

**CHIME SOG THIG:
IMMORTAL LIFE ESSENCE**
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Part 1



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CHIME SOG THIG
The Abbreviated Practice of the Immortal Life Essence;
The Essential Bindu of Deathlessness

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This presentation of Part One of the Chime Sog Thig teachings given by His Holiness Shenphen Dawa Rinpoche at Losar 2013 Yeshe Nyingpo, New York City, has been edited to be more accessible to a broader audience and does not include all the topics given to those who attended the original teachings. Part Two will follow shortly.

Once again, it is emphasized that these teachings do require all three of the Wang, Lung and Tri—that is, the empowerment, the oral transmission, and the instructions as to the meaning and explanation about how to undertake the practice—which you need to receive from a qualified teacher or a holder of the lineage.

Lineage of Chime Sog Thig

Before the teachings begin, develop the correct bodhicitta (compassion) or altruistic mind which is the motivation to benefit all our parent sentient beings who have been very kind to us. For these gracious parent sentient beings, we listen to the teachings of Chime Sog Thig, the essence of deathlessness, which Tertön Zil Non Namkhai Dorje revealed. Then we practice these long life teachings in order to liberate our parent sentient beings, wherever they may be.

Terchen, which means great tertön, Zil Non Namkhai Dorje, born in 1894, revealed the terma “Dorje Phurba Yansang Trinley Chud Dril”, within which this long life practice of Tse Drup Chime Sog Thig appears. This ter or terma was discovered in the secret Dakini Yeshe Tsogyal cave in Monkhar Sengye Dzong in Bhutan and in Lho Drak Khar Chu in Tibet. In the Nyingma tradition, termas can be hidden in various ways: those that are not hidden, those hidden in space, those hidden in water, those hidden in objects and, most precious of all, those hidden in the mind. Most of the ter of my father, His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche, were mind treasures, *gong ter*. While this

earth treasure was discovered in Bhutan, others have been hidden at Yamalung in Tibet, the Tiger's Nest in Paro Thaktsang, Bhutan and elsewhere in holy places. This ter was discovered the same year His Holiness was born.

His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche, was born in 1904, the Wood Dragon year, in the fourth Tibetan Month on the 23rd day which corresponds to the Tibetan 10th day. The 10th day of the Tibetan fourth month, considered as Guru Rinpoche's birthday, is a highly significant date in our Nyingma calendar.

Guru Rinpoche, who hid these teachings, wrote instructions in the terma indicating that His Holiness Jigdral Yeshe Dorje would crown the discovery of this terma. Specifically, the gold secret scroll in the Dakini script instructed Terchen Zil Non Namkhai Dorje to give His Holiness these teachings along with the gold scroll, the empowerments and the pith instructions. Similarly, my father had a prophecy in his terma to meet Terton Zil Non Namkhai Dorje from whom he would receive teachings that Guru Rinpoche had kept for him.

They finally met in 1945, when my father was forty-one years old and Terchen Rinpoche was fifty-one. My father had just finished giving the Rinchen Terdzöd Wang. Upon meeting, Terchen Rinpoche said "Finally we meet! Since I have limited time, I have to give you this transmission immediately." At the time, Terchen Rinpoche was living in a room at the top of the temple called "The Great Lotus Bliss Palace" on a hill behind Mindroling Monastery. Terchen Rinpoche gave all the teachings to His Holiness. At the conclusion, he said "For this generation and at this time, you are one of the predicted lamas who holds the dharma of Tibet in your hand. Not only have I given you my terma, but also I offer you all the other teachings, writings and secret empowerments I have received." It is considered a great honor to receive the teachings and secret empowerments from such a great tertön.

Terchen Zil Non Namkhai Dorje wrote the Chime Sog Thig teachings by hand from the dakini gold leaf he received. He gave this book to my father who considered it one of his most important relics. Later he gave it to me. Toward the end of the seminar, I will bring it so you can see his writing and be blessed with it.

Although Dudjom Rinpoche discovered many termas of long life practices such as the Putri Repung, Khandro Thug Tig, Dorje Sempa and others, he always considered the Chime Sog Thig terma to be his main long life practice. Throughout his life, he always practiced Chime Sog Thig because he said it has tremendous blessing and

realization of the deathlessness of the mind. He always recommended it to other lamas, yogis and students whenever they requested a terma long life practice from him, saying, “Do the Chime Sog Thig practice. Do it first. This is the best one to do.” I’m also very fortunate to have received this terma teachings, instructions, and empowerment from my father. To this day, I have practiced it and always recall the vajra words of these instructions.

First, some background about my father. His Holiness was born in Pemako, Tibet to Tulku Jamphel Norbu, his father, and Namgyel Drolma, his mother. His father, a prince of Kanam, was expected to become the king. Kanam Kings are direct descendants of Emperor Trisong Detsen. Instead, he left the kingdom for his elder brother, saying, “You rule the country, as I have a dakini revelation stating that I must leave this place to meet my future consort and from our union a great teacher will be born.”

His brother replied, “In that case, please take several hundred citizens with you to Pemako.” Pemako is close to the Indian border, but far from Po where they lived. Although he left with three or four hundred citizens, only a few hundred arrived at Pemako owing to the difficulty of the journey. The land was heavily forested with many wild animals. Food was very scarce, but fortunately, wild fruits were scattered throughout the forest. Rivers had to be crossed on foot or on a rope. When I was small, I remember crossing one of those rivers in a basket on a rope bridge.

Tulku Jamphel Norbu, the Prince, found his future consort caring for farm animals. She was from a very poor family, living in a very poor little house. He recognized her as his consort immediately but didn’t say anything to anyone so he could learn more about her. He discovered that she had migrated from Bhutan when her family couldn’t afford to pay the very high taxes on their land. They sought a better life in Pemako.

Eventually, he announced to his citizens that he had found his wife, pointing to the young woman from the village. They were astounded, “You are a prince. You are telling us that you are going marry this common girl? No, we cannot accept that.” The Prince responded, “Whether or not you accept it, she is the one. I will stay here in Pemako.” Unhappy, they protested, “This land has nothing to cultivate, nothing with which to earn a livelihood. We are in the middle of a forest and this woman is from a poor family. How can you do this?” Rinpoche’s father responded “Those who want to

leave and return to Po can do so. I give you permission. Those who want to stay with me, please do." Some left, but most stayed.

Namgyel Drolma was not an ordinary female. Although her family was poor, they were descendents of Tertön Pema Lingpa. Tertön Pema Lingpa was a great Nyingma Tertön who discovered many teachings of Guru Rinpoche. His Holiness was born from the union of Tulku Jamphel Norbu and Namgyel Drolma.

Before His Holiness's birth, a dakini appeared to His Holiness's father holding a crystal mirror with a dorje in front of it, saying, "A son will be born to you who will benefit many sentient beings." Later she appeared again, "An emanation of Guru Rinpoche will be born into your family and your understanding to name him Yeshe Dorje is correct." And sure enough, when His Holiness was born, many auspicious and marvelous signs manifested. From this prophecy and vision, His Holiness's father named him Yeshe (primordial wisdom represented by the mirror) Dorje (the vajra or dorje, symbolizing compassionate skillful means). Jigdrel, added in front of Yeshe Dorje by another lama, means fearless dharma propagator. Tertön Zil Non Namkhai Dorje identified His Holiness Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje as the prophesied recipient in the dakini scrolls and transmitted all the oral teachings, empowerments, pith instructions along with the secret mandalas of this teaching to him.

This Chime Sog Thig practice is extremely precious and very profound, effecting immediate results. Three practices are included: a concise, an elaborate, and an extremely elaborate one. I intend to explain the concise, short Chime Sog Thig practice so that you can incorporate it easily into your daily practice.

His Holiness's advice was to always do one session of long life practice in your retreat. Why? Because most likely we have done some of our practice incorrectly, resulting in the degeneration of our life force. We need to increase the life-span with a long life practice. Whether you do a Phowa, Kilaya, Dakini, Chenrezig, or Dorje Sempa retreat, at least at the end, one session must be the long life practice. Actually, whether in retreat or not, it is wise to take the advice of His Holiness and do a session of Chime Sog Thig everyday.

The Chime Sog Thig revelation has three empowerments that can be transmitted: a very elaborate wang, a medium wang and a concise wang. After receiving any teachings on a given practice it is very important to receive the wang for this. The most elaborate one is extremely important but it takes a whole day to transmit. One may

think that one has received enough empowerments. But no matter how many wangs you receive, it can never be too much. Keep taking them: they remove your obstacles. However, just receiving a wang is not the point. One also has to maintain the samaya and the conduct connected to these empowerments. The heart of the blessing is the samaya that is maintained to the body, speech and mind of the teacher which means maintaining the samaya to the deities and the mandalas of the deities.

To properly enter the mandala with auspicious connection to Chime Sog Thig, the terma instructs that you need a name from the lama transmitting the teachings or the wang. This secret long life name conjoins you with the deities of these teachings. The males receive one name and the females receive a different one. The secret names for the males and females correspond to the male and female buddhas as well as the buddha family to which you are karmically connected in the Chime Sog Thig long life deities mandala.

Transmission

In the Nyingma Lineage there are four or five methods of transmission: through signs, through the dakini's lineage, through being empowered with permission to reveal, and through being prophesied to receive and transmit.

The first, *rikzin dha ye gyud pa*, is signs and symbols. No verbal or oral instructions occur: the transmission is mind-to-mind. Buddha Amitayus gives the transmission to the Five Buddhas of Long Life who give it to Dakini Tsen Da Li. That is why Dakini Tsen Da Li appears in most of the teachings. She is one of the sole holders of long life practice.

The second, *khadro tekgey gyud gyud pa*, is transmission through the dakini's lineage. The dakinis, having received the teachings in the buddhafield, give the same transmission onward. They reveal certain practices directly. Guru Rinpoche himself received this transmission from the dakinis when he was practicing in a cemetery.

Similar to the first method, Buddha Amitayus appeared in person to Guru Rinpoche and Dakini Mandarava when they were practicing long life at Maratika cave in Nepal. Buddha Amitayus blessed them with vajra (dorje) body, vajra speech and vajra mind: the deathlessness mind. As a result of this blessing, they experienced the

level of realization where the four degenerations that usually afflict human beings did not manifest for them

Guru Rinpoche gave these long life teachings and transmission to his twenty-five close disciples. Some of these teachings were hidden in the elements such as earth, space and so forth by Yeshe Togyal to be discovered later by their respective tertons. As to transmission, this is the oral transmission; transmission through speech or words by dakinis.

