



The Yamantaka Short Sadhana Practice

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Owing to the sacred and deeply symbolic nature of the practices associated with Initiations of the Vajra Vehicle, books on tantra are delicate matters. Without the requisite initiations and the receiving of transmissions on Commentaries, books on many aspects of tantra cannot be read by non-Initiates.

In line with this, this book “Yamantaka Short Sadhana Practice” is intended only for those who have received the Solitary Yamantaka Initiation.

The sole motivation for the publication of this book is in tandem with the great Dharma generosity of Geshe Tenzin Zopa in giving such precious guidance to initiates - to enable them to do their daily sadhana practice correctly and in a meaningful way; to bring practitioners closer to the goal of actualizing Buddhahood to benefit all beings.

In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, those receiving tantra teachings of this nature, would be required to regard the Lama giving the teachings as a Guru and to include that Lama into one’s Merit Field visualizations. I had sought Geshela’s permission to allow me to inform readers of this. In customary humility, Geshela expressed there was no need for this, as he is merely “sharing information” but hoped that readers would practice seriously, sincerely and with the right motivation.

Notwithstanding Geshela declining to be regarded as Guru on account of the teachings here, from my own side as a beginner practitioner, who constantly struggles to know what is right and do right, I humbly and respectfully request each reader of this book - to think through carefully and appropriately honour Geshela who is the Lama giving the tantra teachings here and to repay his profound kindness by upholding the Vows well, practice as best as one can and nurture a warm heart towards all beings – and pray for each of us to become the fulfillment of all our Gurus’ hopes.

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The Abbreviated Practice of the SOLITARY HERO YAMANTAKA

We start by setting the right motivation to actualize the great enlightenment state of Guru Yamantaka to benefit numberless beings by liberating them to attain the state of Guru Yamantaka's enlightenment. For this purpose, we resolve to achieve full enlightenment within this very short lifetime by thinking that "I am going to engage into the unmistaken practice, the complete stages of the practice into the Tantra, in particular, by engaging into the practice of the 3 kayas based on the wisdom Yidam Yamantaka with the genuine and wholehearted bodhicitta inspiration to actualize enlightenment on this very cushion".

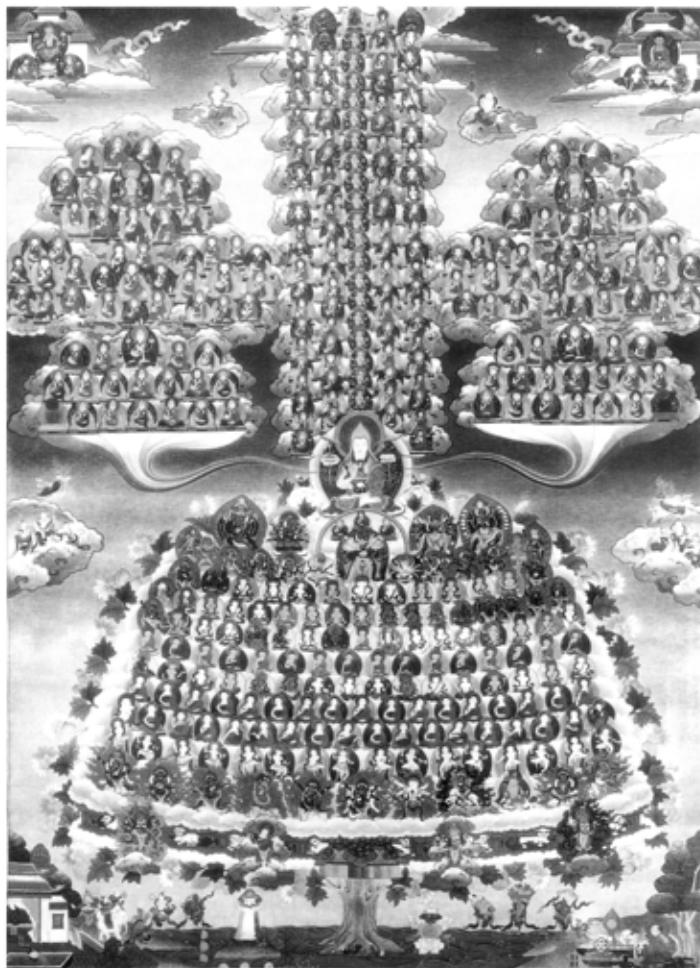
This is the extremely abbreviated practice of the Solitary Hero Yamantaka. After receiving the Yamantaka initiation, you are likely to use this abbreviated practice of Yamantaka. Therefore, it would be beneficial for us to go through the short sadhana.

This practice of Yamantaka involves the essence of tantric practice and the two stages of Tantra practice, the **generation** stage and the **completion stage**. Through this process, you are able to transform yourself from the ordinary to the extraordinary. The practice of both the generation stage and the completion stage which involves the "**Three Kayas**" is only available in the maha annuttara yoga tantras (i.e. the Highest Yoga Tantra category or "HYT" in this book). The three kayas is the essence of HYT practice.

Even though the practice of HYT is a supreme practice amongst the entire span of practices found in the Buddha's teachings, without the preliminary stages of the practice, one will not be able to actualize the purpose of Tantra.

The preliminary stages of practice refers to having clear understanding of the common path, which is the Three Principles of the Path that encompasses renunciation, bodhicitta and right view of emptiness. This is of utmost importance. Cultivating a firm foundation upon the Three Principles of the Path is critical as it enables one to actualize the meanings and benefits of engaging into HYT practice. Otherwise, there is the danger of misusing the powerful tantric tools such as mantras and the different methods of visualization. Such misuse will lead us to total failure and even fall into

the lower realms, such as the vajra hell. Therefore, **in order to actualize the great purpose of Tantric practice, we need to know and practice seriously the principles of renunciation, bodhichitta and hold the right view of emptiness.**



Since HYT is a Mahayana practice, we must begin our Dharma practice with strong bodhicitta motivation. Without this, no amount of tantric practice

can save us from the lower realms as in the story of an Indian Acharya who traveled to Tibet during Lama Atisha's stay in Tibet. The Indian Acharya sought Lama Atisha and when they met, Lama Atisha asked, "What is today's news in India?" This Acharya replied "I heard there is one Hevajra (tantric) practitioner who has obtained the realization in the Hinayana Path of the Seeing." Lama Atisha replied "I truly rejoice that he did not fall into the lower realms. I truly rejoice that he has obtained the Path of Seeing of the Hearer Realiser and fortunately did not fall into the lower realms by practicing Hevajra." What Lama Atisha meant was that even though this practitioner cultivated renunciation and emptiness, he was engaging in high tantric practice without having a stable foundation and practice of Bodhicitta and therefore was in danger to falling into the lower realms. That accordingly, as this practitioner did not do the practice with bodhichitta motivation, he was unable to obtain the highest Mahayanic realizations but merely obtained the Path of Seeing of the Hearer Realiser (Hinayana path).

The above is a true story and it teaches us how important the foundation practice of all three principles of renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness, is.

There are also stories from the Himalayas about serious HYT practitioners who spent numerous years meditating in caves, engaging as solitary practitioners. At the end of their lives when they died, their minds were still overwhelmed by delusions (and having no basis in bodhicitta) and yet at the same time, the power of their mantra recitation brought about great energy levels within them and because of that, it resulted in situations where their consciousness upon leaving their bodies, instead of gaining enlightenment, became very powerful, fierce and aggressive spirit-minds, causing a great deal of harm and disturbance, including taking human lives. There are many such accounts and serve to warn us.

I am certain that all of us here know how important the understanding of these foundation teachings of renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness are. I am merely asserting the importance in our holding these foundation teachings well.

The sadhana text begins with the "**REQUEST**" to the lineage gurus.

When you look into the extensive version of the sadhana, you would see all

the great lineage lamas and gurus names mentioned. For each name that is mentioned, one is required to reflect and visualize on the respective guru's image, as well as on their respective kindness and perform purification of whatever negative karma one has created in relation to that particular lama/guru and then bringing together all their realizations by dissolving each guru (into light) successively into each other, right down to one's present root Guru before entering into one's crown and merging into one's heart.

Through this action, one's mind and all the minds of the lineage lamas including one's root Guru become inseparable and in oneness, like water mixing with water, becoming of one taste. And this mind will be in the nature of holy, transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness, complete with all the realizations and blessings of the gurus.

REQUEST (3 Xs)

*To the all-pervading (Lord) Manjushrivajra Yamantaka;
To the fatherly most venerable Jetsun Tsongkhapa,
Together with the lineage of your spiritual sons,
Who are in actuality all the buddhas –
To all of you I make requests.
Bestow on me, please, the two powerful attainments.*

“To the all-pervading (Lord) Manjushrivajra Yamantaka “: “To the all pervading” in Tibetan is “chak (pervading) dak (Lord)”. In this translation, they put the “Lord” at the last part. It is more appropriate to insert the “Lord” after the pervading (please see above). So here, the meaning of **“all-pervading” refers to the lack of inherent existence. The true nature of all phenomena is the absence of inherent existence.** It pervades every single aspect of existence, including the omniscient mind, the mind of the Guru, the mind of Guru Yamantaka.

“Lord” refers to the Guru, your direct Guru, from whom you have received the initiation who is inseparable from Guru Yamantaka and Guru Manjushri. Why “Lord”? “Lord” refers to the guru who is the root emanator of the 10 direction Buddhas and bestower of all the blessings of the vajra (indestructible)

body, speech and mind and wisdom of the 10 direction Buddhas, Yidams, Dakas, Dakanis.

Manjushri is the embodiment of the 10 direction Buddhas' wisdom. Yamantaka is the wrathful aspect of Manjushri which symbolizes the antidote to Yama.

Who is Yama? There are two aspects of Yama. One is the interpretive/symbolic Yama and the other is definitive/actual Yama. The interpretive Yama refers to the Lord of Death who is represented as a fierce and scary looking, dark-blue coloured being, waiting to seize our lives. The definitive/actual Yama is the self-grasping mind. This self-grasping mind is the one which ties us to samsara with its 3 poisons (ignorance, anger and attachment) and the 6 Realms and thereby brings about death in ordinary beings, as represented by the mouth of the interpretive/symbolic Yama.

Therefore, this definitive/actual Yama, this self-grasping, is the object of negation. “TAKA” refers to ANTIDOTES. So when you say “Yamantaka” it refers to the antidote to self-grasping/death, which is achieved through the Tantric practice of the unification of non-dual great bliss and emptiness.

By actualizing the meditation on the interpretive/symbolic Yamantaka, it purifies the interpretive Yama. By meditating on the definitive Yamantaka, it will purify the definitive Yama which is the self-grasping mind.

When we read this 1st line of the sadhana, “To the all-pervading (Lord) Manjushrivajra Yamantaka”, we need to do the meditation on the various meanings and in particular, **whenever we reflect on Yamantaka, we should be able to reflect on the two objects of negation i.e. death and grasping at self/phenomena**) and at the same time actualize the two antidotes (actualising Yamantaka the practice of the unification of non dual great bliss and emptiness). In this way, the practice of Yamantaka becomes fruitful. Familiarity with this technique strengthens one’s meditation practice and that in turn supports one’s mindfulness throughout every single moment of the day.

“To the fatherly most venerable Jetsun Tsongkhapa”: One says “fatherly” as this lineage of Yamantaka practice is derived from Lama Tsongkhapa.

Venerable Lama Tsongkhapa is the interpretive/symbolic Yamantaka manifesting as a fully ordained monk and the definitive Yamantaka himself.

“Together with the lineage of your spiritual sons, To all of you I make requests” : The spiritual sons refer to the two heart disciples of Lama Tsongkhapa, namely Kedrup Je and Gyaltsab Je as well as all the lineage gurus from Guru Vajradhara right up to one’s Guru from whom you have received initiation, who in actuality are the Buddhas and who are actually Yamantaka.

“Bestow on me, please, the two powerful attainments”:

The two attainments mean the realizations of the two stages of the Tantric path, namely, the generation stage and the completion stage and the wisdom body of Yamantaka (dharmakaya) and the form body of Yamantaka (nirmanakaya) So those are the two powerful attainments.

In short, when we do the sadhana, we have to visualize the Guru Puja/Lama Choepa’s merit field, except that instead of Lama Tsongkhapa in the centre, we place Guru Yamantaka in the centre. One’s root Guru remains inseparable from Yamantaka and is surrounded by all the lineage gurus as in the Lama Choepa merit field. If one can remember every single lineage guru, then place them according to the lineage, where visualization starts from your own root Guru up to Yamantaka. Then from Guru Yamantaka, move upwards to the lineage gurus. Alternatively, visualize Guru Vajradhara downwards to your root Guru who is in the centre. Then make your request to actualize the two powerful attainments.

First, one has to do the purification of the negative karmas committed generally and specifically with the various Gurus. Then gradually dissolve the images inward towards the centre. The sequence is first, Guru Vajradhara dissolves into light and that light dissolves into the successive second Guru and that second Guru dissolves into light and that light dissolves in the successive third Guru and then every single of the remaining Gurus there dissolve into light and gradually dissolves into the centre figure, Yamantaka, and Yamantaka likewise dissolves into light which them dissolves into the root Guru. That root Guru who is the holy vajra body, speech and mind also dissolves into light and enters you from your crown, through your throat and then to your heart and finally merges with your own mind (residing in the heart).

This means that the root Guru's mind, Guru Yamantaka's mind and all the 10 direction Buddhas' minds and your mind become inseparable. So during that moment one should feel that "I have totally purified all negativities and have received all the blessings including actualizing the two attainments". And because of this, you experience tremendous joy within you. That joy consumes all existence, all obstacles to seeing reality and it becomes "dharmakaya". If one can do this visualization without referring to the text and as long as you can do this as a short, glimpse-visualisation, it is making proper request to the lineage gurus. Otherwise it is just reading the words and it does not bring much effect. Of course there is some merit from doing so but does not bring the full benefit of actualizing the two attainments.

If you find the above visualization difficult, then just visualize Yamantaka who is inseparable from all gurus. Hold a very clear image of Yamantaka in your mind dissolving into light, which then dissolves into your heart. Do the purification of negative karmas and make a request.

If the above visualisation is also difficult, then do this, which is the shortest and simplest form of visualization. Visualize one's Guru from whom you have received the initiation, not in the ordinary contaminated form of blood, flesh and bone but one whose holy body is in the nature of the holy indestructible vajra body of Yamantaka, as well as the 10 direction Buddhas and lineage gurus. Visualise him dissolving into light and entering you through your crown and merging with your heart. Your mind and all the enlightened minds in the aspect of Yamantaka become inseparable. Do the purification of whatever negative karma, broken promises and samaya that one has committed in relation to this Guru, as well as whatever negative karma has been accumulated since beginningless lifetimes which related directly or indirectly to the lineage gurus and make a strong request to be granted the two powerful attainments through the blessings of the guru.

That completes the first one part of the sadhana.

If one can do these simple visualisations, then even you do not remember all the words or forgot to bring your prayer book or are stuck in a traffic jam, you can utilize that time to do this wonderful meditation and wonderful sadhana. Sometimes, we have to wait in the hospital for someone or simply have to

wait hours and hours for something. When one is in such a situation, if one is able to do the sadhana at that time, how wonderful! It is so simple and the essence of making request to the lineage gurus is simply this! When one's mind habituates with this visualisation, that brings about the attainment of the resultant practice of Guruyoga within oneself. The resultant attainment of the Guruyoga practice is to actualize the enlightenment of the Guru, the enlightenment of Yamantaka. At the moment we seem ordinary but when we use our mind to think of it as inseparable from Yamantaka, our mind becomes Yamantaka's mind and our mind become the Guru's mind. This is the training process in the causal stage but it will bring us closer to the resultant stage of actualizing the actual Guru Buddha or Guru Yidam.

