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ལམ་བྱེར་གྱི་རྩོམ་ཐོས་སྒྲུ་འཁོར་འདས་རང་གྲོལ།

**The Self-Liberation of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa:
A Spontaneous Vajra Song about Taking as
the Path the Yogic Discipline of the
Profound Severance of Demons**

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo



KHYENTSE VISION
PROJECT

This text is intended to be read and practiced by those who have received the requisite Vajrayāna authorizations, transmissions, and instructions. If you are unsure whether you have received the appropriate permissions, please consult a qualified Dharma teacher of the relevant tradition.

zab mo bdud kyi gcod yul dang 'brel ba'i brtul zhugs lam khyer gyi rdo rje'i thol glu 'khor 'das rang grol

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Khyentse Vision Project: Translating the Works of
Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

These pithy verses written in the form of a vajra song contain a set of practical instructions for severance (*chöd*), the profound application of the intent of the Prajñā pāramitā sūtras. This teaching is given in the form of a “spontaneous vajra song,” a poetic form used widely throughout Tibet for conveying practical instructions and pithy insights in an applicable and inspiring manner. This form has its roots in India, in the vajra songs of the great mahāsiddhas such as Saraha, Tilopa, and Nāropa. It is a succinct text delivering practical instructions. As such, there is little philosophical discussion or argumentation. Rather, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo gets straight to the issue of how to apply the teachings of Severance in the beginning, middle, and end.

The text stems from the Severance tradition's larger body of literature, the core of which is the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras and the compiled teachings of the eleventh-century female siddha Machik Labdrön, the founder of Severance as we know it. In composing this text, Khyentse Wangpo draws on the pith instructions contained in this literature and combines them with his own realization, as he explains in his closing lines.

This text has also been included in the first section of the oral transmissions (*kama*) in the Kabab Dun collection to represent the Pacification and Severance (*zhi chöd*) lineage of the eight great chariots of the practice lineage. The composition of this text is mentioned in Khyentse Wangpo's biography in the chapter about his connection with the eight chariots and his visionary encounters with past masters from these lineages who authorized him as a lineage holder: “In the Iron Mouse year [1840], when he was twenty-one, while paying homage to the precious likeness statue of Machik Lapki Drönma at Sangri Kharmar, she smiled and wriggled, and tremors like an earthquake were felt by everyone. With the great brilliance of this blessing, the essence of her instructions seeped back into his awareness, and he wrote them down in the form of a ‘song of experience.’”¹

The text follows a traditional structure and is divided into three parts. It opens with two introductory verses through which the author pays homage and makes the pledge to compose. This is followed by the first section, an explanation of the preparatory stages of the path, namely, the four thoughts that turn the mind to the Dharma, and the four foundational practices of refuge, bodhicitta, guru yoga, and maṇḍala offering. The second section concerns the main part of the practice, the view of Prajñāpāramitā, how to recognize and train in this, and how to sever the four “demons” into “fixation-free space.” The third and final section deals with the stages of post-equipose, principally, the practice of casting away the body aggregate as food through the four distributions, a practice that is performed in order to enhance the main part. Khyentse Wangpo explains the various upheavals and evidence or signs of success the practitioner might experience, and then concludes with a dedication, aspiration, and colophon.

འཁོར་འདས་རང་གྲོལ།

The Self-Liberation of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa

A HO!

Dharmakāya, Prajñāpāramitā;
Saṃbhogakāya, Vajrayoginī;
Their unity, nirmāṇakāya display—Labkyi Drönma,
I pay homage to you!

To bring benefit to those of great good fortune,
I shall sing this vajra song,
A distillation of the sacred Dharma's very essence
Known as the Severance of Demons, the teaching you yourself taught.