Third, *menlom wang kur gye gyud pa* is receiving the empowerment which grants permission to transmit and reveal the teachings. Terton Zil Non Namkhai Dorje belongs in this category.

The fourth, *kha bap lung ten gye gyud pa*, occurs when the next teacher is already empowered and prophesied to give the transmission such as His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche.

Chime Sog Thig comes directly from Amitayus, the buddha of infinite light. Second it goes to Ghar Gye Wang, third to the five long-life buddha family, fourth to Dakini Tsen Da Li, fifth to Vimala, sixth to Pema Thod Treng Tsal, seventh to Mandarava, eighth to Yeshe Tsogyal, ninth to Gyelong Namkhai Nyingpo, tenth to King Trisong Detsen, eleventh to Vairotsana, twelfth to Aztsar Sali, thirteen to Khe Woo Chung Dren Ma, fourteenth to Dorje Dudjom and then to Zil Non Namkhai Dorje. Zil Non Namkhai Dorje is the emanation of both Vairotsana and Dorje Dudjom, two of the great great terton masters. Then His Holiness, my father, received it and then myself. This brief history shows how the oral lineage of the masters is transmitted.

This particular lineage is very short. Discovered by Zil Non Namkhai Dorje, it was transmitted to His Holiness and then to me. That is why it also comes under the category of tersar, or New Treasures. The immediate directness of this terma is not like other lineages where it is transmitted over a long period of time from master to student, master to student and so on. Like a dakini's breath on a crystal, that has not yet evaporated, the tersar lineage is that fresh. Guru Rinpoche said that during these degenerate times, the tersar teachings will remain until the arrival of the fifth buddha, Buddha Maitreya. My personal prayer for all those who propagate and practice the Dudjom Tersar is "May they flourish and benefit parent sentient beings ceaselessly, toward the swift path of realization."

Dzogchen Misunderstanding

I must correct one thing about Dzogchen. Most of you in the West think that by reading dharma books, you will develop understanding of the dharma. While it is natural to read, you will only develop an intellectual understanding. Wisdom, however, must come from meditation. For example, you cannot understand the teachings of the Great Perfection, Dzogpa Chenpo or any of the secret mantrayana teachings through reading. In fact, if you read Dzogchen books, you are likely to harm your understanding when the real teachings are given to you. You will have a preset idea in your mind of what it is, but, I am sorry to say, that most likely it will not be accurate.

Why? Why is reading not sufficient? It lacks several things. First, reading secret teachings which you have not been authorized to read is not appropriate regardless of your motivation. Many of you are concerned about privacy in the letters you write, feeling hurt when someone reads them. This is mundane nonsense. What about these texts that are forbidden, rare and have protectors guarding and protecting them? Do you think you can easily read these teachings? Do you think the writers of these Great Perfection commentaries will write it in such a simple way that you will be able to understand what is there? No, you will not be able to do so.

These writings hide the real meaning deeply between lines, words and letters. The sentence that you read is not the sentence of the meaning. No, it is not. It is a sentence that is grammatically correct, makes sense and seems to be clear, but it is not. There are secret codes. These codes and keys must be revealed to you in order to read and understand these books and teachings. The codes are not available to everyone. The masters will not give the code to you because what is in that book is their life thread. Nobody is going to put their life in your hands and say "Here is my life thread, do what you want with it."

Also the personal and face-to-face contact of the lama with the student or disciple is missing. First of all, you have a mind-to-mind contact. With that you receive the mind empowerment. Second, when you receive a teaching from a lama or the lama authorizes you to read a book, you receive the speech empowerment. Third, by the lama's authorization, you have the blessing of the five wisdoms and the blessing of the spontaneous activity. Secretly, the lama empowers you so that your veil of obscurations

is removed directly by his presence in front of you. Otherwise, when you read such books without authorization, you damage and do harm to yourself.

This harm refers to the inverted or distorted understanding of the Great Perfection luminosities when perceived by the intellect, rather than experiencing the luminosity of primordial wisdom. You will understand these luminosities as a colorful painting that is visually present to your eyes. When books elaborate the various depths of emptiness and the subtle clarifications of the wisdom aspect, you will understand nothing of it. You won't even understand the first basic emptiness, let alone the other depths of emptiness that are present.

My advice to you, if you want this knowledge, is to connect with a teacher. "Connecting with a teacher" means surrendering your ego to the teacher which may not be very easy for you to do. Nonetheless, you won't burn yourself. I have received the Great Perfection teachings from my father many times.

I have met many students who describe to me the visions they have had about the Great Perfection. They think they have realization and a true vision. To me, it looks like they are preparing to go to lower realms because anything that looks bright and beautiful is not necessarily the experience of luminosity or realization. Within that bright and beautiful appearance darkness can also be present. I say "Be careful." Many things are fine to understand intellectually, but anything dealing with wisdom and secret practices such as Dzogchen is not worth reading about.

What about the person who translated what you are reading? Is the translator a realized bodhisattva? Does the translation carry the depth of the meaning toward enlightenment? Just because the translator has an extensive vocabulary and can write very fluently and poetically, do you then think that is realization? No. Realization and the teaching of Great Perfection is so simple that you can miss it because of your complex mind. The Great Perfection teachings are not complex. They are in simplicity. So simple that you will not believe it. You won't take it to heart because you will say "That can't be what it is!" But that IS what that is.

As Guru Rinpoche was leaving Gung Thang La Thok mountain in Tibet to go to the land of the demons, a woman who milked cows asked him for Great Perfection teachings as she was very old and didn't have much time left to practice. Everyone was confident he would say no to an ordinary woman who milks cows asking for Great Perfection teachings, but Guru Rinpoche, in his compassion, said, "I will make it so

simple that she will understand.” Guru Rinpoche taught her what realization means in the terms of cow, milk and milking. After three weeks the woman attained the rainbow body.

That is the essence of Dzogchen— it is very simple and direct. These teachings don’t need elaborate words. But the one thing required, that most of you miss in the Great Perfection teachings, is **purification**. There is no Great Perfection practice without **purification**. Don’t think that once you practice Great Perfection, you don’t have to do anything but just simply rest on the nature of mind. No, you cannot rest. You need both causal and wisdom merit.

In the long life practice Zil Non Namkhai Dorje says that the most important thing for extending long life is merit. Merit extends your life. Purification generates the merit that arises. Without merit you are not going to achieve anything. Nor are you going to experience realization.

In the practice of Great Perfection, your recitation is important, your purification practice is important, your tsoks are important, your respect to the relative truth and absolute truth practices are important. I have said again and again: do not just sit and look at the absolute, but take the relative with you together. A bird can fly with two wings; it cannot fly with one wing. Similarly, you have to respect the relative and the absolute. Absolute truth and relative truth, these two truths must go hand in hand. In the Dzogchen practice, you might see everything as emptiness—that’s fine. You may see it as luminous five wisdoms—that’s also fine. But what happens when sentient beings appear within that same mind, which previously perceived the five wisdoms? Then what happens? Are you going to see them as a rainbow too? No, not likely. Actually these sentient beings arise as the skillful play of the dharmakaya. This is the skillful play of the dharmakaya. But you are unlikely to recognize them as such.

What does purification mean? Purification is the arising of bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is non-dual compassion for all sentient beings, infinite as space. The core of purification comes from bodhicitta: understanding the suffering and the interconnectedness of all sentient beings as our mothers and fathers. Purification is not just a process. It is seeing the truth of suffering. Therefore, you must understand the two compassions: relative compassion and absolute compassion.

For many of you, the Great Perfection practice seems enticingly attractive: no recitation, no visualization and nothing to do with the body. It’s wonderful because we

don't like recitation that much, we don't like visualization that much and, of course, we don't like doing anything positive with the body much either. Thus, you have an attraction for the Great Perfection which translates as "doing nothing." In fact, some Dzogchen teachings say it is "a lazy person's practice." But a great sage is saying this, not us. "Do nothing" is from the point of view that everything is perfected. It is lazy because it is effortless as there is nothing to meditate upon. A great sage can afford to be "lazy" because everything in his or her vision is already the kayas and wisdom luminosities. Our vision is our obscurations. Don't mistake your normal dualistic grasping vision for the kayas.

For example, if someone gives you a glass of urine and tells you to drink it and you do so without any association to it being either urine or fresh water, then you would be perceiving it as pure without duality. You may have reached somewhere beyond the multitude of obscurations. But if you are a crazy person and drink it because you think it is drinkable and not urine—that is not realization. Bodhicitta develops pure perception and bares the nakedness of our perceptions. Bodhicitta also destroys our strings of attachment toward reality without contrivance. That is the truth.

With the Chime Sog Thig practice, as with other practices, you have to develop a kind heart. A kind heart is a genuinely caring and loving feeling towards all. Without a kind heart the door to the practice is closed. If you are naturally born with a kind heart then half of your dharma is already accomplished. Without a kind heart much effort must go in this direction. At all times develop a compassionate and kind heart, called *chang-chub sem* in Tibetan. That is important.

What is Long Life?

Returning to Chime Sog Thig, what is long life? Long life is merit that does not exhaust. It results from virtuous actions; not negative actions. In most of the worlds, realms and universes, a definite fixed span of life is set for beings: one thousand years, two thousand years, twenty thousand years, thirty thousand years, or forty thousand years. After that, one dies. But for human beings, the life span is not fixed. Though ultimately we have an infinite life span, our actions bring us death. Mind has never died. It is the elements magnetized by the mind that decay or degenerate. The elements

cannot survive for infinity, as they are impermanent. Unvirtuous acts shorten one's life span. Taking the life of another reduces one's life span drastically.

Our life is very fragile. It is not as solid as we think it is. Once you are born, you are bound to die. Survival is quite slim as the causes of death are many. Death can come from: war; famine; disease and illness; accidents; climate change; the five elements; planetary changes; malicious spirits; curses; people who kill or steal our life force; and from influencing others to kill oneself. Even though we love to eat food, our food can kill us too. You may go to sleep tonight but tomorrow you may be dead. Who knows? It is amazing that we wake up the next morning. That alone is a miracle. Also walking from one place to another you may die. Long life depends on causal and wisdom merit. The point of extending life is to perfect one's practice in order to benefit all parent sentient beings.

