

From

THE EXPANSIVE ORAL INSTRUCTIONS

OF THE PRECIOUS DHARMA MASTER

CHETSANGPA RATNA SRI BUDDHI

The first section is a teaching on the guru and the four initiations and from a western point of view is perhaps the most difficult part of the whole book. The term 'guru' refers not so much to the qualities of a person as to the potential for relatedness. In that sense it is similar to the term 'lover'. The significance of 'lover' is revealed through entering into being with the 'lover'. If you cannot connect with the 'lover' then they are not your lover and so are irrelevant for you. The person named as a guru can only reveal that potential, that function, if the student has faith and there is open availability on both sides.

The guru is the living presence of the awakened buddha mind. It is this available presence that enables the transmission to the student of the experience of their authentic intrinsic clarity. The guru returns us to our true presence by helping us to drop our identification with the false constructs of our personality and all the other aspects of our ego-self.

There are disciples who may simply go to the teacher, get a teaching, leave and practise according to the transmission they received. But those who stay close to the teacher and serve her will inevitably get involved in a complex relationship. It is a powerful relationship in which clarity is hard to achieve as the guru frequently acts in a totally unexpected and irrational way, as in the famous encounters of Tilopa and Naropa, and Marpa and Milarepa. In that case, the guru is like a koan and the degree of progress is dependent on the degree of struggle. As Milarepa said, "When I understood my guru, I understood my mind." The more issues that can be worked through in the guru yoga process, the more 'clear' the relationship between guru and student can become. This is particularly important in dzogchen where the practice is not the accomplishment of large numbers of recitations or years in retreat or specific signs, but a very subtle awareness of the moments when presence is lost.

A person is a 'guru' only if they abide in ongoing clarity free of karmic obscuration and distraction. If and when this clarity is absent they are unable to function as a guru. The sky-like openness and clarity of the guru's mind offers no blockage to the student— and so it should dawn on the student that all the difficulties that arise are due to their own confusion. This is a painful awakening: "I alone am the cause of my distress. Blaming others, and in particular blaming my guru, is just my own perversity." If the guru is truly a guru they are free of fault, however they appear. If they are not clear then a messy hurtful drama is highly likely.

The guru is my mind. Well, everything is my mind. My mind is clear and obscured simultaneously. I reify the intrinsic openness which is unreifiable. My reification is a deluding illusion which generates confusion even as it establishes nothing. The gift of the guru is that our minds meet as sky to sky, open to open. Open sky also has clouds so lostness in Cloudland is always possible. The exit from this is not

to struggle to improve, but to return again and again with deep and vast trust to the simplicity of the guru-yoga, to relax into intrinsic openness.

In the dzogchen section Chetsangpa sets out the view and points out the manner and consequences of misunderstanding it. He frequently states a point that is taken up in several of the other texts. This is that, "We who are called 'great meditators' have no need of many different dharmas. What we need is a definite actualisation of our own instant awareness which is the essence of all dharmas." Just as we have been lost in the ocean of samsara we can get lost again in the ocean of the dharma, studying texts, debating, learning more and more about the theory and practice. And all of this 'dharma' may become a means to confusion if we forget that our true aim is the attainment of that 'definite actualisation' of intrinsic potential. 'Keep it simple' seems to be motto of these texts, for the task is relaxing and opening, letting go of involvement, not building up a store of new treasures.

The term 'great meditator' (sGom-Chen) is used here, and also by Patrul Rinpoche, in a rather tongue-in-cheek manner, for are those who are struggling with the basics of dzogchen great meditators? In a true sense they are, for they have given up the local games of worldly benefit and have entered the international league of enlightenment in one lifetime. They are great because they are participating in a great enterprise. Dzogchen conduct is to stay present at all times and in all places – it does not require any great shift in behaviour and so it can be implemented by people in all walks of life, of any age or gender. However, in the early stages it takes true vigilance to not go astray, and the title 'great meditator' is also a salute to the diligence required for that.

