MACHIK’S
COMPLETE EXPLANATION
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Foreword by the Venerable Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche

*Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche’s disciple,* the dharma practitioner Sarah Harding, has trained in the Tibetan language and Buddhism to a great extent. Moreover, she has completed all the practices in a three-year, three-fortnight retreat. Here, following the enlightened intention of her root lama, she has translated *Machik’s Complete Explanation.*

This will be of immense benefit to all those who practice and study the Dharma in English. Machik Lapkyi Drönma drew her inspiration overall from the sutras of the Mother Perfection of Wisdom, and, in particular, she uncovered the hidden meaning of the enlightened intent set forth in the chapter on evil. She then disclosed the method for working with this in her profound system of the Sacred Dharma of Chöd, *Severance of Evil Object* (*dam chos bdud kyi gcod yul*). *Machik’s Complete Explanation* is a fine exposition of both Machik’s life and her esoteric instructions combined into one. It has very great blessings and benefits.

I therefore urge all dharma practitioners to pay great heed to this book. And I offer thanks to the *lotsawa* from the bottom of my heart.

Written by Thrangu Tulku, while touring in California on August 5, 2001. May virtue abound.
Acknowledgments

This translation project has been so much a part of my life for so long that gratitude for anything less than the abiding world and all its beings seems almost serendipitous. I feel profound, inexpressible appreciation of Khyabje Kalu Rinpoche for initiating me into the lineage and practice of Machik Lapdrön and suggesting that I translate this book in the first place. Gratitude to Drubpön Lama Tenpa for teaching it in retreat; Chagdud Rinpoche for helping at the first attempt; and Ringu Tulku Rinpoche (and Uncle-la), Lama Tashi Dondup, and Surmang Khenpo Tsering for selflessly devoting much time to clearing up confusion. In addition, the following lamas consented to answer occasional questions whenever I could catch them: Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, Khenpo Tsurlig Gyatso Rinpoche, Gangteng Tulku Rinpoche, Tulku Sangak Rinpoche, Bairo Tulku Rinpoche, and Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

Many friends read the manuscript and were generous with suggestions and more than a smattering of commas, such as Anne Blasing, Holly Gayley, Tony Chapman (Lama Drupgyu), and Dr. Judith Simmer-Brown, as well as whole classes of students who were given no choice but to read and respond, and whose comments were highly valued. Many other friends as well lent their patient ears during this difficult time.

I want to thank L. S. Summer for the dual task of adding the Sanskrit diacritics and the index, Tharpa Lowry for the glossary, Tracy Davis for copyediting, and Sidney Piburn and the good folks at Snow Lion Publications for support and friendship.

Finally, Eric Colombel and Lama Drupgyu at the Tsadra Foundation made the whole project possible with both financial and moral support and I cannot think how to thank them enough.

These are all the best of friends.
I dedicate whatever merit there is to these and all mother sentient beings, that we may accept our gods and demons and live at peace with them. In particular, I would like to dedicate it to my own One Mother of this life, Isobel Lennart, a great writer of the silver screen and a great mother, whose life ended over thirty years ago but whose love and influence on me never has.
Preface

Genuine, complete awakening that transcends cyclic existence is the ultimate refuge place of those who want to be free.

Machik (chapter 4)

K\textsc{yabje Kalu Rinpoche} gave us this book, known popularly as the \textit{Machik Namshe} in Tibetan, or \textit{Machik’s Complete Explanation}, to study as a support for our practice of Chöd in the first three-year retreat for Westerners that took place in France from 1976 to 1980. Though he had requested us not to study texts after the first year in retreat, commentaries on practices were the exception to that rule. The women of my retreat studied it together, in between meditation sessions, under the guidance of our benevolent retreat master, Lama Tenpa. When we had finished, we began the daily practice of Chöd,\textsuperscript{1} based on these teachings of Machik Lapdrön, a great Tibetan master of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It was the last practice to be done at the end of the day in our individual cells, and we continued with it for the duration of the retreat. Toward the end of the retreat we practiced together as a group for one month, using a more extensive version of Chöd known as the Feast Activity.\textsuperscript{2} These are among my best memories of the retreat. That is not at all due to what might be misconstrued as a paucity of fond memories of the limited life of cloistered retreat. On the contrary, the practice of Chöd stands out even among the rich variety of profound and skillful Vajrayāna practices in Tibetan Buddhism. Whatever one may say about the deep spiritual techniques and psychic truths mysteriously at work in tantric practice can be said all the more of Chöd. With a stunning array of visualizations, song, music, and prayer, it engages every aspect of one’s being and effects a powerful transformation of the interior landscape. It is far from watching the breath.
Some years later, perhaps in 1984, Kalu Rinpoche asked me to translate the text into English. He even said that he knew someone to sponsor the work. That sponsorship never materialized, however, and so I worked on the translation in fleeting moments between other translating and teaching jobs and raising my two children. By the late eighties I had done only the first few chapters (with the gracious help of Chagdud Rinpoche) and finally put the project aside. Now, through the generosity of Eric Colombel and the Tsadra Foundation, it has finally reached completion. This support has been so fortuitous, I suspect it was part of Rinpoche’s grand plan all along. I am only sorry that Rinpoche himself and the great Dezhung Rinpoche, with whom he advised me to work, were not here to help me through the challenges and to witness the completion of this translation.

Perhaps there are some good consequences of this delay. For one thing, I hope that both my experience and my translation skills have matured. More important, there has been a great expansion in the field of Buddhist studies, and many scholarly works, translations, and instructions by both Tibetan and Western teachers are now available to the interested reader, so that this book can find its place within a greater body of informative works. More particularly, there have been some very helpful studies in Western languages of the Chöd lineage and of the life of Machik Lapdrön. Practice texts and commentaries have been translated, and many are in circulation, as are transcripts from the teachings of learned lamas. There are also some interesting studies on the place of women in Tibet and on the feminine principle in Vajrayāna, as well as new translations of works about other female saints, so that we can form a better picture of where Machik fits into the panoply of Tibetan saints and yogis. These works are of great help in contextualizing *Machik’s Complete Explanation*, and I encourage the reader to consult them. Even with all these new additions, there are still many areas that need further research. I therefore hope that this particular translation might be of use to scholars and practitioners alike. But it is not itself intended as a critical study or historical research work in any way. The formidable length and nature of the translated text has deterred me from such extensive scholarly investigations. I simply present the book as it is and as it has been used by Tibetan practitioners for many years. Machik’s biography in the first two chapters, which has already been nicely translated at least three times—by Ani Zimpa (1975), Tsultrim Allione (1984), and Jérôme Edou (1996)—is included here not because of faults in those translations but simply for the sake of the
integrity of the book as a whole. Working through this text and engaging it so thoroughly has been extremely edifying for me personally, and I hope that the reader will find it of benefit.

