



Mangala Shri Bhuti

Drupchö Practice Manual

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INTRODUCTION

Twice a year Mangala Shri Bhuti hosts a drupcho, or group offering practice, led by Kongtrul Rinpoche. In the drupchos, we practice the guru sadhana, Rigdzin Dupa, or the dakini, Dechen Gyalmo. The focus of these practice intensives is on the tsok, or feast offering, portion of the sadhanas. The students collectively accumulate 100,000 or more recitations of an offering prayer written by Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa. The merit, or positive intention and action, of the drupcho is dedicated to the increase of peace, compassion, and spiritual practice, both within the sangha and larger community of Buddhist practitioners, as well as throughout the world.

The intimate environment of a drupcho is a precious opportunity to be in the presence of the teacher's bodhicitta. To make prayers and aspirations alongside his, in the spirit of compassion and wisdom that he embodies, is a profound and often life-changing experience. The drupchos are open to practitioners who wish to make a connection to these practices or simply to deepen their spiritual paths through offering and prayer.

VEN. DZIGAR KONGTRUL RINPOHCE
Explanation of Short Ganachakra Recitation,
Drupchö at Phuntsok Chöling
February 2, 2001

We invite Guru Rinpoche and his hundreds, thousands, millions, and billions of retinues and deities. They are all completely enlightened and incredibly compassionate for sentient beings to wake up and not suffer in the six realms and the cycle of existence. These are our guests who we invite. We invite ourselves visualized as an enlightened Rigdzin Düpa. Our enlightened Rigdzin Düpa invites enlightened Rigdzin Düpa, with all the retinues and assemblies of Guru Rinpoche, and then they come.

Guru Rinpoche has said in the past, “When somebody calls for me with the damaru and bell, like a mother being called by the cry of her only child, likewise, I will come.” So Guru Rinpoche comes immediately from The Glorious Copper Colored Mountain, and from all the different buddha realms. The Glorious Copper Colored Mountain is just one place where Guru Rinpoche has appeared. But we could say that Guru Rinpoche actually has a completely enlightened mandala in this one small grain of rice, with this small rice grain being not too small nor the mandala not being too big. So, it is beyond imagination where one can find Guru Rinpoche’s mandala and Guru Rinpoche himself in different forms, benefiting beings.

So, Guru Rinpoche comes here from all those realms, participating in this feast. Then, besides Guru Rinpoche, who’s the most important guest, “*The lord of the feast, the master of the feast, the guru Vidyadhara, Possessor of the three realms, of the twenty-four sacred places,*” comes all the rest as well. Now, this earth is supposedly symbolized as a lady’s body. In one’s own body, as well as on the earth, there are twenty-four power spots where the lord of the feast, the master of the feast, the guru Vidhyadharas, the dakas and dakinis dwell, particularly in relation to this earth, and they make feast everyday.

They are totally entranced with their sense of enjoyment of the feast, through and through, continuously so, day and night—in their great view, their great meditation, and in their great conduct. So we invite all of them to be present here, the pawo(dakas), the khandro(dakinis), and then the Dharma protectors—the samaya-bound Dharma protectors. What samaya-bound Dharma protectors means is from the Buddha and then onwards, the great masters, and particularly guru Rinpoche, have put many of the demonic beings under oath to not harm beings, but protect the practitioners, and to assist and protect the practitioners of the Vajrayana tradition in whatever ways that they are able. And if they go against that, the oath that they have taken turns into tremendously powerful negative karma for them. Therefore, they are bound by their oath to do so.

But in return, we also have to do our part in making tormas and practicing genuinely and truly. In that sense then, the practitioners are always protected. There are always many obstacles present and the dharma protectors come right away and clear them up before you are even conscious of it. So we invite all of them to come here, *“Approach and accept these enjoyable feast offerings.”*

“I confess my transgressions, confusions, errors, and corruption of samaya.” When we have taken a Vajrayana empowerment, we have been introduced to the body, speech, and mind of our own enlightened nature. But yet we have not realized that nature because of the obscurations. And it is not just general obscurations that are there. We also have created a lot of negative samaya violations. We have transgressed the samaya of the abhisheka, and therefore, things have not improved from where they were before. Or even if it is on the verge of a breakthrough, something is holding us back. Maybe you are on the verge of a breakthrough with something, but you are still not able to break through that confusion, or that sense of habitual tendencies, or that sense of attachment. Therefore, even though you see how beneficial it will be, much of the time you are not able to achieve the benefit of it—the benefit that is awake, that awaits us.

Now, such things have to be related to, and it often comes as some kind of powerful karma. It's often connected to transgressions of samaya—all kinds of samaya—but many relate to the samaya of the guru so to speak. That includes the samayas of body, speech and mind of the guru. That is, to realize how every body is the enlightened body; how all speech is the enlightened speech; how every aspect of the mind is enlightened mind. Now, if you realize that and embody that, then there's no problem in any sense. So however we look at one's own and others' bodies, speech, and particularly the mind; when mind is in confusion and in an ignorant state, we experience so much suffering. But if we see the mind as an enlightened mind or the nature being enlightened, and everything that arises is rays of the sun of that enlightened mind, then there are no dualistic perceptions of there being one's own mind and separately the enlightened beings' minds.

But then we see how difficult that is, because a thought or emotion is so quick to rise and dissolve. It is so fast—the movement of thoughts and emotions—in just a split second there can be hundreds of thoughts, hundreds of emotions. Now, the person may not be conscious of many of those thoughts and emotions, or the person might not actually realize they are having such thoughts or emotions, but the self-conscious mind certainly experiences them, and one is being caught in them.