So here, there are two stages, the causal stage and the resultant stage of Buddhahood. We are training in the causal stage (through visualizations) in order to familiarize with the resultant stage, thereby bringing us nearer to the result of Buddha, of Yamantaka, which could be on this very cushion or it could be 3 years later or it could be at the time of clear light during death or could be at the time of bardo (intermediate state) or could be in the next life. The stronger the effort at habituation, the closer you get to the resultant stage of attainment.

REFUGE AND BODHICITTA (3 X)

*I go for refuge to the Triple Gem,
I shall liberate all sentient beings
And lead them to a state of enlightenment.
I shall purely develop a bodhicitta enlightened motive*

When we do the refuge practice, particularly in this sadhana, we need to visualize the refuge field as per the Lam-rim. The only difference is that here, we visualize Guru Yamantaka in the centre of the refuge field instead of Guru Shakyamuni. If one can manage, visualize every single detail of each member of the refuge field. If not, then at least have a bird's-eye view of it. The central Yamantaka figure should be very clear, appearing alive and real and not like a statue. Put your palms together, kneel down, if possible or sit

in your meditation posture and recite “I go for refuge to the Triple Gem.” Ideally, one should pause at this first line of the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer and try to recite this 1st line as many times as possible, whilst taking time to reflect on the two reasons to take refuge, namely to be free from the suffering of the lower realms and sufferings of samsara for oneself and others.

Next, one should generate full conviction and faith in Guru Yamantaka and the refuge field, that they have the absolute power to protect oneself and other living beings from falling into the 3 lower realms. It is recommended that since oneself is already quite an advanced Dharma student in order to receive the Yamantaka Initiation, our bodhicitta motivation would be better supported through the practice of refuge i.e. by meditating on the root causes of samsara, instead of merely on generating compassion for samsaric beings.

We should then meditate on how the self-grasping mind operates, grasping at the self, grasping at phenomena. Once you meditate this way, you apply the antidote to rid yourself of the definitive/actual Yama (the self-grasping mind which brings samsara within oneself and all beings). Meditating this way, will bring much benefit to your practice of generating bodhicitta to liberate all sentient beings and lead them to the state of full enlightenment which is the state of Yamantaka and actualizing the Path.

The “Request” prayer, you should recite three times; the “Refuge and Bodhicitta” you also recite three times. Thus, your practice becomes deeper and stronger.

Because of Yamantaka seeing you, the practitioner, supplicating in this sincere manner and taking refuge under Him, Buddha Yamantaka is totally pleased. So again, dissolve the entire refuge field into light, each member dissolving successively into the next until it finally comes to the centre and dissolves into Yamantaka, who then dissolves into light and that light dissolves into yourself from the crown. The moment it touches your crown, instantly it purifies the entire aspect of one’s negative karma, particularly in relation to Yamantaka and all the 10 direction Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and all mother living beings.

Gradually your physical form dissolves into light. The light-form Yamantaka having entered your crown, descends into your Throat Chakra and there purifies whatever negative karma has been committed through speech; this light then descends from the Throat Chakra into the Heart Chakra. The moment it enters into the Heart Chakra, your mind - which resides there - becomes clean-clear with the image of wind and light. At this very moment when the light enters the heart, it merges with your mind (also in light form) and right there, every single aspect of your physical form, your speech and your mind is totally pure and one with Yamantaka's holy vajra body, holy vajra speech and holy vajra mind. None of the contaminated gross aggregates remains there!

From that holy vajra mind of yours, merged with Yamantaka, emanates infinite light rays to the 10 direction Buddhas and reaches to every single being, every single atom and to the farthest reaches of infinite space. Whatever those rays of light touches, it purifies all impurities of the environment as well as the beings within that environment. It liberates all those beings and they are transformed into the state of Yamantaka. All the environments are in turn, transformed into Yamantaka's paradise or mandala.

The light rays then return to our mind (residing at the heart) which receives bliss. Once again you as one with Yamantaka, emanate light towards the 10 direction Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The moment the light touches the 10 direction Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, they dissolve into light and are drawn into your vajra holy body, holy speech and holy mind at the respective three points of the crown throat and heart. That light which brings the experience of the great bliss is derived from unification practice of non-dual great bliss and emptiness of all the Buddhas. You achieve instant total bliss in your mind which remains in the aspect of light. Next, that light dissolves into emptiness. And that emptiness-mind recognizes the emptiness of every single existence, including the 10 direction Buddhas, including every single living beings, including your gross aggregates. The moment the blissful mind perceives the emptiness of existence, it attains the unification of non-dual great bliss and emptiness.

Self-generation

The above meditation of dissolving into emptiness and the experience of the non-dual great bliss and emptiness is aided by the blessings of Yamantaka. Due to your bodhicitta motivation, your total reliance on Yamantaka and taking refuge under Him, Yamantaka is pleased with you and thereby introduces to you, the practice of dissolution into light and of emanation up to the unification of non-dual great bliss and emptiness.

In this meditation practice, there is no gross physical form. Now we continue from the point of dissolving into emptiness and from there, arise as a Buddha-Deity. Remember that there is a mind there but is dwelling in emptiness and totally in bliss.

Now visualize, from the emptiness, arises an 8-petal lotus and on top of 8-petal lotus is the moon disc and on top of moon disc is the sun disc (like flat cushions stacked on top of one another). And on the sun disc arises syllable HUNG which is your mind in the state of non-dual great bliss and emptiness. In order to bring about the emanation form, you need substances to actualize that. The substances are the lotus, moon disc and sun disc. Their symbolism are as follows:-

*Lotus symbolizes renunciation;
Moon disc symbolizes wisdom; and
Sun disc symbolizes bodhicitta*

OR

Moon disc symbolizes the red substance which comes from the mother/female; Sun disc symbolizes the white drop that comes from the father/male.

Let's take the analogy of how a baby is formed. Mother-father substances are need to come together to form a baby. However, it is not enough just to have the two substances. Mind (consciousness) is needed. If mind does not enter, then even if you have the two substances, a living baby does not arise.

Similarly, this meditation called self-generation can be described this way:

The base is the lotus and on top of that, the two substances (i.e. the moon disc and the sun disc) acting as father and mother substances. The HUNG is standing on top of the sun-disc. The mind then enters the syllable HUNG. The components necessary for form are then complete. The syllable HUNG thus arises like a baby would, i.e. the complete, gross physical form is not yet there but it gradually builds up, cell by cell. By the power of the subtle aggregates, gross aggregates are built up and at full-term, it becomes a baby, who will eventually grow into an adult. Likewise, from the syllable HUNG on top of the sun and moon disc, then arises Yamantaka. This is what is meant by “the yoga of self-generation”.

SELF-GENERATION prayer

Instantaneously, I arise in the form of the glorious Vajrabhairava with one face and two arms holding a curved knife and skullcup.

As explained above, you first dissolved into emptiness and then arose as Yamantaka. So, why do you need to do the self-generation? It is in order to bless the inner and outer offerings, which are part of the Yamantaka practice.

BLESSING THE INNER AND OUTER OFFERINGS

*OM HRIH SHTRIH VIKRITA NANA HUNG PHAT
OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA
SHUDDHO HAM*

When reciting the above lines, one needs to reflect and meditate on emptiness, on the lack of inherent existence and everything becomes void. By the power of “OM HRIH SHTRIH VIKRITA NANA HUNG PHAT...” this actualizes everything to become empty. From the state of emptiness, a syllable YAM arises and from it comes the wind element; next the syllable RAM arises and from it comes the fire element; then from the syllable AH, a tripod of 3 human heads arises. In order to actualize the 3 syllables YAM, RAM, AH ,

use the same visualization as before i.e. in emptiness and from there syllable YAM arises to create the wind; then syllable RAM arises to create fire, and then the syllable AH to creates a tripod of 3 human heads. Think of these 3 human heads as forming a tripod stand over a campfire. Here we need to visualise the 3 human heads as still very fresh, with hair and stubble on the head, with blood drippings from it and some stains of blood and liquid waste discharged from the nostrils, eyes, ears and mouth. The most grotesque and disgusting looking heads indeed! These 3 human heads serve as the stove sitting above the fire (caused by RAM) and the wind (YAM) below the fire. On top of the 3 heads, from the syllable AH, appears a skullcup which is resting on top of the 3 human heads. Again this skullcup is very fresh, not dried like a fossil.

The outer face of the skullcup is white colour, which symbolizes bodhicitta as well as bliss; whereas the inside of the skullcup is red colour which symbolizes wisdom. Whenever we do this recitation, whenever we think of this skullcup, we have to reflect on the meanings of the skullcup. Remember the (white) bliss symbolizing bodhicitta and the (red) symbolising wisdom. You need to know the meaning so that you will gain some force behind this meditation. Inside this skullcup are the 5 meats and 5 nectars. And above the skullcup, appear OM, AH, HUNG in vertical formation.

In tantra, all images are symbols and not to be taken literally in their ordinary, gross, forms. All images require mental transformation. The 5 meats are bull meat, dog meat, elephant meat, horse meat and human meat. The 5 nectars are human excrements, white bodhicitta (white drop from the male), red bodhicitta (the blood from the female), bone marrow and urine. These 10 different substances are to be transformed into nectar. We have to visualize the substances as it is very difficult to find the actual substance. Even if one could find them, instead of practicing Tantra, we would collapse in shock! (Burst of laughter).

So everything has to be managed by visualization because it is all purely symbolic. During the visualization, it is good to use objects whose colour are similar to the actual substances e.g. such as using black tea or red wine because the colour looks like bloody-colour. Since our visualization and the transformation-mind might not be strong enough, we add the nectar pill (or mani pill or there is another pill which we call “tu chi chon nay” a very

fine, blessing pill). You add these to bring about the representative effect of actualizing the nectar.

The 5 meats and 5 nectars are the objects to be purified.

The 5 meats represent the need to bring about the purity state of the 5 Dhayani Buddhas, representing the perfected, pure aggregates. The purpose of engaging into this wonderful practice is to purify our samsaric, contaminated 5 aggregates. **Why are we still circling in samsara and not yet enlightened? Because the grasping-mind clings to the contaminated, impure base of the 5 aggregates.** By engaging into this practice of visualizing the “5 meats” and purifying it, brings about the effect on your mind to eliminate the impurities, which include negativities and the impure projections of our ordinary mind onto objects. When we are completely successful in this purification, we actualize the pure 5 aggregates, which is the state of the 5 Dhayani Buddhas.

Practices related to each of the 5 Dhyanis-Buddha families purify one of the aggregates (Akshobhya Buddha related practices purify the aggregate of consciousness; Ratnasambhava Buddha related practice purify the aggregate of feeling; Amitabha Buddha related practices purify the aggregate of recognition; Amogasiddhi Buddha related practices purify compositional factors; Vairochana Buddha related practices purify the aggregate of form).

By purifying the 5 aggregates, we actualize the 5 Dhayani Buddhas which is the purity state of enlightenment.

The 5 nectars such as human excrements, urine, etc, are to purify the different afflictive emotions, bringing about the 5 wisdoms of the Buddha.

Therefore, through the practice of meditating on the meaning and symbolism behind the 5 meats, it brings about the perfection of one’s 5 aggregates and meditating on the meaning behind the 5 nectars is to bring about the 5 wisdoms of the Buddha.

When we do the blessing of the nectar at this part of the sadhana, one should reflect on the purification of the 5 aggregates and the purification of the afflictive emotions. At the end of the practice, one builds up the confidence

and conviction that one has attained the purity state of the 5 aggregates and the 5 wisdoms. In other words, actualizing the state of Yamantaka.

So, inside the skullcup are the 5 meats and 5 nectars. All these substances are mixed together. One should visualize that the skullcup as completely vast, infinitely huge, as expansive as the universe, deeper than the Pacific Ocean, wider than space. Through the understanding of emptiness, one is able to construct this visualization of expanding the skullcup to as large and deep in dimensions as possible, with the substances in great quantities flowing into the great ocean within the skullcup, completely filling the skullcup. You mix the 5 meats and 5 nectars together. You look at it, it is unbelievable, the colour and those meat-flesh images. When you travel on the Ganges River, sometimes a human body part pops out of the water. Imagine what kind of grotesque feeling can arise in you. The Ganges River water is considered quite clean. It has been said that if you drink the water from the Ganges River, it will purify your karma. People expel their excrement into it, urinate there, throw human carcasses and all the burned ashes into the Ganges River! I once went there and brought some of that water back all the way up to Himalayas to distribute to everybody to drink! (laughter)

Next we arise as Yamantaka. When we do this, we need to be as clear as possible as to arising exactly like Yamantaka in every single aspect. Look at the picture of Yamantaka. Visualise exactly like that. You cannot think that you are watching somebody else arising as Yamantaka. One has to focus fully and visualize oneself arising exactly like Yamantaka. The stronger your mind is able to do this practice, the greater effect it brings to help you to actualize the resultant Yamantaka. You should feel strongly, yes, “I am Yamantaka”. When you create and visualise nectar, think “Yes, this is nectar”. When you visualize the head, yes, it is the real head. When you visualize yourself as Yamantaka, you are the real Yamantaka and think, “this IS me!” You cannot have any doubt. You cannot think, “But I am still ordinary”. You shouldn’t feel uncomfortable or skeptical about whether you are really becoming Yamantaka or not. You should feel confident, “Yes, I am Yamantaka”. If people happen to see me at this time, people will run away. When you look at Yamantaka’s picture, human body, buffalo head, dark blue horns, my goodness!



Illustration by Geshe Tenzin Zopa

Yamantaka is ornamented by five dry skulls on the head and a mala of fifty fresh-human heads (with blood still dripping), strung together. Who would not run away? Everybody would run away. When you visualize yourself as Yamantaka, one should feel fully confident that oneself is really Yamantaka. His limbs are not skinny like us (laughter). They are solid, big and muscular. It is stated in the teaching, that we have to visualize that as the deity Yamantaka, we are big sizes, muscular, wrathful, majestic. We should not visualize ourselves as weak, small, thin. No! Oh and yes, the eyes! The eyes! Yamantaka has 3 eyes. They are very huge, wrathful, very fierce and the white part of the eye is blood-shot red with the black of the eyes (iris) piercingly black and the eyeballs are bulging, almost bursting, shining like “sun balls” and, when you look at the eyes, you feel as if you are going to be devoured by them! Between the eyebrows and nose, there are deep folds of wrinkles because when you get angry, you contract those facial muscles. They are known as the mark of the wrathful deities. It indicates vajra anger (whose sole purpose is to destroy delusions). Yamantaka’s hair as well as his eyebrows and lashes are all the same colour – blond, reddish-yellowish.

The eyebrows, moustache and other hairs are standing up and fire burns from them. It is a sign of wrath, a strong aeon fire, like the fire that will destroy the universe at the end of time. The two nostrils are like copper pipes heated and on fire. The air passing through them is black and smoky. Since the outer, inner or secret evils (delusions and defilements) are so powerful, Yamantaka who is the direct opponent, has to be even more wrathful. Therefore, his mouth is wide open. Blood continuously drips from it. Think that this is the blood of ignorance, of the inner evils within us that Yamantaka is expelling! He has four fearful fangs and a long tongue which moves faster than lightning. The two blue horns are very very sharp. The tips of the horns burst into fire, they become flames, continuously burning ignorance. The horns are like laser-beam lights. The palms of the hands and the soles of his feet are red with fresh blood. His long fingernails are hook shaped, capable of shredding one hundred thousand evil-delusions at one time . His body which is dark-blue in colour, is huge, solid and round with stout, firm hands and legs. He has a big stomach and all his hairs and pores are emitting fire sparks. His right hand holds a hooked cutter and his left hand holds a skullcup filled with blood. He bears a very very angry, fearful buffalo-face.