The intent of this book, as indicated by its full title, *Clarifying the Meaning of Chöd, A Complete Explanation of Casting Out the Body As Food*, is primarily an explanation and commentary on the Tibetan Buddhist practice called Chöd, translated as “cutting” or “severance.” Chöd is a practice renowned in the popular mind mainly for its graphic visualizations of cutting up one’s body to offer to demons in charnel grounds. The present text is a commentary rather than a practice liturgy as such, but it is far more than a mere practice guide (*khrid yig*). The subject matter is far ranging and at times seems tangential, so I shall present a short chapter-by-chapter guide to the contents. Machik Lapdrön is said to be the source of all that is contained in this book, and it is written as if it were recorded from her teachings and storytelling. But it is in fact a compilation gathered from various sources that finally took shape in its current form many hundreds of years later. How much of it is truly the words or even the ideas of the great woman of eleventh-century Tibet is pure conjecture. As with all transmissions of spiritual teachings that trace back to ancient times, we must trust in the integrity of the lineage.

Chapters 1 and 2 tell of both Machik’s personal life and her spiritual development. These were recorded by Namkhai Gyaltsen (b. 1370), the eighth in the lineage of teachings beginning with Machik. It was no doubt included with this commentary to provide the practitioner with the inspiration and confidence in the founder of these teachings by telling the tale of her “marvelous life.” The details presented in these first two chapters accord on many points with other available stories of her life. At the end of chapter 2 there are appended lists and details of the lineage and teachings. Since many of the texts mentioned here are not currently available, more clarification in this area is needed. It is to be hoped that new material will come to light that will expand this information beyond just a list of titles.

Chapter 3 begins a series of dialogues between Machik and her various children and disciples, the format that is followed for the rest of the book. Here she responds to the questions posed by Tönyön Samdrup, her son and spiritual heir. He is in retreat when suddenly Machik appears out of the sky. Tönyön is astounded at her miraculous arrival and her appearance, and so in
the first part of this narrative we learn about Machik as she explains to her son who she really is. Once Tönyön adjusts to this revelation, he goes on to ask about the future, particularly about the classic Buddhist prediction of the degeneration that is to come. Machik gives a succinct but detailed explanation of the future fivefold degeneration: that of religion, beings, life span, afflictive emotion, and time. She then goes on to answer his questions about the tradition she has founded, the Chöd of Mahāmudrā, and why it is so effective in these degenerate times. Finally, she presents a beautiful explanation of the meaning of mahāmudrā and the other mudrā practices. Mahāmudrā is the highest spiritual philosophy, and it is in these teachings that we see how Chöd is supported by the view of prajñāpāramitā, the Mahāyāna wisdom literature that was Machik’s main inspiration.

Chapter 4 is devoted entirely to an explanation of gods and demons, and one could even say of evil itself. This is the most fascinating part of the book and the most essential for understanding Machik’s system as well as Tibetan Buddhism in general. The questions are posed by Gangpa Muksang, who first asks about the four devils, or māras, famous in the Chöd tradition. (These are reminiscent of, but distinct from, the four classical māras of Mahāyāna Buddhism.) These devils are anything that impedes awakening into one’s own nature. After a brilliant analysis of the levels of spiritual death, Machik goes on to describe various kinds of gods and demons. The term “gods and demons,” or god-demons (lha ’dre), designates that which is helpful (god) or harmful (demon)—in other words, basic bifurcated thinking. If you think you don’t believe in gods and demons, consider whether you judge anything as good or bad, right or wrong. Here we are given a pragmatic blueprint for what we might call the process of “otherization”—the dualistic concepts that interpret all experience in relation to the perceived help or harm it does to an unexamined self. Unpacking the process, we can overcome it. The chapter ends with a description of what that would feel like.

Chapter 5 is unquestionably the core of the book, for it is here that we find an actual explanation of the practice of Chöd. This chapter could easily stand by itself as a complete commentary. Tönyön is again the interlocutor, for it turns out that he doesn’t know the practice as well as he thinks. A ḍākini tells him as much in a dream, so back to Mom he goes. But it seems that he has also forgotten the lesson of his mother’s identity, so she first reminds him in considerably more detail than previously so that he is unlikely ever to forget. Then follows a classical commentary divided into seven sections that mirror
the usual sequence of the Chöd practice: (1) engendering the resolve for enlightenment and calling the guests; (2) meditating on the objects of refuge, which includes a lovely explanation of the Three Jewels in the outer, inner, secret, suchness, and intimate dimensions, and training in the four immeasurable mind states, as well as inviting the field of accumulation; (3) paying homage and making offerings; (4) separating mind and body in the practice of powa (’pho ba) and offering the specific parts of the body as a maṇḍala; (5) supplicating and bringing down blessings; (6) preparing and offering one’s body to the guests; (7) and concluding the practice with dedication of merit, prayer, and dissolution of the visualization.

Although the commentary follows this outline faithfully, there is such meticulous detail in some sections that the material appears almost tangential. For instance, in offering the body to spirits, Machik describes the nature of those whom the Chöd practitioner is trying to help. This includes an unbelievably detailed description of terrestrial and aquatic spirits that might stand as an archive of ancient Tibetan customs, fashions, headgear, textiles, jewelry, horses, saddlery, equipage, amenities, implements, anatomy, and wildlife. There is also a delightful diversion in the section on ejection of consciousness about a mythic bird of ancient India whose eggs provide the model for visualizing one’s own consciousness.

Chapter 6 answers the questions of Gyenema, one of the four Gyens, Machik’s spiritual daughters, who each have the word “ornament” (rgyan) as part of their names. These four women are present throughout the dialogues of the book and are mentioned in chapter 2 as the spiritual heirs of many of Machik’s teachings. Gyenema is very practical: she asks about the process of death and dying, human prenatal development, and human physiology, including the system of energy currents and channels, sometimes called the subtle or psychophysical body, that traces back to Indian sources. She is given such a wealth of detail in Machik’s responses that we begin to wonder if we are reading a medical treatise. It would be a meditational feat of some magnitude to visualize the dissection and preparation of one’s body for offering to spirits in such surgical detail as described here, and yet that is ostensibly why it is included. This knowledge of anatomy and healing may have been due to the influence of one of Machik’s principal teachers, Drapa Ngön-shechen, who discovered the famous Four Medical Tantras (sman gyi rgyud bzhi). Indeed, it may be of some interest to students of Tibetan healing arts. Pathology and demonology are intimately related fields in Tibetan culture,
and the chapter also includes more information about outer and inner gods and demons. It concludes with an explanation of mystic seed syllables or vibrations that are associated with the energy currents, and how to use them in connection with breathing exercises.

