

༄༅། །རྡོ་རྗེ་འཛིན་པ་ལྷ་མོ་བཅུ་དྲུག་གི་མཆོད་ཐོང་མདོར་
བསྐྱུས་པ་རྡོ་རྗེ་སྒྲ་མའི་མཆོད་སྤྱོན།

**The Offering Clouds of the Indestructible
Ladies of Sound: A Concise Garland of
Offerings of the Sixteen Vajra Goddesses**

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo



KHYENTSE VISION
PROJECT

rdo rje'i lha mo bcu drug gi mchod phreng mdor bsdus pa rdo rje sgra ma'i mchod sprin

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Khyentse Vision Project: Translating the Works of
Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This text by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, originally revealed by Jigme Lingpa in the Longchen Nyingtik cycle,¹ provides a concise offering practice connected to the sixteen offering goddesses. As such, it closely follows Jigme Lingpa's related text, *The Lute of the Gandharvas: A Garland of Offerings of the Sixteen Vajra Goddesses*.² For this reason, the first part of the title of this text (translated as "Indestructible Ladies of Sound") can be understood as generally referring to the whole set of sixteen goddesses. At the same time, it is also important to highlight its specific significance as the name of the goddess of sound, Vajraśabdā, who makes an appearance in other works by Jigme Lingpa.³

The ritual found in *The Offering Clouds of the Indestructible Ladies of Sound* differs from other similar practices in several regards. First, the goddesses are numbered as sixteen, compared to the more common numbering of eight.⁴ Second, in the context of Jigme Lingpa's treasure, they are specially qualified as "vajra goddesses." Third, their activities (and respective mantras) vary slightly in this text, compared to other places where they appear. The goddesses' offerings can be divided into different categories, as they play four different instruments, present four varieties of aesthetic arts, make four types of offerings, and engage with the senses in various ways: (1) the *vīṇā*, flute, tabor (or clay drum), and round drum; (2) charm, comedy (or garlands), song, and dance; (3) flowers, incense, light (or lamps), and perfume; and (4) form (or a mirror), taste, touch, and mental events (or the *dharmadhātu*).⁵

This text is intended to be inserted into *sādhana* practice at the time of offering, and would therefore be addressed to the guru or deity to whom the offering is being made. At a deeper level of meaning, the four sets of goddesses and their respective offering clouds are framed in terms of the four joys and the *maṇḍalas* of the four *kāyas*.

རོ་རྩེ་སྒྲ་མའི་མཆོད་སྒྲིན།

The Offering Clouds of the Indestructible Ladies of Sound

སྟོང་པའི་ཡེ་ཤེས་དགའ་བར་རྩེས་ཆགས་གཟུགས།།

tongpé yeshé gawar jechak zuk

The love that unites joy and the wisdom of emptiness takes seductive form

རོ་རྩེ་པི་ལྷོང་ལུ་ར་བབས་བཟུང་།།

dorjé piwang lingbu nga tab zung

As vajra goddesses playing a vīṇā, flute, clay drum, and round drum,

རིག་གཏངས་ཆོས་ཉིད་མཛོད་སྒྲིན་ཆེན་གྱིས།།

rigdang chönyi ngönsum chötrin gyi

And with their offering clouds of rigpa's radiance, the direct realization of dharmatā,

སྣ་ཆོགས་སྒྱུ་འཕྲུལ་སྒྱུ་པའི་དབྱིལ་འཁོར་མཆོད།།

natsok gyutrül trülpé kyilkhör chö

They offer you the nirmāṇakāya maṇḍala, in all its magical multiplicity.

ཨོཾ་ཨེ་བཙུང་མྱི་ཁྱེ་ཧྲུྃ། ཨོཾ་ཨེ་བཙུང་མེ་ཤྲུྃ། ཨོཾ་ཨེ་བཙུང་མི་ཏྲི་གི་ཧྲུྃ། ཨོཾ་ཨེ་བཙུང་མུ་རེུ་ཨེུ།

om ah benza wini hung | om ah benza wamsé tram | om ah benza mritamgi hri | om ah benza muranjé ah

OM ĀḤ VAJRA VĪṆE HŪṢ | OM ĀḤ VAJRA VAṢÉ TRĀṢ | OM ĀḤ VAJRA MRḌAṅGE
HRĪḤ | OM ĀḤ VAJRA MURAJE ĀḤ

ཤིན་ཏུ་སྟོང་པ་ལས་བྱུང་མཆོག་དགའི་དངོས།།

shintu tongpa lé jung chokgé ngö

From complete emptiness, supreme joy arises

དོར་ཤིག་བཞད་སྒུ་དང་གར་མཁན་མ།།

dorjé gek zhé lu dang gar khenma

As vajra goddesses of beauty, laughter, song, and dance,

འོད་གསལ་ཉམས་སྒྲུང་གོང་འཕེལ་མཆོད་སྒྲིན་གྱིས།།

ösal nyamnang gongpel chötrin gyi

And with their offering clouds of clear light, the increasing of meditative experience
and appearances,

བུང་འཇུག་ལོངས་སྟོན་ཆོག་སྒྲུབ་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་མཆོད།།

zungjuk longchö dzok kü kyilkhör chö

They offer you the sambhogakāya maṇḍala of unity.

