

## **The Samādhi Empowerment**

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In general, the visualization of an empowerment introduces us to the bodhicitta mind of all the buddhas. Once we have been introduced, we understand its meaning of practice. An empowerment shows us how we should engage in practice. It introduces us to the fact that we can ripen. If you connect with bodhicitta, then your body and mind can ripen into the buddhas' three kāyas. Your body is the nirmanakāya, your speech is the sambhogakāya, and your mind is the dharmakāya. Your body, speech, and mind can ripen into the three kāyas. Thus it is referred to as the “ripening empowerment,” and this empowerment is an introduction. Then the liberating instructions explain how to engage in practice. Once you have received the ripening empowerment and the liberating instructions, you know how to engage in practice. Then you must liberate yourself by actually engaging in practice.

With regard to deity practice, the four classes of tantra of the new tantric system are taught to accord with the higher, middling, or lower mental capacities of the practitioners. These different levels of practice are explained as though they are separate. They are very complex. In the old tantric system, Guru Rinpoche condensed the meaning of all the tantras into one sadhana practice, that includes the four branches of approach and accomplishment. Within the four branches of approach and accomplishment, the intent of the four classes of tantra is perfectly complete. The four branches of approach and accomplishment are: approach, close approach, accomplishment, and great accomplishment. These branches are differentiated only by the experience gained within the mind visualizing the mantra garland. It is said, “Meditation must be connected to experience.” The practice of the four branches of approach and accomplishment must be integrated with an actual experience. This fusion comes about through visualization alone. You should understand that this is how you receive the lineage of practice and blessings. Now, how are the four branches of approach and accomplishment complete in this practice? First, when you are able to visualize the seed syllable and the mantra garland around it clearly, this is the approach. Often when people practice the approach, they only focus on counting the mantras they are accumulating. However, it is when you are able to visualize the seed syllable

and the mantra garland clearly that you have actually completed the mantra accumulation. Close approach begins when the mantra garland begins to circle slowly. When you are able to visualize the garland moving in a circle, you are getting closer to the deity; this is the close approach. Then the mantra garland accelerates and begins to turn very fast—so fast that it isn't even clearly visible any longer. This is when light rays emanate from it and gather back into it; this is the accomplishment. These light rays make offerings to the buddhas in the pure lands and purify the obscurations of sentient beings. In this way, you are training your mind in concentration. This is the accomplishment. The great accomplishment is when the self-grasping of all sentient beings is sealed with bodhicitta, so that all sentient beings are the deity, which is their nature on the basis. At that time, you will understand that sentient beings are just like blocks of ice. When you have ripened, you will understand that all sentient beings can ripen. For example, if you are an ice-block that has been melted by bodhicitta and turned into water, you understand that all ice-blocks can melt. This is the great accomplishment.

In the new tantric system, the action tantras correspond to the approach. Second, the conduct tantras are the same as the close approach. Third, the yoga tantras are the same as the accomplishment; and fourth, the highest yoga tantras are the same as the great accomplishment. Thus, you should understand that yourself and others can be freed, and that the four classes of tantra and the four branches of approach and accomplishment are connected.

In the practice of the channels, winds, and drops, they are also connected to the four joys. They are precisely related to the inherent quality of the four joys. For example, in the practice of tummo in the Six Dharmas of Naropa, one can recognize the Four Yogas of Mahāmudrā through the experiences of the four joys. The four yogas are the yoga of one-pointedness, of freedom from elaboration, of one taste, and of non-meditation. The four joys, the four yogas, and the four branches of approach and accomplishment are all connected. They all come down to one single meaning. Once you completely understand the meaning of the empowerment, you can empower yourself. How so? The dharmakāya of all the deities pervades like space. The sambhogakāya, which is like a rainbow, comes to anyone who supplicates them, without any bias. They don't think, "I'm going there because there is a lama supplicating. You are ordinary, I'm not going to you." They actually come to whoever has faith in them. Therefore, if you understand the nature of the deity, you can take a self-empowerment. This is because the mental basis of the deity that is practiced and that of the practitioner are the same. As it is said, "Since former times, you and I are one." That is, "you," the deity's mind, and my mind are a

single continuum, just like an electric cord. Our two bodies appear like two light bulbs. If you have faith and give rise to bodhicitta, you can give the empowerment to yourself. You don't have to do anything else, you can engage in the practice. If you understand this, you know the buddhas of the three times are included in one guru. Then you might wonder, "If that is possible, then why do we have to rely on a guru? Can't we just visualize the guru?" When you take refuge in the guru, do you take refuge in his body, speech, or mind? The guru's body is human. If you become attached to it, you are ordinary. It is said, "If you see the guru as a human, then the blessings you will receive are like the blessings from a dog." It's not the body, but the speech and the mind of the guru that are important. Where are the guru's speech and mind? They are here. The guru's dharmakāya nature abides like space, and his sambhogakāya like a rainbow. The guru's body is the nirmanakāya, the speech is the sambhogakāya, and the mind is the dharmakāya. On the level of the nirmanakāya body, we are the same, so you can empower yourself. The samādhi empowerment is meant for those who understand this.