Chapter 7 begins with a list of the ten obligations that a person who wishes to practice Chöd must vow to keep. It seems to be appended here, and does not follow the format of dialogue. It is followed by another delightful diversion, this one into the particularities of dress style for chödpas (practitioners of Chöd), who are infamous even in our time as outrageous dressers, despite this early admonition. Three yogins come to visit Machik, and she comments in detail on their clothes and accessories, admiring some and stripping them of others. She launches an almost obsessive tirade against dog skin, a material that in fact seems never to have been used at all in Tibet. Finally, Machik’s disciple Khugom Chökyi Senge joins the dialogue and, after allowing another bout of anti-dog skin vitriol, steers the conversation to local spirits. She identifies and describes the spirits of earth, land, country, sacred places, and towns. She then goes on to answer his specific questions about the visualizations of Chöd, such as how big to make the body, how many bodies there should be, how to count the worker dakinis who help chop it up, and so on. Then there is the very important section for Chöd practitioners on the results of the practice and evidence that one is doing it correctly. This evidence comes in the forms of various sensations and apparitions, even dreams and visions.

In chapter 8, Machik continues to speak about apparitions, this time at the behest of Jetsun Zilnön, one of the yogins in the preceding dialogue. Basically, it is a dream interpretation manual explaining which kinds of spirits cause which kinds of experiences in dreams and in apparitions. At the same time, it provides interesting descriptions of spirits often included in the varying set called the “eight classes of gods and spirits” (lha srin sde brgyad). Here there are eleven: gyalpo, mamo, düd, tsen, okdön (nāga), lha dön, rāhula, yama (or death lords), nöchin (yaśa), te’urang and hama gab demons. Some of these are very ancient Tibetan spirits, and others have merged with “newer” migrants from India. General apparitions are also described, as well as how to identify specific signs of karmic debt, obscurations, death within three years, and bad future rebirths. Apparitions are an important sign of effective practice of Chöd, and indeed they are sought after. Here, however, the narrative seems to stray into that territory shared with shamanic healing prac-
tices of finding the source of a problem by identifying the malignant spirit. It is a useful chapter for the description of the pantheon of spirits, if that is your fascination. I am hoping that it will not be used to aggravate obsessive hypochondria or dream paranoia. Not everything is a sign of something else, although reading this chapter one might think so.

Chapter 9 presents Machik’s predictions about the future. This is a common device in Tibetan texts, and would seem almost formulaic, but here it makes for a morbidly enjoyable read in prophecy noir. It is certain, at any rate, that the future does not look bright. The questions come from the daughter Sönam Gyen, and in a way continue the descriptions of future degeneration begun in chapter 3. First there are predictions about the terrible state of politics in the future, hardly a surprise. Adulteration of the royal lineage is seen as the primary degenerating factor, and we might be uncomfortable to find out that future corrupt rulers will be “charlatans and women.” Worse, there will be rule by the masses (democracy?) once the monarchy falls.

Chapter 10 continues in the same vein, with the focus on future religious degeneration. Monasteries will become armed garrisons and business centers while their inhabitants foist themselves on the people as genuine spiritual leaders. This is, of course, eerily reminiscent of religious practice in our own time, even of our own personal practice. It would seem, though, that maintaining purity of intention, of deed, of vows, and of lineage has always been difficult. There are some bright moments, however, and we can recognize some of the famous personages whom Machik predicts with amazing accuracy, if we are to believe that it is she who made these predictions. The chapter concludes with the future of Machik’s own teachings, the practice of the Chöd of Mahāmudrā.

The colophon in both my copies mentions only Gang (actually gang bdag) as the editor or author, although this might mean only “someone.” This final statement with its short aspiration prayer is only a few lines long, and should be simple, yet there has been considerable debate about the authorship of the text. Rather than jump into the fray with scarcely any new evidence, I will only offer my opinion that “Gang” at the end is the same person as Namkhai Gyaltsen, who identifies himself at the end of chapter 2 as the recorder. It might even be a version of his name, for he was known as Namkhai Gyalt- sen of the Gang[s] lineage. One of my texts has an added colophon by one Jampa Sönam consisting mainly of a list of donations that he accepted in
order to print the book, but it seems clear that he was responsible only for that particular printing. All of this is an interesting puzzle for scholars to solve; for the most part it is irrelevant to the reader. The words of this text are attributed to Machik Lapdrön, as recorded by the excellent but imperfect memories of her spiritual heirs. No matter who compiled it, it was certainly hundreds of years after Machik lived that the present book took shape, and there is a good possibility that much extraneous material accumulated around a core of what might have been her instructions. Nevertheless, I believe a sense of her teachings is present throughout, and this popular commentary would not have endured if its value were in doubt.
Introduction

Homage to the lama and the Great Mother. “Mahāmudrā Chöd” presents the enlightened perspective of the middle turning [of the wheel of Dharma] in conjunction with the Mantra[yāna] activities for training in awareness. It is a radical method for cutting through the inflation of ego-fixation through the willingness to accept what is undesirable, the disregard of difficult circumstances, the realization that gods and demons are one’s own mind, and the understanding that oneself and others are utterly equal. Not understanding it as such, [going around] saying hung hung pe pe while seeing the enemy in one’s own deluded projections and engaging in all kinds of outrageous behavior in the hopes of defeating demons and bad spirits, or to gain fame, notoriety, and food, is known as perverted Chöd and is an egregious aberration of this approach. So right from the start, focus your mind in the right direction.

Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye

Woman or Goddess?

“Machik is the dākinī of timeless wisdom, the birth mother of all past, present, and future buddhas.” This is the very first sentence, after the homage, of the current text, Clarifying the Meaning of Chöd, A Complete Explanation of Casting Out the Body As Food, or Machik’s Complete Explanation. How does the ineffable become a woman, or a woman become ineffable? Who was the woman behind this book? Stories of female saints are exceptional enough in the history of Tibetan Buddhism, or in any major religion for that matter, to make this story rare and precious. But even among the few that we can discover, the figure of Machik Lapdrön stands out as unique for several reasons. According to the legend, in her previous life she was an Indian man who made the unusual choice to take rebirth as a woman
in Tibet. She was inspired primarily by the *Prajñāpāramitā*, the Great Mother Perfection of Wisdom that is the manifestation of the ultimate feminine. Unlike other female saints of Tibet, she was not a lama’s consort, a nun, or a hermit, but a mother who nurtured the spiritual life of her children, and a self-styled beggar woman. Above all, she was the only Tibetan, male or female, who was the progenitor of a distinct tradition that spread back into the Buddhist motherland of India, a cause for great national pride in Tibet. And she left a tremendous legacy of her own teachings, more than any other woman. Let us look a little at these distinctions.

There are two stories here, often difficult to distinguish, or we could say a tale of two women: The girl from Lap country who excelled at her studies and became Lapdrön, literally “the Light of Lap” (*Lab kyi sgron ma*), and the female embodiment of the ultimate feminine principle, Machik, the “One Mother” (*ma gcig*). Religious figures in Tibet are most often depicted as manifestations of the enlightened principle, and their tales of liberation (*rnam thar*), or hagiographies, are filled with miraculous deeds and perfected qualities. This inspires the devotee with faith and a sacred outlook, but it also places these events and people far from the ordinary, mundane world. At the same time, we have a need for role models with whom to identify, people who have experienced and overcome the regular human struggles and can give hope to even the most hopeless of us candidates for enlightenment. The desire to hear the human side of the story is perhaps even more pertinent for the modern reader, who is often doubtful and even scornful of the miraculous depictions typically found in Buddhist hagiography. In Machik’s story both divine and human aspects offer inspiration, and her teachings are replete with feminine symbolism. It is rather a nice change, if only for a moment, from all of the marvelous males populating Buddhist history.