The Preparatory Stages of the Path

To begin with, reflect upon this body, a support that has the freedoms.
Such a support is exceptionally hard to attain,
But, once attained, it can ferry you to saṃsāra's farthest shore.
Such is its value, its potential worth.
Moreover, since the time of our death is uncertain,
We must ensure we do not let this opportunity go to waste.
To this end, we must contemplate how at the time of death
We will be towed along by cause and effect, our positive and negative deeds.
Thus, we must galvanize our minds with renunciation
Of the aggregates that contain the mass of saṃsāra's suffering. [436]

From now until complete awakening,
Hold in your heart the refuge
Of the guru and the Three Jewels.
With the wish to attain buddhahood for all others' sake,
Rouse aspiring and applied bodhicitta.
In particular, train in the profound practice of guru yoga,
As this is the foundation from which all excellent qualities,
Both common and uncommon, arise.
Thereby invoke the guru's wisdom with wholehearted faith
And, right there as you sit, receive all four empowerments.
Offer the guru your body, your enjoyments, and your possessions
As a maṇḍala free from the three conceptual spheres.
Pray that you may cut directly through hope and fear;
That clinging to saṃsāra and nirvāṇa may be self-liberated;
And that, in the continuity of the unmodified natural state,
You may capture the stronghold of victory.

These are the preliminaries of the path.
Unless they take birth within you in a genuine and lasting way,
Experience of the main part of practice will not arise in you—
Drop your platitudes and apply yourself, get to the vital point!

The Main Part of the Practice

The main part is the Noble Lady,
The primordial innate mother of all victorious ones, Prajñāpāramitā.
She abides naturally in the hearts of all beings.
However, she is veiled by the stains
Of adventitious confusion, and so remains unseen.
So that you may meet her, directly and immediately,
First of all, examine in the following way:

For the crucial point of body, assume the sevenfold posture of Vairocana; [437]
For the crucial point of speech, let your vital winds move naturally;
For the crucial point of mind, examine and analyze
The mind's arising, abiding, and ceasing, and its color and shape.
When you search for mind in this way and do not find it,
And you see that mind has no established reality,
Then, in order to draw closer to resolving the natural state,
Let be without modifying, naturally at rest.

Then, to engage in the essential practice
Using opening the sky door,
You need first to gain recognition through the instructions on the essential meaning,
Then arrive at certainty through instructions on the words,
And finally sustain the practice through the experiential instructions.

Regarding the first point, undistracted awareness:
Hold steadfast in the state of natural clarity,
Then relax into basic space beyond ordinary mind.
Rest in the basic state devoid of reference points and deliberate activity;
No modifying, no fabricating—just rest naturally.
Be confident that the teacher’s instruction is itself
The shared intent of both Sūtra and Tantra.

When you see that name and form, sensations,
Perceptions, conditioned factors, and thinking
Are all, in ultimate truth, void of concepts,
It is the perfection of wisdom you are seeing.

This is demonstrated by the following explanation
From the *Collection of Precious Qualities*:

What is taught throughout the infinite ocean of scriptures
Is taught as well by the wisdom *ḍākinīs* in this way:
When one does nothing whatsoever with the mind,
Habitual tendencies do not arise and the stages and paths are perfected.

Through explanations such as these, with the pith instructions,
And through the guidance of one’s teacher, certainty is gained.
Having gained recognition in this way, [438]
The basic space of self-awareness that is void of designation or thought—
Primordial spontaneous presence—is seen.
This is the teacher as confidence gained through experience.²

By cultivating the meaning realized through this approach,
The supreme fruition is attained.
To that end, in a solitary place free from distraction and bustle,
Train one-pointedly in equipoise in the innate state.
In post-equipoise, view appearances as illusions.

At all times, self-awareness is the dynamic expression transcending ordinary mind.
It arises unobstructedly yet is devoid of real things.
This being so, equipoise and post-equipoise are inseparable.

They are brought to perfection in supreme unity.

At this point, the four demons—exaltation, inflation,
The tangible, and the intangible—
Will spring forth abruptly. Immediately utter PHATṬ,
Thereby severing them into fixation-free space.

The Stages of Post-Equipoise

Next, through direct subjugation,
Adverse circumstances on the path are devoured as one taste—
A forceful catalyst for the birth of experience and realization.
This is the secret enhancement conduct, to be practiced as follows.