ཨོཾ་ཨུཾ་བཞུང་ལུ་བྱེ་ཏྲུ། ཨོཾ་ཨུཾ་བཞུང་མུ་བྱེ་ཏྲུ། ཨོཾ་ཨུཾ་བཞུང་གྲི་རྟེ་ཏྲུ། ཨོཾ་ཨུཾ་བཞུང་ནི་རྟེ་ཨུཾ་

om ah benza lasyé hung | om ah benza malyé tram | om ah benza girti hri | om ah
benza nirti ah

OM ĀḤ VAJRA LĀSYE HŪṢ | OM ĀḤ VAJRA MĀLYE° TRĀṢ | OM ĀḤ VAJRA GĪTE HRĪḤ |
OM ĀḤ VAJRA NRṬYE ĀḤ

ཐམས་ཅད་སྟོང་པ་བྱུང་པར་དགའ་བའི་དབྱིད།།

tamché tongpa khyepar gawé chi

Total emptiness with special joy ^[607] takes shape

མེ་ཏོག་བདུག་སྟོས་མར་མེ་རི་ཆབ་མ།།

metok dugpö marmé drichab ma

As goddesses of flowers, incense, lamps, and fragrance,

གཞི་དབྱིངས་རིག་པ་ཆད་ཕེབས་མཆོད་སྒྲིན་གྱིས།།

zhi ying rigpa tsé peb chötrin gyi

And with their offering clouds of the basic space of the ground, rigpa reaching fullness,

ནམ་ཀུན་མཆོག་ལྷན་ཆོས་སྒྲུབ་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་མཆོད།།

nam kün chogden chökü kyilkhör chö

They offer you the dharmakāya maṇḍala, supreme in all aspects.

ཨོཾ་ཕུང་བཟླ་བ་ཏུ། ཨོཾ་ཕུང་བཟླ་བ་ཏུ། ཨོཾ་ཕུང་བཟླ་ལ་ཀུ་ཏུ། ཨོཾ་ཕུང་བཟླ་གཞུང་ཕུང་།

om ah benza pupé hung | om ah benza dhupé tram | om ah benza aloké hri | om ah benza gendhé ah

OM ĀḤ VAJRA PUṢPE HŪṢ | OM ĀḤ VAJRA DHŪPE TRĀṢ | OM ĀḤ VAJRA ĀLOKE HRĪḤ | OM ĀḤ VAJRA GANDHE ĀḤ

རབ་དུ་སྟོང་པ་ལྷན་སྤྱེས་ཡེ་ཤེས་དངོས།།

rabtu tongpa lhenkyé yeshé ngö

Supreme emptiness and coemergent wisdom⁷ appear

གཟུགས་རིག་འདྲ་ཚས་དབྱིངས་རྟོ་རྗེ་མ།།

zuk rek ro dang chöying dorjé ma

As the vajra goddesses of form, taste, touch, and the dharmadhātu,

ཚས་ཟད་སློ་འདས་དོན་གྱི་མཆོད་སྤྱིན་གྱིས།།

chö zé lodé dön gyi chötrin gyi

And with their ultimate offering clouds, the exhaustion of phenomenal reality beyond ordinary mind,

དབྱིར་མེད་འོ་བོ་ཉིད་སྐྱའི་དགྱིལ་འཁོར་མཆོད།།

yermé ngowo nyi kü kyilkhör chö

They offer you the svābhāvikakāya maṇḍala, the inseparability of all.

ཨོཾ་ཕུང་བཟླ་བ་ཏུ། ཨོཾ་ཕུང་བཟླ་བ་ཏུ། ཨོཾ་ཕུང་བཟླ་སྤྱེ་ཏུ། ཨོཾ་ཕུང་བཟླ་སྤྱེ་ཏུ་ཕུང་།

om ah benza rupa hung | om ah benza rasa tram | om ah benza sparshé hri | om ah benza dharmadhatu ah

OM ĀḤ VAJRA RŪPE⁸ HŪṢ | OM ĀḤ VAJRA RĀSE TRĀṢ | OM ĀḤ VAJRA SPARŚE HRĪḤ | OM ĀḤ VAJRA DHARMADHĀTO⁹ ĀḤ

*This surged from the sea of vidyādhara Khyentse Wangpo's mind. Sarvadā maṅgalam.*¹⁰