Each thought and emotion has tremendous color in its own world, and then one is caught in that. So, from that perspective, we see that if we are to attain enlightenment, if we are to actually wake up to that absolute nature, we must then see how everything arises out of that absolute nature and everything that arises out of that enlightened nature is therefore the body, speech, and the mind of the enlightened ones.

Now, conceptually understanding this is helpful, of course. It's sort of a stepping-stone to the understanding of the realization of the true experience, but it is the true experience that actually liberates us. So, from that point of view, there is something that is not, thought the nature is always nature, allowing us to

experience this fully. Let's call it our karma; let's call it our habitual tendencies; let's call it our negative emotions; let's call it our belief in self and things to exist as solid and true. Let's call it that fundamental ignorant confusion of believing that there is something solid and real.

Let's look at ignorance only, just the ignorance: like a gray sky. I mean, the sky is never really gray, is it? The sky is always blue. But oftentimes, it seems like the sky is completely gray. There's no movement at all—but still, the sky is not gray, it is blue.

Just that fundamental ignorance somehow, or maybe perhaps all of those mentioned previously, are holding us back to experience this completely. So we need to clear it up. We need to actually clear it up. We need to actually clear it up with first a strong intention to clear it up. So it's not like you are just sitting and just kind of mumbling your feast chant. We are not here just to mumble, but to do practice. I mean mumbling may have some effects—perhaps great effects, let's say, because the enlightened ones know what your problem is. But still, from one's own side, it is very important to have a clear and a powerful intention, an intention to purify this whole problematic aspect of one's existence.

And the problem is that although in the nature everything is enlightened—enlightened body, enlightened speech, enlightened mind—in the experience, it is not. And we're so caught in that experience, calling it what it is not. So we need to set a strong intention to purify it. Now, by our own power we can purify this. Yes, it is possible to purify it by our own will and power, but without the blessings, power and compassion of the enlightened ones, it is difficult. The incredible care the enlightened ones have for us, and also their tremendous awareness of exactly what we need—just hitting the hammer on the nail so to speak—allows them to be able to do something like that for us. Without that, we're not going to have much movement in this, or make much of a change in this.

So we therefore set our intention to clear it up, not like theistically just asking them to clear it up for us. But with our own practice, our own diligence in practice, we can also evoke their enlightened power for help and assistance, evoking their enlightened skill to hit the hammer on the nail, so to speak, of what we need.

We know we could do it. There's nothing that with our own intention and will, and their power and compassion, wisdom, and skillful means, that we cannot overcome. Because, after all, it's not like we are totally lost beings. We're here doing this practice. We have some connection. And that connection has matured to the point of being here and doing this practice together.

So, we know it can all be cleared. But we have to have that kind of clear mind and intention, and a will to do so, a strong determination to do so. Why? We know how much suffering there is, how much suffering there is in our life without doing this, or how much we will be suffering, how endless we will be suffering, eons, and eons, and eons, and eons, countless infinite time. We can see how, without this being addressed or being achieved, that just in one day how our mind goes through so much suffering because we just don't have any control, so to speak, over our emotions and our reactions towards things.

Our sense of being, even in let's say a peaceful state of mind, we see how much there is a sense of incredible deeper levels of fear, deeper levels of a tremendous sense of unsettled feelings about our own fate, any negative fate that is to come, any negative experience that is to come. Even a small physical experience such as having a headache, we can see how much of those deeper levels of suffering there is in that kind of experience. Right away, we need to take an aspirin. And beyond that, there can be so many similar fates.

Everything, physically speaking—for instance our body— is like a car, or some kind of machine. Anything can break down any moment. However old you are, that much your fate may be. Some cars, when they're young, when they're new, they run well, but as they age they can break down. And some cars, even when

they are very new, they break down. So it depends on the fate, so to speak, what your fate is. There is going to be that kind of physical suffering.

Like wise, there is suffering based upon how unsettled we feel; how much fear there is on a deeper level. Even on a good day such as today, where actually there is not anything seemingly pressing your mind, how much there is on a deeper level, on an unconscious level, unsettled feelings or fears. These are not just unreasonable fears because if you have a headache, you will have that suffering, and then you'll have to take an aspirin, which might help or might not help.

So anything can go wrong to our physical world. And anything can go wrong with anything that we're attached to as well. So there is that kind of tremendous uncertainty continuously there. Then, when things happen, our mind reacts, and we get caught in not just that subtle level of fear, but then, "true" fears.

For instance, all of a sudden, you're diagnosed with cancer. And then you just can't bear it. So much fear that has been there all along suddenly rises up, and then makes you crazy. You can't sit, can't be in peace, no matter what you do. You pace up and down, but still it is very, very painful. Those uncertain feelings, unsettled feelings, all of a sudden hit you. That's one thing.

There are hundreds of things like that, countless things like that. This is what happens in this life, and you could imagine the rest with birth, old age, sickness, and death, and all the different aspects of experience that we might actually encounter. It is all going to be pain, or it is already pain in many ways. Our life is just pain.

And then there is after this life. Now if we are really to be born in the lower realms, and experience the world of the lower realms as it is described in *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* or any religious books, not just Buddhist religious books, it is going to be totally different than here. It is going to be hundred times, a thousand times, a billion times worse. And the mind will suffer. Just to be

reborn in the animal realm let's say—and you see in the nature shows what animals go through— one will go through that.