Machik Lapdrön lived a long, fruitful life from the mid-eleventh century until the mid-twelfth century, though exact dates vary. It was a time of great renewal of the Buddhist teachings in Tibet—the second spreading of dharma from India. Most of the major schools of the new tradition were being seeded at this time, and Machik was contemporary with some of their great founders. Her system of Chöd, together with Dukngel Zhije, came to be identified as one of the Eight Great Chariots of the practice lineages. Machik herself was recognized as a čākini, an emanation of Tārā and of the Great Mother, Prajñāpāramitā.

It is hard to find the point in time or myth when a regular struggling spir-
ritual aspirant makes the leap over into legend. For women this was an especially rare feat. In Tibetan society, once a woman catapults over the social limitations of gender and comes to occupy a position of strength, the transformation is radical, and she is equally respected without reservation by males and females as the paradigm of enlightenment. We might say that the ideal feminine principle so esteemed in the theoretical underpinnings of Tibetan Buddhism and the real life of women line up, for a change, if only posthumously.

The Goddess Tārā

Starting even before the beginning, the prequel to Machik’s life story tells about her previous life as an Indian man, Döndrup Zangpo. The story of his death and rebirth, aided as they were by a dark female figure of wisdom (dākinī), is notable for his choice to be reborn as a woman. This immediately reminds us of the goddess Tārā, who made just such a choice for all time. It is said that in “an age before which there was nothing else,” Tārā was a princess called Moon of Wisdom who was told by some monks (even then!) that, “If you pray that your deeds accord with the teachings, then indeed on that account you will change your form to that of a man, as is befitting.” Her famous reply also echoes the words of the earth goddess in the Mahāyāna scripture *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sūtra* who was similarly challenged.³ Tārā says:

“In this life there is no such distinction as ‘male’ and ‘female,’ neither of ‘self-identity,’ a ‘person’ nor any perception (of such), and therefore attachment to ideas of ‘male’ and ‘female’ is quite worthless. Weak-minded worldlings are always deluded by this.” And so she vowed, “There are many who wish to gain enlightenment in a man’s form, and there are but few who wish to work for the welfare of sentient beings in a female form. Therefore may I, in a female body, work for the welfare of beings until Sāṁsāra has been emptied.”⁴

This courageous Indian adept, Döndrup Zangpo, not only took a female birth, considered an inferior state by most Buddhist accounts,⁵ but he had the added challenge of being reborn in Tibet, the land of red-faced demons, as it was known. But this too reminds us of Tārā, the goddess who originated in India and was adopted by Tibetans as their most revered and beloved
savioress. In fact, it is Tārā who prophesies and oversees his transition, either as herself or as the dark executioner-midwife. Tārā is more than just an inspiration here, even more than the moving force behind this drama. It is difficult to say that the Indian adept’s next incarnation as Machik is at all distinct from Tārā herself. Tārā acknowledges her own impending arrival (as Machik) to Bumey, Machik’s future sister, in a dream, and during her childhood and youth other people recognize or even see Machik as Tārā as well. It is confirmed again later in Machik’s life when Tārā appears and says, “You are a mind emanation of the Great Mother, inseparable from me.” The figure of Tārā recurs throughout Machik’s life and teachings. In fact it would be fair to say that the record of Machik’s life is a tale of this bodhisattva.

The tradition of telling the stories of great saints, once their sanctity has been recognized, as having all along displayed remarkable characteristics goes back to the life of the Buddha Śākyamuni himself, whose story was later embedded in a rich and marvelous chronicle spanning eons and universes filled with gods and buddhas. This is not only a result of the tendency to embellish and extol the legendary saints; it crystallizes an integral aspect of Vajrayāna known as sacred outlook or pure view. The form of Buddhism that developed in the Himalayan regions integrated teachings from Indian Buddhism on the idea of buddha nature (tathāgatagarbha), the enlightened potential or awakening nature of all beings and, in some interpretations, all phenomena. Such a view is cultivated by the practices of visualization that are the hallmark of Vajrayāna Buddhism, practices such as those of Chöd. If even ordinary beings and bugs have this divine nature, it goes without saying that the great saints that illuminate this very truth for us are all manifestations of that enlightenment. Most of the great religious figures in Tibetan history are associated with one or another (or several) of the host of bodhisattvas and deities that personify the enlightened principle. All of them are seen as emanations of the continuing compassionate activity of the buddhas for the sake of sentient beings who do not yet realize that they too are buddhas—who are stuck in the delusion of being flawed.

In the case of a female saint such as Machik, it is not surprising that the associated enlightened principle would be that of Tārā, the principle feminine manifestation in common practice. Other great women saints were similarly assigned, such as the eighth-century queen Yeshe Tsogyel, who is therefore considered a predecessor of Machik. By further extension, Machik is also associated with the ultimate feminine principle, that of the Great Mother.
Prajñāpāramitā, the Great Mother

The so-called Great Mother boggles the childish intellect. Complete liberation is indescribable. Since it is the very nature of unimaginable infinity, it is not even in the realm of experience of the mighty [bodhisattvas] of the tenth stage. To speak here only in relative terms, however, she is the Mother of all the buddhas of the three times dwelling in the utterly pure Highest Realm of Reality. Or, she is the Great Mother dharmakāya who gives birth to the four [kinds of] noble ones: śrāvakas, pratyeka buddhas, bodhisattvas and buddhas. She bears many names, such as All Good, Wealth of Vajra Space, No Self and Manifold Mother because she is primordial wisdom as the dance of illusion. Through the unimaginable blessing of her reality mind, she dwells within the unborn, unceasing realm of reality, [yet is] undifferentiated from the teacher and entourage of buddhas of the ten directions, such as the Source of Jewels, in the saṃbhogakāya form surrounded by an immeasurable saṃbhogakāya entourage of the mother-fathers of the five families, and more.

Kamnyön Jigdral Chökyi Senge

Machik’s inspiration, the catalyst for her enlightenment, and the foundation of her teachings was the Perfection of Wisdom. This profound philosophy originated in India with the appearance of a literature of wisdom that formed the basis for the emerging Mahāyāna Buddhism. Edward Conze, the preeminent scholar on this subject, dates the earliest of these texts, the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, to a period between 100 B.C.E. and 100 C.E., and the Tibetan translations to around 850 C.E. These sūtras, or sermons, of the Buddha give “essentially a simple re-statement” of early Buddhist thought, expanding particularly on the ideas of nonself (anātman) and loving-kindness (maitṛi), which form the foundation of Mahāyāna teachings on emptiness (śūnyatā) and compassion (karuṇā). They emphasize prajñā, penetrating insight or sharp intelligence, the faculty that can penetrate ultimate reality, which is the lack of intrinsic existence of the self and all phenomena. It is this realization, then, that produces the enlightened state and thus enlightened beings, or buddhas. Conze notes, “Here already, at this early stage, the Prajñāpāramitā is designated . . . as “the mother of the Jinas (buddhas).” In The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Verses, considered the earliest version, it is described why these teachings are so designated:
So fond are the Tathāgatas of this perfection of wisdom, so much do they cherish and protect it. For she is their mother and begetter, she showed them this all-knowledge, she instructed them in the ways of the world. From her have the Tathāgatas come forth. For she has begotten and shown that cognition of the all-knowing, she has shown them the world for what it is. The all-knowledge has come forth from her. All Tathāgatas, past, future, and present, win full enlightenment thanks to this very perfection of wisdom. It is in this sense that the perfection of wisdom generates the Tathāgatas, and instructs them in this world.”