Go to desolate valleys, temples, charnel grounds, and the like,
To places that induce terror and fear;
There, at night, when god-demons congregate,
Summon forth all vagrant spirits of place, all spirits of body,
All earth lords, nāgas, and nyens.
Summon forth all such beings, herd them
To a place of focus, and dissolve them into your body. [439]
Overpower them with gaze and mudrā
And using the four modes of moving (the tiger gait of heroes, the dancing of ḍākinīs, the slithering of
black snakes, the soaring of yogis).

Then comes the main part of the enhancement—subjugating through splendor
The place, the god-demons, and oneself. The visualization for these is as follows.

For the first, within the state of awareness merged with basic space,
Visualize your body expanding to pervade all directions
And remaining thus until saṃsāra is emptied,
Completely unwavering.

For the second, preceded by rousing bodhicitta,
With a mind of compassion toward all god-demons,
Most especially those causing harm,
Exhale your breath so that it fills the entire surroundings;
Then, seated in your power over them,
Draw them in on your inhalation
And force them all down together, beneath your practice seat.
This done, the area is demarcated by a protection tent

Guarded by the Three Roots and Dharma protectors of the cardinal and intermediate directions

So that nothing can ever pass beyond it. Visualize this.

For the third, mind is by its very nature

Utter purity—that is its basic state.

And yet, failing to realize this, god-demons

Act erroneously—how tiresome this is!

Thinking in this way, utter PHAṬ.

Then, within the undistracted innate state that is void of ordinary mind,

Without projecting out or gathering in, drop everything and let be.

When you exert yourself in this way, upheavals will occur.

Externally, you will encounter terrifying images;

Inwardly, you will experience physical illnesses; [440]

Secretly, a variety of thoughts

Driven by hope and fear will arise in the mind.

At such times, with the recognition, resolution, and conviction

That they are all apparitions of awareness,

Utter PHAṬ and thereby cut directly through appearances.

Merge awareness with basic space, and rest at ease.

Afterward, cast away the body aggregate as food.³

To do so, assume the sevenfold posture, the crucial point of the body,

And stare into empty space, the crucial point of the eyes.

Visualize mind in the form of a drop

And, with a series of PHAṬS, gradually raise it up to merge with space.⁴

Wherever space pervades, empty awareness pervades,

The ineffable continuity of luminosity—

Rest naturally in this state without rejecting or accepting.

If thoughts begin to proliferate,

Visualize Vajrayoginī, manifestation of self-awareness.

With the curved knife she holds in her right hand,

She slices open the head of your corpse.

Your aggregates and elements are presented as nectar

To all the guests of offering and charity. This is the white distribution.

For the mixed distribution, they transform into great piles of everything desirable

Expanding into a sky treasury of limitless abundance.

For the red distribution, your actual flesh, blood, and bones

Fill the three-thousandfold universe—enough to satiate all spirits, all obstructers.

For the black distribution, all your misdeeds and downfalls

Are amassed and given to the hordes of god-demons.
Finally, like a rainbow dissolving into space,
All is released into the state of awareness united with basic space.

Focus on these feasts one at a time:
Respectively, at dawn, midday, dusk, and night.

While doing so, no matter how the four demons manifest—
As attachment, aggression, terror, anxiety, or anything else—
Since your body has already been donated as a feast [441]
And your mind is beyond constructs, devoid of arising and ceasing,
Remain free of hope and fear and cultivate certainty.

After that, free of all reference to the three conceptual spheres,
Utter PHAT and merge awareness with basic space.
Visualize giving and taking happiness and suffering,
And dedicate all roots of virtue to supreme awakening.

By applying yourself wholeheartedly like this,
Evidence of success will occur within three days,
Or at least within seven, nine, eleven, and so forth days.
The signs will occur in waking life, in meditation, or in dreams.
There will be ordinary signs, such as people gathering
To honor you and pay their respects,
Finding your way through fearful places, riding lions and elephants,
And light rays shining from your body.
There will be extraordinary signs, such as the stream of afflictions cut right through,
A wealth of experience and realization bursting forth,
And the gaining of higher perceptions and magical powers.

