that your mind since primordial time
has always been Vajrayogini!*

Vajravarahi and your mind are inseparable, in the same way that you cannot distinguish between the space inside a room and the space outside. The space is the same, the only difference is the wall. Likewise, you are inseparable from Vajrayoginī, except that right now you are separated by a wall of conceptual thoughts. It is dualistic conceptual thought that gives you the illusion that you are separate from the natural nature of your mind. In reality, you have never been separated from this nature—cannot be separated from it.



With this practice you are not pretending to be something that you are not. You are naturally a buddha!

Please don't misunderstand the potential of buddha nature, which is not yet unveiled. Your wall of dualistic conceptual thought is still there. So long as the wall is there, if you run you will bump into it and be knocked out by the impact. You cannot think that at this stage you are in open space and run. In sum, you naturally have buddha nature but are not yet a buddha and still need to develop the conviction that you are Vajravarahi. Unless you are confident of your buddha nature, you will not be able to perfect the generation stage even if you visualize perfectly and have a correct understanding of purity. However, if you have divine pride your generation practice can be perfect even without clarity and purity.

Empty by nature. The fourth of the five characteristics of the generation stage is the understanding that the appearance of the deity is empty. When you visualize the deity, you cannot see her with solid flesh and bones like ourselves, nor can she be like an unmoving statue. She exhibits the illusory body that is transparent and complete in every detail.

Three metaphors are commonly used to describe the illusory body:

- ❖ *Reflection in a mirror.* Vajrayogini's form is present but not real, like a reflection. You can see her completely but the appearance isn't solid.
- ❖ *Reflection in water.* She is indestructible; like a reflection in water she cannot be harmed in any way. Again, you can see the moon precisely in the water, but it is not actually there.
- ❖ *Rainbow in the sky.* She is nonexistent yet appears, like a rainbow.

Nonduality. The fifth of the five characteristics of the generation stage is nonduality. This means that the appearance of Vajrayogini is your own mind. We cannot see our mind as one thing and Vajrayogini as another. Keep these five characteristics in mind as you visualize.



TEXT COMMENTARY: MANTRA RECITATION

Mantra recitation, which occurs after the visualization is well established, cuts attachment to speech. There are three types of mantra:

- *Root mantra.* This is a praise and supplication. Our text doesnot include a root mantra, but you can find one in the Chakrasamvara text as the eighth verse of the praise. The Vajrayogini sadhana composed by Chökyab Rinpoche, one of our lineage masters, mentions a root mantra, as does Gyalwa Kunga Rinchen's sadhana. A verse of praise is called a mantra becuse it serves to bring you closer to the deity more quickly
- *Essence mantra.*
- *Very Essence Mantra.* In this text, the essence mantra and very essence mantra are combined into one.

*At the secret place or navel of myself,
luminously appearing as Yoginī,
is a red dharmodayā like a wheel of fire.
On the center of that is a red lotus.
On the middle of the lotus is a sun.
On the center of the sun is the red syllable VAM.*



The *dharmodaya* is not exactly at the secret place or the navel. The correct location is four finger widths below the navel, between the navel and the secret place. This is the area where the right, central, and left channels meet.

*Around the edge of that, the mantra garland circles
in a counterclockwise manner. When reciting the mantra,
the seat and seed syllable are unmoving, while the mantra garland
circles counterclockwise fiercely, aster and aster.*

First, place the mantra syllable by syllable around the edge of the seat by proceeding in a clockwise direction. The face of the mantra must face inward, toward the seed syllable. If you print the mantra on a piece of paper and roll it into a tube with the printing inside, you'll get the idea. Then rotate the mantra in a counterclockwise direction, with OM OM OM in the lead. Note that only the mantra rotates as you recite, and not the *dharmodaya*, lotus, seed syllable, or any other component.



This is also an exercise in mindfulness or recollection. So, first concentrate on the mantra one syllable at a time until you can position the entire mantra on the dharmodayā. Let the mantra spin slowly at first, then faster and faster. This can give rise to agitation or even psychological problems in some people. If that starts to happen, concentrate more on the VAM syllable in the center. The mantra is still rotating around it, but your main focus is placed on the static syllable instead of the moving mantra. However, this can allow conceptual thoughts to arise. If that happens, go back to concentrating on the circling mantra. The main purpose of both methods of visualization is to protect the mind from conceptual thoughts, to keep the mind in a state of mindfulness.