It is only perfect or ultimate prajñā that can generate realization and therefore realized beings. What specifically is known in this sharp intelligence is the nature of mind and of everything as emptiness, as a lack of any true or singular, permanent, inherent existence. This emptiness itself is also understood as prajñāpāramitā. So the perfection of wisdom represents both the agent of knowing and that which is known: its own empty nature. The mystery is that these two aspects of the knower and the known are not to be understood in the usual dual form of subject and object but as inseparable, a state that we cannot really conceive of in ordinary dualistic consciousness. Thus the famous line attributed to the Buddha’s son Rāhula in his praise to the Mother: “To the ineffable, unimaginable, unutterable . . . I pay homage.”

This ultimate truth is not dualistic in any way whatsoever, let alone captured by ideas of one or another gender. It is inconceivable even to great realized beings, let alone to those of “childish intellect.” Perhaps that is why this ineffable truth is depicted by the more tangible designation of a mother. In Tibetan it is known as Yum Chenmo, the Great Mother.

Not only is prajñā the progenitor of all enlightened beings; the nature of emptiness itself naturally carries another maternal image. As the source and inseparable essence of all phenomena, it represents the totality of all that is and all that will come to be. For without emptiness, there would be no space for existence. This imagery of the potentiality of emptiness, of the pregnant void, as some have called it, or the all-inclusive realm of space, is conducive to our worldly association with motherhood. She is the ground of all being, the matrix of all phenomena. In a short prajñāpāramitā sūtra known as the Heart Sūtra, we find one of the most famous of all Buddhist philosophical statements: “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form, form is no other than emptiness, emptiness is no other than form.” Among the many dimensions
of its meaning, this declaration points to the sublime apprehension of emptiness as being in and of the phenomenal world, the very dynamic principle that makes it possible. The nineteenth-century Tibetan master Jamgön Kongtrul puts it this way:

All phenomena of cyclic existence or transcendence, included within both appearance and mind, have no reality whatsoever and [therefore] arise in any way whatsoever. 

The most profound Buddhist teachings practiced in the Himalayan region, such as mahāmudrā and dzogchen, employ a similar metaphor of the mother that is not essentially different from those above. We hear terms like “the mother clear light” or “the meeting of mother and child luminosity.” Here the mother refers to the primordial ground of being, the abiding nature of luminous awareness. Sensitivity to this in one’s own being is cultivated on the spiritual path. When the recognition of it is stabilized, it is called the meeting of mother and child, meaning something more like the re-merging of intrinsic awareness with our mindful awareness, or the return to the source that one never really left.

Up to this point we have been using the word mother, the most potent and primal human archetype, if you will, to designate something beyond designation. There is still another step to take into the human world of experience, and that is the Great Mother taking form as a deity or ākāṇī. Conze states that actual representations in the form of statues are attested to as early as the fourth century, though none survive from earlier than ca. 800 C.E., and he devotes a whole chapter to tracing the iconography of the goddess in her many forms. Thus we can postulate that the abstract absolute made this leap into the relative world of form sometime between the first appearance of the wisdom literature and the fourth century, using the intermediary springboard of Word (“mother”) as metaphor. Conze holds that this represents “an irruption into Buddhism of the devotion to the Mother-Goddess current in the more matriarchal Dravidian society in which it originated.” Judith Simmer-Brown, in her in-depth study of the feminine principle in Tibetan Buddhism, warns that the sense of the Great Mother in the context of highest wisdom is to be contrasted rather than equated with these earlier versions of the mother goddess. The relationship of indige-
nous mother-goddess religions and that of the feminine principle in Bud- 
dhism is a rich field of exploration for future researchers.

The enlightened principle manifests in myriad forms. Lines from a pop- 
ular ritual practice of Tārā put it simply:

From the single essence of timeless wisdom, 
natural unimpededness displays anything at all: 
Marvelous is compassion’s activity.¹⁹

It is in this context of the manifold emanation of reality that we have the con- 
cept of the ḍākīnī, the “sky-goer.” The ḍākīnī is often equated with the fem- 
ine principle in Tibetan Buddhism, and there are many layers of meaning 
indeed, itself a symbol of her complex and shifty nature. “The essence of this 
feminine principle is wisdom, defined as insight into emptiness. That essence 
arises in a variety of expressions in the symbol of the ḍākīnī in the Tibetan 
Vajrayāna tradition.”²⁰

Examples are abundant in the practice of Tröma Nakmo (Wrathful Black 
Mother), a cycle of Chöd practice based on the direct revelation of the 
Tibetan master Dudjom Lingpa (1835-1903). Here we find the lyrical liturgy 
maintaining the feminine imagery in describing the progressive emanation 
process from the basic space of emptiness:

Mothers dancing out of the mother space of wisdom, 
the Buddha family ḍākīnī in the center 
with your trillion emanations 
and retinue of gods and demons of existence—
now come here to enjoy the blood, flesh and bones. 
Dispel in basic space the bad conditions of obstacles and strife.²¹

The refrain continues, substituting different ḍākīnīs for each direction. The Mother, or the basic space of transcendent wisdom, gives birth to dif- 
ferent aspects of wisdom, usually five in number, personified as ḍākīnī. They 
are situated in the five cardinal directions, with further ḍākīnī of the various 
intermediary directions to form the totality, or maṇḍala. This is the first 
dimension of display, which proliferates into limitless emanations, much like 
the mind’s effluence of thought and emotion, or the progressive complexity 
of natural systems. Finally, all phenomenal existence (“gods and demons”) is
included in the vision of the world. They all come to devour our impure self, the deluded projection of selfhood on “blood, flesh and bones.”