So, until we truly wake up, the mind will have the illusion of going through one realm to the next, and the next, and so on. And in those realms, whatever sufferings there are in each realm, that much the beings will experience. There will be those sufferings and one will experience them accordingly. And it's not just once that you go through those experiences. You will be going through that for countless, countless, lifetimes. It's said that like a bee trapped in the glass jar, you will go up to the top then down to the bottom, but never get out.

Like that, until we understand what the true actual nature of things is—until we understand the illusion that we are having, until we understand to embody that true state of mind, and work with the illusion, coming to a point of really putting an end to the illusion of samsara and its suffering—there's going to be unbelievable, immeasurable pain and suffering.

We therefore practice the Dharma. We do so not just for any kind of insignificant or mundane purpose, but to once and for all to put an end to suffering. Not only the suffering of oneself, but to intentionally put an end to the sufferings of all beings, or to at least work in the field of putting an end to all beings' sufferings, continuously so, on the path. So until one attains enlightenment, we continuously confess. We confess all the things that are a problem to us in this way. Whatever is holding us back and is really not allowing us to [let go], like if our state of mind is like water in its true state, right now, we know it is like ice. And the ice needs to thaw into water. Otherwise, there is this kind of a problem that is going to be always there, endlessly. So, this is a good time— much better than how it will be in other realms, as we read in the books about the different realms and the sufferings of those realms.

And the seeds are already here in our minds. We have already done a lot that is ready to ripen for us to be reborn in the lower realms, and experience the whole suffering of those realms. In the same way we have come into this world and are

forced to experience and suffer everything that is here for us to suffer; but here at least there is some enjoyment too. But in those other realms, there is no enjoyment whatsoever. For instance, in the hell realm there is no enjoyment at all.

So anyway, once and for all we have to really get to that true state of mind, the true state of mind that actually embodies the body, speech, and mind of enlightened nature. In the same way the enlightened beings of past times have come to realize that, so too must we. That potential is in us too. Nothing has changed. No matter how hard the ice is its essential nature is water. No matter how mistakenly we see the rope as a snake, it's always a rope, right? Whatever our illusions of it are, however we feel differently than what the true state of being is, the true state of being has never changed at all. But beings such as ourselves are not able to embody it.

So here, we set a very clear and very strong intention to work with our problems and to face our problems. Maybe you already know some of the things that are problems for you, maybe in a more general and fundamental sense, and perhaps in specific ways as well. That's very good. You want just to ask for the blessings— the power, the compassion, wisdom and skillful means of enlightened mind that can just hammer you on the nail, so to speak, to just wake you up and get you out of that state of confusion and difficulties.

But then, there are also countless times that we don't know what really is happening or what is a problem for us. But the enlightened ones always know. They see through it, not only they see through it, they have a tremendous sense of incredible compassion for us in this way.

So you do this intentionally and clearly, with a strong sense of intention, without any hesitations, without any sense of arrogance, because with hesitations, you're never going to be enlightened. With arrogance, you're never going to be enlightened. Hesitations are just like a treadmill, like walking on a treadmill: you don't get anywhere. You're just walking and walking and walking. For some

people, when they do practice, it's like that. You're practicing, but with tremendous hesitation, so there's no getting anywhere. For them, the problem is the faith and the devotion (as I spoke earlier), is very weak.

Then for some people, there is a sense of arrogance, like they don't need any help from outside. They're going to do it all by themselves. Even though they are sure that they're not going to be able to do it all by themselves, they have this arrogance that somehow they are going to do it. Somehow they're going to do it, so they don't need to feel any kind of feelings of being indebted or having to cultivate respect. I guess this is again a problem of devotion. Isn't it? You don't want to have any devotion to anyone else, or to believe in anybody but yourself. Therefore, you just try to do it all by yourself.

Trungpa Rinpoche puts it this way, gives a very good image: someone is sliding by out of control, and you extend your hand to help. But he says he's fine. Then, he crashes down below, and actually breaks his skull, and smashes his—what do you call it—brain, all over the floor. It's really like that or even worse, and that's not going to work. So with this, we really have to have a tremendous intention to not be arrogant in this way; instead, to truly be genuinely honest and humble, and just really very clear. Because it's not like it's saying you don't have potential, that in the true state of mind, or the true state of being, there's not any enlightened body, speech or mind present, you know? So, there's not really any making oneself bad here, in any sense.

If you need to be confessing from a tremendous sense of honesty and humbleness, you're actually doing so in order to purify the obscurations to get to the essence. It helps us to get to the essence. And then to do so, but not with the hesitation because, what other options are there; to wander around in samsara endlessly? Just think of being the confused person you are now and then getting more confused like when the body decays. As people get older you see some people lose their intelligence. As one is near death, people get very confused. Then, when you change your life, if you are born into the animal realm such as

like a mouse or an ant, what kind of intelligence is going to be there? There's not going to be much intelligence.

So whatever intelligence is there right now, it should not feed one's arrogance. Instead, that intelligence should work with the arrogance and then truly seek the blessings of the lineage, [the] blessings of the enlightened ones, the Three Jewels. And there is nothing to be arrogant about. There is nothing to be arrogant about towards them.

But some people are just so dumb in some ways. They really do try to show some arrogance towards the Three Jewels. It's like a philosophical debate that they have not resolved in their mind. Whether, let's say, the deity is mind or not mind. So, some people like to believe the deity is mind, and they like to believe everything is projected by mind, so the deity is also projected by mind. So, they wonder "How could I be seeking a blessing from my own projection?" It's that kind of misunderstanding about the ignorance of the philosophy of Buddhism? Having studied some but not studied in depth, and instead of getting the right view in one's head, have gotten the wrong view in one's head. They just went by the phrases such as "Everything is a projection of your mind." So they took that to be quite interesting, and then from there they actually believed it to mean everything is the mind, including the deity, so they felt a little funny. In some ways this is falling into the category of nihilism.