When such signs appear, don't get tangled up in joy and conceit.
Simply let be, with whatever occurs.

Furthermore, there are four possibilities:
There are occasions when upheavals resemble evidence of success.
For instance, you don red clothing and partake of flesh and blood,
You prostrate disrespectfully,
Play music without sound, and so on.

Then there are occasions when evidence of success resembles upheavals,
Such as when horned animals attack you,
When you get drenched in filth, pus, and blood,
When your limbs are cut off, and so on.

Then there are mixed experiences that resemble both.
At the start of the night you see indications of success,
Then later that night the opposite occurs.
These are indefinite, mixed up displays.⁵

Finally, there are habits that resemble mixed experiences.
You might have a particular affliction
Deeply ingrained, around which thoughts arise
Fueled by intense attachment to that affliction.

Whichever of these occurs, whether positive or negative,
Relax in basic space, without hope or fear, neither accepting nor rejecting.

If, in spite of your efforts, you experience upheavals
But they do not lead on to evidence of success,
Push your location (externally), your aggregates (internally),
And your self-clinging (secretly)—push them all to their limits:
Take yourself to an exceptionally frightening haunted place,
And there rouse heroic conviction in the practice.
Consider how, in so many past lives,
You have had such aggregates before, but squandered them meaninglessly.
With this thought, rouse enthusiasm for giving them away to god-demons.
Think, “If I am unable to give them away, it is my attachment;
And if you are unable to consume them, that is your attachment.
Do not hesitate, therefore, do not tarry for a single moment!
Consume them right now! Devour them without leaving a morsel behind!”
Think, too, “May you cast upon my three gates
Whatever adverse circumstances you can muster!”
When this mindset really dawns in you, without artifice of any kind,
None of the gangs of demons will be able to cause you harm.

If you exert yourself like this but still enhancement doesn’t come,
Then rouse devotion for the guru who gave you these oral instructions,
Perceiving them as a buddha in person;
Waken in yourself unbearable compassion
For all beings who have been your mothers in the past;
And, whatever adverse circumstances, whatever sufferings occur,
Respond with the potent yogic discipline of direct subjugation.
Combining these three together,
Apply yourself, and great enhancement will surely come about.

At the end of the practice, when preparing to travel to another place, [442]
Relax the magic wheel for suppression.
When passing piles of white skulls in these desolate sites,
Visualize them as the Great Compassionate One
With a cascade of nectar gushing forth from his body,
Sating all the local spirits⁶ of the haunted place,
And all the god-demons, and most especially those who cause harm,
Filling them all with undefiled bliss.
Then make dedications and aspirations, both vast and pure.

Furthermore, there are several minor sacred pledges to be observed:
Do not wander about in bare feet;
Avoid lighting fires at night;
Urinate and defecate in a single place;
Never go back to the same place twice;
And once evidence of success has occurred, move on—
But until such time, go nowhere else.

In summary, externally, wander continuously and without partiality
Through haunted places and mountain retreats.
Internally, cast away your body aggregate as food,
And thereby swiftly bring together the two accumulations.
Secretly, definitively ascertain that saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are your mind—
The unique unbounded drop.

The view is to recognize the Mother,
The meditation is the natural unity of equipoise and post-equipoise,
The conduct is to travel the path of equal taste,
And the fruition is to capture the primordial stronghold of victory.

This was written at Zangri Kharmar Sangpuk,
A sacred place blessed by the wisdom ḍākinī Machik.
It combines the realization that arose
During a gathering there
With the pith instructions of this profound path,
Expressed as a vajra song. Through this virtue,
May all beings attain the self-liberated state!