Chetsangpa sets the context in which the other texts exist. Dzogchen teachings are almost unique in dharma in that they point directly to the innate perfection of each individual and are subversive in the sense that they question the necessity of particular behaviours and the hierarchical systems of spiritual development through stages.

SESSION 1, SAT 23 JAN 2021, 10-5PM

THE TEXT

MEDITATION ON THE GURU AND THE FOUR INITIATIONS

Om Mani Padme Hung Hri

Having gathered the two accumulations of merit and wisdom during measureless aeons, the result has ripened for us now. Thus we have gained a precious human existence with the freedoms and opportunities and this has great merit. Because of this we can meet with a fully accomplished guru in order to practise meditation.

Then, if with great faith and devotion to that guru we faithfully practise the liberating elixir of his teachings, we will be able to truly benefit ourselves and all other beings.

Although one may have great faith in and longing for the dharma, if one does not meet with an accomplished guru, then the dharma that one practises will be difficult to develop as the true dharma. Then, although one has practised the dharma, only worldly benefits will develop. There are many gurus whose faithful disciples fall down and get lost, so it is very important to seek out a truly accomplished guru.

So what is an accomplished guru? At the beginning of his training he must have impartially and extensively heard and thought about the dharma. In the middle period he should have gained deep awakening in his meditation, and finally he should be working for the benefit of sentient beings. Having little desire for the world he should always stay in mountain hermitages. He should have given up outer work like business, property and politics, and inner work such as family affairs. Having developed a very pure bodhicitta he must have thorough experience and knowledge of the methods for practising the developing (*sKyed-Rim*) and perfecting (*rDzogs-Rim*) systems.

It is necessary to seek someone like that as your guru. If on merely hearing his name, your hair bristles, if on merely seeing his face you gain blessing, and if on merely praying to him your mind turns away from samsara, then these signs indicate that you have a connection from a previous life with the guru.

If you find a guru like that then you must know how to serve him and develop your connection. There are four ways of giving service:

- 1.** To always believe that whatever your guru does is good.
- 2.** To be able to give him whatever you have.
- 3.** To be able to do whatever he orders.
- 4.** To always believe that whatever he says is true.

1. TO ALWAYS BELIEVE THAT WHATEVER YOUR GURU DOES IS GOOD

Whatever form your guru shows, whether he is a monk, or a yogi or a layman, you must believe that whatever he does is good. If he is a monk and indulges in meat and wine, eats after mid-day, or takes a wife, or if he is a yogi and acts roughly and without care, you should not lack faith and devotion however he behaves, since whatever is done by the guru is good. Whatever is done by the guru is the

expression of the intrinsic mode. His activity is a miraculous apparitional display. You must believe that everything he does is good and beneficial for sentient beings. If your guru is a householder with many children and he is doing worldly work and business, subduing enemies and protecting friends, killing sentient beings and so forth, even then you must still go to him for refuge and firmly believe that these activities are his demonstration of whatever method of training is necessary for sentient beings.

2. TO BE ABLE TO GIVE HIM WHATEVER YOU HAVE

You must give him all your own wealth, be it great or small, and everything you have. Offer it without lingering attachment or regret, neither secretly withholding some, nor hesitantly giving it in dribs and drabs. Even if you have only a needle and nothing else, then offer him that. Encourage others to give to your guru. Create with your imagination the external world and all its inhabitants and offer all this as well. Offer your own wealth and your body without the least selfish desire.

3. TO BE ABLE TO DO WHATEVER YOUR GURU SAYS

If the guru tells you to do business and run about, to take a message a long distance, to do kitchen work, sweep and dust, to collect wood and bring water, to do whatever may be required for the sangha, washing, cleaning and so on, you should do whatever it is with faith and without reluctance. If your guru says, "Die!", then you must be able to die, and if he tells you to jump into deep water or from a high place or into a fire, then you must be able to jump. If he tells you to eat poison and excrement then you must be able to eat it. If he tells you to drink molten metal then you must be able to drink that too. If he says, "Cut off your head and cut out your heart and give them to me!", then you must be able to offer them. If he tells you to kill your parents and other sentient beings, and rip out their intestines with your hands, then be able to do that. And if he says, "Now stop practising dharma and become a layperson!", then you must also be able to carry out these orders.