Rotate the mantra until it spins so fast that it turns into light and then focus on the light from the mantra. The radiating light can be of multiple colors to correspond to the four types of enlightened activity (satisfying, magnetizing, increasing, and wrathful). The radiating light becomes an offering to the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions. It returns with their blessings and radiates again. This time, it transforms the outer universe into the mandala of Vajrayoginī, and transforms all the inner sentient beings into Vajrayoginis. As you recite the mantra, all the sentient beings from the six realms recite the mantra together with you. It sounds like thousands of beings are reciting the mantra even though you are alone in your retreat cave. You will not feel lonely!



This mantra is called *Vajravarahi's Faces of Two Truths*:

*oṃ oṃ oṃ sarvabuddha ḍakiniye vajravārṇaniye
vajravairocaniye huṃ huṃ huṃ phaṭ phaṭ phaṭ svaha*

Why do we rotate the mantra clockwise in some practices and counter-clockwise in others? It has to do with whether the practice is a father tantra or a mother tantra. This does not refer to the gender of the deity, but rather to whether the main focus of the practice is wisdom (mother tantras) or method (father tantras). In Vajrayana, a male's right side represents wisdom and his left side represents method. For females, they are reversed; the left side represents wisdom and the right side represents method. Thus, in father tantras the mantra rotates clockwise with the syllables facing outward and in mother tantras the mantra rotates counterclockwise with the syllables facing inward. HH Gyalwa Drukpa wrote a vajra song in praise of Mount Kailash that says, "*All the dakas are circulating clockwise and all the dakinis are circulating counterclockwise.*" This shows both the wisdom and method aspects.

Recite the mantra as much as possible.

Mantra recitation belongs to the completion stage of practice. Even so, it cannot be separated from the generation stage because it is necessary that these two are always in union. Our text focuses on the generation stage, but recall that we started with the three emptiness mantras that are actually the completion stage without signs. To practice the union of the two stages, recall the deity's form as you recite the mantra. The visualization need not be so detailed but you do have to keep your-self in the deity form while reciting the mantra.



Furthermore, make sure that your recitation is free of these six faults:

1. *Reciting the mantra too fast.* In doing so, you distort the speech process and your pronunciation will be inexact. You may even miss some syllables. This can cause a shortening of your life span because it symbolizes that you are missing part of your life.
2. *Reciting the mantra too slowly.* This makes it difficult to reach the desired number of recitations.
3. *Reciting the mantra too loudly.* This can attract the attention of malevolent beings who oppose the Dharma, and who will interfere with your practice. Saying the mantra in a wrathful manner harms those in the demigod realm, and they may harm you and obstruct your practices.
4. *Reciting the mantra too quietly.* One's voice should not be too loud or too soft. The proper volume is such that you can just hear yourself. Even if you are reciting the mantra mentally, you still need to include every sound and syllable.
5. *Reciting the mantra too roughly.* Saying the mantra too forcefully affects your physical well being negatively. It can disturb the balance of elements, and your health will suffer.
6. *Reciting the mantra too gently.* Being too gentle or timid will not invoke the full power of the mantra.



TEXT COMMENTARY: END OF THE SESSION

O vajravārāhī argham prātīccha svāhā
Offer up to śapda: pādyā puṣpe dhūpe āloke gandhe naivīdya śapda

We start the conclusion of the practice session by making the customary offerings: water for the feet, drinking water, incense, perfume, food, and music. You can offer whatever helps sustain your life—computers or cell phones, for example. It is important that any materials offered are pure, both materially and morally. Materially, we must only offer clean items, not used or soiled ones. Morally, we must be sure that the material did not result from a wrong livelihood, theft, or trickery. This subject is covered in detail in Chapter 12 of *the Jewel Ornament of Liberation*.

*O' Vajradākinī imbued with splendor,
of the dākinī mandala you are queen.
You are the five wisdoms and the three kāyas.
Homage and praise to the refuge of beings!*

The offerings are followed by a short verse of praise, which serves to increase the energy or power of the mantra. Thus, it is called using the root mantra as praise. The five wisdoms and three kayas are a reference to complete enlightenment or perfect buddhahood because they are qualities that only a completely enlightened being could have.



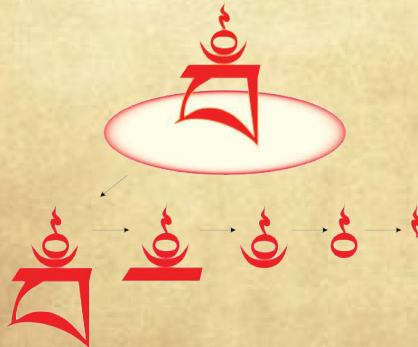
TEXT COMMENTARY: DISSOLUTION

To counteract any attachment we might have developed toward the deity, we include the dissolution stage. One of the primary points of Dharma practice is to cut off the afflicting emotions such as attachment. Attachment is especially important since it is so closely aligned with hatred and jealousy. Without attachment, hatred and jealousy are less likely to arise.