Then the others, again, have this view, or they have just heard in passing—actually not through concrete studies of Buddhist philosophy, just in passing—have heard that the Buddhist path is a non-theistic path. So when we pray, they get this paranoia that they're becoming theistic, like they're returning back to Christianity or Catholicism or Protestantism or Judaism, or whatever background that they come from, with all their aversion to that religion.

So, all this comes up in their mind at once, and they think. "No. I didn't become Buddhist just to return back to where I was. I want to be a pure Buddhist, so to speak, and that is non-theistic. So prayers and all of this is not actually my cup of

tea. Therefore, I want to do it all by myself. No prayers, no surrendering to the Three Jewels or taking refuge. Now, of course everyone [here] has taken refuge, but maybe some people have not truly taken refuge, or just have a lack of understanding of the whole thing, or the philosophy.

But some people are very interesting, because even though they have a wrong view, they never believe that they have a wrong view. Somehow they think that their view is the right view. That again is arrogance and pride. And then, how is one going to have the right view without any studies? How can one ever call it a Buddhist view when one has not done any studies, or when one has not really taken any kind of classes? Not just any kind of classes, but from someone who has studied at length the tradition and philosophy.

So it's kind of an arrogance problem. People get that, but I'm sure the enlightened beings see through it, as well as other see through them, as to what their problem is. And in some ways, it's very hard to get through that because such people are often impenetrable. They just don't want to have that kind of devotion, any kind of faith and devotion. They don't want to have faith in anything other than self-doubt, they have faith only in their self-doubt. With a lot of this people there's no faith in anything but that, really. They have faith only in the self-doubt. Like a good scientist, I guess.

So, it is really important to look at those things if you have those problems. But I would think that the people who have been with me for a while would not have those kinds of problems, because most probably you have had to work with those things. But still I don't know. Maybe there are some people who have these kinds of problems. Anyway, there's no point in being caught in hesitation, and no point in being caught in arrogance. So very openly, very humbly, and without feeling eternally bad, but clearing up your confusions to reach to the essence, you confess. If you read my confessions liturgy, you will see that there is no sense of shame. A sense of shame comes with a belief of some kind of eternal badness, you know? Really, we all have confusions, so it's important not to feel any shame in having confusions.

So with a powerful intention and will, if one asks for blessings, and the power, the compassion, the wisdom, and the skillful means to work with you, the enlightened beings, the three roots— particularly Guru Rinpoche— then in mysterious ways, things work for you. I mean everything works, in many ways, with logic, but because much of the time we are not able to follow the logic—the subtle levels of logics are beyond our perceptions— it seems to work mysteriously to us. So things can work very mysteriously for oneself. In that way you might actually attain a rainbow body. It is very possible that one can attain a rainbow body, but in order to attain a rainbow body we need all the help that we can get.

So, it could be one's intention to clear this up and attain a rainbow body. There is no point to ask for some kind of petty things, because if you ask for petty things, your wishes may be fulfilled, but it will only be petty wishes being fulfilled. So don't get caught up in petty wishes. Petty wishes are like "May I just get over some lack of power." A lot of people are so caught in a sense of lack of power. They want power. They want to be a very powerful being. Like somebody who could just dominate the world. To dominate others with incredible magnitude, as well as just by looking at someone they would shiver. They want this kind of power. So they ask for such power. Especially in the Vajrayana practice, people get into this kind of power trip a lot. It's a very petty thing because you could be born as a demonic being with that kind of power, but what good is it if you have that power but you are a demonic being?

So that would be a petty thing. It's not something we want to pray for. Then, some people are caught so much in a kind of poverty. They just want to feel incredibly rich, to have all possessions in the world at their disposal, to feel very, very rich. These are subconscious thoughts and feelings. It's not necessarily that you loudly think that way, but maybe inwardly, on a deeper level of suffering, you would want that kind of a rich feeling. So you project in all different ways how you could actually feel as rich as you long to feel. Look at Bill Gates—he's

very rich— but it doesn't seem like any great thing to be rich if you turn out to be like Bill Gates.

So, again, that would be a petty thing. It would really be a petty thing. Anything like that would be very petty things. The only true and genuine aspiration is to aspire to actually realize the body, speech, and mind of the enlightened nature that you already possess. Just truly wish that and wish that for the benefit of all sentient beings; for putting an end to all one's suffering that comes from delusion, and not realizing the three natures. When you do that, then it's for the right cause you are praying; your aspiration to pray is in line with a right, worthy cause.

Then it says, *"Destroy outer and inner obstacles into the Dharmadhatu."* When it's all destroyed into the dharmadhatu, then you have realized the three natures. Outer, inner, and secret obstacles include all your problems. So, really wish to destroy them into the dharmadhatu. Destroy into the dharmadhatu doesn't mean that you put them into a cup and you hammer it, breaking it into small pieces. That's very dualistic. What it means to destroy all one's outer, inner, and secret obstacles into the dharmadhatu is to thaw the ice into water. That's not dualistic. So that is very important to have in your mind.