NOTES

1. More specifically, this text is found in the *yang gsang bla ma'i sgrub pa thig le'i rgya can* section of the *klong chen snying gi thig le*.
2. See <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/jigme-lingpa/sixteen-vajra-goddesses>.
3. For example, see *dpal ri theg pa chen po'i gling gi gtam rdo rje sgra ma'i rgyud mangs* (van Schaik, "A Tibetan Catalogue of the Works of 'Jigs-med gling-pa," 49; Deroche, "History of the Forgotten Mother-Monastery," 90), which gives a history of Palri Monastery (*dpal ri*) along with the mythological origins of Buddhism in Tibet. Regarding the roots of Vajraśabdā, she is mentioned in the *kun rig cho ga'i rnam bshad*, a ritual manual connected to Vairocana and the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*, which is believed to have originated in India with Ānandagarbha (see Skorupski, *The Buddhist Forum*, 85, 125). A wall painting from the Red Temple of Toling (*tho gling*) in western Tibet dated to the early fifteenth century and reflecting Kashmir influence shows the goddess playing a vīṇā (Luczanits, "Revival and renaissance in Tibetan art," Figure 8). Also playing a vīṇā is the six-armed Vajraśabdā statue found by Baron A. Von Stael-Holstein in 1928 in the Tibetan temple of the Forbidden City of Beijing (Clark, *Two Lamaist Pantheons*, 62).
4. See, for example, the *Thirty-Seven Point Maṇḍala Offering* (*maN+Dal so bdun ma*) by Chögyal Pagpa (chos rgyal 'phags pa, 1235–1280). See also Jamyang Kunga Namgyal's *kun rig cho ga'i rnam bshad* (Skorupski, *The Buddhist Forum*, 125), where the eight offering goddesses are found together with the goddesses of the five senses, including Vajraśabdā.
5. For a list that differs from the sixteen goddesses as they appear in this text, as well as a brief mention of them in relation to Abhayākara Gupta and Pema Karpo (who similarly connects them to the four joys), see Beyer, *The Cult of Tārā*, 159.
6. Note that the mantra sometimes instead has *bāśye*, the vocative of Sanskrit *bāśya*, which literally means "laughter" but more specifically refers to the mood of Indian aesthetics associated with comedy. The word *mālye* found here is the vocative of *mālya* ("flower garland").
7. Based on the context of the first three of the four joys being mentioned above, this refers to the fourth joy (*sahajānanda*), known as "coemergent joy" or "innate joy."
8. This is also found as *darśe*, the vocative of *darśa* ("appearance").
9. Other versions of this mantra use the simpler vocative form *dharme*.
10. "May everything always be auspicious!"

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GLOSSARY

basic space of the ground

གཞི་དབྱིངས། • *gzhi dbyings*

This technical term usually found in Nyingma literature describes the ground reality of pristine awareness from which everything arises.

clear light

འོད་གསལ། • *'od gsal* • *prabhāsvara*

In tantric practice, luminosity is accessed through skillful means and utilized for insight practice. It is a term commonly used in Buddhism to describe the nature of mind.

coemergent wisdom

ལྷན་སྐྱེས་ཡེ་ཤེས། • *lhan skyes ye shes* • *sahajajñāna*

The primordial, great wisdom of a buddha. The wisdom that is the unity of bliss and emptiness in which the basis (the essence of the nine constituents) and characteristic (inseparable bliss or the union of bliss and nonconceptuality) are not separate.

complete emptiness

ཤིན་ཏུ་སྟོང་པ། • *shin tu stong pa* • *atiśūnya*

This is the second of the set of four emptiness-related mental states found in the *Pañcakrama*.

dharmadhātu

ཆོས་དབྱིངས། • *chos dbyings* • *dharmadhātu*

Literally, “expanse of phenomena.” A synonym for ultimate reality and emptiness.

dharmakāya

ཆོས་སྐུ། • *chos sku* • *dharmakāya*

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

dharmatā

ཚུལ་ཉིད། • *chos nyid* • dharmatā

The most fundamental, irreducible quality of something. When applied to the mind, it implies buddha nature, luminous and empty, which is mind’s essence.

four joys

དགའ་བཞི། • *dga’ bzhi* • caturānanda

Four increasingly subtle, blissful experiences arising based on the winds and mind moving in the central channel. They are joy, supreme joy, special joy, and coemergent joy.

four kāyas

སྐུ་བཞི། • *sku bzhi* • catuḥkāya

The four bodies of a buddha: nirmāṇakāya, saṃbhogakāya, dharmakāya, and svābhāvīkākāya.