*At the end of the session, light emanates from the seed syllable VAM.
The entire vessel and its contents melt into light and dissolve into me.
My body melts into light from the top down and the bottom up and
dissolves into the syllable VAM.*

The best way to start this is to visualize the whole universe dissolving into light and then the light dissolving into the sentient beings. The sentient beings dissolve into the mandala, which dissolves into the central deity. Vajrayogini dissolves into the seed syllable VAM.

*The body of the VAM syllable, the head, the crescent moon,
and the bindu dissolve into the nāda.
The nāda then transforms into the nature of luminous emptiness.*



There is a good picture of the dissolution of the seed syllable on page 20 of our text. Notice that the text does not say that the nada disappears entirely; it becomes invisible but luminous.

*Evenly rest in that state for as long as possible.
When emerging: Again, I arise in the illusion-like form of om
with one face and two arms.
From this state of visualization, enter the path of activities.*



When you cannot do this any longer, refresh yourself as being Vajrayogini and proceed to the dedication prayers. There is no need to visualize the mandala, retinue, or the rest. Just remember that you are Vajravarahi. This is the actual samaya being—your ordinary body, speech, and mind transformed into the three vajras. With this state of mind, proceed to your daily activities. That way, whatever you do becomes part of the practice .





TEXT COMMENTARY: DEDICATION

Before doing anything else, before you are interrupted by conceptual thoughts, say dedication prayers. Some merit can be destroyed by strong thoughts such as anger if it has not been dedicated. Unless you have a wrong view, dedicated merit cannot be damaged by other conceptual thoughts. With wrong view, even dedicated merit can be damaged.



Great Vajradhara, Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa,
Dharma Lord Gampopa, Phakmo Drupa, and Lord Drikungpa—
may the auspiciousness of all the Kagyu lamas prevail!

By this merit may I attain omniscience.
Having defeated the enemies – my wrongdoings –
may I liberate all beings who are tossed in the ocean of saṃsara
by the waves of birth, old age, sickness, and death!

I pray for the excellent health of the guru!
I pray that he lives a supremely long life!
I pray that his activities spread far and wide!
Grant blessings that I may not be separate from my guru!

Just as the Hero Mañjushri realized things as they are, and as did Samantabhadra
too, I will follow in their path and perfectly dedicate all these virtues!
By the blessing of the buddhas who attained the three kayas, by the blessing of the
truth of the unchanging nature of reality, and by the blessing of the undivided
Sangha community, may my prayers be fulfilled according to this dedication!

By the virtues accumulated in the three times by myself and all beings
in saṃsara and nirvaṇa, and by the intrinsic root of virtue,
may I and all sentient beings quickly attain unsurpassed, perfect,
complete, and precious awakening!

This dedication was composed by Jigten Sumgön himself, so it is held
in especially high regard. If you are unable to devote much time to
dedication prayers, at least recite this one.

May the teachings of the great Drikungpa Ratnaśhri—
Master of Interdependence, Omniscient Lord of Dharma who has seen all knowable
things—be upheld until the end of cyclic existence through study, practice, hearing,
contemplation, and meditation!



*At the 2021 Spring Retreat at TMC,
H.E. Chenga Rinpoche bestowed the Vajrayogini empowerment
and provided practice instructions.
Shortly afterward, Khenpo Tsultrim Tenzin Rinpoche gave more detailed
instructions on the same practice.
These teachings were all combined into this one presentation.
At the petition of Khenpo Tsultrim, they were
transcribed by Crizalia Le Blan and edited by Khenmo Trinlay Chödrön,
E-book Design & Layout by Elen Badra.*

*Visualization Animation
@Youtube Channel Khenpo Tsultrim Tenzin Rinpoche
The Generation Stage Liberating Instruction of
Bhagavati Vajrayogini with Faces of the Two Truth*



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Appendix 1

Two bodhicittas

1. aspiration
2. engagement

Two kayas or forms

1. dharmakaya
2. rupakaya

Two truths

1. relative
2. absolute

Three Buddhist motivations / vehicles

1. Hinayana
2. Mahayana
3. Vajrayana

Three jewels

1. the Buddha Jewel
2. the Dharma Jewel
3. the Sangha Jewel

Three kāyas or forms

1. the body of reality or dharmakaya
2. the body of perfect rapture or sambhogakaya
3. the emanation body or nirmanakaya

Three realms

1. desire
2. form
3. formless



Three times

1. past
2. present
3. future

Four births

1. from a womb
2. from moisture
3. From an egg
4. miraculous birth

Four categories of tantra

1. action (kriya) tantra
2. performance (carya) tantra
3. yoga tantra
4. highest yoga (anutara) tantra.

