

The Oral Commentaries

of His Holiness The Drikung Kyabgön, Chetsang Rinpoche.

Translated by Michael Lewis
Transcribed by Ngakpa Jeffery Könchog Gyaltsen
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On The Short Sadhana of Amitabha Buddha and The Pureland of Dewachen

We begin on page 2 of the text. The first word is 'Namo'. 'Namo' means "I bow down to, prostrate to, or make obeisance to". To whom? To the Three Jewels, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. In addition to, or as another mode of manifestation of the Three Jewels, there is what is called 'The Three Roots'. They are one's teachers, the lamas; the chosen deities, the Yidams; and the Dakinis who are the forces of inspiration manifesting as enlightened females. All beings who have attained any stature of enlightenment: Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, any of those in whose mind has arisen enlightenment. In all of them, I go for refuge for the sake of establishing all sentient beings in the state of Buddhahood. In this one stanza of four lines, there are two processes, where both refuge and the generation of bodhicitta are contained. The first two lines constitute the refuge. Then the purpose for going for refuge is to place all sentient beings in the state of enlightenment; I will generate the mind of enlightenment. In this one sloka, two things are accomplished: going for refuge and the establishment of bodhicitta. These are the preliminary steps for entering the practice of the sadhana. Three things have been accomplished already. One has been obeisance. The second is the taking of refuge. The third is the generation of bodhicitta. One repeats this stanza three times.

Now one can engage in the main body of the practice. However, to engage in the practice, first, let go of your perception of yourself as an ordinary flesh and blood person, and your environment as being ordinary. Dissolve everything into emptiness. Then, from emptiness itself, arises the remainder of the practice. The dissolution of all ordinary perception into emptiness and rising of all subsequent practice from emptiness is implicit in the first syllable of this line: the syllable 'AH'. It is said that the syllable AH is the supreme sound. It is the seed of all other letters, syllables, and sounds. AH is the thirtieth letter of the Tibetan alphabet, making it the culmination of the meaning, the sound, the intention, and the vibrational frequencies of all the other letters. It is the implicit underlying, deep meaning of, and the culmination of all the other letters and all the other sounds. In the text of the "Manjushri Namsanghati", it is said that it is the supreme among all letters because it is natural. It is spontaneously self-arisen. It is not produced or contrived in any way. For example, it is the first sound made by a baby. Therefore, it is said to be unborn. As unborn, it is the symbol of emptiness itself. "AH" signifies Mahasunyata. It is called the king of all letters. Just as the letter AH pervades all the other letters of the alphabet, so emptiness pervades all other phenomena. It is the underlying substratum of reality. The letter AH personifies emptiness. First, you dissolve everything into emptiness, which means to abandon your view of yourself, companions, and your environment as being ordinary. When you practice the developing stage of deity yoga, according to tantric procedure, you need to let go of ordinary, demeaning, limited perception, and cultivate pure view. Not seeing you and others as flesh and blood (ordinary beings), but rather as Chenrezig. Not seeing

this building, as an ordinary building, rather seeing it as a celestial mansion in the midst of the Pureland of Great Bliss. The Lama is not an ordinary teacher, but is in fact the true manifestation of the Buddha Amitabha. This is called the 'cultivation of the exalted view of the developing stage'. The next line says, "All phenomena, all experiences are unborn". They are pervaded by emptiness, just as the letters of the alphabet are pervaded by AH. The next line says, "This is the nature of reality." The natural condition is great compassion and awareness of emptiness, non-dual. This is not something fabricated by the mind. This not just our idea. This is not something we create by thinking it so. It is the essential nature of reality itself. It is now, has always been, will always be the case that emptiness and compassion are the ultimate nature of reality.