*For the nourishment of myself and all others who wish to practice the profound perfection of wisdom,
this song was composed by an aimless, ailing yogi who delights the Lotus. These are extraordinary
pith instructions—gubya!*

NOTES

1. See Akester, *Life of Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo*, 186.
2. I have translated this line following the Drima and Dzongsar 2020 editions, which both read *nyams myong yid ches slob dpon no*. The Gangtok and Dzongsar 2014 editions, however, read *yid chos* in place of *yid ches*, which would render this line as: “This is experience of mind and mental phenomena as the teacher.”
3. See Harding, “Did Machik Really Teach Chöd?”
4. These lines describe the transference of consciousness taught in *Opening the Sky Door*. See Kongtrul, *Chöd*, chapter 13.
5. That is to say, such experiences cannot be categorized as either upheavals or evidence of success.
6. Local spirits (*gzhi bdag*) are spirits abiding in mountains, cliffs, and patches of earth, often a kind of earth goddess.

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GLOSSARY

affliction

ཉོན་ཐོངས། • *nyon mongs* • kleśa

The mental factors, or states, that make the mind unpeaceful and distort perception, and are responsible for inciting unwholesome actions.

aggregates

ཕུང་པོ། • *phung po* • skandha

The five aggregates are the five groups of psychophysical phenomena making up the entirety of human experience. The five are forms (*rūpa*; *gzugs*), sensations (*vedanā*; *tshor ba*), perceptions (*saṃjñā*; *'du shes*), formations (*saṃskāra*; *'du byed*) and consciousness (*viññāna*; *rnam shes*). The self of the individual gets imputed on the basis of those five aggregates.

aspiring and applied bodhicitta

སློན་དང་འཇུག་པའི་བྱང་ལེས། • *smon dang 'jug pa'i byang sems*

The resolve to attain buddhahood for the benefit of all beings, and the resolve to practice the path in order to achieve this goal, respectively. These two aspects comprise relative bodhicitta, ultimate bodhicitta referring to the wisdom that realizes the true nature of reality.

basic space

དབྱིངས། • *dbyings* • dhātu

The open, empty aspect of the mind, or empty nature of phenomena.

Collection of Precious Qualities

ཡོན་ཏན་རིན་ཆེན་སྡེ་པ། • *yon tan rin chen sdud pa*

dharmakāya

ཆོས་སྒྲུ། • *chos sku* • dharmakāya

Literally, “dharma body,” dharmakāya refers to the perfectly accomplished wisdom mind of a buddha, free of the two veils of mental afflictions and cognitive obscurations. Often

mentioned in tandem with the rūpakāya, or two types of form bodies, which are the physical manifestation of a buddha.

downfalls

ལྷོང་། • *ltung* • āpatti

Actions that are negative because they transgress specific vows of conduct one has taken, thus causing one to fall from the path.

drop

ཐིག་ལེ། • *thig le* • bindu

A technical term with a wide range of meaning, from a small sphere that can be a meditation support, to the energy essence abiding in the channels of the subtle body.

earth lord

ས་བདག་། • *sa bdag*

A type of spirit exercising dominion over a certain local area.

enhancement

བོགས་འདོན། • *bogs 'don*

Practices devised to stabilize and bring out the insight and accomplishment cultivated through meditative practice.

equipoise

མཉམ་བཞག་། • *mnyam bzbag*

A period of formal meditative practice.

fixation-free space

འཛིན་མེད་དབྱིངས། • *'dzin med dbyings*

The inner space of the mind free of mental grasping.

four demons

བདུད་བཞི་པོ། བདུད་བཞི། • *bdud bzhi po, bdud bzhi* • caturmāra, cāturmāra

The obstacles to awakening subsumed into four types of demons: the demon of the son of the gods, the demon of the aggregates, the demon of mental afflictions, and the demon of the lord of death. In the Chöd tradition, the four demons are identified as exaltation (*dga' brod*), inflation (*snyem byed*), the tangible (*thogs bcas*), and the intangible (*thogs med*).

four empowerments

དབང་བཞི། • *dbang bzhi*

A ritual in four stages that functions as the entrance to the path of the highest class of Buddhist tantra. The four are: vase empowerment, secret empowerment, wisdom empowerment, and precious word empowerment.