It is in this sense of immanence in manifestation that the Great Mother can be visualized in meditation practices, such as in the ritual practice (śādhanā) of Chöd. Visualized pure forms in Vajrayāna practice do not merely represent a separate, higher reality; rather it is a practitioner’s technique to directly participate in the reality that is already there but obscured to mundane vision. Anne Klein describes it thus:

All visualized symbols, whatever other significance they hold, are thus also understood as embodiments of the empty essence or primordial purity that is considered their true nature. Engagement with these symbols is aimed primarily at gaining access to this reality, which the practitioner learns to recognize as the actual substance of all symbols. This reality is classified as feminine.22

On this level the Great Mother functions exactly as the other manifestations of the feminine, such as Tārā, Vajrayoginī, the dark dakinī, and so forth. In fact, in Machik’s encounter with her, the goddess Tārā basically takes credit for this relative reflection of the Great Mother:

The one known as the Great Mother is “emptiness,” the true nature of all phenomena. She is the transcendent knowledge of nonself, the immaculate essence of the realm of emptiness, the absolute reality free of all veils and obscurations. Thus she is called the mother who gives birth to all the buddhas of the three times.

But the Great Mother that all people worship in order to accumulate merit [came about like this:] I prayed with fervent yearning and aspirations for the sake of all beings. By the power of compassion and those aspiration prayers, there arose from the radiant light of empty reality an orange sphere of light marked with the syllable mum. From its blazing light the Great Mother manifested: gold in color, with one face, four arms, two legs in vajra sitting posture, and all the marks and signs of a buddha. She was surrounded by her children, the buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions. That is the sublime palace, the place of utter purity, the extremely pure realm of Akaniṣṭha, where she dwells even now.” (chapter 2)
Tārā goes on to describe how the Great Mother that she herself evoked went through various permutations and dākini emanations until “finally she came to Tibet as Lapdrönma. She is you!” Machik was surprised to learn this. At first she succumbed to what might be called a bout of female low self-esteem. But this is one of the last times we will see Machik’s hesitation or humility. Shortly after this she will prove herself once and for all to the skeptical Indian scholars, “the undisputed guardians of Buddhist orthodoxy,” and we will all forget that she was ever a woman to doubt her own power. It is the Great Mother that effects this transformation as well.

The Woman Lapdrön

Starting as a young girl, Machik learns to read extremely well, and her first “job” is to recite the prajñāpāramitā sūtras. Oral recitation seems quite foreign to our notion of reading and needs to be understood in the context of a long tradition of reading scripture as a spiritual practice in and of itself. In cultures where literacy was quite rare, the ability to read at all was a highly revered skill, even akin to magic. The power of the word still held its full mystical force, and the written word took on a spiritual life of its own. And these words of the Buddha, the very Dharma itself, were every bit as powerful as mystical incantations, the curses of sorcerers, or mantric spells. Note the connection of “spell” and the “spelling” of written words. These words held the very power to enlighten. At a certain period in the history of Buddhism, the written word, in the form of the sūtras of the Buddha, came to be an object of veneration, partially replacing the earlier veneration of relics and reliquaries (stūpas).

In Tibet, reading the words of the Buddha became a primary function of the clergy, one that the laity would gladly pay for in order to gain the benefit. The faithful would not necessarily understand what was being read, but that was not a problem. Often the reader might not understand it. The power of the recited words was enough to ensure the Buddha’s benediction for continued prosperity and well-being. It is very common even today to see such readers employed by householders all over the Himalayan region.

But Machik did more than read—she understood. While racing through The Prajñāpāramitā in One Hundred Thousand Verses (twelve volumes) at supersonic speed, she was comprehending its meaning. Intellectual understanding was not enough, however, and she was admonished by Sönam Lama, her primary spiritual guide.
Lapdrön did as the lama instructed, doing her recitation practice while contemplating the meaning. While on the chapter concerning devils, she suddenly understood. A special realization arose within her unlike anything before. Suddenly she was free of all mental elaboration, and the knot of self-fixation was released. The sun of transcendent knowledge, the realization of nonself, arose and dispelled even the sound “darkness of self-fixation.” (chapter 1)

Machik suddenly “got it.” In particular, she understood the chapter on evil, or māra, and therein lies the germ of her famous teachings on Chöd, the Vajrayāna enactment of the prajñāpāramitā. And it is here that Lapdrön the woman and Machik the ḍakini of timeless wisdom merge. Although the notion here of evil is definitely the sense of ego-fixation or spiritual death, it is not unrelated that her eventual practice is associated with more “real” demonic spirits, for outer and inner, mind and its perceptions, are never so separated as we in the West tend to believe.

Motherhood

It is notable that Machik herself was an actual, physical mother and that this fact is not at all obscured in the biography. Diana Paul points out that in some religions, “In the maternal role woman can receive legitimized power within the religious structure,” but in Buddhism, “Mothers represented to Buddhists sufferers and perpetual givers of life in pain, almost as if it were a natural law for women to suffer.” In fact, it is these very suffering mothers who motivate aspiring bodhisattvas to exert themselves on the spiritual path in order to rescue them. In Tibet, the role of the mother was certainly honored in itself, but not as a viable spiritual path on which one could actually progress to liberation. Rather it was seen as a trap to be avoided altogether if enlightenment was the goal.

Does the existence of a rich theory and iconography of the Great Mother, and even the cultic behavior of worshiping her, mean that real mothers reap the benefits? Is this a case of the idealized mother bearing no resemblance to a real woman, and even a formula for denying and undermining the real thing? Anne Klein explores the connection of theory and practice:

Female images of the divine, that is female enlightened Buddhas, abound;
positive female imagery is a major element of Tibetan Buddhist art and practice. Furthermore, Buddhist philosophy appears to support an egalitarian vision and to affirm a cluster of values one would expect to work positively for women. This question is this: Are these positive indications mirrored by women’s place in society?26

The Tibetan writer Migyur Dorje Madrong states that “in fact countless numbers of great women have existed in Tibet, but only a few of them were recorded in the historical documents, probably because of discrimination against women.” He cites a Tibetan historical record that specifically leaves out women “to avoid this document from becoming too extended.”27

But it is not just androcentric record-keeping that was the problem. Generally, a woman who wished to devote herself to religious life had fewer options than a man. The most respected spiritual role for women in Tibet was as the consort of a great lama. Other options were life as a celibate nun in a poorly funded nunnery or at home, or as a wandering pilgrim or yogini. Female spirit-mediums and delogs (“returned from beyond”) with paranormal experiences were also acceptable. But positions of power or even erudition in the clerical hierarchy were generally unavailable.

Although Machik represents an exception to some of these limitations, she was certainly a part of her world. Her “demonstration” of renunciation, which entailed leaving her children at one point, is a reflection of the prevailing attitude that one must renounce home life and children (and women themselves) as the cause of bondage. Her liaison with their father, Töpa Bhadra, was apparently met with skepticism and even shame on her own part and that of the society. In some versions, it is said that the reason for this scandal was the breaking of nun’s vows, although many versions do not report her ever taking ordination.28 The biography translated in the present book seems to go to some length to explain away her foray into normal sexuality by emphasizing that both of her masters urged her on because it was auspicious, that is, somehow religious. It furthers its case by practically deifying Töpa Bhadra, a view with which at least one Tibetan historian takes issue.29 Finally, the prevailing history that is commonly accepted by people down to the present is that Machik was the direct disciple and a tantric consort of a great Indian saint, Dampa Sangye (d. 1117), even though there is scant real evidence of this.30 Dampa is also most often credited with founding the entire Chöd system. This would serve to legitimate Machik’s tradi-
tion as Indic in origin and also to place her in the sanctioned role of consort and preserver of the teachings of a male saint. But this has been contested in recent scholarship. Karenina Kollmar-Paulenz states that “the allocation of the gCod doctrine to a male Indian lama (Pha dam pa sangs rgyas) in order to prove the conformity of the gCod teaching to the teaching of the Buddha proves to be very doubtful in the light of the actual textual evidence.”