4. TO ALWAYS BELIEVE THAT WHATEVER YOUR GURU SAYS IS TRUE

With regard to dharma, you must really believe that whatever your guru teaches you is the truth. This applies to the difficulty of obtaining the freedoms and opportunities; death and impermanence; the nature of karma; understanding the defects of samsara and the benefits of liberation; the more subtle relations of action and consequence, and to whatever other teachings he gives you.

With regard to worldly things, if the guru says that a cow is a donkey, a goat is a sheep, a cow is a buffalo, a hat is a boot, east is west and west is east, an enemy is a friend, fire is water, poison is medicine, a man is a woman, then although it may not look like that to you, yet the guru has said it, so it is certainly true. You have to decide that this is how it is.

Your own pattern of action must be to do whatever your guru wishes, practising what he orders without modification, even when there is great danger to your life. To do whatever the guru says is the best possible activity. If you are not in agreement with the guru's instructions, then even if you give up all worldly things and practise meditation, you will not really have entered the dharma. So you must do exactly what your guru says, and perform whatever services he might possibly wish with your body, speech and mind. If you act like that, then automatically the guru will see that you are a disciple worthy of receiving teaching and he will hold you with his compassion.

If as a worthy disciple you do whatever your fully accomplished guru tells you and pray with total devotion and faith, then, without great difficulty, you will gain the level of buddhahood. By acting in this way with faith and devotion, you will understand that your precious guru encompasses the body, speech and mind qualities and activities of all the buddhas of the past, present and future. It is by this understanding that sentient beings, who are the cause¹ gain the result of buddhahood.

You must think of your precious guru as the very kind one who turns you away from the misleading path of unvirtue and sets you on the very pure path. Then imagine him seated on four cushions in the sky before you, slightly higher than your head. If you believe that your guru is really a buddha, then visualise him in his usual form. But if you think he has some faults, then meditate on him in the form of Vajradhara, Padma Sambhava of Urgyen, Prajnaparamita, or whichever divine being you have faith in.

Imagine that a white letter Om (ॐ) appears on the crown of his head, the red letter Aa (ॐ) at his throat, and a blue letter Hung (ॐ) at his heart. Light rays in their respective colours radiate out from these three letters, inviting the gurus of your own guru's lineage and any other gurus from whom you have had teaching, as well as all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. They all appear with light rays of the five colours, white, red, blue, yellow and green and melt into your own guru, and so you should believe that he really encompasses all the buddhas of the three times.

Then pray from the depths of your heart with sincere faith and devotion using whatever prayer you have been taught, be it long or short. Pray so intensely that tears come, you shake and tremble, and the hair on your body bristles. The signs of receiving blessing when praying in this way are that you turn away from desire for samsara, an awareness of impermanence is born in your mind, and you become aware that you might die very soon. Your habits of adopting and rejecting diminish, and your mind turns away from desire. Love and compassion arise. You are not able to separate from your guru, and the good qualities of practice arise.

When you finish your period of prayer recitation you must take initiations which bring you to maturity. Therefore, you should meditate as follows.

From a white letter Om on the guru's forehead rays of white light radiate out and melt into your own forehead, purifying the errors and obscurations of your body. The blessing of his body is obtained. You have received the pot initiation. Your body is empowered for the meditations of the developing system (*sKyed-Rim*). You now have the opportunity to gain the fruition of the nirmanakaya apparitional mode. You now have the chance to gain the vajra body. Then imagine that the inside of your body becomes full of rays of white light. Meditate on this for some time.