four modes of moving

འགྲོ་ལུགས་རྩམ་བཞི། • *'gro lugs rnam bzhi*

Four modes are: the tiger gait of heroes, the dancing of ḍākinīs, the slithering of black snakes, and the soaring of yogis.

god-demons

ལྷ་འདྲེས། • *lha 'dres*

The Tibetan term *lha 'dre* is often translated into English as “gods and demons.” Sarah Harding, however, translates the term as “god-demons” based on teachings from Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche: “In Tibetan there is the term *lha 'dre* which is used here, it means ‘god-demons,’ it is one word actually. It is because, sometimes, when these god-demons are in a positive mood, they will help you, then they are beneficial. But when they are hurt, they will harm you in turn.” (Harding, *Machik’s Complete Explanation*, 39).

Great Compassionate One

ཐུགས་རྗེ་ཆེན་པོ། • *thugs rje chen po* • mahākāruṇika

Epithet of the great bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, the embodiment of the compassion of all buddhas.

guru yoga

བླ་མ་འི་རྣམ་འབྱེད། • *bla ma'i rnal 'byor* • guruyoga

A central practice in the Vajrayāna that consists of merging one’s mind with the wisdom mind of the guru to expediate the transmission of the lineage’s blessings.

higher perceptions

མངོན་ཤེས། • *mngon shes* • abhijñā

Five types of abilities attained through meditative accomplishment: divine sight, divine hearing, knowing others’ minds, knowing past lives, and the ability to perform miracles. To these worldly accomplishments, a sixth is added, which can only be attained through insight: knowing the exhaustion of defilements.

Labkyi Drönma

ལལ་གྱི་སྒྲོལ་མ། • *lab kyi sgrol ma*

Literally, “Light of Lab” (*lab kyi sgron ma*), reading *sgrol* as *sgron*. This is an epithet of the female master Machik Labdrön (1055–1153), who was instrumental for the transmission of the Chöd tradition in Tibet.

Machik

མ་གཅིག་། • *ma gcig*

Literally, “Sole Mother.” Honorific title of Labkyi Drönma (1055–1153), who was instrumental to the transmission of the Chöd tradition in Tibet.

maṇḍala

མཎྟལ། • *maN+Dal* • maṇḍala

Literally, “circle” or “disc.” In tantric rituals, the maṇḍala is a diagram or three-dimensional structure used to signify the pure environment of a deity.

Mother

ཡུམ། • *yum*

Epithet of Prajñāpāramitā, “Perfection of Wisdom.” “Mother” signifies wisdom giving birth to all buddhas.

nāga

ལྷ་ • *klu* • nāga

A serpent being believed to inhabit subterranean and watery areas. While some nāgas are powerful, benevolent protectors of the Dharma, others can be malicious and cause diseases.

nirmāṇakāya display

སྤྲུལ་པའི་སྤྱོད་གསུམ་ • *sprul pa'i zlos gar* • nirmāṇakāya

Literally, “emanation body.” One of the two form aspects (*rūpakāya*) of a buddha.

Nirmāṇakāya forms can appear in any shape or form and are visible to ordinary beings.

nyen

གཉན་པོ། • *gnyan*

A class of spirits associated with the natural environment that can cause diseases.

opening the sky door

ནམ་མཁའ་སྐྱོད་འབྱེད། • *nam mkha' sgo 'byed*

The phrase “opening the sky door” is distinctive to the Severance tradition and refers most specifically to the practice of separating consciousness from the body and sending it out through the cranial aperture—a type of “transference” (*'pho ba*) practice. However, this phrase has also become a more generalized designation for a whole cycle of Severance teachings, including an enumeration of a set of ten instructions called sky-door openings.

post-equipoise

རྗེས་ཐོབ། • *rjes thob*

Literally, “subsequent attainment.” A period following a session of formal meditative practice, generally involving daily activities and ordinary sense perceptions.