The great sage Nagarjuna, said that our life is as impermanent as water bubbles or a flash of lightning in the sky. Nevertheless, because of our grasping we hold to our life solidly. We think nothing will happen to us even though death happens to other people all the time. When it happens to others it seems fine. Even if a beloved died today we will not accept this fact. We still hope that he or she is going to answer back any second. Such is the grasping that we have developed.

The Chime Sog Thig teachings mention about eighty-one immediate conditions for death that can arise. Take for example the offering lamps which are alight over there. Even if you light them all at the same time they will not extinguish at the same time. Why? Because of causes and conditions. For some lamps when the butter is finished it will go out. For others, the wind will put it out even though the butter and wick are still there. For some, the oil becomes exhausted but the lamp still burns; in others the wick disappears but some oil remains to keep it lit. These results are based on causes and conditions. In our life it is the same. Our span of life depends on causes and conditions.

With the life force or vitality there is a compound factor called 'la', which makes life vibrant. Life depends on life force; life force depends on the purity of the elements—the purity in the blood essence and the purity in the essence of air. These factors depend each other. Life span depends on causal and wisdom merit. Extension of life means achieving these four: 1) a span of life that knows no death; 2) a youth that doesn't age; 3) a strength that does not degenerate; and 4) merit that is never obscured. It is due to

demerit that some people in total good health die suddenly. There is no other reason: their organs are functioning but it doesn't help. Life span and merit go together.

Tsa, Lung, Thigle

The force and integrity of life depends on three things: tsa, lung and thigle or nerves, air or wind, and mind essence. In yoga, a Tibetan quotation says "*nepa tsa yowa lung kod pa thigle*" which when translated means "what is remaining is the nerve, what is moving is the air (or wind) and what is adorned is the essence." From the point of view of the primordial ground of our origin air refers to the space. Within the space is the air. This space is the dharmakaya. The movement of the air in the dharmakaya creates the subtle nerves. The subtle nerves are the sambhogakaya. Then the subtle nerves and the dharmakaya space unite to create the essence which is the nirmanakaya. The essence is called the radiant drop (thigle). The Dzogchen quotation of "*ngo wo tong, rang shing sel, thug jey kun khyap*" refers to the emptiness of the dharmakaya, the luminosity of the sambhogakaya, and the compassion of the nirmanakaya. This process in turn refers to the tsa, lung, thigle. The forming of DNA, I believe, is the atomic cells of the nerves, the tsa, that can't be seen with the ordinary eyes but only with a microscope. According to the togyal and trekchöd teachings, it is only visible by the awareness of the mind.

Now we will discuss formation. Wind comes first and has twelve structures of mandalas. That is the first thing to know. Once the tsa has formed and the air pushes on a nerve, this combination of air pushing on nerve creates sound. For example, if the wind flows over an empty tube, it creates sound. The origin of language comes from this sound. The central nerve is called the uma (uma in Tibetan, avadhūtī in Sanskrit). The three main meridian nerves are uma, roma, kyangma which correspond to the three kayas. Roma is white, kyangma is red and the central channel, uma, has the three colors of the dharmakaya: blue, red and white.

At the time of death, the roma (nirmanakaya) and kyangma (sambhogakaya) dissolve into the central channel, uma (dharmakaya). They dissolve there because they have nowhere else to go. The uma, roma and kyangma each have twelve major nerves. For each one, the twelve is doubled to twenty-four nerves. When multiplied by a thousand, each major nerve has twenty-four thousand nerves. Adding these three

together totals seventy-two thousand. Thus, seventy-two thousand nerves are present before birth from the roma, uma, and kyangma. After birth, twelve thousand additional nerves develop, totaling eighty-four thousand. That is why the Buddha taught eighty-four thousand stanzas of teaching dealing with the obscurations of our mind.

Neither the nerves nor the channels are visible to the naked eye. Only the wisdom eye can see them. When we talk about seeing, who or what is seeing? Do you think it is the physical eyes? No, it is the mind not the eyes that perceive. Eyes cannot see anything on their own. When you do Dzogchen practice, do you think your eyes are looking at the thigle (bindu)? No, no, no! You are looking with the mind's awareness. Your naked eyes will not see these atoms. If your eye is the agent that is able to see, then if twenty-five eyeballs were all tied together, you should have a spectacular view. But that's not so. Your naked eye sees only the atoms that are stagnant and not moving. Even if your naked eye saw something in front of you moving up and down, it would not be the atoms.

Essentially what are we? When we meditate, where does the kye rim, the generative practice, come from? Where do these visualizations come from? They arise from our central channel or our innate mind, which is not solid and does not grasp to phenomena. When you visualize the kye rim, the deities are not solid either. All of us have some experience with the central channel whether we recognize it or not. Sometimes we see a white light in front of us. Sometimes we see a white light behind us. In our dreams, we may see a tube or we could travel in a luminous tube. Some people experience dying as entering a tunnel. Some experience total darkness and falling into the depth of a dark hole. All of these are the mind moving within the central channel. The kye rim makes us look inwardly, not outwardly. It directs us to focus internally and not to get caught in the outer trappings of phenomena. Outer phenomena are fine, just don't grasp at them. They are neither friends nor enemies. It is our grasping mind which runs after phenomena that is at fault.

You must familiarize yourself with and meditate within these three channels. You might ask "What size is the roma, kyangma and uma?" For the present, consider it to be the thickness of a thumb or an arrow. Essentially, it is a tube—long, straight as a palm tree, bright and luminous. Located in the center of your body, it goes from the brahma crown to four fingers below your navel. This central channel, the uma, has four qualities: translucent, waxy, straight and fine as a lotus petal. However, to make the

mind flexible, during meditation, we learn to expand this central channel to infinity and reduce it to as thin as a horse tail hair.

Roma, the white channel, is on your left and kyangma, the red channel is on your right. For females, you reverse it: the white roma on the right and the red kyangma on the left. It doesn't matter if you mix these up because basically the channels do not differentiate between a male and female. Everyone, male and female, has the father essence and the mother essence. Therefore, within every female there is a male awareness and within every male there is a female awareness. However, some yoga movements may specify which channel is on which side of the body. For these, follow the exact instructions. When you die, all the elements, winds, energies, roma and kyangma—essentially all the elements of our mind—dissolve into the central channel. Roma will disappear and so will kyangma. The central channel itself then diffuses into the space.

Most meditations include visualizing in the heart. The heart is not to the side of the central channel, as is true physically. In meditation visualize the heart within the central channel and the central channel going through the heart. All the deities are in the heart within the central channel. Eventually the central channel becomes the Buddha of Infinite Light.

The twelve spokes of the wheel in the uma are a reflection of the twelve spaces in the space. When I say the “twelve spaces in the space”, I don't mean the atmosphere, stratosphere, hemisphere or any wind spaces. No. We are referring to the twelve primordial molecules. These molecules set the pattern of our body—essentially our DNA. Space and the central channel are connected. Since the twelve molecules of the inner central channel are reflected in the outer, this means the entire universe is connected. In fact, “mass” communication between the other existing universes, buddha fields and realms are all connected via these twelve chakras or wheels. The twelve spokes make it possible for us to be in those realms. Without them, we couldn't experience those realms.

The central channel, uma, is the profound secret path of the practice. To practice the small vase, tsa-lung practices or the heat practice of tumo, you must visualize the central channel. Phowa is also effected from within the central channel. The uma is absolutely essential to understand and realize. By meditating on uma, which is your

light body, you will be able to detach yourself from the gross body. This will enable you to recognize your radiant body free from phenomena.

Next is lung (air or wind). Two things are important about the lung. First, the lung itself is in the syllable AH; AH is the essence. The brilliant clarity of the essence of the white and red is the wind. Second, lung is the energy. When we talk about air or lung, it is the energy which stays in the form of the syllable AH. Appearance is the essence of the red and white. Within the lung, this air gives rise to the five elements of the body: earth, water, fire, space and consciousness. Because it forms these five elements, each of the five is present within us: our flesh is the earth; our breath is the air; our blood is the water; our digestion and warmth is the fire, and our consciousness is the space element. It is all there.

Accompanying these five elements and opposite to them are the five winds: *che kyab* (all pervading wind), *gyen ku gyu* (upward thrust), *me yam* (digesting) , *thu sel* (downward thrust), *sok dzin ge lung* (life force holding). Sok dzin ge lung is the most important: *sok* means life, *dzin* means hold, *lung* means wind. These airs give us mobility to speak, move, digest food and defecate. The mind commands the nerves then the wind moves the muscles into motion. Our mind and our thoughts also ride on these winds. That is why calm breathing is so important in meditation.

The third, perhaps the most important is the thigle, the essential seed essence. Thigle or bindu is formed from the mother's blood cell and the father's seminal cell. When these two combine they form thigle, the seminal essence. Many meanings are given to thigle. At the outer level it can be seminal essence; at the inner, it is father and mother essence; at the secret, it is radiant clarity of the mind—or at times, bodhicitta. Thigle in Tibetan as *thigle nyak chik* means “the very essential drop of realization.” And this *ma thigle nyak chik* is the very essential drop of the primordial mother's space of realization. In Dzogchen the union of all the buddhas and buddafields are understood as thigle (*thigle chenpo kudang shing kham dzog*). Thigle is also referred to as the dakinis' heart drop. In another understanding thigle refers to the core atom within which all the primordial wisdoms and kayas are present in the nowness which is realization without duality.

When great teachers dissolve into rainbow body or teachers leave behind bone relics (in Tibetan, *ringsel*), where do these relics come from? They come from this seed essence which is the secret bodhicitta. The seed essence is the indestructible seat of

concentration of the mind. It can also mean a radiant sphere or orb within which the five primordial wisdoms manifest.

How is it produced? You know that the best food you eat is digested and purified into blood. This blood is filtered and purified again. The residual impure blood is expelled as urine and feces. The filtered pure blood from the arteries and veins goes through the bone marrow to be filtered and purified once again, which then goes to the heart and the brain. If you examine the marrow, you find small pockets of bone cells which are the filters for the blood. This pure filtered blood also forms the thigle or seed essence. Moreover, this purest blood has the power to fuse through the bone and radiate into the crown. All disease generally comes from blood that is impure. Curable or incurable diseases such as cancer or leukemia develop from the impure blood where the bone marrow's filtering process has not functioned thoroughly.