"Accept the leftovers and accomplish all actions." We give to beings who enjoy the leftovers. Again, it all makes sense if you have faith and devotion, and a vivid imagination. If you don't have faith and devotion, if there's not really much happening in the chest, in the heart, it just becomes a little bit entertaining in the head. It never comes into experience. But maybe you have faith and devotion, but if you don't have a vivid imagination, then you'll just be chanting with a dense mind, like the gray sky that we talked about. So, it doesn't really have much fun in it. So you have to have a faith, which is really believing in what you are doing, what is said here, to believe what I said to you, with tremendous inner confidence in that.

And devotion is totally being offered from a deep, deep feeling to realize that, to have a direct experience of that. Then, the vivid imagination is using your mind as best as you know how, truly being the practice.

So with all of that, then, each minute, each second, there is a tremendous sense of your mind and this world that is described here being totally joined. Joined, so you're not wasting your time just sitting here and mumbling, going once around, then looking at another person sitting next to you and seeing what that person is doing, you know? And also thinking, "When will this actually end?" Or "When will I run out of breath? I really might faint." You know? Maybe you are mumbling here, but the mind is traveling everywhere else. In that way, of course, there would be some blessings because the mandala is already set here. You are in the mandala, but you actually are not present. You will get some of the blessings of it, but you wouldn't be able to make your time totally worthwhile doing that.

So with that, we'll end this session.

VEN. DZIGAR KONGTRUL RINPOHCE
Faith and Devotion
Dechen Gyalmo Drupchö at Phuntsok Chöling
Oct. 20, 2007

We all have to go from this life to the next; no one can escape this destiny. Now is the time to prepare for the journey, and the best way to do so is to develop a relationship with the Three Roots—guru, yidam, and dakini.

The Three Roots are, of course, not outside our own nature. Ultimately that is true about everything, but until we reach complete enlightenment, we are in the relative, dualistic world, and need many things as if they are outside our mind. We all long for such things as wealth, a home, companionship, and physical and mental attributes. But what everyone longs for most deeply is a sense of security, safety, protection: a source of reliable support, something other than just ourselves. Though we do everything we can to take care of ourselves, we are still anxious because we lack this feeling of support. Nothing can provide that for us better than the Three Jewels and the Three Roots.

We don't need to be so concerned about this life. One way or another, things will work themselves out. Whatever is bothering you right now will somehow resolve itself; there's no point worrying so much about it. The worst thing that could happen is that you die. But that's not really the worst thing—it's just part of life. We could spend a lot of time worrying about this life, and all the things that need to come together for us to feel good about how things are, but ultimately everyone must go beyond this life to the next. Once we die, we enter unfamiliar territory. We have no idea what will happen, what our next karmic situation, our next life, will be. At that time, we will need the support of the Three Roots most.

If we develop an acquaintance with the Three Roots in this life, doing the *tsok bum*—the 100,000 feast offerings—whenever we have the chance, then the guru, yidam, and dakini won't let us down at the time of death. Of course, this requires faith. It requires a mind with the inclination and the freedom to care more about the next life than this one. But if our mind is completely occupied

with concerns of our present life, then there is no space to think of death, the intermediate state, and rebirth. Mind is not really turned toward the Dharma. It is rugged and rock-hard, and the moisture of the Dharma's blessing cannot penetrate it.

It's not that we don't care about this life. We still have to take care of our job, family, social interactions, and other matters. But having the freedom to think about the next life is crucial. Look at His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Not only is Tibet's future in his hands, he also has to be concerned with the whole future of the Tibetan Buddhadharma in the West and throughout the world. Nevertheless, he says that as he ages, he is turning his attention more and more to his own death, the intermediate state, and his next life. The other concerns are becoming less important to him, of necessity. Whether one is doing something important or insignificant, whether one is in a difficult situation or an easy one, things will work themselves out. Worrying about it is as pointless as rearranging the furniture in a house that's burning down.

It's especially important for practitioners, who have more awareness, to be concerned with death, the intermediate state, and rebirth. While we have the freedom to think about these things, we should supplicate and put our trust in the Three Jewels, and particularly in the Three Roots. While doing the 100,000 feast offerings to Guru Rinpoche, or to the Queen of Bliss, the dakini Yeshe Tsogyal, we should ask them to remember us at the moment of death and in the intermediate state. We are all at different stages in our practice. Some may be highly realized, with confidence in the practice, and therefore have less need to worry about what will happen at the point of death. Others are just beginning the four immeasurables practice. But regardless of our level of accomplishment, we should pray for the guru and dakini to remember and care for us at the moment of death and beyond. Just this simple practice of sincerely praying for care and protection when we die could result in being reborn in the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain or the Celestial Realm of the Dakini. This could happen without our having been a great practitioner, without much accomplishment in the view, meditation, and action of the Vajrayana. Simply attending these drupchos twice a year, for as many days as we are able, could cause this to happen. Now that's not a bad deal!

With our countless seeds of negative acts from past lives, which are sure to ripen, we may take birth in the three lower realms, perhaps in the animal realm (which has the least suffering) with two horns on our head. But having made a special connection with the Three Roots, by making strong aspirations and tsok offerings every year, the guru and dakini will grace us with rebirth in their celestial realms, where we can escape lower rebirths and purify all our obscurations. Continuing our path in a celestial realm, we can realize all there is to realize, and attain enlightenment.

This is how I think about it for myself. I don't pray so much for this and that to happen or work out in my present life. Of course, we have to make a lot of prayers for the dharma, and for the longevity of the great masters, and for beings to be liberated. But for me, the most poignant prayer is that, when my last breath goes out, I will be able to see the whole assembly of the Three Roots vividly and be guided by them so that I become enlightened in the intermediate state—if there is a chance—or if not, to be reborn in the celestial realms and continue my path there.