Four categories of highest yoga tantra

1. mother tantras
2. father tantras
3. non-dual tantras
4. essence tantras

Four immeasurables

1. immeasurable loving kindness
2. immeasurable compassion
3. immeasurable joy
4. immeasurable equanimity

Four maras

1. māra of the skandhas / aggregates
2. māra of afflictions
3. māra of the Lord of Death
4. māra of the son of the gods



Four types of enlightened activity

1. satisfying
2. magnetizing
3. increasing
4. wrathful

Four vajras of the generation stage

1. meditation on emptiness
2. meditation on the seed syllable
3. meditation on a complete body
4. meditation on placing the mantra.

Four ways of gathering disciples

1. giving what is needed
2. speaking nicely
3. acting meaningfully
4. acting consistently with the meaning)

Five “excellences”

1. excellent place
2. excellent teacher
3. excellent Dharma
4. excellent retinue
5. excellent time

Five manifestations of enlightenment / Five-fold truth perfection / Five awakenings

1. meditation on emptiness
2. meditation on the moon and sun-disk seats
3. meditation on the seed syllable
4. meditation on the hand implements
5. meditation on the complete form of the deity.

Five poisons

1. attachment / passion
2. aggression
3. delusion
4. pride
5. jealousy



Seven Dharmas of Vairochana

1. legs positioned in the vajra posture.
2. straight spine.
3. shoulders open and relaxed.
4. hands flat on your lap.
5. eye gaze.
6. tongue lightly touching just behind the front teeth.
7. neck bent slightly forward.

Fifty-one Mental Events / Factors (Skt. caitasika)

five omnipresent mental events:

- 1) feeling (Skt. vedanā)
- 2) perception / recognition (Skt. samjñā)
- 3) apprehension / intention (Skt. cetanā)
- 4) contact (Skt. sparśa)
- 5) attention (Skt. manasikāra)

five object-determining factors

- 6) intention (Skt. chanda)
- 7) decision / conviction (Skt. adhimoksha)
- 8) mindfulness (Skt. smṛti)
- 9) meditative concentration (Skt. samādhi)
- 10) wisdom (Skt. prajñā)

six root afflictions:

- 11) ignorance (Skt. avidya)
- 12) passion / attachment / desire (Skt. rāga)
- 13) anger (Skt. pratigha)
- 14) pride (Skt. māna)
- 15) doubt (Skt. vicikitsa)
- 16) wrong views (Skt. drsti)

twenty subsidiary afflictions:

- 17) rage / fury (Skt. krodha)
- 18) resentment (Skt. upanāha)
- 19) concealment (Skt. mrakśa)
- 20) spitefulness (Skt. pradāśa)



- 21) jealousy (Skt. īrshyā)
- 22) avarice (Skt. mātṣarya)
- 23) dishonesty (Skt. asāthya)
- 24) pretense / deceit (Skt. māyā)
- 25) self-infatuation (Skt. mada)
- 26) malice / hostility (Skt. vihimsā)
- 27) lack of shame (Skt. āhrīkya)
- 28) disregard / lack of fear of blame (Skt. anapatrāpya)
- 29) dullness / lethargy (Skt. styāna)
- 30) excitement (Skt. auddhatya)
- 31) distrust / lack of faith (Skt. aśraddhya)
- 32) laziness (Skt. kauśīdya)
- 33) heedlessness / carelessness (Skt. pramāda)
- 34) forgetfulness (Skt. mushitasmṛtita)
- 35) distraction (Skt. vikshepa)
- 36) unalertness / inattentive (Skt. asamprajanya)

eleven virtuous factors:

- 37) faith (Skt. śhraddhā)
- 38) sense of shame / conscientiousness (Skt. hrī)
- 39) propriety (Skt. apatrāpya)
- 40) non-attachment (Skt. alobha)
- 41) non-hatred (Skt. advesha)
- 42) non-delusion (Skt. amoha)
- 43) perseverance / diligence (Skt. vīrya)
- 44) pliancy (Skt. praśrabdhi)
- 45) heedfulness (Skt. apramāda)
- 46) equanimity (Skt. upeksha)
- 47) non-violence (Skt. ahimsā)

four variable factors:

- 48) regret (Skt. kaukrtya)
- 49) sleep / drowsiness (Skt. middha)
- 50) coarse conceptual understanding / examination (Skt. vitarka)
- 51) fine conceptual understanding / discernment (Skt. vicāra)