According to tantric yoga teachings there are thirty-two chakras in the crown, sixteen in the throat, eight in the heart, sixty-four in the navel and eight in the secret center. Chakras refer to spokes and spokes refer to atoms. They don't mean spokes of a wheel. They refer to atoms. The thirty-two atoms in the crown are arranged in a circle, like a mala, around the center of the chakra. The arrangement in a circle is similar for the other chakras as well. The crown spokes face downward (like an umbrella), throat spokes face upwards (like an upside-down umbrella)—thus they form a pair facing each other, so to speak. The heart spokes face down and the navel spokes face up—another pair. The secret center eight spokes face up, but this one is independent—and has no corresponding chakra to pair with it. Within these chakras, all the buddhas of purification reside. That is why the body itself is not an obstacle for realization, but grasping to the existence of self is.

Not understanding the non-existence of ego is the root cause of duality. If we examine how we identify ourselves as an "I", we will not find that which we have identified as this self either microscopically in our body or outside our body. This self then is to be understood as egoless great compassion which encompasses the entire space.

The purest blood of thigle drops into the crown chakra because the crown gives us movement, thought and clarity. The sixteen in the throat or speech chakra relate to dreams, strength in mantra recitation and strong wind power. Since the speech chakra supports the clarity of the dream yoga practice—the mingling of the three kayas and

purifying the mental body, it must be protected from obscurations. Sleep is the training of our everyday awareness into the continuity of sleep, dream and waking as one process. The advanced bardo teachings have three practices related to dream yoga.

All practices dealing with luminosity relate to the eight spokes of the heart. The visualization of the deities and their respective mantras is always in the heart. These deities in the heart chakra are protected by a luminous vajra tent by which they become indestructible. It is important to understand the heart as the central core energy of the body, from which all energies are processed to other parts of the body (similar to the heart pumping blood to the rest of the body). The blessings and the wisdom nectar of the meditative deity radiates to all other mandalas or chakras of the body. For example, in the healing practice, in which you meditate on Guru Rinpoche as Guru Dewa Chenpo (Guru of Great Bliss) in your heart, seated on an eight petal lotus, sun and moon disk, holding in his folded hands a bowl of white nectar which is overflowing and wearing the pandita hat—this overflowing bowl is pumping the nectar from the heart to all parts of the body as healing.

The navel center's sixty-four atoms relate to manifestations of samsara and nirvana. In the navel center, the practice of tumo, which is mystic heat, requires meditation on the uma. The father's essence at the crown and the mother's essence below the navel center are fused together within this central channel. For this process, to refine and ignite the wisdom heat below the navel requires very subtle breathing and intake. Too strong a fire or wind can put out the fire; a gentle wind can increase the flame. Tumo basically purifies our white thoughts, red thoughts and neutral thoughts (positive, negative and neutral thoughts)—by the father essence (the syllable HANG) dropping into the mother essence (the syllable AHTUNG)—all having been heated by the wisdom energy or fire.

In the Khandro Thug Thig we visualize Guru Rinpoche as the male essence and Yeshe Tsogyal as the female essence. The wisdom heat gives rise to Yeshe Tsogyal's essence and Guru Rinpoche's essence mingling together in the heart. In the practice of phowa we visualize our consciousness in the form of a small bird's egg containing both the red and white essence, fitting exactly within the uma. This egg is ejected via the central channel to the heart of Guru Rinpoche in the form of the Buddha of Long Life. Please realize, I have not in any way described these practices in detail. I mention them to indicate their importance and the importance of understanding the channels.

During some unions, this thigle, which comes from the crown, will drop down. It will drop at known and unknown times: known to the yogis, unknown to the lay people. This drop is the vitality and force of life. Only one drop is produced in a month. This purified essence is so rare, just a pin drop, not more.

As a result, in the Tibetan medical texts, the yoga teachings and many other teachings in addition to the Chime Sog Thig, frequent unions are not advised because it results in a loss of your vitality. Conservation! I know I look like the bad guy saying this, but I have to say what is in the teachings. Also the medical texts and teachings advise different frequencies for union during summer or winter. Everyday day is not a day for union. In any case, this thigle is so precious you cannot waste it. You cannot abuse the thigle. If you do, then you will incur the wrath of the dakinis and the mamos. That is exactly what is advised in the texts.

For males, your health and well-being is your thigle. If you have no thigle, you have no health. What is an arrow without the feathers? Then it is not an arrow, it is just a stick. Essence is not the seminal fluid. The essence thigle doesn't drop in every union. Most of the time it is the ordinary semen that drops. But, unless you are a well-advanced yogi you will not know when the thigle drops or not. Therefore, you shouldn't waste any seminal fluid at all!

In the West, when the doctors draw blood, they take it from our arterial heart vein. They say drinking a glass of water or orange juice will reproduce the blood later and this is not a problem. But drawing blood is a major problem from the dharma point of view! For Western doctors, ordinary blood may seem plentiful since our whole body is water. Yes, we have a lot of blood due to the water element but in the dharma we are not talking about the ordinary blood. The danger is that the pure essence blood is drawn out as well.

Puncturing your veins with needles, without referring to where your life force wind is at that moment, is extremely dangerous for your life force. According to the teachings, there are moments when the life force is in your crown center, in your throat center, in your heart center, in your navel center or in your secret center. This movement corresponds to the astrological movement of the planets. Also the Asian birth year chart which identifies your good and bad days should be consulted as well. Puncturing your veins can reduce your memory because it punctures your nerves. If you have any organs removed, you will not qualify for the tsa lung practice of yoga.

Each respective organ has its own function. If the organ is missing, then the deity within that organ is displaced. As the Buddha said “You have the essence of the buddha, the tathāgatagarbha essence.” What is tathāgatagarbha essence? Tathāgatagarbha essence is the whole mandala outside, inside and secret. With impure vision, it is an organ. With pure vision, it is an entire mandala.

As for the feminine principle, your purest element is the blood and you represent the wisdom aspect. Men, in this respect, represents the skillful method. Purification of your blood is considered the wisdom flow in the body. The light cells and the quality of your blood give you extra abilities compared to men. You have far more gifts than men. Most important, of course, is the wisdom. Therefore, you should reach enlightenment faster because skillful method must ultimately dissolve into the wisdom.

You have intuition, which men don’t have. You have multi-tasking ability that men don’t have. You have foresight and insight which men don’t have. Your logic and reasoning are greater than men’s and you can categorize and itemize more than men. You can retain more in memory than men. Your body has more flexibility and more endurance. Equally important is your uncompromising love. Your focus, whether love or hate, is strong and intractable. Your main purification is the blood but that doesn’t mean that you don’t have thigle. You do have thigle. All beings have both rakta and thigle. That is why in the sense of being, all males are female, all females are male—all beings are male and female. That is how it is.

The female blood is called rakta when it is pure. When not pure, it is known as ordinary blood. When you eat the best food, what happens? It produces rakta. It produces more rakta than thigle. Only a dot of thigle, which is also produced, is needed to complement the rakta. Sometimes your menstrual period is a very light and radiant, like crystal, almost white. The thigle is infused with the rakta. The first menstrual period is very pure rakta—it is medicine. During this time you are a blossoming lotus: fragrant, beautiful, vigorous, energetic and vital. You couldn’t look better than that. Later periods cleanse the blood of impurities and maintain fertility in the feminine cycle. I will not go into more detail at this time.

There are eight important pure cells and twenty-four sequentially degenerating cells in the thigle of males. When it degrades down to the strength of twenty to twenty-four, it represents cancerous cells or life threatening sicknesses. The true imprints and the condition of your body is revealed by the color, by the smell and by the taste of

one's thigle. The urine analysis and the thigle analysis are only used with important lamas. By looking at the seminal essence, secret teaching medicine can tell the state of your mind and the state of your body. Traditional Tibetan medicine diagnosis identifies what the illness is and where it is located. Similarly, analysis of the seminal essence indicates the same, but even more.

The small vase is one of the methods for purifying the essential fluids. If you consistently develop the small vase, you will benefit a great deal from this. It is powerful and has many blessings. Your purification and energy level will improve vastly; so will your memory and the lightness of your body. It will also extend your life. Make sure you expel the three stale airs and correctly hold the wisdom air of the buddhas, when forming the vase. You have all received this teaching from me previously, so you know a lot about it already.

Thigles appear in two locations within the uma. The father thigle essence is in the syllable HANG, upside-down, at the forehead level of the crown. The mother thigle essence is in the AHTUNG, just four fingers below the navel. At the time of your death, the HANG and AHTUNG will meet together at the heart. When the father essence and mother essence meet, you will become completely unconscious. Within this unconsciousness, the bardo (intermediate state) arises. For a practitioner, the kayas will arise but for a practitioner with a lot of karma, the bardo arises.

The HANG and the AHTUNG will not meet until the time of death. However, in the tumo practice, one raises the mystic heat of the AHTUNG up to the upside down HANG at the crown. As the HANG melts, it drops its essence into the AHTUNG. That is called "blazing in union." That is the true union—the blazing of the AHTUNG and the HANG is the true union.

Everything we do is a practice. If you look at it from pure perception, then everything is practice. For example, practitioner couples can turn their union into meditation. Your union can be practice. While there are union practices with visualizations and holding of the air, that is not necessary in an ordinary union. Ordinary union can become union with awareness. The key is awareness. If awareness is there, you are beyond past, present and future. Past, present and future, holding to the different times, comes from non-awareness. Rather than doing union like animals do, rather doing it with one's poisons, turn that union into a meditation union. You can do the "union of shi-né."

The technique is very simple. When you are having union and feel the bliss, examine the bliss: where does it come from? Where does it go? What is happening? Look into it. If you can understand this bliss you will realize that this bliss is the same as the bliss of meditation. It is no different. Don't read those books that talk about tantric sex. These are all rubbish. It is not good for you. How can you visualize yourself as a deity when you, yourself are not pure and have not reached that level? First, you need to understand and master the mundane human conduct, then the civil conduct and then the godly conduct. Only after these three, do you master the deity conduct of wisdom. Without mastering the first three, how can you be a deity? You have all these obscurations and you are thinking, "I am Dorje Sempa" and my partner is consort "Nyema"? You are fooling no-one but yourself and your partner.

During union, examine where the bliss comes from? Where does it go? Is it graspable or tangible? Perhaps not. Yet when you experience the bliss of union, the bliss shatters your concepts, your intellectualized concepts. You may find in a union that you can think of nothing except the experience of a *vast* space, a vast infinity. In this space, neither you nor your partner will exist. Nor is there a subject, object or action. "Why is that appearing in my mind? I thought I was having union. Why?" Investigate. The most important thing is to investigate. In the union, you must have tremendous respect and veneration for your partner. The union is a blessing and empowerment of the ultimate mind. Therefore, it is sacred and the union of the mudras.