This is a very good practice for everyone, but particularly for Western students, who tend to lack faith. I encourage you to have faith in this way and really put all your heart into developing faith and trust. This would be a big step. Simple faith and devotion seem to come more naturally with Asian students. Westerners find it easy to develop wisdom through logic and reasoning, but often find it challenging to make simple prayers and aspirations like the ones I make for myself. They may see them as theistic, or based on blind faith. But there is nothing theistic about it. Perhaps it is slightly "blind," since right now you can't see the next life. You can't see the Three Roots vividly, you can't see to whom you are making aspirations, but there is nothing blind about it. We can't see tomorrow, but we are sure tomorrow will come. If we make preparations for tomorrow, even though we can't foresee the result, we know the result will be there. Similarly, if we prepare for our next life, the result will be there.

The practice of developing faith and trust is a way of resting our mind. Just being at ease based on faith, so that we feel deeply secure and completely protected from harm, is a practice that I cannot recommend highly enough. I think this way of resting our minds will be required more and more. When I was

first teaching I encouraged people to exercise their reasoning and develop critical intelligence. But now that people have quite a bit of that, I'm encouraging them to develop faith, trust, and devotion. People attend this drupcho to clear away obstacles and hindrances, to increase longevity and other favorable circumstances, and to accumulate merit and enjoy all the good things resulting from that merit. Of course we wish for all that. But the critical accomplishment is to be met by the Three Roots at the time of death, right after you cease your breath. So remember to think of that.

Roy Nemoto was an extraordinary example of someone able to face death with confidence and peace of mind because of his faith. He had tremendous faith and confidence in his own practice, and in the Three Jewels—particularly in Guru Rinpoche and the lineage masters—to help him through his struggle. His only slight concern was the period of time just before death when he might have a hard time breathing. Beyond that he had no concern whatsoever about his future. It was very obvious how his faith protected and supported him. He knew he would be taken care of and that it was all going to work out. So he went wonderfully from this world to the next world. Recently I taught at Shambhala Mountain Center, where Roy was cremated. The staff all wanted to come to the teachings because they knew I was Roy's teacher and they were so impressed with him. What impressed them the most was how much thought he put into his cremation ceremony. He had even chosen the brand of champagne that would be served. They thought that was extraordinary.

Such faith and devotion has to be developed over a long, long period of preparation. And I can say with all my confidence, that if we have this kind of faith, the Three Jewels and the Three Roots will never fail us. If we can develop such faith by doing these tsok bum drupchos twice each year, it would be a great, painless accomplishment. Look how much time you spend trying to take care of the details of your life, though in the end everything has to be left behind. But if you can do this one practice properly for two weeks out of a year, or for as many days as you can attend—if you are really present and doing it fully, with your heart—you will accomplish something of lasting value.

Being met by the Three Jewels and Three Roots at the point of death requires fully developed faith, a heart full of devotion. You yourself will know if

your heart is completely there. You all have the potential to be fully there. Some are further along than others, but everyone has a long way to go. The practice of drupcho is the opportunity to develop ourselves in this way, and we should take advantage of it. That's why, during the ganachakra recitations, I don't want people doing so many mudras and distracting themselves and others in various ways. People are praying sincerely, which is a wonderful thing. When you do mudras, mind and body are engaged, so it's hard to have one-pointed concentration. During the feast offerings we should maintain the right atmosphere so that people can make deep aspirations and supplications.

Once faith and devotion have been developed, it's very simple to pacify whatever mistakes you have made, whatever negative deeds you have done. The ganachakra recitation is also a good time to do that. And then it will be just a matter of asking the Three Roots to meet you. But without faith, trust, and devotion, asking to be met at the time of death will be very sketchy. You won't be fully coming from your heart. Your prayers will be mixed with self-doubt, second-guessing, and reasoning about whether your faith is founded on truth. For reasoning to help you, it eventually has to be translated into faith. Reasoning can only do so much for you here, and that you already have. So what it ultimately comes down to is whether you have faith.

Often simple faith that arises "blindly," not depending on other factors, is the most powerful. If you rely on something other than faith itself, you may feel that your faith is lacking. It's like asking someone out on a date and then wondering, "Will she show up? Why would she show up? Am I worthy?" Without faith, all sorts of anxieties come up and you become like a teenager worrying about your prom date. This is a very important point. People who have faith have more brightness in their eyes. They are more at ease with their lives. There's a sense around them that they are protected by the blessing. They feel more certain that all things will work out, and are less vulnerable to neurosis and confusion. These are all blessings of a heart imbued with faith, trust, devotion, and a connection to something larger than the individual, larger than the little brain that works so hard to figure things out.

These drupchos are some of the most important times for me, because as an individual, I can never make so many tsok offerings. As a sangha it is easier

and more natural. And whether it's a group or an individual practice, each person gets the merit of the entire offering. So this is a great opportunity to make a connection to the Three Roots, and to pray for many things—particularly to be met at the time of death.

A prayer to Guru Rinpoche says:

May I be blessed by your grace in this life, in the intermediate state, and in the next life.

May I be completely liberated from the suffering of samsara.

May I realize the unborn nature of all phenomena.

There are many more prayers that could be said for others, but for oneself, this is the most important prayer.

I wanted to talk about these matters so that people move forward in this direction. I have spoken about this before at drupchos, but now there are many new people coming. This talk is about making prayers and aspirations—one aspect of the sadhana. There is also the whole practice aspect—the view, meditation, and conduct—but if you are at that stage, you have studied the teachings, practiced, and done retreat, so there's no need to discuss that here.