So how did Machik Labdrön escape the circumscriptions on women to the extent that she did? How did we end up with this text, retold and revised over centuries by the many men in her lineage, in which Machik is presented as an unabashed mother manifesting her full powers to teach a dharma system of her own making to her own children? I would say that it is because of this very system, the amazing Chöd, and its undeniable uniqueness and efficacy that Machik’s legacy has endured the centuries, joining the ultimate feminine principle with the life of an actual woman.

In the end, Machik takes her place in the pantheon of enlightened embodiments, and the collective memory of her real life is absorbed into the sacred view that yearns to awaken its own nature. In the various rites of Chöd in every tradition into which it was assimilated, Machik is envisioned, or revised, surrounded by the Great Mother, Vajrayogini, and a retinue of dakinis and buddhas.

Her body is white as a conch shell,
With one face and two hands.
Her right hand plays a golden drum in the sky.
The left supports a silver bell at her hip.
Her three eyes gaze into space.
Her hair is bound atop her head,
The rest flowing free down her back.
Her naked body adorned with bones and jewels,
With right leg flexed and the left straight—she dances.

**Sympathy for the Devil**

It seems simple enough that if the basic ground of the Great Mother manifests as Tārā, Machik, dakinis, and all those other lofty beings, then the world of spirits and demons that plays such a big role in the practice of Chöd is simply the opposite: the bad guys. The forces of light versus the forces of the
dark. There is no doubt that the universal human tendency to anthropo-morphize this cosmic drama of our own consciousness plays a significant part in the imagery of Tibetan rituals, a tendency that goes back to the earliest Buddhist scriptures. But a careful reading of Machik’s words will reveal that this is exactly the problem: it is this bifurcation of the phenomenal world into good and bad, gods and demons, that must be severed in the practice that she developed. So in this text, for the most part, god-demons do not necessarily represent the negative half of a duality, but rather duality itself, whereas the realm of basic space that manifests simultaneously as the pure world of deities and dakinis represents transcendence of that duality.

Our talent for intricately dividing our world into good and bad should gain some transparency with a close reading of this book, particularly chapter 4. But since unseen spirits play such an important role in Tibetan Buddhism, and since modernity has distanced itself from this once-common human language, some investigation of the layers of interpretation might be helpful.

Māra and Evil

The notion of negativity and its personification as Māra date back to at least the beginnings of Buddhism. The term in Sanskrit is a nominalized form of the verbal root mṛ-, “to die,” and can be associated with actual death or spiritual death. It also comes to represent anything that impedes spiritual attainment, such as doubt, desire, self-aggrandizement, fear, or obsession. In the life of the historical Buddha, Māra plays a continuing role as tempter and impedes of spiritual practice. He constantly tags after Prince Gotama, the future Buddha, trying to distract him from any virtuous activity, even tempting him with world domination. The prince doesn’t fall for it, but Māra doesn’t give up easily:

“I shall catch you,” thought Māra, “the very first time you have a lustful, malicious or unkind thought.” And, like an ever-present shadow, he followed after, ever on the watch for some slip.  

Notice the use of the word shadow here, which I think is not unrelated to the idea of the “shadow” in the psychological sense. As the shadow, Māra grows with every advance of the “light,” that is, the bodhisattva’s proximity
to enlightenment. And true to his word, it is at the final moments before Śākyamuni’s full awakening that Māra pulls out all the stops, bombarding the meditating future Buddha with aggression, in the form of armies, and passion, in the form of his sexy “daughters.” The defeat of Māra is a major chapter in every account of the Buddha’s life and becomes synonymous with the Buddha’s enlightenment itself. The beautiful Lalitavistara Sūtra, in which Māra is “the lord of desire,” recounts exactly how he is defeated:

Seeing the frightful transformations of Māra’s army,
the Pure Being recognizes them all as a product of illusion.
There is no demon, no army, no beings;
there is not even a self.
Like the image of the moon in the water,
the cycle of the three worlds is misleading.  

The Buddha’s defeat of “evil” through his realization of nonself and his subsequent full enlightenment is precisely the intent of Machik’s practice, fully titled Dud kyi Chöd yul, “severing the object (or field) of evil.” It is commonly acknowledged that she gained enlightenment while reading the section on Māra in a Prajñāpāramitā sūtra, but exactly which one is not known. There are some possibilities cited at the end of chapter 4 of this text, and The Religious History of Zhije and Chöd quotes the “chapter on Māra from the prajñāpāramitā” as follows: “You should understand that anything that impedes you, from embodiment until omniscience, is the work of māra.”

The Blue Annals, on the other hand, cites the Prajñāpāramitāratnaguhāsaṅcaya-gāthā:

If as many beings as there are in the fields—countless as the sands of the Ganges—would all, let us assume, become māras;
And if every single hair on their bodies would again magically create a snare, they could all not hinder the Wise.
For four reasons does the powerful and wise bodhisattva
Become unassailable by the four māras:
Because he dwells in the emptiness;
Because he does not abandon other beings;
Because he acts as he speaks;
Because he is sustained by the Sugatas.
There are innumerable such references to Māra in the prajñāpāramitā sūtras that may have catalyzed Machik’s realizations. In any case, it is in the context of Māra as spiritual obstruction that we get a breakdown into sets of māras, or “devils” as I have translated, culminating in the four māras specific to Chöd practice. In the early literature there were anywhere from one to five māras: “Māras of defilement, of the aggregates, and of kamma [karma] formations, Māra as deity, and Māra as death.”

In the Mahāyāna there are usually four:

1. The māra of the aggregates: the five aspects of embodied experience—form, feeling, sensation, formation, and consciousness. Just having a body with perception and consciousness can act as an obstacle to full awakening.

2. The māra of the afflictive emotions, the emotional reactions in response to the pleasure, pain, and neutrality of perceptions.

3. The māra of the “child of the gods,” that is, being spoiled and indulgent to the extent that any spiritual development is precluded by complacency.

4. The māra of death, or “the lord of death,” an obstacle that needs no description.

Sometimes these are called the sūtra māras, whereas the four we find specifically in Chöd are called tantra māras. These two groups are also referred to as outer and inner māras, respectively. But the māras in most tantric literature remain as these found in Mahāyāna, often taking on the form of subjugated gods. In the Śrīhevajravyakhyavivarana, for instance, they appear as the Hindu gods Brahma, Yakṣa, Indra, and Yama, respectively, crushed under the feet of the (Buddhist) deity Hevajra.