Why is it that sometimes you don't experience any bliss in the union? Why is it that sometimes you are walking on the street and the bliss spontaneously arises? You are not doing anything but walking. Why is that? Why are you feeling the bliss then? Examine it. Examine it. Sometimes you feel the bliss way before and sometimes way after the union. Because bliss is ever present with the nature of our awareness, you cannot obstruct it or manipulate it. Even if you don't experience any bliss, the mind itself is aware and the bliss itself is in that awareness.

Yoga talks about either having a good union or being exposed to a bad union that pollutes all your channels and obscures you. A bad union can destroy your life totally. A bad union occurs with somebody who has a negative channel. This doesn't mean the person is bad or negative, but owing to one's karmic propensity, the person has done negative things that pollute his or her channels. The person doesn't intend to pollute you. Some people are gifted with clear channels and others are not. Females,

especially, need to be guided by their wisdom and not by their intellect, whereby they show idiotic compassion by having union with a male person who tells them a sad story.

With this simple shi-né, a union becomes practice. You can have the same result as with a sitting meditation, perhaps more profound. Many times when you meditate, it is fine, nothing is shocking but then all of a sudden you experience bliss and are bewildered. You don't know what to do. At least, if you are practicing shi-né of union and bliss arises, you won't be shattered. Instead your mind will fall into a natural focus and concentration in the vividness of that bliss.

Union practice with awareness is a good way to proceed. However, the most important point to remember is not to get attached to the bliss. If you get attached to the bliss, you will be manipulating it. That is not the point. Understand bliss and let it be. That is what you have to do. If you are attached to the bliss, when you die you will be reborn in a god realm. That is not where you want to be. If you let it be bliss-emptiness, then you will be in a better realm. The whole point of the shi-né union is to transform the bliss into the four kayas. It purifies the concept of union itself. This union is union without subject and object. So rest in that awareness. This is resting in the bliss of the rigpa. How marvelous!

Many thangkas show naked deities in the posture of union. We must not misunderstand the wisdom of this union. It is not in any way, that the deities are imitating how human beings have union. Rather, it is to help us understand the truth of the union of wisdom and skillful means: not to grasp to the union itself but to purify it into the bliss of the kayas, and understand the union of form and formlessness which is the uninterrupted great bliss space of the primordial ground.

Yeshe Tsogyal appears completely naked in the thangkas. This means do not grasp to the female body as a sex object, but rather recognize her nakedness as a field of purification towards realization of bliss-emptiness. If you have even the slightest notion during awareness development practice of any feminine principle being a sexual object, you will be reborn in the lower realms and suffer inconceivably.

In your practice, the five blisses of the five kayas will arise and you have to transcend each one. Starting from the lowest chakra to the crown and sometimes in reverse, a different bliss arises for each center. We must not grasp or identify with them, or even entertain the memory of them. In the Nyingma there are many terma teachings

for understanding this mudra of union and there are many practices to prepare one for such secret instructions. These teachings are only given to students who have strength, courage, devotion, pure samaya, interest in union and are karmically connected. I do not intend to elaborate on this. However, these teachings are expounded in many tertons' discovered teachings.

After union with shi-né or ordinary union, do not consider offering the bliss to the buddhas, deities or bodhisattvas. There is nothing to offer! It is like you are offering your vomit. However, whatever merit you have generated from your current and previous practice which has been done with the right motivation, then dedicate this positive thought and action for the benefit of all sentient beings in the never exhausting space of the dharmakaya.

Death and Deathlessness

As I said, our life is very fragile. The causes of death are many and the chances of survival are few. Life is not as solid as we think. The best thing to do is to reach the state of deathlessness awareness of the mind. Although we have an infinite lifespan, yet because of causes and conditions, karma and elemental causes, we are subject to death. Most important is the ripening of our negative karma and the debt we owe to our *len chaks* (karmic creditors). Our mind has not known death nor does it hold to the concept of death itself.

The whole point of Chime Sog Thig is conquering the mara of death, the mara of emotional obscurations and the mara of pride and ego, so that we reach the deathless state. The three kinds of phowa, the practice of transferring the consciousness at the time of death, are nirmanakaya phowa, sambhogakaya phowa, and dharmakaya phowa. The most excellent is dharmakaya phowa. In Chime Sog Thig practice we reach the dharmakaya level of awareness where we conquer the concept of death and destroy it. Our concept of death arises from our mind being attached to the elements in addition to the memory of being in the six realms. When we fail to understand the emptiness of the elements, we experience death.

The sixteen great fears of dying include war, famine, disease, earthquake, and so forth. In addition, we have the degeneration of the lifespan and the general degeneration of the elements, resulting in the life span being reduced. Lifespan or our

life force can be stolen by people who have the ability to use evil charms or by demonic forces and malicious spirits. Of course, our own negative actions and sexual misconduct can cause loss of life and life force. While harming or behaving negatively toward somebody creates negative karma, the most negative action is taking life and committing any of the five heinous acts. Killing beings or animals shortens your life while the opposite, saving lives increases your life. A shortened life may mean dying in infancy, as a teenager or in middle age. All these early deaths result from what you have done in the past. Of course, you do not remember what you have done but certainly it is not positive.

You might ask why some negative people live for so long. If long life is from merit and short life from negative action, what is the merit that gives them such a long life? That is simple. Even though they have reached the peak of their negative actions, they are still not satisfied and they want to accumulate more. In Tibetan this is called: *ley kyen kha ma gang*. For example, an old man approaching his death is still enjoying fishing which takes more life and thus adds more to his negative karma. Living longer causes them to add more negative actions. By not recognizing their own projections, the moment their breath stops, immediately they will go to the lower realms and continuously suffer without interruption. The long life they enjoy is not a good life but a preparation for the lower realms. Outwardly, it may look like merit, but it is not.

Obviously, to extend your life you must do virtuous actions. Buddha said, “Do no negatives, do all that is virtuous.” Whether you do virtuous actions or negative actions, it is your mind that displays the positive and the negative. Therefore, it is important to subjugate your mind and to develop control of your mind.

At the time of Gautama Buddha, a woman who lost her only son, went to Lord Buddha in desperation and said “Oh Lord, I request you to revive my son who died. He is the only son I have and I depended on him. You have miraculous power and I implore you to revive him.” The Buddha said, “Yes, I can do that on one condition. Bring me a mustard seed from a family where no death has occurred and then I will revive your son.”

This woman went everywhere asking people at each house, “Have you lost any one in your family; I need a mustard seed if you haven’t.” They said, “No, my uncle died, my father, or daughter, or my cousin, or my relative died.” There was not a single family where death had not occurred. She returned to the Buddha, “Lord I could not

find anyone where death did not happen.” The Buddha responded, “That is what it is. When you are born, you must die. That is the cycle, the law. Instead, generate positive merit for a better rebirth of your son. Light lamps. Give charity. Sponsor virtuous activities. That will be more beneficial.” We all know death will come. In our family there is no one who has not lost someone. So how come, knowing that, we don’t want to face death? Even the teachings of the Ngondro develop the understanding in us of impermanence.

Impermanence

In the Kadampa school of Tibetan Buddhism, they think of impermanence to such an extent that they will not even empty the water offering bowls on the altar. We cannot ignore impermanence. Ignoring impermanence means creating solidity. A good practitioner has to look impermanence in the face. That makes you realize you do not have time. You need to practice. You cannot leave it for some other day. Impermanence is always shining, is always right in front of our face, yet we ignore it. Buddha and many teachers have said, reflect on impermanence and then turn your mind to the dharma.

What is it from morning to evening? Impermanence: time passes from the morning to the evening. Flowers and seasons all show impermanence. Flowers grow and wither: that’s impermanence. The soil itself goes through many changes. During winter it is dark. In summer it changes to light-brown and becomes soft soil. Impermanence. Years pass. The New Year is coming. What is this? Impermanence. Impermanence shows every second and every nanosecond. From the view of dharma, what is there to celebrate with the New Year? In fact, you are one year closer to death. Even the words I am speaking to you now are impermanent. And your understanding now has also changed. What I said, I have said. It is in the past, not in the moment. Some of you write down your dreams. It is useless. Once you try to recall your dream, it is the past. All of this demonstrates impermanence.

It is not that we Buddhists have a negative or pessimistic outlook on life, always talking about suffering and impermanence. It is just the nature of life. What is truth, is the truth. Nothing can change it. But for many of us, we are extremely clever at hiding impermanence. We say beautiful things about the changes: “now in winter we’ll have

nice white snow;” “now the rainy season, so gardens and crops can grow.” We do not want to accept impermanence. Like film viewers who respond to the illusion on the screen as though it is one’s life (the truth), we immerse ourselves in the illusion of impermanence as though it is the truth.

As you grow older, your elements degenerate. The support of your body begins to collapse. Your skin becomes wrinkled. You can’t eat the food that you want because the foods you love now cause indigestion. You can’t sleep properly. Later on, you have problems with your memory. You want to relive your youth. You want to do the same things you did when you were young. You want to look attractive like you were earlier. You are totally fooling yourself by trying to relive what you were before, instead of accepting your age and the process of aging gracefully. This is no time to try to become young. Accept the process as the natural evolution of self: birth, old age, sickness, and death.

Now is the time to devote to practice to prepare for your next life. Think clearly, reflect back and correct all the mistakes and omissions that you have done or said. Make up for all the hurt feelings you have caused others. Forgive others and ask for forgiveness. It is a time to put your “report card” in better shape. When you die, you have to account for your actions. The Lord of Death will judge what you have done.

Relationship to Parents

In the West, you often place your parents into old people’s homes. That is not where they should be. No one likes to live away from their family, away from the house they are used to. You may respond: they get better medical attention and better health care there. But care is not about the place; love is the important thing. You need to repay your parents with love, respect and kindness—a courtesy that your parents extended to you when you were young. Besides giving all their love and attention to you, you have also taken food from their mouth. Putting them in a strange place to die doesn’t show this respect. It is better for them to feel comfortable in familiar surroundings and to die in the midst of the close family gathering. It is also a blessing and opportunity for you to serve them in their old age. Your prosperity lies with their blessings.

From the Buddhist perspective when you were young, your parents looked after you; when they are old, you should look after them. Repay their generosity as they

deserve. Having been in the West for a long time, my experience suggests that the biggest obstacle and obscuration you will face in your practice is your relationship to your parents.