From a red letter Aa at the guru's throat rays of red light radiate out and melt into your own throat, purifying the impurities of your speech. The blessing of his speech is gained. You receive the secret initiation. Your speech is empowered to read mantras and sadhana texts and to perform long recitations of mantras. You now have the opportunity to gain the fruition of the sambhogakaya enjoyment mode. You now have the chance of gaining the vajra speech. Then imagine that the inside of your body becomes full of rays of red light. Meditate on this for some time.

From a blue letter Hung at the guru's heart, rays of blue light radiate out and melt into your own heart, purifying the errors and obscurations of your mind. The blessing of his mind is obtained. You

receive the true knowing original knowing initiation. Your mind is empowered to meditate on the bliss void mahamudra. You now have the opportunity to gain the fruition of the dharmakaya intrinsic mode. You now have the chance of gaining the vajra mind. Then imagine that your body becomes filled with rays of blue light. Meditate on this for some time.

From the guru's forehead, throat and heart, rays of light, white, red and blue respectively, radiate out simultaneously and melt into your own body, speech and mind, purifying the errors and obscurations which variously affect them. You gain the blessing of his body, speech, mind, qualities and activities. You receive the fourth initiation, the precious word initiation. You are thus empowered to meditate on your own mind as voidness and effortlessly arising clarity. You now have the opportunity of gaining the svabhavikakaya, the inseparability of these three modes. You now have the chance of gaining the four kaya modes. Then imagine the inside of your body becomes filled with rays of white, red and blue light. Meditate on this for some time.

Then intensify your devotion to the guru and imagine that he comes to the crown of your head. The five-coloured light which is his body bends inwards and melts down to be slowly absorbed through the crown of your head. Thus the guru's body, speech and mind and your body, speech and mind become indistinguishably merged, like water into water. In that state the three afflicting poisons of deluding assumption, aversion and desire are destroyed. So avoiding all contrivance, let your mind abide in its spontaneous original presence.

If your meditation later weakens, then you must truly strive and pray day and night with true devotion. By the power of the guru's blessing those who practise over time and sincerely will certainly discover that their meditation improves and develops and so will be convinced. There is no need to follow many different dharma methods. If you foster faith and devotion to your guru and the state of awareness, then there is no need for any other method.

By really getting the power of your guru's blessing, you beginners will directly understand the intrinsic mode of your own mind without requiring the guru to explain it by teaching. With your intrinsic awareness you will understand the falsity of your ordinary state of mind and you will clearly open to and directly experience the intrinsic mode of original presence.

You must always remember the great kindness of your guru, for that attitude of faith and devotion to him is the profound path to the happiness of buddhahood in this very life. So whether there be happiness or sadness, pray! In sickness or in fever, pray! Whether going or staying, pray! If you can always pray one-pointedly, this single dharma path will be sufficient for your liberation.

But if you do not act in that way then you will lose your faith and abandon your devotion and firm belief. You will think it sufficient to fulfil only a few of your tantric vows. You will fall away from the dharma and become useless. It is vital to avoid all such laziness and falsity, so start immediately to practise with the utmost diligence.

If you do the mantra practice of a personal deity without praying with faith and devotion to your guru as the essence of all the buddhas of the times, then that is a very mistaken approach. If the guru is happy, then the buddhas are happy. If you attain your guru's level then you have attained the level of all the buddhas.

Moreover when you see that there is some fault in your meditation on the guru, remember that your guru is the actual buddha himself and without the least fault. Therefore the faults you see are due to your own badness and impure understanding. So when you see any faults in him, you must see that they are in fact your own, and immediately commence the antidote of confession. The root of all meditational practice is praying to your accomplished guru and protecting the mind from contrivance. So we must all practise this strongly with faith and devotion. Please bear this mind.

NOTES

1. Sentient beings are the cause due to having buddha potential which is intrinsic to the minds of all beings. Awakening is due to this cause. All other factors such as meditation are secondary and supportive. Thus 'our' awakening is not due to us but to our buddha potential of which we are unaware until introduced to it through the dharma by the guru.