Jigme Lingpa

འཇིགས་མེད་གླིང་པ། • *jigs med gling pa*

Jigme Lingpa (1730–1798) was a key treasure revealer of the Nyingma tradition, famous for the Longchen Nyingtik terma cycle. Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo is considered a reincarnation of this master.

joy

དགའ་བ། • *dga’ ba* • ānanda, prīti, muditā

In the context of the four joys of the Longchen Nyingtik, this is the first joy. In the context of the four immeasurables (*brahmavihārā*), the third is sympathetic joy, feeling happiness for the happiness of others.

Longchen Nyingtik

ཀློང་ཆེན་སྙིང་ཐིག། • *klong chen snying thig*

The Longchen Nyingtik (“Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse”) is a terma cycle discovered as a mind treasure by Jigme Lingpa (1730–1798), one of the most important figures in the Nyingma tradition. He revealed the Longchen Nyingtik through a series of visions of the fourteenth-century Dzogchen master Longchenpa.

maṇḍala

དཀྱིལ་འཁོར། • *dkyil ’khor* • 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 tantric deity.

nirmāṇakāya

སྐུ་སྣང་། • *sprul pa* • nirmāṇakāya

Literally, “emanation body.” One of the three bodies or dimensions of a buddha.

Understood to be the tangible presence of the buddha’s wisdom that appears to ordinary beings.

ordinary mind

ལྷོ། • *blo* • buddhi, mati

One of several important terms for mind. It emphasizes conceptual aspect of the mind that operates within the framework of subject, object, and action. Thus, it is often translated as “rational mind.”

rigpa

རིག་པ། • *rig pa* • vidyā

A term for the act of knowing, the intellect, and awareness, including the most subtle level of mind, inherently free of mental afflictions and cognitive obscurations. A reference to the self-arising awareness (*rang byung gi rig pa*) that is the supreme, unchanging clear light (*prabhāsvara; 'od gsal*).

sādhana

སྒྲུབ་ཐབས། • *sgrub thabs* • sādhana

A ritual method for actualizing spiritual attainments and liberation through the practice of a deity.

sambhogakāya

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

Literally, “enjoyment body.” One of the three bodies of the buddhas. The sambhogakāya is associated with enlightened speech and appears to highly realized bodhisattvas as bearing the major and minor marks.

sixteen offering goddesses

མཚོད་པའི་ལྷ་མོ་བཅུ་དྲུག། • *mchod pa'i lha mo bcu drug*

Goddesses in Vajrayāna Buddhism who embody various sensory and spiritual aspects.

special joy

ཁྱད་པར་དགའ་བ། • *khyad par dga' ba* • viramānanda

The third of the four types of joy, this is the joy of cessation.

supreme joy

མཚོག་དགའ། • *mchog dga'* • paramānanda

The second of the four types of joy, this is also known as ecstatic joy.

svābhāvīkākāya

རོ་བོ་ཉིད་སྒྲུབ། • *ngo bo nyid sku* • svābhāvīkākāya

The svābhāvīkākāya is the ultimate buddhakāya, the union of the three other kāyas. Its wisdom aspect is called the wisdom dharmakāya, its luminous appearance in the perception of pure beings is the sambhogakāya, and its physical appearance in the perception of impure beings is the nirmāṇakāya.

The Lute of the Gandharvas: A Garland of Offerings of the Sixteen Vajra Goddesses

རྫོ་རྩེའི་ལྷ་མོ་བཅུ་དྲུག་གི་མཚོད་ཐེང་རི་བའི་རྒྱུད་མང། • *rdo rje'i lha mo bcu drug gi mchod phreng dri za'i rgyud mang*

A text of the Longchen Nyingtik cycle presented to Jigme Lingpa by the goddess Sarasvatī, in which the sixteen vajra goddesses offer symbolic gifts.

unity

ཟུང་འདུག་ • *zung 'jug* • yuganaddha

This term generally denotes the union of two components, such as conventional and ultimate reality, or skillful means and wisdom.

Vajra Sound

རྡོ་རྒྱུ་མ། • *rdo rje sgra ma* • vajraśabdā

See “Vajraśabdā.”

Vajraśabdā

རྡོ་རྒྱུ་མ། • *rdo rje sgra ma* • vajraśabdā

An inner offering goddess of the five senses who delights the maṇḍala deities with sound. She is depicted with an Indian lute (*vīṇā*).

vidyādhara

རིག་པ་འཛིན་པ། • *rig pa 'dzin pa* • vidyādhara

Literally, “knowledge holder.” This term is used for tantric adepts.

vīṇā

ཕི་ཤར། • *pi wang* • vīṇā

An Indian stringed instrument with four main and three auxiliary strings.