From the body, emits the aura of wisdom fire. If you look from a distance you will see nothing but a huge mass of fire. All this is faultless and pure and overcomes all ignorance and is the actual result of the Buddhahood of the Bhagavan Yamantaka.

When you have time, try to go through the long sadhana. There, you will see more details. From the heart centre of yourself as Yamantaka, from the syllable HUNG, you send out infinite light which touch the wind element and causes the wind to propel faster, which in turn causes the fire to burn with greater intensity. Due to the ferocious blaze, the substances in the skullcup completely melt and boil vigorously and become a thick stew-like soup.

Above the 5 meats and 5 nectars, appear OM, AH, HUM. Light rays emanate from them and hook back the 3 vajras (holy body, speech and mind). The infinite light rays emanate to the 10 directions and hook back the 3 vajras from the 10 direction Buddhas, Yidams, Dakas and Dakinis, which are the holy vajra body, holy vajra speech and holy vajra mind which then dissolves into the syllables OM, AH, HUM. Then the 3 syllables drop into the skullcup, meaning that the 10 direction Buddhas, Yidams, Dakas and Dakinis' vajra

body, vajra speech and vajra mind, now fill this skullcup. The syllable HUM brings about the purification of the terrible colour of the mixture in the skullcup and transform it to the most magnificent and stunning. Just by looking at it, the nectar appears delicious, enticing and most tempting. Amazing. Like, YUMMY!!! It is like, when you are extremely thirsty and you sip very cold orange juice. How do you feel then? Or when you do Nyung Nay fasting retreat, how do you feel when you look at all the bottles of Coca-Cola and fruit juices on the altar. It is exactly like that. When you look at them, mmm,so YUMMY! A spontaneous feeling of bliss arises. (Laughter). So, the appearance of the transformed mixture in the skullcup should give you that kind of feeling. The syllable HUM purifies the impure colour, impure odour and all aspects of the impurities within and outside the skullcup, including the symbols of father and mother substances, all these are completely cleansed by the syllable HUM.

From the syllable AH, which is inside transforms all the substances into nectar. From the moment you taste it, the moment it touches your tongue, it brings the greatest bliss which pervades every single aspect of the physical form and of the mind. Hence the mind is so powerful. Normally, when we feel cold, we go outside to be under the sun, which brings warmth and a sense of temporary bliss. Or when your hand is cold and you put it near the fire, the part placed near the fire feels warm but the other parts of the body do not experience the same comfort. But this nectar, once you taste it, every single pore of the body experiences great bliss. This nectar is all-encompassing. Similarly, when we experience bliss in our mind for one moment, the rest of the time is affected by suffering. But when you taste this nectar, every single moment of your mind, past, present and future, every fraction of a moment, is totally blissed out. The transformed nectar has that overpowering effect.

The syllable OM then causes this nectar to increase and become inexhaustible, causing the nectar to overflow the skullcup and fills the entire place with this supreme nectar. No matter how many beings taste it or drink from it, it does not get depleted. The more you drink, the more it increases. Inexhaustible.

When we do the creation of and blessing of the nectar, it is a powerful method to purify suffering. The immediate benefit is to bring about the purification of mental and physical sufferings. The longer term benefit is to bring about the purification of past negative karma, including purifying the causes of

samsara. This is how remarkable this practice is. The practice brings about great purification, creates so much merit and also produces inexhaustible food, medicine and water.

Our physical form requires food, liquid, medicine etc. By doing this practice, we will gain the merit of never being deprived of these. By using the syllables OH, AH, HUM to bring about the purity state of the nectar, many benefits arise:

The syllable OM helps us to purify negativities to gain the perfection of one's ordinary physical form, which is to actualize the Buddha Vairochana. **The purity state of one's physical form is Vairochana.** By using the syllable AH, which is the seed syllable of Buddha Amitabha, we gain the state of longevity. Normally for long life practices, we refer to Buddha Amitayus (who is Amitabha in long life aspect).

The syllable HUM symbolizes the 10 direction Buddhas' vajra holy mind. It will cause one's mind never to be separated from the vajra holy mind of the Guru, the Buddhas, Yidams, Dakas and Dakinis. It will bring about the great purification of defilements within our mental continuum and enable us to actualize the state of Vajradhara.

Syllable AH is red in colour. Syllable OM is white in colour and syllable HUM is blue in colour. Colours are also great forms of symbolism. The role and effect of the seed syllables have already been explained above.

Therefore, by understanding this practice of using OM, AH, HUM, apart from actualizing nectar and purification, it also brings about longevity to oneself. This is important because in order to gain realizations, we need long life and good health to engage in practice. By activating the syllable AH into our stages of practice, it will bring about the stability of our life, such that even if we are unable to attain Yamantaka's enlightenment within this lifetime, due to harnessing the practice of AH, after we die, it will bring us into Amitabha's Pure Land. This is one of the most powerful forms of prevention for from falling into the lower realms. Once we obtain Amitabha's Pure Land, we will never fall back into the lower realms by the force of karma and delusion; we will be able to travel to hundreds of Buddha realms to receive direct teachings, empowerments, initiations, oral transmissions and blessings and

within a very short time, attain Yamantaka's enlightenment there. It has this much effect!

As a Trantric practitioner, especially as a HYT practitioner, every single substance that we taste in our mouth, every single material used by our body, such as ornaments (earrings, necklace, ring etc) including the clothes we wear, we should first bless them by saying OM AH HUM. If we do not do this, we (are treating these items as ordinary items) and thus commit the Tantric gross transgression called "bombo" which is regarded as very high negative karma (of failing to relate everything we engage with to the Buddha-deity). Therefore, whatever we taste, including a drop of water or even one grain of rice or wear even one small ornament or clothing, they have to be blessed by OM, AH, HUM. Therefore, in our daily life, we have to make sure OM, AH, HUM is recited at least three times. If one is able to remember the meanings of the OM, AH, HUM, and think of the ornaments we wear as that of the deity and create nectar to offer to the self-generation deity, that would be a great practice. If not, at least use the mantra. Since the mantras have the power to bring about this transformation, it is highly advised that one uses this OM AH HUM blessing mantra to avoid committing Tantric transgressions.

After we have received the Initiation, i.e. the permission to enter into the Buddha-deity's mandala and the permission to do the practices in relation to the Buddha-deity, we have to remain in self-generation state. We should not for even one single moment, live without being in the self-generation state. Because of that, whatever we taste, whatever we wear, is supposed to be used by the Buddha-deity. In this way, it makes sense to do the OM AH HUM blessing when we go about using our daily life objects.

If we forget to live in the self-generation, again we commit a downfall. **Therefore, it is imperative that we must constantly maintain the awareness of our own self-generated deity form with all the positive qualities of the Buddha-deity.** Therefore, by using OM, AH, HUM, we avoid committing transgressions and at the same time, it reminds us to remain in our self-generated Buddha deity form. The benefit is immeasurable. We have to remain in deity aspect every single moment, even during sleeping-time. Before going to sleep, we have to put our head on Guru Yamantaka's lap. The thing is, who knows, you might obtain enlightenment during the sleeping period!

Up to this point, the actual sadhana has not started yet. The actual sadhana talks about the 3 kayas. That is the actual practice. **The 3 kayas teachings relate to using death, the intermediate stage and rebirth into** actualizing the resultant state of the 3 kayas of the Buddha, namely the Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya.

Whatever has been discussed so far requires intensive concentration and extensive practice. We have no choice. The important thing is to understand the meanings. We do not have to memorise the text. We can put the text aside and do the meditations. Only that part can be made easier. Other than that, there is no short cut. If somebody were to tell you “I forgot to do the sadhana but that is ok, isn’t it?” You might be tempted to say, “Ya, I think its ok. But if you can do from tomorrow onwards, it’s alright. Do some Vajrasattva practice to purify”. Such words are just to comfort the other person. After all, it is not very nice to say to a newcomer, “If you don’t keep your commitments and break the samaya, you will go into vajra hell”. But it is true, you know. (Laughter). Just like yesterday’s teaching on the effects of criticizing one’s Guru and getting angry with one’s Guru. When Vajrapani asked the question, “If you get angry or have negative thoughts towards your Guru even for one second, what kind of karma will you experience?” Shakyamuni Buddha replied “Do not ask this type of question, you won’t be able to bear to hear the consequence of such an action.” Later it was explained that Buddha was pointing to a hell even lower than vajra hell. Generating anger towards the Guru even for one moment, will result in being born into that kind of hell which is so frightening that you cannot even mention its name.

Question: When we shower or shampoo our hair, must we recite OM, AH, HUM?

Geshela: Yes, yes, yes, definitely. Every single thing we do needs to be in relation to Yamantaka. Whatever persons we encounter, should perceive them as Yamantaka. Whatever environment you are in, you should view it as Yamantaka’s mandala.

You should regard that this practice of maintaining the self-generation state is one of the most powerful practice to actualize equanimity and purify the anger, attachment and ignorance towards different beings. By viewing every single

being as equal to Yamantaka, there will be no opportunity to differentiate between people as “This person is close to me; that person is my enemy; that person is a stranger”. Further, this will cause great mindfulness and one that will not allow the arising of anger, attachment or ignorance. If every single moment, one thinks “Yes, I am Yamantaka, with all his qualities” it becomes so powerful a practice because you are in full concentration. You need to have divine-pride when practicing Yamantaka or any Buddha deity. Divine-pride is not the ordinary pride and arrogance that comes from delusion. It is a state of concentration which holds oneself as having all the positive qualities of Buddha Yamantaka all the time. The moment you think that you are not Yamantaka, you degenerate into ordinariness. Thus, you need to have divine pride. Whenever you think you are Yamantaka, when the object of anger comes in front of you, Yamantaka will not respond negatively towards this object of anger, so naturally your anger will cease. Such a powerful transformation technique. This way, we will not be fussy and complaining about this food is good, that food is not good. (Laughter) Of course, this is not easy. This is the practice we have to put effort in. Whatever clothes you wear, regard it as an offering to Yamantaka. Even one’s spectacles – no doubt, Yamantaka does not wear spectacles (laughter) but the point is you need to develop the habit of making offerings and could regard the spectacles as an ornament to be offered to Yamantaka.

Student: Geshela, all this while, I have not been practicing formally. Could you advise me on the method to purify the past mistakes? Looks like I’ll fall into the unmentionable hell that is worse than the vajra hell!

Geshela: (Laughter) No, no, no. Ha! Ha! There is Vajrasattva practice. Hopefully, it will take care of it. The Vajrasattva practice in there, is a unique one. It is not like the usual Vajrasattva practice. It has a unique visualization. It will bring about the great purification of broken samayas. It is specially dedicated for that.

Up to this point, one has performed the self-generation, created the nectar, so the next step is to offer it to the Buddha deity. Recite OM, AH, HUM using the same visualization on emptiness.

OM, AH, HUM (3x)

OM SHRIH SHTRIH VIKRITA NANA HUNG PHAT.

*OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA
SHUDDHO HAM*

Everything becomes void; From the state of emptiness, from AH comes broad and expansive skullcups, inside of which are HUMs. The HUMs melt and become the individual offerings, which by nature have the three special features.

After offering the blessed nectar, you should offer the individual offerings such as the 8 offerings to the self-generated Yamantaka. That too needs to be actualized through emptiness.

First of all, bring about the skullcup through the syllable AH, which is vast and extensive. Inside the skullcup contains the syllable HUM and that syllable HUM melts (inside the skullcup) and becomes the individual offerings. Offering of the 3 nectars, flower, incense, light, food and music - argham, padyam, gandhe, pushpe, dhupe aloke, naividya and shapta. While you are reciting this, you offer each of the offerings to the self-generated Yamantaka. Here, we have to make sure that one should not have the ordinary perception of oneself nor these offerings. One must have divine pride that oneself is really Yamantaka and have grand pride that the offerings are actually nectar which have the 3 features of:

- The first feature is that its nature is one of great bliss and emptiness.
- The second is that all are in the aspect of nectar.
- The third is that it has the function of bringing great bliss to the holy guests such as oneself as Yamantaka. And later, when we make the front-generation offerings, these 3 features should be actualized.

The function of nectar is to bring great bliss to the guest, namely to oneself as the self-generated Yamantaka or to the front-generation Yamantaka or to the 10 direction Buddhas who are in the aspect of Yamantaka. Or you may want to make offerings to the numberless beings who have just obtained Yamantaka state. All these should be actualized with these 3 features.

In the next session, we will get into the actual sadhana.

Student: Geshela, during the refuge practice when we dissolve the Guru into light, what colour is the light that one should visualize?

Geshela: I think more likely bright golden-white colour. Some people visualize dark-blue light when they are generating a strong visualization of Yamantaka's physical form.

Student: When I do my sadhana, how do I move back to Yamantaka state from Vajrayogini?

Geshela: I see. It is something like doing the mantra recitation. Different mantras have different seed syllables. Like you are doing Vajrayogini practice, the self-generated Vajrayogini dissolves into Yamantaka and then arises as Yamantaka. Like BAM transforming into HUNG. Now you want to do the four activities in your daily life based on Yamantaka, so your seed syllable mind BAM, transforms and manifests into HUNG.

During night time, you want to practice as Vajrayogini. Your self-generation of Yamantaka in the day time transforms into Vajrayogini. It is not necessarily to do the purification part during this. Normally, if you are self-generating Vajrayogini, make the label, everything, into emptiness. From the emptiness arises syllable HUNG, from which gradually arises Yamantaka. Then night time comes, Yamantaka is empty and your mind gradually forms Vajrayogini. So you can do either or vice-versa.

Student: Geshela, back to the image of Yamantaka with one face and two arms. Must it appear like Yamantaka's face?

Geshela: Exactly the same. Non-human, with the 2 horns and the buffalo-face of the 13-face Yamantaka's central figure.

Student: Geshela, how do you train the mind always remain in divine pride? That is hard to do but is there a way that we can train our mind?

Geshela: We should try to remind ourselves by remembering the Guru or remembering the Yidam throughout your day. Train to think that whatever appears, one remains as the Buddha-deity. Or you could continuously think of the syllable OM. Somehow, one tends to remember a particular syllable of a particular mantra. So you could use that as a reminder of the deity. Whenever I remember the syllable, I remember the self-generation. It depends on the individual's experience.

The best thing is to the sadhana in the morning. The moment we wake up, if there are no disturbances, like children, friends, companions, open your eyes and straight away do the self-generation, even if one cannot do the whole sadhana. Remain in self-generation because you self-generated at night before going to bed. Just remind yourself, "I am Yamantaka" with all the Buddha qualities and that kind of pride is divine pride. It is not ordinary pride because when you are in the aspect of Yamantaka, you are the most humble, most gentle being, with your speech, your body, your mind soft, contented, humble.

There is the danger for the divine pride to degenerate into ordinary pride. For example, we might look down on those we regard as lower practitioners or newcomers. That's the danger. If you are true Yamantaka practitioner, in the mode of self-generation or in the mode of front-generation, when we interact with people, it will always be with respect and pure view. No matter how negative the person may appear from his/her side but from your side, it should be one of total purity because you have divine-pride, free of ignorance, anger and attachment. Divine pride is the antidote for the ordinary pride. You can see the yogis who are great Tantric practitioners. They purposely remain in the worst clothes, worst environment and appear very ragged. Yet in their hearts, they are in total bliss as they are one with the Deity and in full care and respect of all living beings around them. To them, every single place is a pure land, every single living being is an enlightened being, a Yamantaka or

a Vajrayogini. They place themselves as the lowest. Therefore, deity-yoga practice is a form of mind training practice and much more powerful and effective than Lojong practice.