Prajñāpāramitā

ཤེས་རབ་པ་པོའི་ཕྱིན་ལ། ཤེས་རབ་པ་པོའི་ཕྱིན་ལ། • *shes rab pha rol phyin, shes rab pha rol phyin ma*
• prajñāpāramitā

Literally, “perfection of wisdom.” Name of the liberating, direct insight into ultimate reality and of the female deity that embodies this wisdom.

sambhogakāya

ལོངས་སྤྱོད་རྫོགས་སྐུ། • *longs spyod rdzogs sku* • sambhogakāya

Literally, “body of enjoyment.” One of the two form aspects (*rūpakāya*) of a buddha.

Sambhogakāya forms are characterized by the major and minor marks of perfection and are perceptible only by highly realized bodhisattvas.

samsāra

འཁོར་བ། • *'khor ba* • samsāra

The beginningless and ceaselessly repetitive cycle of uncontrolled birth and death that beings are subject to as long as they are not enlightened. This perpetual cycle of worldly existence is characterized by unsatisfactoriness and a lack of true freedom.

samsāra and nirvāṇa

འཁོར་འདས། • *'khor 'das*

The state of conditioned existence characterized by suffering and dissatisfaction, and its transcendence into unconditioned peace.

self-awareness

རང་རིག། • *rang rig*

An awareness that knows itself, free of dualistic fixation and conceptual thought.

sevenfold posture of Vairocana

རྒྱལ་ལྷུང་ཆོས་བདུན། • *rnam snang chos bdun*

A seated posture that facilitates meditative concentration, characterized by seven points: (1) legs crossed in vajra posture; (2) hands resting in meditative equipoise; (3) a straight spine; (4) the chin slightly tucked in; (5) the shoulders open like the wings of a vulture; (6) the eyes gazing along the tip of the nose; and (7) the tongue resting against the palate.

Severance of Demons

བདུད་ཀྱི་གཙོད་ཡུལ། • *bdud kyi gcod yul*

Tantric tradition, commonly known as Chöd (“Severance”), transmitted in Tibet through the activities of the Indian master Padampa Sangye and in particular his Tibetan disciple Machik Labdrön.

three conceptual spheres

འཁོར་གསུམ། • *'khor gsum*

The three aspects that characterize dualistic perception: the object of an action, the agent, and the action itself.

three gates

སྒོ་གསུམ། • *sgo gsum*

Body, speech, and mind: the three ways through which karma is produced.

Three Jewels

དཀོན་མཆོག་རྣམ་གསུམ། • *dkon mchog rnam gsum* • triratna

The three objects of refuge: Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha.

Three Roots

རྩ་གསུམ། • *rtsa gsum*

The guru, as the root of blessings; the yidam, as the root of accomplishments; and the ḍākinī, as the root of activities.

three-thousandfold universe

སྟོང་གསུམ། • *stong gsum*

According to Buddhist cosmology, every world has one central mountain surrounded by continents. One thousand such worlds make up one minor world system. One thousand such minor world systems make up one intermediate world system, and one thousand intermediate world systems make up one great world system, or three-thousandfold universe.

Vajrayoginī

ནལ་འབྱོར་མ། • *rnal 'byor ma* • yoginī

Female deity of the highest class of Buddhist tantra.

wisdom dākinī

ཡེ་ཤེས་དྲ་གི། • *ye shes DA ki*

A female embodiment of enlightened wisdom in the context of the Vajrayāna teachings.

yogic discipline

བརྟུལ་ལྷགས། • *brtul zhugs* • vrata

Uncommon forms of conduct or spiritual disciplines, in particular practiced in the highest class of Buddhist tantra.

Zangri Kharmar Sangpuk

ཟངས་རི་མཁར་དམར་གསལ་ཕུག། • *zangs ri mkhar dmar gsang phug*

Literally, “Secret Cave of the Red Fortress of Copper Mountain.” Name of the former residence of Machik Labdrön, the founder of the Chöd tradition, in central Tibet, and symbolic center of this tradition.