TSOK OFFERINGS

The tsok and sadhana practices encompass all aspects of offering from relative to absolute. First, we offer the relative richness of the senses and the phenomenal world, along with our practice. The merit in so doing purifies our obscurations; and the innate richness of our own nature, which manifests as the sacred world of the deity, reveals itself. Given the power and depth of this practice, it is crucial how we view the offerings, how we treat them, and how we follow through to the end of the tsok and afterwards.

Setting up for tsok

It is important to understand that, in reality, we are receiving and hosting the most honored of guests. Rinpoche explains:

We invite Guru Rinpoche and his hundreds, thousands, millions and billions of retinue deities.¹

Therefore, how we relate to the offerings is of the utmost importance. Patrül Rinpoche advises:

All the tantras and pith instructions speak of “clean offerings, cleanly prepared” or “these cleanly prepared objects of offering.” They never recommend “dirty offerings, dirtily prepared.” So never offer leftovers or dirty food.²

The whole environment should be uplifted, with clean hands and clean cutting boards, surfaces, plates and utensils that are only used for tsoks. Do not incorporate personal kitchenware. Also, do not mix the plates. Do not use the leftover plate from one tsok for the Dorje Lobjön in another tsok and for Ekajati in a third. Mark the plates clearly. It is also not appropriate to offer packages already opened for non-offering purposes, or anything half-eaten; this would be like offering leftovers. Do not offer anything crushed or broken. Wash fruit and

vegetables thoroughly, cutting off old stems or anything not presentable. Do not offer anything old, shriveled or badly bruised.

We must pay special attention to organizing trays so that nothing will fall off, while also making sure they are full to the brim. These two do not contradict; it just takes extra effort and care to make sure they both happen. It is fine to use fewer trays so that all are well-heaped. Fullness is important because of the *tendrel* in making the offering. If we prepare and arrange everything as we would for a special guest, such questions as, “Should we offer moldy cheese?” or, “If it falls on the ground, can we still put it on the tray?” or, “Is it better to leave dirt on the organic vegetables?” will not be hard to answer!

Here are a few helpful tips for arranging trays:

1. If possible have a *separate tray* or *smaller platters* and dishes for meat, cheese, sliced fruits and candies. These can rest on the larger trays. Separating wet offerings (baby carrots) from dry offerings (red-hots and crackers) keeps the tsok fresh. Sorting and packing up the offerings after the tsok will be neat and fast. The tsok can then be offered to others in a pleasing way.
2. Place whole fruits, veggies, etc. around the *edges* of the trays, and dry crackers, chips, fruit and nuts in the *center*. The offerings look nice when the most colorful items, such as cookies and candies are on top. Small items like Jelly Bellies and M&Ms can be placed in tiny bowls on top of the trays so they don't fall to the bottom and get mixed up and gooey. These simple methods add a sense of abundance and uplift the offerings tremendously.
3. Have as many different shapes, sizes, textures, and especially colors as possible. Colorful cookies, candies and cakes are nice to offer in order to offset all the beige chips, crackers and nuts, giving the offerings a much richer feeling. Other colorful items include red, orange and yellow

peppers, whole papayas, whole mangoes, whole pineapples, plums, tomatoes, broccoli, purple cabbages and eggplants.

How to View Tsok Substances

The word tsok means gathering. Everyone must be involved for it to be successful. We should not leave it to Rinpoche or the tsok leader or chöpön to fix everything out of place. If something falls on the ground do not hesitate to pick it up and put it aside. Don't think twice about rearranging a precariously heaped tray. Also, if something seems out of line with the lineage tell the chöpön or the tsok leader at an appropriate time. And don't hesitate to ask the khenchungs or other experienced students questions.

It is unacceptable to drop *anything* – particularly off the plates or trays. This is not only true for the chöpöns, but for all of us. Think of yourself as a waiter in a nice restaurant. If when serving customers, you let potatoes or peas slide off their plates, or spilled wine all over the table, how would that be? Rinpoche has often had the chöpön arrange a whole new plate when something dropped. Therefore, we need to apply extra care while handling offerings. But this is more than simply being a good waiter and following rules of etiquette. *It has to do with mindfulness, connecting to the significance of what we are doing, and, most importantly, our awareness of the presence of the guests.* These details create the auspicious coincidence, or good tendrel, which counteracts our ignorance and wrong views, allowing us truly to enter the mandala. Therefore arrange the plates so nothing falls off when they are held up. During the collection of the leftovers, make a nice offering (which can be small), but also be aware of the size of the assembly and the size of the leftover tray. Be careful with the *serchyem*, the *dütsi* and the drinks. Candles, shrine implements and statues should all be treated with the utmost care.

Arrange protector plates plentifully but precisely, again taking care that nothing falls off. Always include something torma-like and grain-based, like muffins, donuts or bagels, as well as sweets and fruits.