In the beginning it says, "*All mother sentient beings, limitless as space...*" First, there is the generation of a mind that is free of selfish concerns. It says, "*I will practice the yoga of the four empowerments so that all mother sentient beings, limitless as space, may have happiness, be freed from suffering, and gain the state of buddhahood.*" Having freed myself, I wish to free all sentient beings from suffering. In order to free ourselves from the six realms of saṃsāra, we must become free of self-grasping. "Sang-gye" (Buddha) means that first, self-grasping must disappear, which is like a block of ice melting into nonduality. This is the ultimate buddha. When relative bodhicitta arises in the mind, the ultimate buddha will naturally appear. For example, when two ice-blocks have melted into one in the ocean, then where are two? You should recite this line with the understanding that all sentient beings are buddhas. You think, "I'm an ice-block, so I will melt myself first. Once I have melted, I will become all-pervasive." "*I will practice the yoga of the four empowerments...*"

Then it says, "*I appear as the yidam deity.*" At my basis, I am pure; only temporarily, I have become like a small ice-block. The guru [in front of you] represents a pure quality. From the dharmakāya appears the sambhogakāya form emanation, appearing like a rainbow. The deity that I practice is there [in front of me]. I am the nirmanakāya. Because my nature is unripe, I am like an ice-block. The dharmakāya and sambhogakāya are like the sun. Whichever yidam is yours, if you visualize it—that is, if you practice the actual development stage again and again—you will forget about your body. If you think of the deity again and again, [it will appear]. For

example, when I close my eyes, sometimes a black dot appears. That is actually a sign of the onset of blindness. Those black dots keep appearing, and when they do, I remember an instruction by Jigten Sumgon. He said that one should visualize the deity on the place of one's illness. I like Tara, so I think that the black dot is Tara. At first, there was a hole as tiny as a pinhole inside the black dot. Now Tara always appears inside it. How is it from an ultimate perspective? Normally, when the black dot appeared, I would think, "This is a sign that I will become blind." Fear would arise in the mind, and then things would only get worse. But when Tara appears, there is no fear; I am actually happy. When I am happy, my blood changes, and the illness slowly goes away. It has helped my eye a little bit too. This is really what happens, Tara appears. Therefore, Jigten Sumgon said, "Wherever you have an illness, visualize the yidam there; do not think of the illness." This is why visualizing the form of the deity quells the karmic imprints of the body.

The mantra stops the karmic imprints of speech. Of these two, the imprints of speech are worse. They are the thoughts that grasp at a truth in the meaning of sounds. Once you start talking about samsaric activities, thoughts of attachment and aversion arise uninterruptedly in the mind, like falling rain. When you talk about pleasant things, you laugh; when you talk about unpleasant things, you cry. These are thoughts grasping at a truth in the meaning of sounds. Speech is the worst. If you hit someone's body, it's not so bad; you can apologize for that mistake. But if you say something nasty, they keep holding on to it in their mind. So, to purify grasping at sound, we recite the mantra.

Bodhicitta purifies the karmic imprints of the mind; it purifies the mind. The development stage purifies the imprints of the body, the mantra purifies the imprints of speech, and bodhicitta purifies self-grasping in the mind. Then there is the svabhavikakāya (essence-kaya): you realize it when you understand that the buddha, the guru, and your own mind are one. There are four kāyas: the dharmakāya, the sambhogakāya, the nirmanakāya, and the svabhavikakāya. These relate to the four empowerments.