Student: Can you explain front-generation?

Geshela: Front-generation is whatever deity you visualize in front of you.
Self-generation is yourself arising as a deity.

The extensive self-generation (The actual sadhana practice)

This is where the main Yamantaka sadhana starts and here is where it focuses on the three kayas. The three kayas is the core practice of the extraordinary Highest Yoga Tantra practice. The HYT is distinguished from Sutra by the practice of bringing the future results (Buddhahood) into the present path. The three kayas mean using the stages of death, the intermediate state and rebirth in one's Path to enlightenment by transforming **death** into the DHARMAKAYA; the intermediate state/**bardo** into SAMBHOGAKAYA and **rebirth** as the NIRMANAKAYA.

In order for us to get into the understanding of the three kayas, first of all we need to know the general teachings on generation stage and how to bring about the causal stage of practicing the purification of the 3 bases namely, death, intermediate stage and rebirth, in order to bring about the attainment of the resultant dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya.

In Buddhist Tantra there are four types of tantra, corresponding to the practitioner's ability which are:-

- (1) Action Tantra;
- (2) Performance Tantra;
- (3) Yoga Tantra; and
- (4) Highest Yoga Tantra (HYT)

The consistent and pure practice of any of the 4 types of tantra can bring about enlightenment. The HYT's main focus is to purify or stop (ordinary) death, intermediate state and rebirth by transforming these three bases of into the three bodies/aspects of the Buddha and hence achieve enlightenment.

This is done through the series of yoga which allows the practitioner to gain control over the process of death, the intermediate state and rebirth. This brings about the total liberation from the obscuration to enlightenment. Since these yogas are based on Highest Yoga Tantric practice on simulating death, it is vital for the practitioner to know how a human being dies, i.e. the stages of the death process. This is based on the text known as the Collective Explanations on the Theory of the Womb. The life of the mind depends on

the power of the inner wind energy which every single being possesses.

In order to bring about a virtuous direction for our consciousness during the death process, the inner wind energy has to be influenced by the positive energy.

Therefore, the study of the death process for the HYT practitioner is to study the inner winds, which the consciousness rides upon.

In the Tantric Medical Theory, the inner wind comprises of **five root winds**. It is important to know of the existence and functions of these inner winds that support the life of the body and the bodily functions. Inner winds are essential for the functioning of our body and mind. Their main role, however, is to act as mounts for the various minds (different thoughts like virtue, non-virtue neutral). Therefore, it is very necessary for us to know about these inner winds in order for us to gain control over the winds and consequently, control over our consciousness and its direction. for the purpose of purifying the stage of ordinary death, intermediate state and rebirth into three states or three bodies of the Buddha.

- (1) The first one is called the “**Life Bearing Wind**”. It abides at the **heart** and it supports life. Its function is cause the activity of inhalation and exhalation, as well as burping and the force behind our expelling saliva.
- (2) The second one is labeled as the “**Upward Moving Wind**.” This wind moves in an upward motion. It ascends from the bottom of the body towards the upper parts and resides at the **throat**. This wind moves around the throat and mouth. It causes the activity of speech, swallowing of food & drink and saliva. This wind affects the function of one’s different joints.
- (3) The third one is called the “**Pervasive Wind**”. It abides at the **crown of the head**. As its name suggests, it pervades the entire body, particularly the three hundred and sixty joints and supports general movement. It functions to enable the body to move. Without this wind, we would be completely immobile. Thus, it allows physical movement, stretching and bending of the limbs, opening and closing of the mouth and eyelids.

- (4) The fourth one is called “**Fire Dwelling Wind**”. This wind sits on the **third stage of the stomach**, at the navel area and it moves throughout the internal organs such as the heart, lung, liver, bladder as well as through the inner channels in different limbs and thereby brings about the movement of heat). This wind facilitates the digestion of our food and drink, brings the nutrients to different part of the bodies and also refines bodily waste products such as urine.
- (5) The fifth one is called the “**Downward Void Wind**”. It abides at the **lower abdomen**. It moves in the area of the lower abdomen and also moves about in the womb, seminal vessel, urinary bladder and so forth. It functions to hold and release urine, faeces, sperm and menstrual blood.

We need to have a general idea of these five root winds and their functions, in order to be able to engage in the practice of drops and channels. In order to perform purification using drops and channels, first we need to be able to activate and direct those inner winds. Therefore it is necessary for us to know more about the five root winds.

From the practice of the HYT, the practitioner causes these winds in their causal subtle form to dissolve into the very subtle life bearing wind at the heart chakra. Through the use of Tantric meditative techniques, one aims to bring all the inner winds that reside in all parts of the body into the Life-Bearing Wind at the centre of the heart channel wheel (heart chakra).

This has a great effect on the practice of the three kayas. It is necessary for us to be familiar with the different movements of these winds and also the arrangement of the channels, since it is through gaining control over the winds and drops flowing through these channels that the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness will be accomplished.

Having a clear understanding of the placement of the channels, the moving winds and the drops cannot be over-emphasized as it will greatly benefit us when we progress on to meditate on the body mandala. When we perform the body mandala practice, through the force of concentration, we will be able to penetrate the chakras at various places along the channels) which has the effect of activation of the inner winds and therefore the mind.

Teachings on the channels, drops and winds in themselves have no great significance. However, they **become profound practices only when they are motivated by bodhicitta and conjoined with a realization of emptiness.**

There are 72,000 different channels within our body, including the three main ones, namely the central channel which is flanked on both sides (with no intervening space) by the left and right channels. These three channels are straight and adjacent to one another. The left and right channels wrap/coil around the central channel at various major places, thereby forming the so called channel-knots (chakras). These knots constrict the central channel. At each of these places where the channel knots occur except at the heart level, there is one twofold knot formed by a single coil of the right channel and a single coil of the left. They wrap/coil around the central channel by crossing in front and looping around it. At the heart level, there is a sixfold knot formed by three overlapping loops of each of the flanking channels. This is the most difficult knot to loosen, but when it is loosened (through meditation) we developed great mental power namely the realization of the clear light mind. At each of these various major channel-knots, a different number of spokes or petals, branch off from the central channel.

The central channel (tsa-uma) begins at the forehead, at the point between the eyebrows and ascends in an arch to the crown of the head. From there, it descends to the spinal cord in a straight line to the space in between the anus and the tip of sex organ. The central channel is of a clear crystal-like nature, not in any way heavy or solid. It is very smooth and soft. We should visualize the central channel as being closer to our back, a little bit in front of our spine. On the basis of the bodhicitta aspiration and understanding emptiness, by activating the winds and channels, one is able to bring about the melting of the drops at the crown, which can bring about the attainment of great bliss and emptiness.

So from here, we can establish that the melting of the drops at the crown, the white substance brings about the bliss of the different stages up to the tip of the secret organ but without release of body fluid. Great bliss is experienced at this point and that energy is retained. The process is then reversed from great bliss backwards as well as transmitting of bliss into the different channels including the 72 thousands different channels throughout the whole body.

To begin with, we have to understand how the central channel manifests within our physical body so that we will be able to identify the chakras precisely. Along these three channels there are 7 chakras at various locations, each with a different number of spokes or petals. The **first chakra** is located at the **forehead (brow/ajna chakra)**, which has a certain number of spokes or petals. The next channel wheel is at the top of the **crown** (crown chakra) with 32 spokes. Next comes the **throat** (throat chakra) with 16 spokes, the **heart** (heart chakra) 8 spokes, the **solar plexus** (navel chakra) with 64 spokes, the **base of the spine** (secret chakra) with 32 spokes , and at the **sexual organ** (jewel chakra) has 8 spokes. There are some drawings from the texts which clearly illustrate channels and chakras. Here, you just have to reflect that within your body, those channels exist at those spots. When you want to do the meditation on wind, channel and drops, it will be more effective by knowing the precise location of the chakras.

In some teachings, the left and right channels are described as being wrapped/coiled around the central channel. The left and right channels are adjacent to each other and all three channels run straight up and parallel to one another. The effect of the left and right channels is to bring about the constriction of wind in the central channel. Therefore, one can picture it the left and right channels having a pressing effect on the central channel.

When death occurs, the wind that serves as the mount of the consciousness, dissolves into the wind in the left and right channels first. This, in turn dissolves into the wind in the central channel. When the wind in the left and right channel dissolves, they become “flattened” thereby releasing the pressure they previously asserted onto the central channel, which in turn allows more movement of the wind within the central channel. This induces the activation of the subtle-mind. Letting the winds enter into the central channel, actualizes our subtle-mind. This experience is felt by every single being without exception. When this dissolution occurs to the ordinary person, it brings great fear as they feel they are being completely annihilated.

As for the yogi, especially the HYT practitioner, he will use this experience of the activated subtle-mind in the spiritual path. Instead of being fearful, the practitioner uses the subtle-mind to engage in the practice of purifying the three bases of death, the intermediate state and rebirth.

Most ordinary persons are completely overwhelmed by fear at this time. However, for the yogi, whenever the gross mind subsides and the subtle mind arises, the yogi knows that this is the time when the winds are moving within the central channel and that because of that, there will be the sensation of being annihilated. The yogi will then remember that one should not be fearful but use this subtle-mind actualize the path by using the techniques of the HYT.

The root substances namely, the white and red drops, which we received from our father and mother at the onset of conception, resides within the central channel, upon which every act of our physical and mental activities (inclusive our health condition) are derived.

These white and red drops reside at two different places within the central channel. The **root essence from father** which brings about **the white drop** which has the ability of increasing the white drops in our body, reside at the **crown (crown chakra)**; and the **red drops, the root essence from mother**, resides at the navel chakra central and has the ability to increase the red drops.

The white drop which has the ability to increase is able to produce the (seminal fluid) drops and again the red drop produces the blood (during menstruation). The subtle and fused red and white drops however, is called the indestructible drop and resides at the heart charka.

Student: It was mentioned that the white drop will increase. What does it mean by “increase”?

Geshela: Increase means the ability to produce more drops i.e. more white drops means an increase in seminal fluid and more red drops means an increase in menstrual blood. Men and women possess both the white and red drops. The man has more white drops and the woman has more red drops.

Student: The white is for the white drop. The red is for the red drop. Isn’t the melting of the white and red drops is supposed to bring about great bliss?

Geshela: Ah, that one will come later. Ha, Ha. We will discuss later.

This **indestructible drop** that abides at the **centre** of the heart channel wheel within the central channel it the size of a small pea. Some texts described it as the size as of a mustard seed. Many of the lamas liken it to a grain of the Indian red dhall. The red dhall is smaller than the black dhall. The shape of the indestructible drop is slightly flat and roundish. Many lamas say it is half-moon shape. Whatever, it is not necessary that every human must have the same size or shape. Different texts have different versions.

The indestructible drop is a mixture of white and red and hence pinkish in colour. However, the top part of the drop is more prominently white and the bottom half-part more reddish. The reason why it is called the indestructible drop is because the moment when we were conceived in our mother's womb, these two subtle drops (the white drop and the red drop), the substances which come from our parents, come together in union. When the cells of our mother and father came together, they contained delicate, clear, essential drops of energy and formed a kind of oyster, joined at the base and opened at the top. The moment the consciousness enters there, the oyster closes and the consciousness remain inside. It remains closed up to the moment of death. It opens at the first entry of life (of consciousness) and it again opens at the departure of the mind (during death-time). During the period in-between (between life and death), nothing can destroy it. It remains inside the indestructible drop.

The practice of transferring of consciousness also known as *powa*, is about opening this "oyster" indestructible drop.

In the Vinaya Sutra, it is stated that the mind that enters into the indestructible drop is called the spirit of the mind. We can also refer to it simply as "mind". Mind **is very subtle and is in the manner of an inner wind**. This Life-Bearing Wind, which is clear and capable of cognition moves about like the wind. At the time of death, all the inner winds ultimately dissolve into this Life Bearing Wind and right there, the experience of the clear light of death manifests.

In order to actualize the clear light mind, we have to bring all the inner winds, the gross winds and the winds within the three channels, including all the winds which were described before, the different stages of winds, **into the central channel and dissolve them into the Life Bearing Wind which**

is within the indestructible drop. The moment the winds enters there, it brings about the clear light experience and that why they call it the clear light of death. The consciousness of the volume of grossness and subtleness depend on the rider of the horse. One's consciousness, whether the gross aspect or the subtle aspect, functions on the basis of the inner wind. That is why consciousness/mind is said to be the rider of the horse (inner winds). Death begins with the sequential dissolution of the four elements, earth, water, heat and wind. The earth element refers to the solid part of the body, such as bones, teeth and nails etc. And the dissolution of the wind means that the wind is no longer capable to act as the mount of the consciousness. At the time of death, this loss of ability of the inner winds to support the consciousness, induces radical changes that the consciousness experiences.

What happens to the elements of the body with regards to the inner winds is this. When the earth element (solid aspects of one's body) dissolves, the inner wind which supports that element, ceases. The consciousness supporting the next element becomes increasingly manifest. The ceasing of the capacity of one element, followed by the greater manifestation of another element is called dissolution. It does not mean the earth element "melts" and becomes water. It is a matter of experiencing one element as becoming weaker and the next element becoming more prominent. In other words, when the "earth element" diminishes, the next element (water) is perceived more clearly. It is the same with regards to the dissolution of the other elements. The dissolution of the elements brings with it external sensations and internal signs and are associated with the decline of the aggregates and the effect on the different stages of wisdom.

The Stages of Dissolution During the Death Process

(1) First stage of simultaneous dissolution (simultaneous because many aspects of the dying person are degenerating at the same time)

The factor or element that dissolves first is the “earth element”, the aggregate of form. The external sign is that one’s body becomes very thin, with the limbs being loosened, one’s body is very heavy as if sinking beneath the earth or as if the whole mountain is pressing onto you or that you have fallen into the crater after an earthquake, sinking deeper and deeper into the hole, ambushed by colossal broken pieces of mountain rocks of various sizes. These are the external signs.

The internal sign is that one starts to have inner visions like mirage, the appearance of shimmering water in the distance. If you happen to go to the desert in the very hot sun, when you look on the sand in the distance, there appears an image of a pool of water there. This is only the reflection of the sun onto the sand. The inner vision of appearance of mirage is the first sign to occur when the death process begins.

At the same time, the basic mirror-like wisdom that we have i.e. the ordinary consciousness that is able to perceive many objects simultaneously starts to degenerate.

When this basic mirror-like wisdom degenerates, one’s sight becomes unclear and dark. Objects of sight cannot be seen clearly and it’s not because we watched too much television or at the computer too much. Here it is a natural, physical experience degeneration of that occurs during the death process.

Corresponding to this, the five senses also degenerate alongside the dissolution process. The first one is the eye sense. The external sign is one cannot open or close the eyes easily. At the time of dying, once you open your eyes, you don’t have the strength to close them. Once you close them, you don’t have the strength to open them again. The ability of the eye senses to focus on the colour and shape of objects is diminished.