Buying offerings for tsok

When choosing and buying the tsok offerings, we take our relative understanding of what is valuable, rich and elegant as our guiding principle. We can fall into a confused notion of nondiscrimination. We may find ourselves offering a can of tuna on a paper plate with the view that we can truly transform it into Samantabhadra's inexhaustible display. *To disregard relative appearance is a fault; essence and appearance are not at odds with one another.* Sadhana practice has to do with enjoying the richness aspect of the nature itself. According to our means, we should engage that richness directly by purchasing lavish offerings with a generous attitude of abundance. This is not a small-minded approach. As Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche states:

The bigger the tsok, the bigger the accomplishment.³

We should be wary of searching for offerings that we individually look forward to eating. The offering is not made to *me*, but to the lineage for the purpose of going *beyond me*. Therefore, we must never think of the tsok as a meal. By eating a good lunch before and planning to eat dinner afterwards, we can avoid the pitfall of being the *jackal of the feast*.⁴

Relating to tsok substances

Any tsok offering is a samaya substance. Simply put, it is not ordinary food or drink. It has been transformed by the blessings, power and view of the practice. Rinpoche has given many instructions on this topic, but essentially, we should be aware of any attitudes of grasping or rejecting. *The purpose of the tsok is to enjoy our experience in a deep and nondiscriminative way.* This goes for our outer environment as well as our minds. When we speak of *one taste* we don't mean there are not many flavors or a multitude of rich appearances. Rather, we mean that everything equally shares the same profound nature and can be enjoyed in a transcendent way, beyond the duality of grasping and rejecting. In sadhana

practice this view applies not only to tsok substances, but to all experience, including thoughts, emotions and the entirety of the phenomenal world.

Ultimately the point is to carry out and mix the view of one taste with all of our experience. Knowing that everything arises as an expression of our own nature, we can enjoy and appreciate every aspect, no matter how “difficult,” of our experience and our practice:

Because of the essence of the mind, our experience is full of potential and full of tremendous vitality and charge. If that essence were not there, there could not be an ego, nor the cherishing or protecting of the self, negative emotions, the charge of negative emotions, the flavors of negative emotions, the spices of the negative emotions and what they bring forth to us.⁵

Pure perception is beyond the notions of pleasant and unpleasant, toxic and pure, organic and inorganic, healthy and unhealthy. Negative biases toward certain foods often come from the strong attachment we have to our bodies and our physical comfort. While eating, we may think, “Even though these cookies are loaded with sugar and the apples are not organic, do I still have to eat them because they are supposed to be *pure*?” This is misunderstanding “pure” in the context of practice; the purity of the nature has nothing to do with good and bad.

On the other hand, eating samaya substances in an ordinary, excessive way, hiding behind the notion of “pure,” is sneaky. Some of us go straight for the alcohol. Some like the cookies, but are repulsed by the meat. Others try to balance the carbohydrates with the protein. Vegetarians who go straight for the meat with the justification that it is tsok again miss the point. *The point is to bring the view of one taste to the act of eating.* The tsok is a chance to make a leap and go beyond the solidity of our preferences.

If we open up to a bigger picture of what is going on in the practice and what the tsok really is, we may receive the full benefit and merit of the practice. It does not make sense to go through the whole process of buying offerings, arranging them beautifully, and engaging in the practice fully -- but during the enjoyment of the tsok, collapsing into ordinary discriminating mind and dismissing the view of one taste altogether. We should be aware when preferences based on attachment or aversion arise, and instead of following them, *use them as an opportunity to work with our minds* and self-reflect joyfully, investigating our strong stance along with the beliefs that back it up.

We must drop our usual attitudes of modesty and pickiness. We should accept whatever comes without discrimination and serve ourselves and others generously. We should not worry about how we will *deal* with our remaining tsok, or feel overwhelmed about eating it all. Ideally, we should take the time to pack up our plate nicely and bring it home. Then we should not be in a rush to get it out of the house. It is a blessing for your home, so keep it wrapped up in the refrigerator for a little while and eat it at your leisure. If need be, respectfully dispose of whatever cannot be eaten, keeping in mind that it is a precious substance of *samaya*.

When handling large quantities, such as after a drupchö, we should joyfully take whatever we can. If we can't take it all, we should think of creative ways of dispersing it, doing our best to stay in line with the view, not seeing the blessed substances in an ordinary way, such as something to get rid of.

Also treat offering substances with respect before they are offered. Do not store candles under the bed or incense in the sock drawer. Be especially mindful where tsok offerings are stored. Do not keep them on the floor or in the bathroom; do not step over them on your way out the door. This kind of mindfulness applies to all offerings, objects of refuge, and representations of the Three Jewels. Hanging a picture of our teacher over the toilet or storing Dharma tapes in the shoe closet will not help us progress on the path. To accumulate merit it is crucial to develop conscientiousness and mindfulness.

These guidelines are given in order to preserve the tradition, its blessings and genuineness, as well as for one's own merit.

¹ Guru Drupchö, Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche, 2/2/01

² *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, Patrül Rinpoche, pg. 290

³ Sadhana Retreat, Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche, 8/26/1995

⁴ '*Jackal of the Feast*' refers to the act of coveting the food that is being offered.

⁵ *Appreciating Your Wealth*, Personal Link #87, Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche, 10/22/00

Drupchö Practice Sequence

Session I

Sadhana Practice:

Seven Line Supplication through Repeating Offering and Praise Sections

Session II

Protector Prayers

Session III

Narak Dongdruk

Marme Monlam

Tsok

Kongshak Dorje Tollu Parts I and II

Short Ganachakra Recitation

Session IV

Tsok

Short Ganachakra Recitation

Kongshak Dorje Tollu Part III

Long Life Prayers

Conclude Tsok (skip the *Receiving the Siddhis* section until the last day of the drupcho)

Prayers of Dedication

Recitation Format

After 100 recitations of the Short Ganachakra, recite the sections in the tsok section of the liturgy all the way up through the Offering of the Remainers section. Then go back to the beginning of the tsok section of the liturgy and start from the beginning again.