Here you visualize the root guru before you, "*in the form of Bhagavan Śhrī Heruka.*" In the Drikung Kagyu tradition, we visualize Chakrasamvara. You can visualize Chakrasamvara in a seated posture. If a clear visualization is sustained, then the karmic imprints of grasping at substantial form and concept labels will collapse. Even if the visualization is not clear, it should be fine to just visualize your own guru inside the rainbow sphere. To some, the root guru appears more naturally. For example, Vajradhara Drubwang [Rinpoche] appears to me naturally, without

any effort. The moment I think of him, he appears, as if real. When that happens, the notion of an “I” and all karmic imprints are completely gone. Such is the power of the development stage. Therefore, you can visualize your own guru, you don’t have to visualize Heruka. Or, if you like Tara, you can also visualize her. It says, “*He is with his consort Vārāhī*”. Whether you visualize the guru or a yidam, you must visualize him with a consort. This is because yab and yum (male and female) in union is the outer expression of the unity of emptiness and compassion. The Secret Mantra is explained through signs, symbols, and their meanings. When an ordinary person sees the outer union of yab and yum—for example, Samantabhadra in union with his consort—what comes to mind is “There is a couple together, they must be very happy.” When they see this, a feeling will instantly arise in the mind of anyone who has desire. But what is this bliss? The perception of substantial forms and concept labels are collapsing; ordinary grasping in the mind collapses as it becomes overpowered. Externally, there are two bodies, yab and yum, but the inner mind is clear and empty. The yab (male) is the clarity and the yum (female) is emptiness. When you abide within the view of the clear, empty, non-dual mind, within that mind there is not the slightest suffering. You will understand that mind is beyond birth and death. It is called “the great bliss dharmakāya.” It is an ongoing, uninterrupted state of great bliss. The yab-yum deity reminds us of this uninterrupted state of bliss. So it says, “*Holding vajra and bell, he is with his consort Vārāhī, holding a curved knife and skull. The father and consort are adorned with bone ornaments, ribbons, and jewels. With one leg outstretched and the other one bent, they stand on Kālaratri and Bhairava. Moving in the nine moods of dance, they abide in a brilliance of rays and lights.*” Then there is a brief offering of the Seven Branches, “*prostrating, offering, confessing,...*” As for the meaning of the Seven Branches, it is said that they are an antidote to the six afflictive emotions plus the dedication as an antidote to clinging to one’s own roots of virtue. Then it says, “*Great Guru Vajradhāra, please bestow empowerment upon me!*” Who is the Guru Vajradhara? The rainbow-like form is beyond birth and death. Who knows that? When you seeing your own mind [you see that just] the body will change. The mind is clear and empty, but if it connects to self-grasping, it will wander in the six realms of saṃsāra. When you attain buddhahood, the clear and empty space-like mind is still there. It is always there; it never dies and it is never born. It is not born from causes and cannot be destroyed by conditions. Can space disappear? It cannot cease to be, and no one can bring it to an end. This is Vajradhara. This is the guru’s mind, regardless of his outer body. The outer form, here, is the sambhogakāya. The inner mind is the dharmakāya. The sambhogakāya and the dharmakāya are connected, like a rainbow.

Although you can clearly see the colors of a rainbow, it's essence is intangible; it is clear and empty, the sambhogakāya. Then it says, *“White light radiates from the coil of hair between the brows of the guru father-with-consort, dissolving between my brows.”* By this, like setting fire to a stack of wood, you empower your body with the form of the deity. These steps are related to the four empowerments. So, here, think that your body transforms into the deity like setting a wood pile on fire. All grasping at substantial form and concept labels have been burned away. Then it says, *“White light with a red glow radiates from the guru father-and-consort's point of union.”* Most people say that the light radiates from the throat, but Jigten Sumgon says that the actual blessing of the guru comes through drinking the bodhicitta drops that stream from the union of the guru yab-yum during the third empowerment. *“White light with a red glow radiates from the guru father-and-consort's point of union, dissolving into my throat.”* From this, great bliss fills all the channels of your body. Thus, the bodhicitta element is very precious. The channels are the nirmanakāya, the winds are the sambhogakāya, and the drops are the dharmakāya. Through the practice of the channels, winds, and drops, the state of the buddhas' three kāyas can be attained. Due to one's drops, clinging and desire arise. Through the practice of the channels, winds, and drops, the meaning of empty bliss—the nature of the guru's bodhicitta that is empty bliss, free of dualistic grasping—dawns within your mind-stream. *“White light with a red glow radiates from the guru father-and-consort's point of union, dissolving into my throat.”* The stream of nectar from the guru yab-yum's secret enters your speech and fills all your channels. Through the arising of extremely great bliss, all ordinary thoughts stop. This is the power shown in the third empowerment, represented by the nectar received from the skull cup during the empowerment. *“White light with a red glow radiates...dissolving into my throat, and cleansing the obscurations of my speech. I receive the supreme secret empowerment and I come to embody every buddha's speech.”* Through this, all sounds have become the self-resounding sound of mantra. If the self-resounding sound of mantra is sustained continuously, the door to grasping at sound is closed. And this door has to be closed; you have to really recognize your grasping at sound, because grasping at sound is extremely destructive. When [you do not grasp and] hear the sound [of someone saying], “You are a buddha,” you will not feel pleased; and when [someone says,] “You are a demon,” you will not be offended. If you know that words are empty, the power of mantra has become manifest. As long as you grasp at sound, the mind will be obscured by alternating attachment and aversion. As long as you have not realized the view, grasping will arise. Once you have realized the view,