Even an animal knows when it is loved and it will respond back with love. If you care for a wounded animal, that animal will be eternally grateful to you and be your closest friend. If an animal knows that, why is it difficult for human beings not to know that too? Aren't we possessed with better intelligence than an animal? I also observed in the West that you often show more concern for your pet animal than for another human being. The care you take of them makes me wish that some of the unfortunate people born in the East would have been born here as your pet to enjoy all your care and concern.

When teaching Guru Yoga in the Ngondro, I have said many times, it is easy to talk about one's love for the guru, but your immediate Guru Yoga is based on your parents. If you can't love your parents or accept them as they are then how will you properly accept a guru who is unfamiliar or you hardly know? You may say "My parents hurt, manipulated, or abused me." I know that these things can happen. However, they did not happen from your parent's wisdom but instead from their ignorance. A person who hurts or harms others from ignorance deserves even more compassion. Trying to "even up" things with your parents by doing to them what they did to you creates more negative karma. And when you have children, they are likely to do the same thing to you as you did to them. Karma is unfailing and unavoidable. Don't say, "Oh what an unloving, ungrateful child I have." You get what you deserve, what you have earned.

The dharma teachings explain exactly how ovulation, conception and the egg develop. They also explain how the consciousness and the mind enter into the womb. The unwanted child in the womb will know if you speak negatively about him or her. It may not know or remember the exact words, but it will understand the meaning and have a reaction. This human body does not birth itself on its own. You received this human life from your parents. You chose your parents when you were in the bardo, the intermediate state between death and birth; the parents didn't choose you. You think your parents would choose you if they had a choice? No, they would not, that is certain.

In the bardo when you could not find a body, you saw them in union so you injected your mind into their union. That is how your mind got attached. If you had a

liking to the father, you become a girl; if a liking to the mother arose, you become a boy. The sex is determined by the attraction to one parent and aversion to the other.

In Tibetan we say, *dren chen pha ma* to our parents, the father and mother, who have been so kind and bestowed so many blessings. Therefore I ask you all to be kind to your parents. If there is any way you have caused them suffering, ask for forgiveness. Otherwise, once your parents have died, you will have **tremendous** regret, believe me. In ordinary terms, this body is called *me lu* in Tibetan, but in dharma terms it is called *me lu Rinpoche* (precious human body). Why? Because this human body is the body of dharma which allows you to practice the path. In ordinary terms, the body is called a human birth. The purpose of your precious body is to benefit others. In the ordinary sense it is working with wisdom and skillful means. In the dharma sense, it is understanding the self-arising inner mandalas, chakras and inner atoms of the body, and then recognizing these to be enlightened awareness.

You think this body is easy to obtain. It is extremely difficult to obtain a human rebirth. You might respond by saying that the universe is over-filled with many beings. Yes, this is true. However, if you look under one leaf, there can be thousands and millions of insects—they are sentient beings—but they are not fortunate rebirths. They are beings without dharma, without connection to any spiritual practice of realization. They are simply born, born to suffer and die. Just receiving an ordinary body without the freedoms and endowments is useless. With the endowments of hearing, understanding, and intact capacities plus being fortunate enough to have dharma teachers and teachings available, it is important to apply these in the development of your spiritual practice.

We take many things for granted: eating, sleeping and even defecating. You will understand suffering when it hurts to eat or it hurts to defecate. These are not just simple actions that we can take for granted. Rejoice that these functions are operating as they should, because if they don't, it means sickness and suffering. I'm sure you can now see how important it is to reflect on impermanence and not take everything for granted.

Plans, Merit, and Preparations for Dying

In a classic Tibetan story, a trader bought a sack of rice which he hung on a roof beam above where he slept. He spent much time thinking about how much he could sell at what price, and if he bought more, how he could sell it at a higher price. He was thinking about how rich he would become with this one bag of rice. Unfortunately, a mouse ran along the beam, ate the rope, the sack fell down and killed the trader. This is similar to how we ourselves make too many plans which may never work. When death comes, unfinished plans are useless.

What good are “plans”, if you can’t even take this body you love so much with you? You have to leave your body and everything behind. You can’t take anything with you, not even a single hair. But what you don’t want to take *will* accompany you—your negative karma. When you’re alive, the karma isn’t visible, but when you are dying, you will see it. Your plans are useless and worthless. They only cause distraction and attachment. The benefit you hope to build from these projects will be the real cause of suffering for others. It was all a projection and illusion that you built up. It did not help anyone get realization. Some plans may help some people out of suffering a little, but ultimately the result will be suffering.

What happens to the wealth when a rich person dies? Most of it does not go where it is directed, but instead to the wrong people or institution. The dying person will have tremendous anger at this diversion of his or her wealth, which does not help on the path. Attachment, whether to a religious object, to a dear friend, or to your family disrupts one’s travel in the bardo and is of no value. No matter how you value the object to which you are attached, attachment is attachment. Even to your loved ones attachment turns into harm, as the law and circumstance of the living and the dead are different. It is best to die like a beggar, with nothing to worry about or to hold onto. Therefore before dying, give all your possessions away. If you are smart, you will designate your property and money accordingly to the family, to children, to your lama and monastery, for charitable gifts, for prayers and pujas performed after your death, and to those who supported and served you well.

Earlier I mentioned some of the many causes of death. Our life is like holding a lamp in the wind that is about to blow out all the time. You do not know when the wind will be strong enough to blow it out. So you do not have time. If you want to

accumulate good merit to prepare for your death, do it now! Not next year, or the year after that. No, it's now. Little drop by little drop you accumulate positive virtue. It's now!

Don't trust that somebody will do great charity for you after you die. Even if you leave wealth to your loved ones, do you really think you can completely depend on them to do this charity? That is a deception. Most likely whatever wealth you have will be gobbled up by them. If you are sensible, do it yourself now! At the time of death, you are lucky if they keep your body in the house for a few days. Like a dirty rag you may be cast out and they may even be afraid that you will turn into a ghost to haunt them. Alas, understand this and direct your mind to the teachings you have received. When dying, try to manifest yourself as your yidam. Try to recall your daily sadhana. If not, with one-pointed mind, pray to your guru to find the path of the pure buddha realm.

Once you accumulate merit, it will not evaporate. It's like a drop of water added to the ocean. It will always remain. Before you die, give away what you have to give. Give your children what they deserve now. Don't wait for death. When death comes, what choice do you have? You cannot take it with you. And when the inheritors receive or possess your wealth, they won't think it is your kindness and be thankful. If you give it now, they can appreciate your kindness. What good is it to give meat when the teeth have already gone? If you are going to give something, why delay it?

In addition, free animals as much as you can in order to extend life. Don't take the life of animals, free them. Life is precious for everyone. No one will say "Kill me." Life is precious. It is precious for animals too. No animal will say, now eat me so I will be happy. By saving birds, animals or fish from being slaughtered, you will gain longer life. The freed animal will ever be grateful that you spared it and this charity rebounds on you as merit.

Releasing animals must be done in the correct manner. At times, safe sanctuary is provided for these animals to live. At times they are released in the woods or water or sky. Whichever it may be, before releasing the animal you have to feed them with precious relics and say prayers of quick rebirth and dedication. Often in the East, when these animals are set free, we color mark the body of these animals, indicating that they have already been dedicated and spared. Especially on multiplying, increasing and auspicious months animals should be released, but they can be released at any time or

moment when the need arises. The month of Saga Dawa is a particularly important time to release animals since the merit is multiplied one hundred thousand fold. Releasing one fish on Saga Dawa is like releasing one hundred thousand fish. If someone is sick or dying, release animals immediately. That will help extend their life or bring them out of a stagnant situation. The virtue is immediate! The more lives you free, the greater the merit.

Eating meat

Many, if not most of us, eat meat. I'm going to share some important understandings regarding the eating of meat. Essentially we are eating one of our parent sentient beings. An animal has lost its life to feed your life. You need to remember this. Before you eat, be grateful that the animal has given its life for you. Renew your determination that by eating this meat you will practice well and dedicate all the merit to the animals. It is customary to first offer the meat—even the whole meal—to all the buddhas. Don't just start eating. What you are eating becomes blessed when you offer it. Then think about all the positive things you will do, all the strength you will have by being nourished with this meat, this food. Dedicate the merit from this positive activity to them.

Eating meat has different meanings depending on your level of development. For ordinary practitioners, giving gratitude and merit to the animals is the only thing they can do. Advanced practitioners bless the meat and it immediately turns into nectar. Even more advanced practitioners see that meat they are eating as part of their yidam. In that process, the animal receives total liberation. Literally, eating the meat is a blessing. When a great sage or extremely realized practitioner eats meat, it is not meat. It is liberation because this person has the power to liberate. To our eyes, it looks like he is doing something negative, but, in fact, what appears as negative is actually extremely positive.

When eating animals, be satisfied by consuming larger ones. That way, one life feeds many people. Why would you want to eat small animals, like small shrimp, twenty, thirty or forty of them at a time? A lot of lives are sacrificed in one shrimp cocktail. Believe me, all these animals living in the world, in our universe, are here to balance our ecosystem, not just to feed you. The animals are not in the world simply so

you can eat them. We eat them out of necessity. If those animals disappear, it will unbalance the ecosystem. On the other hand, you need not worry about overpopulation of animals: nature will always rebalance the ecosystem through a cycle of balance and change.

Some of you are vegetarians or vegan for your health. Not everyone can be vegan or vegetarian. It depends on what four generations of your ancestors have been eating. Only then can you change the habit to be a vegetarian. Until then, it is not in your blood system to become vegetarian. In an earlier time, we were all vegetarians. That changed once we tasted the blood of animals. Our habitual system changed. If your ancestors were meat eaters and all of a sudden you change to being a vegetarian, you are diminishing your health. At the beginning, you will feel light, light headed, and weightlessness. Later, this will become total weightlessness. Eventually a sickness displays the imbalances in one's air or lung. Yes, from the point of view of not taking life, it is good not to eat meat, but from the point of view of health, it may be essential to eat meat.

Death Producing Situations and Signs

It's impossible to go through all of the immediate death producing situations. Usually this teaching lasts one month and I am trying to condense it into three days. I think this is a magical feat.

Here are a few signs that death is approaching or the life force is decreasing. First are changes in physical, psychological, mental, or behavioral tendencies. These are some of the immediate death producing circumstances. For example, if a person goes naked for no reason, it could be a sign of loss of life and oncoming death. It could mean the life force has degenerated or death is coming. It fits the common saying: where there's smoke, there's fire.