The next line on page three, that begins with 'Kung Nan Rig Ped Chung Tro Ley', means that all-pervading, substratum of reality. The true nature of existence, which is compassion and emptiness, is not dormant. Just as the sun naturally emanates its rays resulting in illumination, the nature of reality manifests from the unmanifest Dharmakaya the rays of compassion and wisdom radiating into our realm of existence. The manifestation takes the symbolic form of a lotus blossom upon which is a moon seat. The lotus blossom signifies freedom from defilement. The moon seat signifies being free from attachment or desire. They both signify the white seed of the father and the red seed of the mother. The birth of a human being in our realm takes place when the white thig'le (bindu) of the father and the red thig'le of the mother come together and between them is the consciousness of the being to be born. When those three factors come together, a being is born in this world. What is symbolically presented here, is rebirth into the Pure Realm of Pure Perception of the Developing Stage of Deity Yoga. In the Pureland, birth takes place in a similar way. The lotus symbolizes the red seed of the mother, and the moon seat symbolizes the white seed of the father. One's own consciousness is between them. One then abandons the ordinary view and develops divine view. Because of that, one is born in the form of Chenrezig, having one face and four hands. The essence of the procedure of the Developing Stage of Deity Yoga is as follows. In our ordinary view we are engaged in what we consider worship: we think of the deity as something external and then offer ourselves and various substances as a service to that deity. In the Developing Stage of Deity Yoga, the procedure is different. One eliminates the view of oneself, one's environment, and one's companions in this world as ordinary. If you see yourself as an ordinary human being, then your mind is under the sway of the virulence of the five poisons . To eliminate the five poisons, one cultivates the divine view. One sees one's self, his environment, and companions as divine. The cultivation of the divine view effectively removes the five poisons from one's mindstream. If you are Chenrezig, and not an ordinary flesh and blood human being, if you are the Bodhisattva of Boundless compassion, then you have no ignorance, attachment, aversion, pride, or jealousy. Your mindstream is then, innately and primordially pure. That innate primordial purity is cultivated in the divine vision of the Developing Stage of Deity Yoga. Another reason for the cultivation of the divine view is that if you cultivate the qualities of the Buddha, by considering them you're own, then, little by little, they become your own qualities. The more you contemplate possessing these qualities, the more they actually increase. By slow stages, you develop the qualities of the enlightened being. On the other hand, the more you develop these qualities, the more you abandon negative qualities and mindsets. Little by little your negativity is lessened and the positive nature of your mind manifests. Just as when the sun rises, little by little the darkness disperses. That process takes place simultaneously. The more the light increases the more the darkness decreases. The more you contemplate the qualities of enlightenment, the more you develop those qualities, and the more your limitations are overcome. To symbolize the completion of great compassion in the form of Chenrezig, one meditates on one's own body color as being a luminescent white (moon like) color. You have one face and four hands, In the first hand, the upper right hand, you hold a crystal mala, symbolizing the capacity to liberate all sentient beings

from cyclic existence. The upper left hand holds the stem of the lotus blossom. The lotus blossom is a flower that is rooted in muck and yet grows and blossoms above it in a way that is pure. The flower is in no way stained or defiled by the muck and mire in which it is rooted. This is symbolic of the fact that although as human beings we have fallen into cyclic existence, and abide within it. Yet we have within us the inalienable core of our being our actual original nature and it is enlightened (tathagarba). That Buddha-nature is in no way defiled by the apparent stains of cyclic existence. The first pair of hands is folded in the prayer mudra in front of Chenrezig at His heart level. The gesture is quite elegant. The hands are cupping the Wish Fulfilling Jewel. The Wish Fulfilling Jewel is symbolic of Chenrezig's power to liberate all sentient beings from suffering. The next line says that Chenrezig appears in the form of Samboghakaya. In that form, he appears as an enlightened being manifesting in the body of visionary enjoyment. He wears various ornaments. There are three different groups of ornamentation. For example, there are five types of silk garments, the silk that holds together the jewels of the crown, a shawl, a skirt, a belt (or sash), and a long flowing scarf. There are eight types of jewel ornaments. The jewels in the crown are earrings, a choker necklace, a longer necklace that hangs to the heart chakra, an even longer necklace that hangs to the navel, arm bands, bracelets on the wrists and ankles, and finally, rings. These are always present in all Samboghakaya forms. His two legs (your two legs) are crossed in the full lotus position. You then meditate on that appearance with great clarity and sense of reality. However, it is not a flesh and blood construct. Rather, it is an empty, self-luminous form, devoid of self-nature, yet appearing in exact detail. Remember that you are visualizing yourself as Chenrezig. In the space in front of you facing you, appears Amitabha Buddha. He is seated upon a throne held aloft by eight peacocks, two in each corner of the throne. On top of the throne is a variegated one thousand petaled lotus blossom. On top of the lotus blossom is a moon seat. The moon seat symbolizes the assuaging of the fiery nature of delusion and afflictions. The cool rays of the moon seat calm that down. On top of the moon disk seat, standing upright is the essence of Amitabha Buddha, the syllable HRIH. It is red in color. Amitabha Buddha appears from the transformation of the letter HRIH. Amitabha Buddha is the representative of all the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three times. He is deep ruby red in body color. He has one face and two hands. His hands rest in Dhyana Mudra form. His feet are in the full lotus position. He holds in his hands a begging bowl filled with the nectar of immortality. To His right is Chenrezig. To his left is Vajrapani. Normally Vajrapani is very wrathful looking; here he is not like that. He is portrayed in a peaceful form or manifestation. Both Chenrezig and Vajrapani are standing and they are slightly turned toward Amitabha Buddha. They each have one face and two hands. They stand on top of sun and moon disks. The complete congregation of enlightened beings such as bodhisattvas and arhats surrounds them. Let us recap for a moment. You are Chenrezig. In the space in front of you is Amitabha Buddha. To His right is Chenrezig and to His left is Vajrapani. They are surrounded by the mandala of all enlightened beings. From the crown, throat, and heart chakras of the three central figures, light rays emanate white, red, and blue. Those light rays constitute an invitation to the wisdom beings in their purelands to come forth and join with the commitment beings, which have been created by the visualization. This is called an Invitation. The wisdom beings come forth and descend like downpour of light bodies in the form of Amitabha Buddha, Chenrezig, and Vajrapani. They come forth from the Pureland and merge with the visualized construct collectively known as the commitment being. At the bottom of page seven, it is written: "Hung Hrih, from the realm of Dewachen in the west. Oh Lord Amitabha! Please be on this stainless throne of lotus, sun, and moon disks." That is called the invitation. The second thing that happens here is having invited Him, You invite Him to take a seat on the throne prepared for Him. Amitabha Buddha then takes His seat and you make obeisance to Him. You prostrate to Him with your body, speech, and mind. Then you make offerings to Him. This is not a set of ordinary offerings. Instead, you offer all the elements of existence to Him. Having done that, you begin to have a heart to heart conversation with Amitabha