As a reminder, you have already generated yourself as Yamantaka because you had to perform the blessing of the inner offering and offering of the

eight offerings to one's self-generation, as well as the front-generation. Therefore, we are already in the mode of the self-generated Yamantaka deity. Next you, the self-generated deity Yamantaka, emanate infinite light rays to the entire universe and the beings therein. The moment this light touches the environments and the inhabitants therein, they are transformed into Yamantaka mandalas and Yamantakas respectively. They then dissolve into light and this light dissolves into you and you likewise dissolve from the crown down to the heart and upwards from the toes, to the heart. Knowing that at the heart centre is where the syllable HUNG resides, the HUNG which is your mind, you should think and feel with **divine pride**, "Yes, I have achieved the state of dharmakaya" – this is the time the internal sign of appearance of mirage occurs.

The above is the shortest stage of meditation on the first kaya. You have to do this. Otherwise, the actual Yamantaka practice of the sadhana will not serve the purpose. That is the very simple practice of the first kaya - the Dharmakaya - which one is encouraged to practice at the time of death and the dissolutions.

The 8 Stages of Dissolution with
the practice of the 3 Kayas



Illustration by Geshe Tenzin Zopa

OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HAM

While reciting this mantra, one has to engage in the meditation on the death-process, as well as the purification of the three bases of purification (death, intermediate state and rebirth), which brings about the purification of death. This then brings about the causal stage of the **sambhogakaya**.

Familiarizing ourselves with the death-process is the causal stage practice to bringing about the grand pride of being in the sambhogakaya form in the causal stage . By meditating on the death process and all the related experiences described above, after processing these different stages of dissolution, we will arrive at the moment where one achieves the clear light mind. Here we are still at the 1st dissolution - that's the time one should feel that "I am the " dharmakaya" (wisdom-body) aspect of Yamantaka". I have actualized the vajra body, vajra speech and vajra mind of Yamantaka. So oneself gaining divine pride during the training stage is called the causal stage of attaining the dharmakaya and this serves the purpose of actualizing the resultant state of achieving the actual dharmakaya body.

Next one as Yamantaka dissolves into the syllable HUNG which is in the centre of one's heart. Now we go to the second dissolution.

(2) Second stage of simultaneous Dissolution

Now at the time of the second stage of simultaneous dissolution, one visualizes the "oo" (that part of the syllable marked as No: 1 in the diagram) dissolves upwards into syllable "ha".

The second dissolution is of the water element, giving way to the arising of the fire element. The external sign is that physically one's saliva, sweat, urine, blood and bodily fluids begin to dry up and one begins to feel very hot. At the same time, one will experience that oneself is being drawn into the ocean, with no escape, feeling totally helpless. You feel you are drowning, totally encircled by strong swirling energy of water, dragging you to the deepest bed of the ocean. There is no solid entity to hold onto, only water.

The internal sign or vision is the appearance of smoke, just like we see in the incense puja and how smoke appears.

In terms of the aggregates, the aggregate of feeling, namely that of pleasure, pain and neutrality (feelings of joy, suffering and indifference) are no longer felt. A sense of being totally blank is experienced.

The internal sign of the appearance of smoke correlates with the Basic Wisdom of Equality i.e. the ability of our ordinary consciousness to recognize pleasure, pain and neutrality. One feels detached from one's mind.

In terms of the five sense, the "ear sense" is dissolving. External sounds can no longer be heard and even the buzzing in the ears cease. One no longer hear external or internal sounds. At this time, the practitioner should remember that is the experience of the second stage of dissolution of the water element.

Instead of being overwhelmed by fear when experiencing these signs, one should transform them into the practice. When the vowel "oo" dissolves into syllable "ha", at that time one should think that oneself is Yamantaka dissolving into syllable HUM.

(3) Third stage of simultaneous dissolution

The involves the dissolution of the fire element, giving way to the wind element.

The external sign is that one cannot digest food or drinks. The digestion process becomes incapacitated because the fire element is beginning to disintegrate, giving way to the wind element. At this time, one is no longer mindful of even close relationships because the aggregate of discrimination (which enables us to recognize people and our relationship with them) degenerates at this stage. One will not even remember one's family members nor the most loved one. You are totally cut-off from those memories. One loses the capacity to distinguish between close relatives, friends and other people; one forgets the names of people and objects.

The internal sign is the appearance of fireflies or the sparks within the smoke.

Like when we do Incense Puja, one can clearly see sparks within the smoke.

Here, the basic wisdom of analysis which in our ordinary consciousness is able to recognize and distinguish between persons and the level of closeness, remember names and so forth, is lost. At that time, even if you wanted to call somebody or wanted to send a last message, you would not be able to remember the name nor the number.

In terms of the senses, the nose sense degenerates. Inhalation becomes weak and exhalation becomes stronger and longer. If you look at a dying person, the inhalation tends to be very short but the exhalation is very long. I have this problem. I don't know whether this is called problem or not. Sometime ago, perhaps 2-3 years ago, I thought I was already experiencing death, as my inhalation was very short and exhalation very long. I thought, maybe my life is going to be very short.

However, when I analysed and observed my other faculties, they were strong. So I thought perhaps it was just a health problem and not related to dying. If we check carefully, many of us are already having short inhalation and long exhalation! We should practice having longer inhalations and shorter exhalations.

Again at this time, the dying person is likely to be gripped with deep fear having seen all those internal and external signs. Instead of being overwhelmed by fear, one should again remind oneself of the practice which at this stage, has the syllable "ha" dissolving into the "horizontal line".

We have no choice but to experience these dissolutions. They are unavoidable. Therefore, we need to remind ourselves constantly of these dissolutions through the power of concentration and practice. This way, we will not be dominated by fear when the signs related to the various dissolutions at death-time arise.

Here, we are at the stage where the syllable 'ha' dissolves into the "horizontal line". After that, comes the fourth stage of simultaneous dissolution.

(4) Fourth stage of simultaneous dissolution

The factor dissolving here is the "wind element."

The external sign is that inhalation and exhalation ceases. This is because the inner winds begin to move towards the heart. At this time, the person will be declared medically dead (heart & breath stop). However, from the yogic point of view, the death process has not completed yet.

The internal sign is the appearance of a spluttering butter-lamp, that is reddish, very bright but whose flame is unsteady. It is reddish and very bright but unsteady. Some texts describe the appearance of the spluttering butter-lamp about to go out.

The **aggregate of compositional factors** degenerates.

The basic wisdom of achieving activities, i.e. our ordinary consciousness that is mindful of external activities, their purpose and so forth, completely ceases. Even if somebody wants to remind you of things or plays a CD of Amitabha mantra, there is no hearing sense. Someone may try to place a holy picture for you to see but no sight is possible.

The "tongue sense" degenerates. The external sign of this is that the tongue becomes thick and short. The root of the tongue becomes blue and the tongue shrinks. I saw this when my late master passed away. It shrank to the point where the tongue seemed totally lost. He reminded us that the appearance of mirage is appearing now. When mirage appears, most of us ordinary beings are already helpless and find it difficult to practice. That morning, my master's exhalation was very long and inhalation very short. I thought that he was already dying. We all rushed to Him and He said, "No. I will not die till tonight. Go back". That night, He was quite calm. He said, "The sign of mirage is appearing. Now we shall start the prayers. Sign of mirage is appearing." Even at this stage, His mind was very stable and clear. This is a very simple yet clear example that consistent and deep training in the causal stage presents great opportunities to actualize the resultant dharmakaya. He did it. He went into clear light meditation. I saw the tongue shrinking. I opened his mouth and could not see the tongue. However, during the cremation, the entire tongue was there! (Laughter). After cremation, amongst the ashes, the

whole tongue was there. It's amazing!

Student: If a person is in coma, will the person still experience all these signs.

Geshela: Whether one is in a coma or not, when death occurs, all the external and internal signs are experienced. The length of appearance of the signs can be long or short. For some people, it could even take months. That is why I said, it may be that we have already started. The moment we take birth, we are already heading towards death. Similarly with our skin. As the earth element dissolves, our skin becomes very rough, loose and very dry, requiring us to apply cream.

Student: A person who is clinically dead i.e. breathing has stopped, brain activity has stopped by earth element may still be intact - how would this person be aware of the external & internal signs?

Geshela: Although that person may not be able to experience things through the bodily senses, the subconscious mind remains alert in all these experiences. This brings a lot of fear and negative thoughts of anger, attachment or ignorance. The fear itself is negative. The practitioner should strive to remain steady, have a clear and concentrated mind that is undisturbed by the dissolutions.

(Continuation of the 4th stage of dissolution) At this stage of the sadhana, **this “horizontal line” dissolves into the “ crescent.”** Remember, this is your mind, the syllable HUNG is your mind, Yamantaka’s mind, the causal dharmakaya which has the potential to actualize the resultant dharmakaya. Therefore, one is presently training through one’s visualization to bring one nearer to the clear light mind, to attain the resultant dharmakaya. In order to actualize that, one has to bring it to the stage of emptiness.

In order to do that, even the seed syllable HUNG, which is the mind, has to dissolve in stages corresponding to the different stages of dissolution. **The fourth circle of simultaneous dissolution comes about when the horizontal line dissolves into the crescent.** The moment the **fourth circle** of simultaneous dissolution completes, the person is clinically dead. Inhalation and exhalation ceases.

The first four stages relate to the dissolution of the elements in relation to the body. The next 4 stages of dissolution relate to the dissolution in relation to consciousness.

The first three of the 4 remaining appearances are the white appearance, the red appearance and black near-attainment appearance, which appear before one gets into the clear-light mind stage. Just before the clear light mind stage, the 80 conceptual thoughts also dissolve (i.e. during the 7th stage).

(5) The fifth stage of simultaneous dissolution

Factor dissolving here is the mind of white appearance, where the wind in the right and left channels below the heart enter the central channel at the base of the spinal chord. The internal sign is of a very clear vacuity filled with white light.

At this point, the crescent of the syllable dissolves into the drop. At **that time one has to think that “I have achieved the vajra body of Yamantaka.” We have to remind ourself with full conviction that “I have achieved the vajra body of Yamantaka” and also to develop the divine pride then.**

(6) Sixth stage of simultaneous dissolution

At this time, one should remind that oneself is already clinically dead and that one is entering the sixth stage of dissolution, namely the mind of red appearance occur. That's the time, one should visualize the drop dissolving into the nada.

The sixth stage of simultaneous dissolution is described as **the mind of red increase** and the upper and lower winds gathering at the heart. The wind exerts force at the heart chakra. The upper wind moves in a clockwise circular movement and gradually goes downwards and the lower wind spirals upwards in anticlockwise motion and they simultaneously exert pressure on the indestructible drop at the **centre of the central channel**. To gauge where the location of the indestructible drop is, you need to measure from the crown up to the secret part. If we have inner wind imbalance, there is one particular

heart wind problem known as “nying loong”, where when one touches the area, it is very sensitive and very painful. Between the spinal vertebrae number 6-7, where the indestructible drop resides, if there is too much wind movement there, it causes tension, agitation, impatience, insomnia and it can hurt right there. It is not advisable to do acupuncture for that condition. It is better to do warm oil massage. There are two medicinal herbs known as “gonyeh” and “zati”. Crush them together and mix them with heated massage oil and apply it to this area. It will help and soothe your mind.

The internal sign, the vacuity is filled with redness. That's the time, the practitioner should remind oneself that the “drop” enters into the “nada” (spherical tail).

When **the sixth stage of simultaneous dissolution** occurs, the mind of red appearance arises and at that time, it is very important that one should think **one has achieved the vajra body**. After the dissolution comes, after training in the path of the HYT based on using the three kayas practice, based on Yamantaka, oneself dissolves into the syllable HUNG, then syllable HUNG having dissolved from no.1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 4-5, 5-6, 6-7, 7-8 as per the diagram here.

When the mind of red increases appears, when the upper and lower winds gather at the heart and dissolved into the ‘drop’ and the internal sign appears like the first vacuity filled with thick redness, internally swooning, at that time one has to remind oneself that the “drop” has entered into the “nada.” One has to think, “I have achieved the vajra speech. I have definitely obtained the state of vajra speech of Yamantaka.” All these meditations must have the **divine pride**.

(7) **Seventh stage of simultaneous dissolution**

Then we come to the **seventh stage of simultaneous dissolution**, the mind of the black near-attainment. The cause of this appearance is due to the wind in the right and left channel **above** the heart, entering the central channel. During this process, all inner winds enter into the very subtle Life Bearing Wind in the central channel, into the indestructible drop at the heart. This is also the period where the 80 conceptual thoughts dissolve.

When the mind of black near attainment occurs, one should remind oneself to focus on the nada dissolving into emptiness. That is the time, one has to think, “I have obtained the vajra mind of Yamantaka” and generate divine pride.

As the black near-attainment begins to dissolve, the mind of the clear light of death arises. The appearance is like late dawn, clear, bright, without any signs of redness, white nor darkness. A sense of calm, soothing, bliss is experienced within the subtle mind. One needs to remember that the “nada” is dissolving into “emptiness”. And this point, the practitioner has to meditate and think, “I have actualized the resultant state of dharmakaya.” The practitioner then remains in clear light meditation. Here, the very subtlest mind experiences the feeling of bliss and that blissful mind recognizes the lack of inherent existence. **This combination of clear light meditation together with the blissful mind** is called the **union of great bliss and emptiness**. The practitioner can remain in this meditation for one day, two days, three days, one week, 10 days or more. It is up to the practitioner. This is the time that can be used by the practitioner to realize emptiness directly.

At this stage, one is not merely influenced by meditation on emptiness but is totally immersed in the actual realization of emptiness/the absence of inherent existence, coupled with bliss. The union of great bliss and emptiness is the actual dharmakaya .

If one wants to be able to engage in the longer process of the dharmakaya meditation, we first need to train in familiarizing oneself with the stages of dissolution. Try to recall the dissolutions with the corresponding internal and external signs, coupled with the practice of oneself dissolving into the HUNG and the HUNG dissolving from no.1-8.

As a summary, once the physical aggregates/elements have dissolved, the dissolutions relating to the consciousness begin. Upon the inception of the fifth stage of dissolution, the gross senses cease and the subtle ones manifest. First the gross thought processes cease; upon the arising of the mind of white appearance, the mental state experiences a vacuity filled by white light. Though free from gross thoughts, it remains dualistic and in turn dissolves into the heightened mind of the red (6th stage of dissolution) appearance, which then dissolves into the mind of black appearance (7th stage of dissolution).

(8) The eighth stage of simultaneous dissolution

Just before this point, all that appears is a vacuity filled by darkness during which the person goes through a sensation of inner unconsciousness. This thus leaves a totally non dualistic vacuity, bringing forth **the 8th stage of simultaneous dissolution, namely the mind of clear light**, free from the white, red and black appearances. At this moment, the consciousness leaves the body. This is the completion of “death” according to the tantra teachings.

From the tantric perspective, the point of actual death is not linked to the inhalation and exhalation but to the appearance of the mind of clear light. Every person will experience these dissolutions and inner visions as well as this stage of lucid vacuity for up to three days or more or less depending on the practitioner. The clear light state is the experience which occurs after the death process is complete; clear light meditation is using that experience in the path. Although everyone will experience the clear light state, not everyone knows how to do the clear light meditation.

After the 8th stage of dissolution, when the consciousness departs from the body, there are external signs. They include the red drop in the form of blood from the nose or pinkish or cream discharge and the white drop in the form of a whitish-fluid discharge from the lower body. If the deceased person’s body was very weak, it is more likely that there will be the whitish discharge from the secret part/lower part of the body.

Until the consciousness leaves the body, there is a danger of the negative karma of destroying a human life, e.g. cremating or burying a body before actual death occurs. And in the case of a HYT practitioner who remains in the self-generation practice during the death process, if one interrupts that by arranging for the body to be cremated, there is the danger of destroying an enlightenment body. Likewise, there is the danger of drawing blood from a Buddha or Bodhisattva, as the practitioner might have been self-generating as a Buddha-deity. Therefore, until we see the signs, we have to be careful.