there will be no more grasping at sound. So you have received the supreme secret, or speech, empowerment. Then *“Blue light radiates from the endless knot at the heart of the guru father-and-consort, dissolving into my heart, and cleansing the obscurations of my mind.”* When you look at the nature of this great bliss, the essence of great bliss is naturally empty. Blue light radiates from the heart, and your body and mind become completely empty, like space. This is the third empowerment, it is the practice-consort empowerment of Secret Mantra, in which we are introduced to great bliss when ordinary thoughts stop. Thus, *“I receive the supreme third empowerment.”* Then we meditate on the meaning of the supreme third empowerment. *“The guru father-and-consort melt into light, dissolving into my crown and purifying the grasping of my three doors.”* The guru yab-yum dissolves into light, which becomes nectar entering your crown and purifying your three doors. The guru, yab and yum are nondual. The guru and your own mind are nondual. This is the svabhavikakāya. *“I receive the fourth empowerment and realize the vast and equal essence spontaneously as every buddha’s body, speech, mind, and sameness wisdom.”* The guru, your own mind, and the buddha become the same. When you abide in the ultimate view and know that there is no separation, that is the wisdom of the fourth empowerment. During extensive empowerments we are introduced to this in the word empowerment. Once you have completely understood the meaning of empowerment, you can take the empowerment from yourself. Even if you are someone who has not received an empowerment, but who clearly understands the practice of a certain tantric division, on a secret level, you can actually engage in the practice. On the basis, you must have bodhicitta. If you lack bodhicitta, even if you receive the empowerment and engage in practice, the result will be lesser. If you have bodhicitta, you can take a self-empowerment, you can receive a self-transmission or a blessing conferred with a text placed onto your crown. If you really want to practice the Dharma, you can give the transmission to yourself. There are some who have a lot of faith and really want to practice, but they are told that without having received empowerment and transmission, they are not allowed to look at the text. They want to know it so badly, but they feel that there is no way without the empowerment. Actually, they can also receive it over the phone and so on. People have received empowerment through livestream from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. If you understand the meaning of the empowerment, it is not absolutely necessary to receive the vase on your crown. Milarepa said, *“The touching of the vase to the crown of your head is the outer empowerment. To realize your body as the body of the deity is the inner empowerment.”* It is when you realize your body can ripen. *“The recognition of your mind itself*

is the ultimate empowerment.” To realize the view—the nature of mind—is the ultimate empowerment. Empowerment should be understood as “sovereignty.” When you realize the nature of mind—nondual primordial wisdom—you attain the state of Vajradhara, the royal seat of the dharmakāya. You attain the royal seat of the dharmakāya, and for the sake of others, nirmanakāyas and sambhogakāyas will appear, acting, like a great king, for the benefit of sentient beings until the end of saṃsāra. Such is the royal seat of the dharmakāya, or the empowerment of the svabhavikakāya; they have the same meaning. *“Thus, I abide in mahāmudrā—without elaboration, primordial awareness.”* “Without elaboration” means that the nature of mind is free from all elaborated extremes of existence and non-existence, eternalism and nihilism. When you meditate, the mind that pervades like space is not an object of conceptual analysis; thus, it is unelaborated. Elaboration is the conceptual analysis of affirmation or denial, “it is” or “it isn’t”. The nature of mind cannot be analyzed conceptually, it can just be realized. When you realize the natural state of mahāmudrā, that is the ultimate empowerment.

*“By this virtue, may I and all other beings swiftly accomplish the glorious guru, establishing all sentient beings, without exception, in that state.”* If you really want to practice a sadhana, even if you have not received empowerment, if you have faith and bodhicitta from the bottom of your heart, doing the samādhi empowerment will then allow you to engage in that practice. This is the meaning of secret.

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