Second, if a person you know becomes spaced out all the time, this is a "smoke" sign. The person doesn't have dementia or another physical explanation; they are just spaced out. The life force is scattered and again death is approaching.

Third is a change in the sky, which means you cannot tell what color the sky is. Another clue involves your shadow after-image during the full moon. Go outside during a full moon, raise your arms up and wide, spread your legs apart, and then look

at the shadow created by the moon onto the ground. After looking at the shadow for a while, look back up to the sky. If you do not see the outline of your body shadow in the sky, then your life force is not there. The elements of your body are dissipating.

Fourth, if people give you good advice with good intentions and you misinterpret their intention as something negative, bad, a criticism, or as the opposite to what they intend, this is also a sign of life force weakening and death approaching. Fifth is the loss of memory. If you are losing your memory—you can't seem to remember things, places or events, it is a sign. Losing one's memory eventually leads to reducing the strength of the life force wind. Sixth is an unexplained loss of appetite. Not eating or drinking without any logical cause is another warning sign.

Seventh is not communicating clearly. Sentences are mixed up: what belongs at the beginning is at the end and vice-versa. Words are used incorrectly or forgotten. The person can't maintain a logical stream of thoughts. This is a sign that the five winds are not operating properly and the person is close to the door of death.

Dreams also indicate signs of forthcoming death. One dream sign is going naked or riding naked on a donkey. You could be naked, or somebody close to you, like a family member, could be naked. That is not a good dream. Dreaming your teeth are falling out of your mouth or are breaking is usually a sign of illness rather than death. Yet, at times it can also refer to death. It can be your teeth or the teeth of somebody close to you. Other dream signs of impending death or reduced life force include: a shaved head, riding a donkey, getting stuck in the mud, looking up at the hills when the sun is setting, having union with someone, a stranger, you have never met before, entering into a foreign land you have not seen before, or seeing landscapes and land you have never viewed previously.

When these dreams appear, don't talk about them. Talking about them speeds the crystallization and actualization of the dream. There is nothing worse than talking about your dream which then turns into gossip. This can be very dangerous for you. In many cases, you can reverse these signs by immediately practicing the Lion Headed Dakini. When you awaken from the dream, don't get up but remain face down on your bed. Do the short Lion Headed Dakini practice. Repeat the mantra one hundred times: two or three hundred times is even better. The clapping (or reversing) section with the Jho, Jho, Jho's should be done three times before getting up. The clapping brings the earth and sky into witness. The clapping sound destroys the negative forces into the

emptiness of the dharmakaya. In addition, clapping means that by the truth of the teachings of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the truth of the substances, and the truth of the strength of the mantra, we bring the negative forces to understand these innate truths. That reverses your dream, turns the negative omen around.

Pujas can be sponsored to extend your life force. Many different pujas of Long Life Buddhas, male and female, can be performed. Other methods to extend your life force are: frequently performing tsoks; going on pilgrimage to holy places; making tsa tsas, particularly tsa tsas of the Three Buddhas of Long Life, (*tse lha namsum*, Amitayus, Namgyelma and White Tara); ransoming practices which use an effigy as a substitute for oneself; and, of course, Long Life practice sadhanas. Some profoundly secret practices of union can extend one's life. In the East, we consider sponsoring the reading of the Buddha's canons and teachings as a means for extending one's life. For a lama's life to be extended, specific practices made with effigies and invoking the five wisdom dakinis of long life are enacted. Even for children, special prayers and pujas can be performed to extend their life.

Complementary Practices: Watching the Natural Elements

Watching the Natural Elements Practice, from the Great Perfection teachings, is a complementary practice to the Long Life practice. Earlier I mentioned the thirty-two buddha fields on the crown, sixteen in the throat, eight in the heart center, sixty-four in the navel center and eight in the secret center. These buddha fields are atoms that work in conjunction with each other. They unite with each other and separate from each other. One understanding is that the atoms are so perfect they are called buddhas. Another understanding is that the luminosity of the atom itself is the buddha because it is so perfect.

Therefore, watching the elements means watching the five core wisdom elements. As we watch the five wisdom elements, the gross element purifies into the finer element. Then we watch the five finer elements. However, each of these elements, each of these five atoms, must appear clearly in your mind. Sometimes five colors appear, sometimes one color and sometimes three or four colors in each atom. Your purity determines how many colors appear and how the atoms circle toward each

other. The point of watching the elements practice is to unite these five elements into one thigle—one core atom.

If you can see all five elements clearly, the five thigles, then the bardo will not appear to you. You are free from the bardo appearances and from rebirth. But the point is to turn these five thigles into one. When they merge into one, there will be only one thigle left. Many people accomplish watching the elements and may see the thigle, but the difficult part is to be in the thigle—to be the thigle, not just aware of it. That is radiant clarity. There is no place else to go. That is the primordial space.

Various techniques and practices develop understanding of what thigle means: watching in the dark, in the sun, in the candle. When you close your eyes you will see a lot of lights moving around. These are ordinary thigle, the ones from cause and condition karma, not the wisdom thigle. Wisdom thigle is not seen by your eyes; it is seen with your mind. Watching thigle is watching the kayas. Should you ask whether Watching the Elements practice available? No, it is not easily available. To receive that practice, the teacher must have tremendous trust and confidence in the student's ability and purification. Essentially the teacher is giving his or her life cord to you. Nobody gives their life essence away easily like that. The explanation I have given is not a transmission. I'm just giving you a flavor, not the details, transmissions or progressive states. I'm bound under samaya not to do so.

Complementary Practices: Practice of Channels

The next complementary practice is the practice of channels: uma, roma, kyangma and the practice of the three sets of twelve thousand meridian nerves. In the channel practice, we are controlling the wind and training the mind to settle. A metaphor is a blind man riding a horse. The horse will go anywhere it wants to go. The blind man has to follow the horse wherever it goes, whatever city or town or streets it rides through. In the practice of channels, we learn to tame this wild mind (the horse). We cannot catch the mind, since it is not tangible but certainly we can let it rest, relax at its base. Therefore, in the practice of the channels, we learn to master the command of our mind so these channels, winds and drops conform to the command. Otherwise, our body, our channels and essences will behave like a bad tenant that we have no control over. We have to establish an order and a discipline which until now we haven't done.

Again these are secret teachings and I do not intend to elaborate on either the movement or the practice. Neither am I giving you a transmission.

Complementary Practices: Practice of Meditation

Here meditation means shi-né. When looking at the nature of the mind, we ask: What is its color? Where does it go? Where and how does it move? How does your mind create thoughts? Meditation means watching the thoughts, letting the thoughts arise and letting the thoughts dissolve. Not being attached to the thoughts. Letting the thoughts move. By trying to control the thoughts, you create an obstacle for yourself. Be gracious enough to see the thought; recognize the thought; be present in the awareness of the thought—but do not manipulate the thoughts. Your manipulation of thoughts up until now is why you are still stuck in samsara. Meditation means letting the thoughts move. When the thoughts can move, they will change; they will go into emptiness. They are not solid. They move. They change.

Thoughts show you impermanence. Thoughts show you that the structure of words are not solid. We take words to be so solid. If someone stood in front of you and said “you are a shit,” you are likely to be offended and react back. What is this word “shit”? Examine the word. You have a picture or concept that gives meaning to the word but in addition to this you put that onto the word itself. However, it really means nothing.

In shi-né we learn how to de-structure the word. Don’t add more to the thought— instead break it down! We commonly add meanings to what the word itself means. We say house and think of the bed, furniture, the refrigerator, the TV set, the bathroom, the running faucets and so on. These are all added to the word house. We are as skillful as carpenters at adding but exceedingly slow at seeing the emptiness of the word.

Not only do we learn how to de-construct the word in shi-né, but also how to let the thoughts flow. While it may be important to recognize the thought, it is important not to attach to or grab the thought. Let it go. Be spacious. Don’t be so quick to identify what everything is or is not. Let it settle it down. Even if someone asks you something serious, before giving an answer—often a wrong one, keep quiet for a while. Reflect. Maybe you do not have the answer. That is okay.

Our minds are so quick to grasp. We see the moon and we've already grasped it. Yes, we like to grasp quickly. Slow down. Our falling into samsara is because of our quickness to grasp. The ego grasps very fast. How can we understand egoless compassion? We cannot understand it if we grasp things so fast. Slow down, slow down, slow everything down.

Post meditation has great import, perhaps even more than the meditation itself. Your post meditation behavior shows how much practice you have really done. People always say one can tell by your action, your words and your movement how integrated your practice is with your everyday behavior. It is not too difficult to see this at the level of relative truth.

Shi-né helps you understand how mind works. You need to receive teachings on shi-né. Doing mantra recitations is fine from the relative truth but you also have to let the relative truth go to the absolute truth. You have to reflect in the absolute truth too. If you are stuck on the relative practices all the time, it won't help you get enlightened. On the path, the relative and absolute go hand-in-hand together.

Complementary Practices: Practice of Long Life

As for the practice of Long Life, which is extremely important, I will explain the practice of Chime Sog Thig in detail later. The Chime Sog Thig has a Long Life union practice which is exceptionally beautiful and detailed that I will not discuss here.

Complementary Practices: Practice of Bodhichitta

Bodhichitta is the essential nature of the buddha so we definitely need to practice it. As I mentioned earlier, bodhichitta is both relative and absolute. Absolute bodhichitta means respect for others, respect that they are buddhas, that they have the tathāgatagarbha essence. In bodhichitta, we find two divisions: one is mental and the other is action. In Chime Sog Thig, of course, we begin by taking refuge. After maintaining one's refuge vow without fault, we then develop the strength and commitment in our mind to take the bodhisattva vows. Generally the refuge vow is not that difficult to maintain, but the bodhisattva vow, since it deals with the mind developing pure perception and not entertaining any negative thoughts or view, is extremely difficult. Nonetheless, we have to follow in the footsteps of all the buddhas,

what they have done in the past and what they will do in the future. The path of the bodhisattva is the big mind. It is the path in which you recognize that all sentient beings are your parents and you recognize the non-differentiating love between relative, friend and foe: loving all and serving all in one taste. When you take bodhisattva vows, you receive a bodhisattva name which you must exemplify.