Prior to the consciousness leaving the body, any violent handling of the body will disturb the process of the death, possibly resulting in the lower rebirth for

the dying person, as well as the caretaker. Especially for those practitioners doing practice during the death process - if they were in the midst of clear light meditation - and you happened to disturb that practice before they finished their meditation, we would cause them to lose the greatest opportunity to attain enlightenment. Therefore if death happens to a Dharma brother or sister who practices HYT, it would be best if taken care of by those who are familiar with this practice. In fact, as a general rule, we should take care of each as advised by the teachings.

As a related point, we should not simply assume things. Since we know about this teaching on the dissolutions and signs of the consciousness leaving the body, we might think that once a deceased person remains after three days without any decay of the body, he must be getting into clear light meditation. If this is in fact the case, there is a danger of your committing the negative karma of lying because you have merely assumed that the person is already in clear light meditation, which is like saying that someone has achieved the direct realization of emptiness. Unless you know for sure, there is a danger of breaking the vow against lying. Therefore, we have to observe the deceased person's daily life to see whether the person was a serious practitioner or not, whether that person had qualities to have that kind of ability. Also, we cannot rely totally on ordinary appearances. A person practicing HYT need not be renowned as a very kind person because it is possible that due to the force of his past lifetime efforts, he is now able to engage in clear light meditation.

Thus, we have to be careful the things we speak of. Regarding relics. There might be the tendency of again make assumptions about relics. The moment you see round black bits amongst the ashes/bones, you assume it is relics. Or you notice white particles amongst the ashes, again you say it is a relic. I have encountered many people who claimed "My uncle produced so much relics". Who knows? That might have been the case but one needs to check carefully.

After the 8th stage of dissolution - When the clear light stage ceases

When the clear light ceases, the consciousness then goes through a reverse process, going through the same prior 7 stages of dissolution. Up till this point, I have been speaking on the meditation on the first kaya (Dharmakaya) i.e. transforming ordinary death into the path.

So far, I have been referring to engaging in the causal stages of the tantric path by meditating and visualizing on the death process and then using the clear light meditation to purify death to actualize the resultant state of the dharmakaya. This could happen now or during the time of sleeping or at the time of union with the release of the drop or at the time of dying during the experience of clear light.

Our present practice of the sadhana is training in the causal stage, which influences the actualization of the resultant stage of Buddhahood. This resultant stage can be gained at the time of death when one experiences the actual clear light stage. For most people, they go through all the dissolutions without choice nor control but as a practitioner, if we are able to utilise the HYT techniques of the union of great bliss and emptiness, that becomes the most powerful antidote for the subtlest defilement and this enable one to attain the resultant dharmakaya, which is the Buddhahood. The dharmakaya state is omniscience and has no form. It is the Buddha's wisdom body that can be perceived only by other Buddhas and not ordinary beings nor Bodhisattva aryas.

That is how many practitioners have realised enlightenment during the death process because they put great effort into the 3 kayas practice. Without such habituation, there will be no way for us to engage in such a practice because for most of us, we will be totally confused and lost at the time of death.

Further, the mind is subtle. If we do not habituate ourselves with the signs and dissolutions, these signs can be fearsome. All are illusions. You are lying on the bed but the appearance of the signs appear to you as real and generate so much fear, e.g. colossal mountains collapsing onto you. Even at the first dissolution, one can totally freak out, feel totally overwhelmed by fear and negativities. That is how one is thrown into the lower realms such as the hell realms, the hungry ghost realms and the animal realms.

When practicing HYT, one needs to have clear understanding of the stages of practice, namely the generation sage and the completion stage. These 2 stages operate as a cause and result. Completion stage is actualizing the resultant dharmakaya after accumulating all the causes of the buddhahood during the generation stage. Here we should feel how fortunate we are to

be able to access this extraordinary practice of the Highest Yoga Tantra. Whether we practice well or not, we will at least have the positive imprint. By understanding how to do the practice, the meanings behind the symbols and putting effort into the three kayas practice, we begin to cut the root of samsara.

One does not need to wait for aeons to practice this. With proper motivation, receiving proper initiations from a qualified vajra master with instructions, one should practice well these two stages (generation stage and completion stage). Then at the time of dying, we can perform those practices to guide ourselves. And especially if we live an ethical life, devote correctly to one's Guru and are really hardworking, we can actualize the two stages within this causal stage, right now, on this very cushion, within this lifetime.

The above practice of the first kaya is the simplest shortest version. When we recite **OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HAM**, we should do the practice of the first kaya. Later, you can through more detailed commentaries/explanations of this.

Now refer to the sadhana:

“OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HAM

Everything becomes void. From the state of voidness arise the vajra surface, fence, tent, and ceiling, together with a mountain of flames. Inside of this is the celestial mansion, which is square with four entranceways, in the centre of which, on a seat of a variegated lotus and moon and sun disk mandalas, I arise in the form of the causal vajra holder Manjushri.”

So here, from one's meditation on emptiness, we generate a Buddha form that can be seen. At this stage, we have to meditate on the **sambhogakaya**. Do the purification of the ordinary intermediate state and actualized the sambhogakaya. After the clear light stage ceases, the consciousness passes back through the other seven stages in reverse order and then enter into the intermediate state. Therefore, instead of the mirage appearing, we started with the clear light, followed by the radiant black sky, radiant red sky, radiant white sky, flame of butterlamp, fireflies, smoke and mirage. The 8 stages

of dissolution in total reverse. The moment one arrives at the mirage-vision stage, one has already entered the intermediate state (bardo).

Bardo-being: The person who has completed the death process is reborn into the intermediate state as a bardo being and its subtle body can go wherever it likes, through mountains, so forth, in search of a place to take rebirth. It travels unobstructed, except for two places namely Bodhgaya's stupa or holy image and the other is the future mother's womb. Other than these two objects, a bardo being can travel anywhere, traverse miles within a microsecond. The lifespan of the intermediate state can last for a period of 7 days depending whether or not it meets its karmically-linked parent-to-be. If they are not encountered within the first 7 days, the bardo being will undergo a small death, experiencing the 8 signs of the death process as outlined earlier. Then this being will again experience the 8 signs of dissolution in reverse order and be reborn in the second intermediate state. This can happen for a total of 7 rebirths in the intermediate state, making it 49 days during which time a realm of birth will be found.

Here, for the practitioner meditating in the clear light, experiences bliss and the blissful mind directly actualizes the emptiness of the void, which is in the union of great bliss and emptiness. Then from the state of voidness, one generates the arising of the vajra fence and the rest of the mandala, up to the visualization of oneself as the youthful Manjushri holding a sword, which is the sambhogakaya form. This is the second practice of the 3 kayas (the first kaya was dharmakaya, now samboghakaya).

In this **second kaya practice**, one actualizes oneself as the **sambhogakaya aspect** of the enlightened being (in present case, Manjushri). As mentioned before, the dharmakaya can only be perceived by other Buddhas. Even the arya Bodhisattvas cannot perceive the dharmakaya. In this regard, one could say that its benefit cannot be directly understood. Since the purpose of all Dharma practice is to benefit numberless beings, it is beneficial for oneself to actualize the form body of the Buddha. The sambhogakaya is one of the form bodies of the Buddha. In order to do that in the causal stage of practice during the death process, one needs to purify the ordinary intermediate stage. To do this, one uses visualisation to generate the mandala of the enlightened sambhogakaya form, with the lotus, moon disc and sun disc in the centre of the mandala with the Buddha-deity seated upon it. At this stage, think

“I arise as Manjushri, 2 arms, holding a sword and holding a text, glorious and youthful, in the aspect of a 16 year old”. By doing this visualization with the altruistic motivation to appear in a form to benefit sentient beings, one is able to purify the intermediate state and obtain the sambhogakaya enlightenment.

When we talk about the visualization or creation of the mandala, when you refer to the long Yamantaka sadhana, it is very elaborate. When we practice this condensed version of the sadhana, we still need to visualize all the mandala’s details like the vajra fence, vajra tent, vajra ceiling. One should visualise every single aspect of the mandala being totally made up of vajras. Every single space, every single segment of the surface is also made of vajras. The mandala ceiling is also a vajra ceiling. Inside the celestial mansion of Manjushri, every single aspect is constructed by varying sizes of vajras. When you joined two vajras together, the hollow space is also filled by smaller vajras. Not an atom of space is left unfilled with vajras, such that from outside, you cannot see through the impenetrable numbers of vajras. Even the great wind would be unable to enter it. You should construct your Yamantaka mandala like that. When you look into the real sadhana, inner fence, outer fence, 4 gates, vajra fence, fire fence and cemetery, all are made up of vajras. When you touch the vajra, it is soft but firm. Not like a metal vajra which could hurt someone if we hurled it at someone. The vajras which make up the mandala are very soft, sponge-like, yet stable, firm and sturdy. Nothing can destroy them. Indestructible. Even the great wind of the end of the era which is capable of destroying the entire universe, cannot affect the vajra mandala.

During the sambhogakaya practice, the second kaya practice, the single-pointed meditation on the creation of this mandala of vajras, is the best creation protection for oneself. It is more potent than mantra protection. Wherever you go and whatever you do, no spirit can harm you and even if the whole world is consumed by fire, you will be untouched by the fire. If you happen to be at a place where it is afflicted by flood, the water current will not carry you away. You become indestructible. This is because you are in centre of the mandala and every single aspect of the mandala contains the vajra protection.

“From my heart as clearly appearing hero Manjushri, light rays

emanate and bringforth all the sugata buddhas in the aspect of glorious Vajrabhairava. They dissolve into me. I completely transform into the resultant vajra holder, the great and glorious Vajrabhairava, with a dark blue-black body, nine faces, thirty-four arms, and sixteen legs. I am standing with my right legs bent and my left legs outstretched.”

Now we come to the practice of the **third kaya**, the meditation of “**nirmanakaya**.” As explained above, the ordinary intermediate state, one remains until one finally meets one’s karmically-linked parents-to-be. This period could range from 7 to a maximum of 49 days.

Let’s take the example of one being reborn as a human being. As explained, one will experience the reverse process of the 8 stages of dissolution. Conception or the arising a human being occurs at the moment the mother and father substances are unified and consciousness enters.

Now, again using the HYT practice by purifying the basis (in this case, the base of rebirth) one should engage in the practice of **third kaya**, namely the **nirmanakaya**. When arriving at the line in the sadhana which states, “From my heart, clearly appears Manjushri “ which is the sambhogakaya aspect, light rays emanate to all the Buddhas and all the Buddhas manifest into **Yamantaka** . The light then hooks back and dissolves into oneself. As the sambhogakaya Manjushri, one then completely transforms into the resultant Yamantaka and the great glorious Vajrabaivara which is Yamantaka, with dark-blue body, 9 faces, 34 arms, 16 legs, right leg bend, left leg outstretched. By generating the nirmanakaya in this way, one purify birth.

As described before, one can also add after visualizing oneself as Manjushri emanating light towards the Buddhas who then transform into Yamantakas and the light rays return and dissolve into you and transforming you into Yamantaka, you again emanate light rays to all the beings and all environments, transforming them into Yamantakas and Yamantaka mandalas respectively and the lights absorb back into you.

The process of dissolution during death from stages 1 to 8 in a reverse way can also be experienced during orgasm, during sleeping time or even experienced in a dream, though not necessarily in a very complete form. This is how the practice of dream yoga comes about. When we go to sleep,

we simulate the process the same as when we die, clearly visualizing the exact process. When we wake up, we train our minds to visualize the 8 stages in reverse. In the practices of the generation and completion stages of Highest Yoga Tantra, the uncontrolled process of death, intermediate state and rebirth are ultimately purified. The most subtle mental state namely that of the “clear light” is eventually used as a basis of the compassionate mind without relying on the gross mind. The actual achievement of these practices would be beyond those who have not cultivated compassion/bodhicitta mind realizing emptiness not learned the technique of deity yoga. The meditative appearance of the compassionate/bodhicitta mind realizing the emptiness IS the deity. So here, certain text, they use as a compassion. During the clear light mind, the bodhicitta mind is the one that is in the state of bliss which directly perceives the lack of inherent existence/emptiness.

Student: About the reverse dissolution of the sambhogakaya, we do it after “OM SUBHAWA HUM” When do we come in ? Everything becomes void or.....

Geshela: First you have to do the motivation to actualize the sambhogakaya form. Then from the state of emptiness, one starts to create the mandala beginning with the vajra fence and so on, so that's the time that oneself experiences the reverse dissolution.

Student: When we visualize during the void

Geshela I see. In the second kaya practice, the visualization of the dissolutions is not as extensive as the first kaya. In the second kaya, one is just gets a glimpse of the stages of dissolution. The reverse dissolution process almost just appears. After that arises the DEITY very quickly. As long as you know the clear light has ceased, it means you are already experiencing the reversal process.

Student: From the sambhogakaya stage to the nirmanakaya, does the dissolution process again occur?

Geshela: Yes and very quickly. First from the intermediate state, the dissolution process begins and then goes into reverse in the manner of a child being conceived.

Student: Does the dissolution process in reverse have to be very detailed?

Geshela: Not necessary. It would appear but very quickly. So, when one knows when the clear light stage has ceased, one is born into the intermediate state but in the second kaya practice, instead of focusing on the stages of dissolution, one straightaway generates the sambhogakaya form.

Student: It appears as a HUM ?

Geshela: No. The sambhogakaya form is Manjushri. Like the mirage, then the smoke- appearance up to the clear light, all these stages are done very briefly and in quick succession. Of course, if you want to go detailed like the long sadhana, then you can visualize on top of the sun disc, then you visual the syllable HUNG, then from syllable HUNG the (dissolution)stages of the syllable HUNG, then from there the limbs of the deity are constructed, then from the limbs, then you visualize the implements. So you can do that. But the simple way is like this.

Continuing from where last stopped, the sadhana continues.

After accomplishing the transformation of clear light in the dharmakaya practice , one then proceeded to the transformation of the intermediate state, using the practice of the sambhogakaya. Then one arise from Manjushri as the sambhogakaya form into the nirmanakaya form of Yamantaka. Light rays then emanate to all Sugatas and Buddhas in the aspect of glorious of Yamantaka and they dissolve into oneself then one transform in the resultant vajra holder, Yamantaka. Then from there, one arises as Yamantaka in the aspect of dark blue body 9 face 34 arms 16 legs, standing with right leg bent and left leg outstretched, in whose heart resides the youthful Manjuhsri and in Manjushri's heart is the concentration being in the form of the syllable HUNG. On the crown one's head syllable OM, the throat syllable AH and the HUM in one's heart, one should do the invocation of the wisdom beings in order to initiate and to actualize empowering deities. Now, from the HUNG which is the concentration being residing in the center of Manjushri's heart,

who resides in your heart emanate light and bring forth the wisdom beings and the empowering deities confer blessings and the nectar flows into one through the crown of one's head.

At the same time, through the emanation of light from your HUNG, you also invite the initiation deities in the aspect of enlightened dakas and dakinis, some holding vases and others holding the ritual vajra and bells, some are holding the text, some holding all the necessary initiation implements. The dakas and dakinis then dissolve into oneself. One should visualize enlightened dakas and dakinis pouring the nectar and purifying the ordinary aspect of oneself and bestowing the 4 stages of empowerment, whilst guiding you through the mandala and introducing you directly to the actual Yamantaka in the center of Mandala. Yamantaka directly communicates with you and grants blessing and one feels the full potential and inspiration to practice and actualize Yamantaka. After the empowerment, one should visualize oneself as formerly like a bucket completely filled with blood and pus whose appearance was dark but after this empowerment, one is completely cleansed. As the nectar is being poured it overflows and from there appears the 5 Dhyani Buddhas, which symbolizes the purification of the five aggregates.