Buddha. In this case, you confess to Him all your downfalls and broken vows. You open your heart to Amitabha Buddha in that way. The wisdom beings have come and hovered over the assembly of commitment beings, they are still visualized as external to you as Chenrezig. You tell them to sit down and accept the offerings, and then you confess your non-virtues. They will dissolve into the commitment being (visualized as Amitabha Buddha, Chenrezig, and Vajrapani) at the recitation of the mantra Za Hung Bam Ho . (Here, His Holiness takes some time to demonstrate the mudra that goes with saying of the mantra.) We come, now, to the part of the sadhana that constitutes the recitation of the mantra. Having merged the wisdom beings with the commitment beings, in the heart of Buddha Amitabha on top of a lotus and moon disk (lying flat), is the seed syllable Hrih, standing upright. The letters of the mantra 'Om Ami Dewa Hrih' are set up on the edge of the moon disk. They are set up counterclockwise, but rotate clockwise. As you recite the mantra, light rays emanate from the mantric syllables and transform the whole universe as an external container into the Pureland of Great Bliss. In addition, with all sentient beings as the contents of that container, transform into the commitment being. While reciting the mantra, you hold the idea that the experience of what is called 'The Three Vajras': Vajra body, Vajra speech, and Vajra mind. That is to say, all form is the enlightened body of Amitabha Buddha, all sound is the mantra of Amitabha Buddha, and all thought is the movement of Amitabha Buddha's consciousness. With that realization, you recite the mantra 'Om Ami Dewa Hrih.'

(At this point, His Holiness leads His students in the practice of the sadhana up until the recitation of the mantra.)

When you begin to recite the mantra, you should visualize light rays boundlessly emanating from the commitment being in front of you. First, offer the light to the enlightened beings of the ten directions, then the light comes back to emanate once more to touch and purify all sentient beings. You recite the mantra for as long as you have time, or for a set number of repetitions.

As the practice winds down, you visualize that light rays emanating from the commitment being. The light rays dissolve all external environment into the three main figures of the commitment being. Then, Chenrezig and Vajrapani dissolve into Amitabha Buddha. From Amitabha's four places, the crown, throat, heart, and navel chakras, light rays emanate and strike you in the four corresponding places. This cleanses and purifies you from all obscurations of body, speech, and mind. The light rays transfer to you the four empowerments. The Amitabha Buddha melts into light and dissolves into you through the point between the eyebrows. At this point, you enter the inseparability of emptiness and appearance. You allow the mind to rest in its own natural sphere, the state of Mahamudra.

What has gone on up to now has to do with the developing stage practice of the deity yoga of Amitabha Buddha. Everything that is concerned with the developing stage practice has a particular point of reference. It has an object of meditation, a support of meditation. When Amitabha Buddha dissolves into light and merges with you, you enter what is called the Completion Stage practice of the Deity Yoga of Amitabha Buddha. In this stage, there is no fixed frame of reference. This is a state beyond thought. A state transcends the conceptual mind. The purpose of the practice of the Developing Stage of Deity Yoga is to overcome one's view of oneself and one's surroundings as ordinary. It is to make divine your view of existence itself. It is to overcome your attachment to an ordinary, demeaning view. The purpose of the completion stage practice is to overcome your view of your self and your environment as divine. Therefore, having attained the beatific vision, you go beyond the beatific vision by giving up your attachment to this divine view. It is said that the developing stage practice perfects the accumulation of merit, and the completion stage practice

perfects the accumulation of wisdom. Both practices, taken together (in fact, they are an inseparable unity), yield Buddhahood. This practice combines, in a quintessential way, the main practices of sutra and tantra. This is a non-dual practice of sutra and tantra leading to non-dual realization, and non-dual accumulation of wisdom and merit.