To take the bodhisattva vows we really need to understand and realize that all sentient beings are our parents. Only buddha has the wisdom and the stainless memory to know that all parent sentient beings are connected to everyone but he gave it to us as a teaching. There is no one who has not been my father, my mother, my sister, or my brother. Some of you in this room might have been my father, or my mother, or my brother. I do not know who, but I do know we are all connected.

That is why the categorization of father, mother, relatives, friend, and enemy is a concept projected by ourselves. Although we choose to love some as a friend and to dislike others as an enemy they are actually in the same taste of mind. There is no father, no mother, no enemy—in that sense, all are one. Our habits and our preferences make these distinctions. Therefore, the practice of equanimity is very useful. Compassion, love, equanimity and loving kindness—these four immeasurables we must all practice.

Chime Sog Thig and the Elements

Our body has the five elements: our skin is the earth, our blood the water, our warmth the fire, our breath the air and our consciousness the space. These are the five outer elements. The inner elements are the five atoms. And they become the five wisdoms which in turn are the five buddha families. Secret to that are the five kayas. We have much work to do. First we recognize the elements, then the atoms, then the wisdoms, then the buddha families and then the kayas.

In the Chime Sog Thig we take the empowerment of the three essences: the external essence, the internal essence and the secret essence. The external essence is the essence of elements and the five atoms. The internal essence is taken by the three syllables AH, NRI and HRI. With these three we take the essence of the six realms, drawing the essence of the beings of these six realms to us. With the syllables OM, AH, HUNG we take the secret essence of all the buddhas, their sons and daughters.

Begin by visualizing the central channel, the roma and kyangma as a simple meditation. Then visualize the five syllables OM, AH, HUNG, SO, HA in the central channel. These five syllables represent the five buddhas. Let's review the colors. OM is white. AH is red. HUNG is blue. SO is yellow. HA is green. These syllables, OM AH HUNG SO HA, are the heart syllables of each chakra and its petals. The essence of all those buddhas are thirty-two on the crown with the white syllable OM. The throat mandala has sixteen atoms with the red AH. The heart has eight with the blue HUNG. There are sixty-four with the yellow SO in the navel and eight, again, in the secret center with the green HA.

The syllables vibrate energy. The exact wave length of the energy produced by those syllables communicates with the five kayas. These OM, AH, HUNG, SO, HA are all primordial arisings. No one created them. They spontaneously arise. They are self-arisen and originally pure. OM, AH, HUNG, SO, HA are molecule combinations. The molecule pattern combination of mind binds them together.

What happens when you say OM? (Rinpoche tells the group to) say "OM"; again, "OM"; clearer, "OM." When you say OM your mind at the crown vibrates. It awakens the subtle nerves in the brain. That is where OM strikes. OM is clearing the path. When you say AH, you feel your throat begin to tickle. It is clearing the throat. That is what it is supposed to do. When you say HUNG, you feel your heart move. It vibrates the subtle channels in the heart. With SO, your navel tickles. With HA, your secret center vibrates.

OM, AH, HUNG, SO, HA are the movement and awakening of all the nerves in their respective channels. The sleeping channels wake up by mantra. The word "mantra" means "mind binding to it." Mind binds to the nerves and that is why the nerves must be stimulated. If you don't stimulate the nerves, nothing much is going to happen. You have to give those nerves movement.

Familiarizing yourself with the five syllables OM AH HUNG SO HA is beneficial for your practice. For example, if you begin togal practice, most probably the syllables will appear first before the thigle, even though the syllable is surrounded by the thigle. All of the syllable will not appear; only part of it, such as the foot or head of the syllable AH. You must be able to recognize the whole from the part. Instant familiarity is what you strive to attain.

Each syllable of OM, AH, HUNG, SO, HA has its distinct compartment or space in the central channel. That means when the OM space ends, the AH starts. When the AH

ends, the HUNG starts, and so on. Each compartment is separate because it holds one of the five airs or winds within its chamber, as well as the activities of that wind. These five chambers must not mingle with each other, otherwise insanity will result. Most of the time when someone goes crazy, it is because the air from one chamber has escaped into a different chamber. Sometimes when we die, the “life holding air” is lost. It is this “life holding air” that people, maledictions, or spirits can steal. They enter the chamber and take the essence.

Here is a practice to do. While visualizing the central channel with its four qualities and the roma and kyangma to the sides, recite the OM, AH, HUNG, SO, HA, fairly loud. In the male, the seminal nerve, roma, is open. There is no knot, but the female channel nerve, the kyangma, has a knot. That is why males do not have a menstrual flow. With females, the seminal nerve is closed with a knot and the blood is open. This is from the perspective of visualization. The knot means the passage is blocked. We do not “create” the knot, it is blocked due to karma. In the teachings, there are many specific signs relating to the structure of the body, birth moles (*me wa* in Tibetan), and habitual tendencies by which we can recognize a daka or dakini. Dakas and dakinis have both channels open—there is no knot in either nerve. Union with such a person is total illumination of the mind which purifies all the outer, inner and secret obscurations. This is the accomplishment of Long Life.

The bottom of the roma and kyangma joins to the uma in the shape of a syllable AH. We meditate on that. The central uma channel is multicolored: white on the outside, red on the inside and blue in between the red and white, signifying the three kayas. The two outer channels, the red and the white, join into this central channel of three colors. In the central channel, each of the five centers has its syllable—OM, AH, HUNG, SO, HA—enclosed within a circle. Do not visualize your body as solid: visualize it as a light body. These three channels actually are your real light body. This is the astral body with which you have been travelling to different universes.

The more you can visualize yourself as the central channel, the better it will be for your practice. Get the confidence of the central channel. That way you will be learning how to detach yourself from the external phenomena and instead concentrate on the inner light body which is the true body of the dharma. Working with the central channel is also working to purify all the negative karmas. That also includes the

negative memories which the subtle winds are holding. The only way to defeat self-defeating thoughts is meditation on the central channel.

When to Practice Long Life?

When should you do the Chime Sog Tig practice? Preferably, early in the morning just before dawn. Facing east, your first practice as you wake up is Calling the Lama From Afar. We should not misunderstand the purpose of Calling the Lama From Afar. It does not mean the lama is far away and we need to get his or her attention but instead that the lama is within your awareness at all times and has never been separate from you. Your realization that the lama pervades the three kayas is extremely important. Another important aspect is that from the beginning of your day you are invoking the blessing of your teacher, your lama, and you have done your Guru Yoga practice.

If you don't have or know the practice of Calling the Lama From Afar, do the Seven Line Prayer. It is the same. In Tibet, some do the Seven Line Prayer and play the drum and some do Calling the Lama From Afar. As you finish that while still in bed, without getting up, do the Long Life Practice. Some do Long Life practice, some do Manjushri practice. The merit of Manjushri is also beneficial towards long life, but on the other hand, Long Life practice is a specific to Long Life.

For those of you doing private retreat with a preset schedule of guidelines, follow the schedule given by the lama, even if there is no long life practice in the mornings. Toward the end of your retreat, the last week or two or particularly the last day, you could include the Long Life practice as a section of your early morning practice.

Malas

For reciting the long life mantra, you need a mala, preferably a bodhi mala. If you don't have a bodhi mala, a sandalwood mala or a crystal mala is all right. Most excellent is pearl mala or a red coral mala. The red coral mala will cost you a fortune, so go for the bodhi. The bodhi mala can be used for both peaceful and wrathful practices. I remember my father extolling the benefits and virtues of the bodhi mala. The

important thing for you to remember is that bodhi mala will retain all the blessings of your recitations and will not let the power of the recitation disappear into nothing.

But under no condition use animal bone as a bone mala. That is not permitted. A genuine kapala bone mala is beneficial for wrathful practices. The most excellent bone mala is taken from one hundred and eight different skulls. These days, many traders sell you cow or buffalo bone and claim it to be genuine human bone. They charge you the price of human bone, when it's not true. A bone mala is only for wrathful practices, like Phurba, Drollo, Yamantanka, or Shinje. A raksha mala is also used for wrathful practices, since it has many healing properties. Whether you wear it or use it, raksha can calm the hot heat of the body.

For other practices, like Chenrezig, Tara, Drolkar and so on, a mala of pearl or gem can be used. As the deity is present in your mala, you cannot use it for prostrations or as a necklace. If you are doing prostrations, use an ordinary mala, like a seed mala or a simple sandalwood mala.

The proper mala for this Chime Sog Thig practice is a bodhi mala. If you don't have one, try to get one. It will benefit you. However, these days, the price of a bodhi mala is not what is used to be. It's extremely expensive now.

You must observe the etiquette of the mala. You cannot play with your mala. You cannot sit on your mala. You cannot swing your mala. You cannot trample upon your mala and you cannot throw your mala. If you keep your mala on your table, put it down gently. A mala can have one hundred and eight or one hundred and eleven beads, but it's essential to have at least one hundred beads. Why the extra eight or eleven? It corrects the mistakes you might make in your recitation by being distracted, missing some counts, or not chanting clearly. The one hundred beads signify the forty-two peaceful and fifty eight wrathful buddhas. One string ties all the beads together, indicating the peaceful and wrathful buddhas are all together as one mind. The guru bead means that these buddhas manifest from the principal deity. This deity is your yidam.

Purifying One's Mala

It's appropriate for you to know the mantra for purifying your mala. You cannot keep running after a lama each time your mala falls down on the floor or each time something happens which requires purification. The mantra for purification is:

OM RUTSI MANI PRABHA DANA YE SO HA.

This is the mantra you say at least one hundred times. Enclose the mala, piled up, in your hands. The tip of the middle finger of each hand holds the guru bead, pointing up. The five fingers of the left and the right hand are the five male and female buddhas. They are in union and the center buddha is now touching your guru bead. From your heart center, visualize the red syllable HRI shooting into the guru bead, into a syllable HRI in the center of your guru bead. This links your heart to the guru. From that guru bead, the syllables HRI HRI HRI shoot into all the rest of the beads.

Recite OM RUTSI MANI PRABHA DANA YE SO HA as much as possible. Whether you say PRABHA or PRAVA it is the same. Similar to dorje and vajra: one is the Sanskrit term and the other is the Tibetan term. After the last recitation, blow three or more times into your hands and visualize the HRI penetrating all the beads, each of the deities becoming further empowered by that HRI. With that, mingle the beads. Move your hands up and down and rub the mala, mixing the beads around. It's like you are adding some spices and you want the spices to spread all over. So rub it around a bit. While rubbing, you can blow into the mala. Blow and mingle. Now you know how to purify your mala.

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