After this complete visualization, one should make offerings to self generation (both the 8 offerings as well as the nectar offering).

One should then perform the mudras. Left hand holds the bell and right hand holds the vajra. While holding the bell, move the both hands in the half lotus mudra and upon the two hands reaching the centre of the heart, to snap both hands using the thumb and middle finger. The gap between the chest and the hands is about 4 inches away. The snapping of the fingers initiates the sending out of numberless offering goddesses who have the potential to travel from one's celestial mansion to Yamantaka a million times within a single moment carrying with them infinite offerings.

When emanating the offering goddesses with the finger snap, the goddesses of each of the individual 8 different type of offering appear, though you focus on each of the offering items you are reciting. Continue with doing the full lotus mudra. Then invite back in the offerings goddess to the mandala which is at the centre of one's heart chakra. For the next offering, similar gesture in sending out and retracting them back in. When you arrive at shabda offering,

while holding vajra, take the damaru and strike it (string of damaru held by three last fingers). After finish you put damaru down but still vajra and bell are still in hand. So then you bless the inner offering and offer the inner offering using the left ring finger that is lifted to the level of the forehead.

When handling the vajra and bell, HYT tantric practitioners use only the right hand to take vajra and using the same hand to take the bell and then pass the bell to the left hand. When passing the bell, there should be no sound. In the monastery, if we make a sound while doing this, we could be asked to leave the hall. It can be very strict.

The meaning of the praise to Yamantaka is clear as he is the subduer of all the maras and yakshas. Next comes the very important recitation of the mantra.

Yamantaka is sitting on the lotus, sun and moon discs. At the heart of yamantaka is Manjushri and at the heart of Manjushri is the syllable HUNG. The syllable HUNG stands on top of a sun disc which stands on the lotus. The HUNG is surrounded by the mantra rosary of OM AH RA PA SA NA DHIH in clockwise direction. Upon visualizing the OM ARA PA SA NA DHI, the syllable HUNG then transforms into the syllable DHIH.

Recite that mantra as much as possible. On the tongue is the lotus and sun disc with the DHIH standing on top of the sun disc. When we recite the mantra, the vibration caused by the mantra brings about another syllable DHIH at the base of the tongue nearer to the throat and is position as it the head of the syllable is facing downwards towards the throat. From this, emanates numerous syllable DHIHs like snowflakes falling downwards towards one's heart and dissolves into the DHIH at one's heart, purifying all the impure inner, outer, secret pollution within the charkas and inner winds. This in particular will harness the power of retention of Dharma knowledge enabling one to attain the higher stages of realization. The syllable DHIH then absorbs into your heart chakra. You no longer see any syllable DHIH residing separately but instead, it is merged into oneness with oneself, with the blessings, all are of one nature. At this point one can begin the recitation of DHIH DHIH DHIH DHIHat the final DHIH, recite it louder and make strong dedications and also gain the conviction that you have definitely achieved the entire purpose of the visualizations.

Now syllable DHIH transforms back into the syllable HUNG on the sun disc on the lotus is time, the mantra rosary surrounding the HUNG is OM YAMANTAKA HUNG. Next mantra rosary is OM HRIH STRIH VIKRITA NANA HUM PHAT. The next mantra rosary is OM YAMA RAJA SADOMEYA also clockwise.

In order to actualize the mantra, we should not recite it too loud or too soft. It ought to be like when someone is sitting next to you, he can hear some sound but not make out specific syllable-sounds but for oneself, one should be able to hear very clearly so as to use the sound of the mantra to train in concentration. Later, one can combine this with the meditation as explained in the Lama Tsongkhapa Guruyoga, namely the process of extracting the 7 different wisdoms or just focus on Manjushri dissolving into your crown and to every single chakra, completely enhancing all aspects of wisdom, particularly the wisdom realizing emptiness.

The meditation on the 7 Wisdoms from the Lama Tsongkhapa Guruyoga is as follows:

- Visualise multiple Manjushri melting into oneself like snowflakes whilst praying: “Please inspire me to generate the great wisdom which has no resistance to understanding the meaning of the extensive scriptures”.
- Visualise millions of the mantra OM ARA PA SA NA DHIH dissolving into oneself whilst praying: “Please inspire me to generate the clear wisdom which understands even the subtle details of difficult points of the Dharma without confusion”.
- Visualise millions of DHIH dissolving into oneself whilst praying “Please inspire me to generate the quick wisdom which quickly cuts off all ignorance, wrong conceptions and doubt”.
- Visualise Manjushri’s implements of the sword above a Dharma text dissolving into oneself whilst praying “Please inspire me to generate the profound wisdom which understands the meaning of the scriptures in a profound limitless way”
- Visualise Dharma texts dissolving into oneself whilst praying “Please

inspire me to generate the wisdom of explaining the Dharma, elucidating the definite, correct understanding of all the words and meanings of the scriptures”

- Visualise millions of 8-spoked wheels of swords whilst praying “Please inspire me to generate the wisdom of debate which courageously refutes deluded views”
- Visualise millions of 8-spoked wheels of swords above Dharma texts whilst praying, “Please inspire me to generate the wisdom of writing which uses perfect grammar and poetic words and expresses clear wisdom and gives joy”.

Once you are familiar with the mantra recitation and visualizations, you can further enhance the practice by several visualizations simultaneously. This is done where with one portion of your mind, you focus on the mantra recitation; another portion of your mind you focus on the rosary; another portion of your mind you focus on the DHIH at your heart; another portion emanating the light from the syllable DHIH towards the ten direction holy beings and hooking back their blessings and dissolving that into the mantra resonating in one’s body. This will help you to actualize resultant Yamantaka wisdom more quickly.

One can also manifest infinite numbers of the respective syllables of the mantra, dissolving into the mantra one is reciting e.g. infinite numbers of OM dissolve into the OM that one is reciting and so on. One can also visualize while reciting, that one portion of one’s mind reaches out to the ten direction beings and the moment our light rays touch those beings they are instantly purified and attain the enlightened state of Manjushri or Yamantaka and after one has enlightened them, one’s emanated light ray hooks back 10 direction enlightened beings into oneself in oneness.

Sometimes one can do mental recitation , namely reading the syllables with one’s mind while remaining silent. Here, the clarity of the mantra syllables is important. Best if you should use Sanskrit syllables or Tibetan syllables or at least in English.

Visualisation during mantra chanting is very good training for samatha through deity yoga practice because even though one is changing through the 6 to 7 letters syllables, one continues to maintain focus. If we have decided to recite 100,000 mantra, we can vary the practice such that sometimes, while reciting the mantra OM AH RA PA SA NA DHIH, one part of our mind will focus on the sound, one portion on seeing one's Guru as the Buddha deity (the yidam), then hold the visualization and pause 1-2 mins. Calm your mind and leave your mind dwelling on the understanding of the precious human rebirth, death, impermanence , bodhicitta, the qualities of the Buddha and so on.

In good retreats, the counting of mantras is limited. The retreater does not rush. Emphasis is placed on visualizations and meditation, rather than counting the number of mantras done. Only when one is feeling tired during the session, is mantra chanting resorted to. The priority is the single pointed concentration on visualizations of the different stages. There is a saying that the recitation of mantra is like refreshment. We tend to set mantra-number targets as the main focus. We should not do this. After all, if numbers are what we are after, we can achieve it trough recitation during driving and cooking! The purpose of a retreat is therefore not about numbers but single pointed concentration on the different stages of meditation. The reason why Lamas give mantra commitments of 100,000 and the like is because otherwise, we would not do any!

During the meditation of the 3 kayas it is especially important that one must integrate the practice of divine pride (visualising oneself as deity) as this is the most powerful antidote for one's ordinary grasping. One of the main reasons we cannot actualize enlightenment during this lifetime is our grasping at ordinary appearance and the practice of tantra is aimed at 2 objects of negation namely, eradicating grasping at the true existence of self and of phenomena.

Visualisations such as visualizing the deities of the self generation and front generation, visualizing every aspect of the deity's mandala, are all direct antidotes to eradicate ordinary appearances. The meditation on divine pride is the direct antidote to eradicate ordinary grasping. During this sadhana practice, the main purpose is to fight ordinary grasping at the true existence of self and phenomena.

In our daily life practice, it is common to recite OM AH RA PA SA NA DHIH 21 times or more but in retreat, of course we accumulate greater numbers. We can either recite OM HRIH SHTRIH VIKRITA NANA HUM PHAT a minimum of 110,000 times; then OM Yamantaka HUM 10,000 times, OM YAMA RAJA SADO MEYA 10,000 times, OM AH RA PA SA NA DHIH 10,000 .

When we recite that root mantra, this is especially powerful to remove hindrances, inner and outer obstacles. Visualize all around you yakshas, maras, human harm givers 80,000 hindrances, 434 different sicknesses, those contagious sicknesses outside the mandala. Visualise all spirit harm givers in the aspect of very black, wave-like smoke, so when you recite the root mantra, infinite lights from the mantra, touches all harm givers. They then receive the purification and are subdued. Even powerful spirits can be subdued by you and ordered to be a Dharmapala, to guard and protect your journey to enlightenment and place them in different directions . While blessing them, you can place them in different directions, i.e southern harm givers are place in south , northern harm givers place in the north and so on. Then some will guard Mondays, some Tuesdays etc. The spirits related to the sun, the moon, anything related to light, are to be transformed into Dharma protectors. Through this practice we are not chasing them away but subduing them and placing them in the service of Dharma practice. In fact if somebody in a house feels very uneasy and if one senses some disturbance there, one can recite this mantra (OM HRIH STRIH VIKRITA NANA HUM PHAT)and if you have mustard seeds you can throw them into every corner to purify spirit beings. That is how powerful Dharma Protectors like Palden Lhamo came about. She was previously a witch, which through this practice, was transformed into a very powerful dharma protector constantly working to cleanse hindrances to Dharma practice a Dharma works .

After the recitation of the mantra OM HRIH SHTRIH in the center. This is labeled as the action mantra and this is especially powerful for transformation of the environment as well as the beings within it, purifying them and bringing them into a pure state. Therefore, if you want to bless someone's house or new holy items, books or car, you can recite OM HRIH STRITH.

In tantra, there are 4 types of actions, namely that which pacifies (peaceful),

increases, controls or is wrathful. One can recite this mantra when performing any of these 4 actions to benefit beings by purifying them. For instance, if you need to pacify the karma of broken samaya or purify the impurity of a place or any form of impurity, you can use this mantra and then dedicate .

If you wish to liberate 100,000 people into the spiritual path, they need to be subdued for which you can recite this mantra as controlling action; or in the manner of being wrathful, purify the lord of death by reciting this mantra.

The colour of light rays also have their respective significance. White light for pacifying action; yellow light for increasing action; fire red colour for controlling. In the case of controlling action, you can use the emanation of light in the form of red-flowers touching the hearts of beings to be helped, subduing their mind; for wrathful action, visualize dark-blue or black color light. In Yamantaka practice, we use dark blue light, not total black. When emanating light, the idea is not to just shine the light out but rather, light going out in a wave, like frequency waves. Different colours and different mantras have different effects.

Yamantaka mantra (OM YAMANTAKA HUNG) in a circle is called the essence mantra. This mantra is especially used to receive the Buddha's blessing of body, speech and mind. Once again, emanate golden light to the 10 direction Buddhas. All Buddhas manifest as Yamantaka or Manjushri aspect dissolving into one's crown completely transforming one into the holy body of the Buddha; they also receive the blessings of the mind through the dissolution of the implements of Yamantaka, namely the damaru, skull cup and the like into them. This is the technique that can be used in daily practice or in retreat.

After that, in the center of one's heart emanates the 100 syllable mantra (the Yamantaka Vajrasattva version) in white light which then enters into your crown dissolving into your body, completely blessing your body and especially purifying any unclear pronunciation of the mantra committed or unclear visualizations of the deity or whatever broken samaya relating to the vajra master or to this particular deity. Here, one should strongly feel that all these have been purified.

When one wants to dispel hindrances, one can just generate the compassionate or bodhicitta mind to subdue them. Or one can visualise the syllable DHIH at the centre of Manjushri's heart, transform into the syllable HUM (different

from HUNG), emanate light which then dispels hindrances.

After that, you can do the offering as a gratitude to the front generation and the Yamantaka entourage.

Then recite Om Yamantaka Hum Phat. Here you offer nectar and recite the same praises “..supreme hero utilizing the supreme object who tames those difficult to subdue, oh Yamantaka I prostate to you.”” When you recite the praises, think of the power of Yamantaka.

Next comes the blessing of the torma offering. There are 5 types of different torma.

So by the power of this mantra from the state of emptiness, one emanates the syllable Yam from which comes the wind; from Ah comes the element of fire, the 3 humans head form a tripod on top of which comes a wide skull cup. Inside are the 5 meats and the 5 nectars. Above this appears the syllables OM AH HUM. From the hum at your heart light rays emanate infinitely outwards. The wind (from Yam) then starts to move, causing the fire element to blaze strongly which in turn causes all substances in the skullcup to melt and boil. From the 3 syllables OM AH HUM, light rays emanate outward and hook back the 3 vajras from the front generation of Yamantaka, the holy body, speech and mental vajra, dissolving into the syllables OM AH HUM into the skull cup mixing together with the nectar within the skullcup completely cleansed. The syllable AH then transforms into nectar and the syllable HUM increases the nectar infinitely, never to be exhausted.

After visualizing OH AH HUM (ring the bell for invocation). Visualize the offering mandala, Yamantaka and its supporting deities appear. Yamantaka and entourage appear in front. From the HUM at my heart emanates light which shines forth and hooks back the wisdom mandalas and residing deities which appear as a front generation. . brings forth the wisdom mandala.

Then the wisdom being (Manjushri) becomes one with the symbolic/samaya being (syllable HUNG) when you recite za hum bam ho. The torma is offered – for this, from the HUM on the tongue of each of the deity-guests arises a white single spoke vajra, through which each member of the entourage partakes of the torma being offered.

This mantra OM HRIH SHTRIH VIKRITA NANA HUM PHAT VAJRA

BHAIRAVAYA ADHIPATI IMAM BALIMTA KHA KHA KAHIAKI
HUM PHAT SVAHA instantly actualises all the torma in the aspect of nectar. The deity guests enjoy this nectar and gain great bliss. You can do this visualization 3 or 7 times while visualizing the guests enjoying the nectar. After that, offer the 8 offerings.

Verses of praise : As the wisdom body you are the most extraordinary and all pervasive, with compassion extending equally to all. You are the father of all the victorious Buddhas. Being void as all things are, you are likewise the mother of Buddhas, as the wisdom beings of all the Buddhas. In the Dharmakaya there is no love nor hate, compassion is for all without exception, anger is overcome.

Here, although Yamantaka appears in a terrifying aspect, remember that in the Dharmakaya there is only total compassion, so you should feel grateful for this opportunity to practice and benefit numberless beings in the same way as Yamantaka.

Next verse is OM YAMA RAJA SADOMEYA, YAME DORU NA YO DAYA..." where one offers the torma. This mantra can be used to bless the torma and the other purpose is to bless the torma and offer to Yamantaka. Hold vajra and bell and do lotus mudra, snapping fingers at the end of each mudra.

The verse "OM BUCHA RANA/ YA PATALA.." is the second offering which is made to the entourage. Bucha Rana refers to the Protector Kalarupa. "MANA KHE CHARAYA ..." refers to Palden Lhamo, followed by the 4 directional attendants.

After that comes the outer guests "OM I HRIH YA STHTRIH VA...." refers to the 10 Dharmapalas, as well as the worldly gods like Indra as well as the elemental gods in relation to wind, fire , water, earth. You recite this 3 times and do the lotus mudras.

Do the lotus mudra two rounds and then offer the 8 offerings to Yamantaka and the entourage.

Recite the praises and request all Dharma protectors and worldly gods to protect and perform virtuous activities which are beneficial for sentient beings.

The final praise and request is to the gracious Dakini Palden Lhamo, that her every order will tame the maras and demons and command them to protect the teachings without exception and may the directional protectors and their entourage, overcome all interferers and help us secure and protect our samaya which we keep secretly.

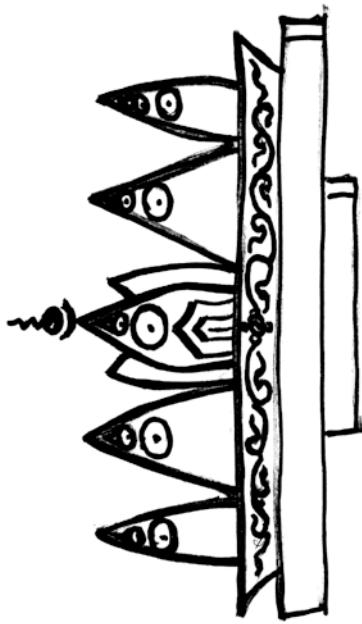
The guests who were invited to the torma and their entourage then return to their own abodes.

So one has now offered everything and the time comes to request the deities to return to the mandala. The mandala is dissolved and then the cremation ground is dissolved into celestial mansion, meaning the environment contracts and absorbs into the Yamantaka mandala .

The celestial mansion dissolves into yourself and oneself dissolves the Yamantaka mantra which is absorbed into you and then you absorb into wisdom being (Manjushri) and Manjusri dissolves into concentration being (the syllable HUNG) and that syllable HUNG dissolves into clear light, the light dissolves into voidness which dissolve into the union of great bliss of emptiness.

From the void I appear as Yamantaka, one face 2 arms and this Yamantaka is to remain in all the aspect of your life and while you have a conventional existence, remember the 3 syllables of OM at your crown, AH at your throat and HUM at your heart. That will bring the divine of Yamantaka and be inseparable from the body, speech and mind of Yamantaka in the form of nirmanakaya body (oneself) who is going to benefit numberless beings through interacting with ordinary living beings. That is how you should live your life each day.

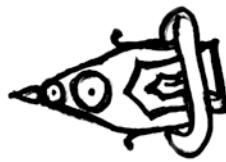
After that, make the final dedication that by the virtues arising from this effort and by my pure selfless wish that all sentient living beings never be separated from happiness and the causes of happiness by the peaceful and wrathful aspects of Manjushri, may I instantly lead endless beings this very state.



Set of tormas to Yamantaka



Gektor to pacify interferers



Shidak torma to earth protectors

Illustration by Geshe Tenzin Zopa

Doing Yamantaka Retreat

If you are inspired to do the retreat, whether you go to caves, monasteries, retreat huts in the jungle, live near rivers or forests or in a city-house, just remember to do your best to make torma made up of a mixture of nectar pills (crushed) mixed with the three whites (milk, yogurt and butter) and the 3 sweets (white sugar, brown sugar and honey) together with flour – it needs to be edible. Minimise the use of water, as when it is mixed with flour and the boher ingredients, it could cause the torma spoil or rot before the end of your retreat.

There are 3 types of torma. The central and main one is to Yamantaka Buddha. The next type is torma to the earth protectors/local landlords and the third type of torma is called gektor which is to pacify the interferers to one's retreat.

As for the 3 tormas to pacify the interferers, put 3 candles at the front of the 3 torma and the gektor (which is a strip of dough squeezed with one hand, leaving finger marks on the dough) at the back. In front of the main torma, arrange the front generation and the self generation offerings. The front generation offerings for Yamantaka are from left to right, 3 waters, flower, incense, lights, torma and music symbol and the self generation are from the opposite direction. As for the torma for landlords, you need one row of offerings for that (i.e. 8 offerings from left to right).

The torma for Yamantaka and his entourage is red colour and for the landlords the torma is white and for the gektor is white colour. You set your cushion facing south direction for the retreat or if you are doing Yamantaka practice at home, ideally a south facing direction has a special effect .

Here is general advice for Yamantaka retreat:

Whichever place you have in mind to conduct your retreat, you first have to do the outer cleaning of sweeping the place, making it fresh and clean. Any odours have to be removed.

Next, inner cleaning is required, namely setting aside your worldly concerns, family and business concerns, anxieties about enemies and conflicts, all such distractions and obstacles need to be cleansed or set aside from your mind. Dedicate the purpose of your retreat towards purifying past negative karma and defilements. Remember always that one of the main purposes of HYT is to purify one's ordinary grasping towards the self and appearances. During the session and post session, one should remain in the recognition of oneself as the deity and where one lives is the deity's mandala and all whom one meets are the deities and all that one hears are the deity's mantra and what one tastes is nectar. This may be more challenging during the post-sessions, but one should try.

As for the actual items used during one's retreat, let's start with the meditation cushion. If we have the strength to do an austere retreat, we would not be concerned about having the "necessary things". However, for us beginners, we need to find a proper cushion with a slightly higher back and lower front portion. Below the cushion, one should place a drawing of a Buddhist swastika which then makes your cushion seat a vajra cushion. On top of the Buddhist swastika, place 3 strands of kusha grass (extract from a new, un-used broom) which symbolizes clarity, the active function of one's inner winds and mind in the 3 channels. The kusha grass is a conducive condition to one's gaining single pointed concentration and removing all blockages to one's meditation. You should put the head of the grass bundle facing the back. On top of the kusha grass, one should place (sun-dried) long life grass which has many knots. Try to get as long strands as possible, with the two ends i.e. the head and root facing the back. This is an auspicious symbol for you to remain long in retreat without hindrances. You can then bless the cushion yourself using the vajra and bell or you can just recite OM AH HUM.

For the retreat altar, try to arrange beautiful and abundant offerings which can last till the end of the retreat, as nothing can be discarded until the fire puja.

Then you should invite the lama sometime between 5-8pm based on his convenience to bless one's retreat cushions. During this tie, light offerings

are made. When this session is over, change the offerings for the start of the actual retreat. The retreat starts at midnight but the retreater should use the time before that to generate the proper motivation. but on the first night it must start from midnight. At midnight best to go through the Refuge & Bodhicitta and long sadhana. When we reach the mantra recitation on the first session of the first night, we need to recite 21 times of each mantra in the sadhana as part of commitment, then the dedication, then finish. Change offerings for next session or sleep and then set up offerings for first session of the day at about 3am.

You then divide your retreat day into 4 sessions. What is commonly done is to time the sessions this way – first session starts around 3-4 am which will take you to about 5-6 am. This way, you finish the first session before sunrise. If one is not taking 8 Precepts that day, one can have breakfast and start the 2nd session around 8am till lunch time. After lunch, you can rest for about 1-2 hrs and start at around 3pm till around 6pm. If you are having dinner, then break for dinner and rest 1 hour. If you are not having dinner, then you can resume the 4th (final) session for the day any time after sunset i.e. anytime between 7pm to 8pm. The sequence of prayers: The last session will take more time than the earlier sessions. You can shorten the sadhana practice in this way - In the first session, you don't have to recite the long auspicious prayer but you have recite the prayers of the lineage lamas, gurus, 3 kayas; for the 2nd session one can skip the long auspicious prayer and the last session, one can skip the lineage lama prayer but need to recite the long auspicious prayer. Try to end your session by 9pm and rest before 10pm. Sleep about 6hrs.

If one has prayer/sadhana commitment in respect of other deities, one should do these during the pause sessions or post sessions (usually after the 1st or 2nd sessions, as after the 3rd session one will be quite exhausted). During the retreat, even if one wants to do some reading, it should relate to Yamantaka or Lam Rim topics. No magazines, letters, SMS, phone calls. To do a retreat seriously, one cannot see others and others cannot see oneself. Even if you suddenly see a bird coming at you, you need to think of the bird as a messenger of the deity (different birds are associated with different

deities for e.g. the crow is associated with Makakala) and if we see another human being, we need to view that person as Yamantaka. The reason for this is for us to train our minds to be in the purity state, free from conventional impure perceptions. As this is not easy to accomplish, we need to minimize distractions and interaction with others during retreat.

Similarly with the environment. One should transform one's environment into the deity's mandala. As our concentration is still in the training stage, it is best to meet only those within the retreat boundary. If you are in doubt, seek advice from a qualified teacher.

In the event you encounter a certain experience during the retreat which you don't know how to interpret, consult a qualified master. Within the retreat boundary (i.e. within your mandala) it is best to have a qualified doctor or nurse and retreat-helpers who will assist with food and drinks for the retreat. Usually about 4 people.

During the retreat, you can offer torma everyday.

Torma offerings can also be in the form of small cakes or biscuits or sweets. Even if the food offerings spoil one cannot throw them out of the door to avoid affecting the samaya but within the retreat confines. Hence the earlier advice to avoid using water in the torma.

Offerings for the front generation and self generation need to be changed every session or added to at every session.

After concluding the retreat, one needs to perform the Yamantaka fire Puja. Ideally, one should end the retreat with the first session of the morning. In that session, one should not engage in counting mantras. Complete the sadhana, recite the mantras 21 times as a commitment, then finish before sunrise. If the fire puja is to be done that final morning itself, it can begin at about 8-9 a.m taking about 2-3 hrs to finish. If one has received training before, one can then do self initiation. If there is the opportunity, it is good to invite great

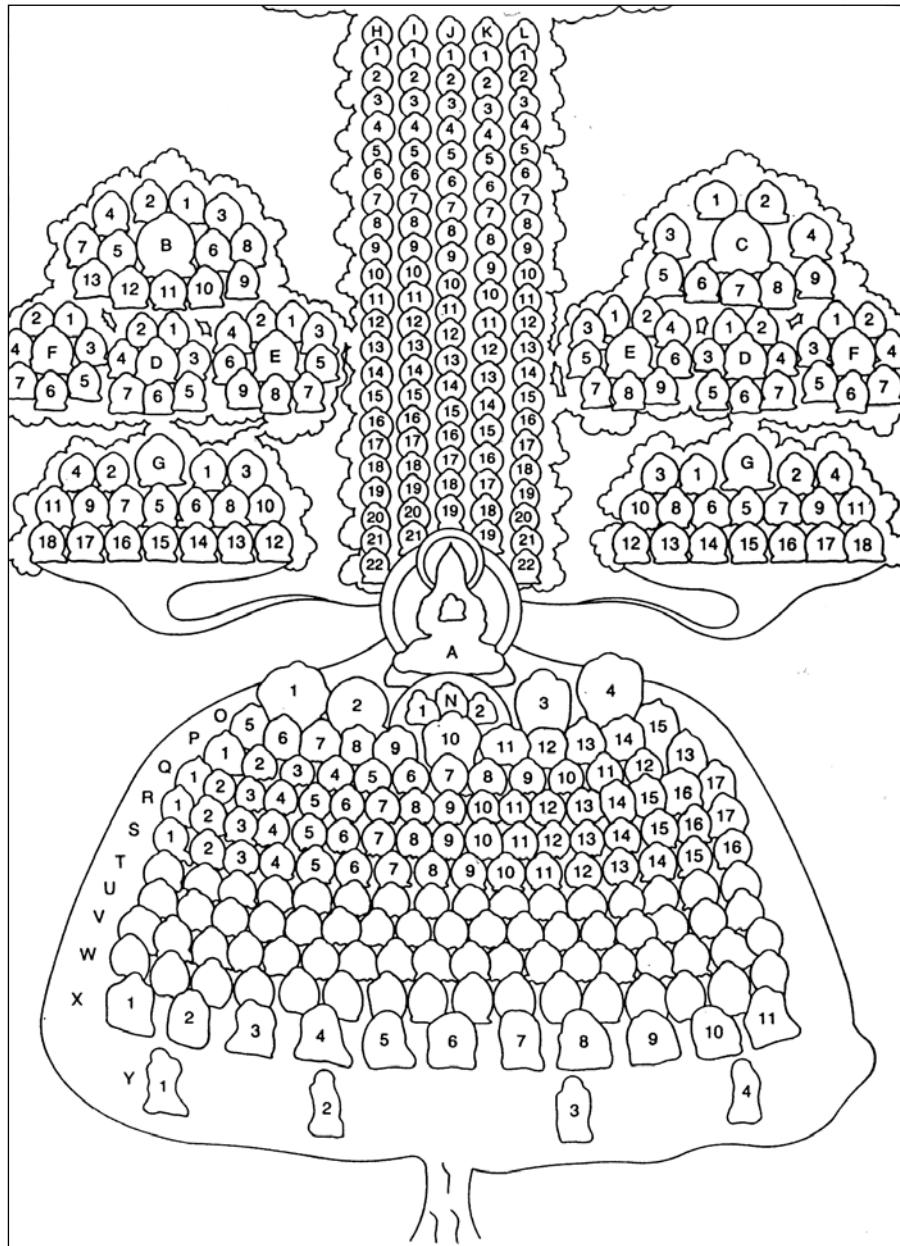
practitioners of that deity for the fire puja ceremony. Following this, at least 1 once a month, you should do your own self-initiation to restore all broken samayas completely. We should pray hard that at the end of one's life we can perform this self-initiation, so that we can die without any downfall or regrets. Having done the retreat, we should try our best not to break our daily practice of sadhana. If one happens to forget to do the sadhana or didn't get change to do it, one need not take an extreme view of its seriousness but one must avoid losing the practice totally. Doing retreat is very important, as it provides us with the means to self-initiate, to upgrade ourselves. There is so much benefit.

I am unsure of my English but I hope you will go through what is mentioned in this book once in a while, so that when we go for retreat, we will be able to make it a good retreat. Otherwise, to only start learning about the mantras and visualizations during the retreat might be difficult.

All the Gurus say and in particular the late Geshe Lama Konchog used to say, that when one decides to do a retreat, 3 thoughts should arise. Firstly, one should feel like one is going for a holiday. Secondly, during the retreat, one should feel it as indeed a holiday, being relaxed and calm and realizing how meaningful doing retreat is. Thirdly, when one ends the retreat, to have a sense of it being deeply meaningful. Although physically a retreat may be tiring, a sense of great satisfaction should arise at having done the retreat.

The end

LIBERATION IN OUR HANDS



*Key to the Guru Worship **merit field***

HOW TO TREAT DHARMA BOOKS

Dharma books contain the teachings of the Buddha. They have the power to protect against lower rebirth and to point the way to liberation.

Therefore, they should be treated with respect – kept off the floor and places where people sit or walk and should not be stepped over. They should be covered or protected for transporting and kept in a high, clean place separated from other mundane materials. Other objects, including statues and stupas, should not be placed on top of dharma books and materials. Licking the fingers to turn pages is considered negative and will create negative karma.

If it is necessary to dispose of written dharma materials, they should be burned rather than thrown into the trash.

When offering dharma texts to the fire, first recite the mantra OM AH HUNG, then visualize the letters of the texts to be burned absorbing into the syllable AH and the AH absorbing into you, transmitting their wisdom to your mind stream. After that, as you continue to recite OM AH HUNG, you can offer the texts to the fire.

Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche has specifically advised that photos or images of holy beings, deities and other holy objects should not be burned and instead placed with respect in stupas or other high clean places so that they do not end up on the ground.

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