In the Chöd of Machik, however, the list seems to be somewhat original. We find it partially suggested in the short poem by “Āryadeva the Brähmin” that is often given as a source text (gzhung) for Chöd. The other source text is Machik’s own composition, perhaps one of the earliest, from which the list is drawn:

Devils are classified as four:
Material devil and immaterial devil,
The devil of exaltation and the devil of inflation.
But all are subsumed under the devil of inflation.
1. The material devil is related to outer objects of perception and can be associated with the māra of aggregates, the perceptions of an embodied being.

2. The immaterial devil is the relationship with inner disturbances, sometimes perceived as invisible, external forces, and can be related to the māra of afflictive emotion.

3. The devil of exaltation is the excitement and attachment to positive experiences and qualities that arise in spiritual practice. Although remotely similar to the māra of a child of the gods, it really seems to be unique to Machik’s system and is not mentioned in Āryadeva’s poem.

4. The devil of inflation, or attachment to an existent self, does not specifically correspond to the previous Mahāyāna list but is a concept that underlies all Buddhist teachings.

These four are described in detail in the present text, whereas the first set gets no mention. The all-important māra is the last one, which I have translated as “the devil of inflation.” I have chosen inflation as the closest word that gives a sense of both arrogance and distortion resulting from reification. The term as used in modern psychology is pertinent, although we should be cautious in this analysis. Psychologically it indicates an exaggeration that covers up or compensates for the lack of a strong ego structure—the big bully that is hiding a basic insecurity. But in Buddhism, this insecurity results from the creation of and fixation on a false self, a self that isn’t really there in the true sense. This is the inflated devil that we create and try to maintain at all costs—basic ignorance.

This is the conclusion that the Buddha Śākyamuni reached in tracing the cause of suffering, revealed in his first teachings of the Four Noble Truths. The cause of suffering is clinging to a false sense of self. In Machik’s in-depth analysis of inflation, she makes the distinction that the practice of Chöd (and of Dharma) does not aim to remove the agent that causes inflation (snyems byed), because that in fact is mind itself, or intrinsic awareness. Only the inflation that it creates (snyems bya), the bloated self, is to be severed in the practice of Chöd. It is a subtle point and quite disarming of any tendency to interpret māra as an actual entity to be destroyed.

Māra in all the contexts mentioned above is clearly an abstract notion about inner obstacles on the path to awakening, and for that reason it may
be appropriate to employ psychological or philosophical notions to describe it. Even in the stories of Buddha’s enlightenment, where the drama of protagonist and antagonist is reported in the most personified way, the audience is constantly reminded of its allegorical nature. It is not a secret kept by ancient mystics. So is the choice of the word devil or evil to translate it counterproductive? These words bring in Christian connotations that are not necessarily present. “Evil” is not a primordial state or entity of any kind, merely a lack of awareness. The personified devil, Māra, is more a description of the sense of struggle that a spiritual seeker faces in trying to be fully awake. This is a significant difference from the theistic notions of human struggle with evil that reflects the cosmic tension between the creator God and his nemesis. On the other hand, the enactment of the interior struggle in the terms of a humanlike drama with good guys and bad guys has an enormous appeal to people of all religions. It is more than entertainment; it speaks directly to a deep place of mythic sensibility and understanding that might otherwise be untouched by an analytic or even strictly spiritual approach. Therefore, I favor the word devil for māra to reflect the metaphor that the tradition itself has employed.

_Gods and Demons_

The Tibetans used the word _bdud_, (pronounced düd, with the last “d” almost unvoiced) to translate the term _māra_ that they found in Sanskrit texts. But with this translation, another world of experience was brought into the story. _Düd_ was already widely used in Tibetan to refer to a category of specific demonic manifestations, and also as a generic word for all negative spirits. I have used the word devils for the generic usage in order to maintain the continuity that the Tibetan presents, but in the lists of specific subcategories I have stuck mostly to the Tibetan names, including _düd_. It is quite impossible to identify all these invisible beings according to Western demonology unless one is privy to sightings of both Tibetan and Western spirits.

The Tibetan worldview includes multitudes of normally invisible spirits. Some of them trace back to ancient times, some were adopted from Indian Buddhism, and some are a blending of both.43 Foreign observers of old could not but comment on them. Alexandra David-Neel, the intrepid Frenchwoman who traveled the back paths of Tibet disguised as a Tibetan “insignificant mama,” reported: “There is hardly any country which can vie with
Tibet as to the riches, variety and picturesqueness of its folklore regarding ghosts and demons. If we were to rely on popular beliefs, we should conclude that evil spirits greatly outnumber the human population of the ‘Land of Snow.’”

Although Tibetans create lists and enumerations at every possible chance, consistency does not seem to be emphasized. I will therefore not try to reproduce a manual of demonology here. The current text covers many types of spirits, some of them in alarming detail. But this particular conspectus does not necessarily agree in all details with that in other sources. It may be that these spirits don’t always stay in their hordes of origin and that many of them are awfully shape-shifty. Instead, I would like to mention some ideas about the beings that in this text are broadly called gods and demons.

Actually, the word in Tibetan is simply *lha 'dre*, god-demons—there is no “and.” Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche has suggested that it should be translated as one word:

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 benefical. But when they are hurt, they will harm you in turn.

Machik also describes some of the classes of god-demons this way, such as the gods and demons by worldly designation. However, the significance and benefit of these teachings is to help us understand how we create these categories by judging a phenomenon as *either* helpful (god) *or* harmful (demon) to the all-important self. If the phenomenal world were consciously recognized as relative and changing, as basically good-bad or god-demon, then perhaps a practice such as Chöd would be irrelevant. But that is not often the case, regardless of whether actual gods and demons are a part of the scenery. In many ways the distinctions we make are a natural and crucial function of consciousness. Survival is predicated on the ability to differentiate between potentially harmful and harmless situations — the difference between a lion and a rabbit, for instance. But of course the tendency is to attribute the classifications (predator or prey, demon or god) as qualities that are inherent and ultimately existing in the phenomenon itself, rather than in the relationship between oneself and the phenomenon. We do this constantly and unconsciously, a result of the initial reification of the self. And therein lies the problem.
But are all these helpful and harmful spirits just a childish projection of the judging consciousness, a remnant of “indigenous” cultures, or are they a part of the environment that we should take seriously? And what relationship do they have with the pantheon of buddhas, bodhisattvas, deities, ḍākinis, and dharma protectors that are also invoked in the Chöd practice?

The question, of course, does not apply uniquely to Tibetan culture. There is no place on earth inhabited by humans that was not at some point also perceived as inhabited by spirits. And this is not just true of the so-called indigenous cultures; all of the world religions give significant space in their scriptures to dealings with the unseen world. It is only in the era of science that such entities have been ostensibly rejected. In addition, there continue to be significant numbers of people who claim to see such beings. Are we to totally dismiss such claims as the same paranoid hallucinations that the whole world was having until only recently?

In cultures of the Himalayan regions the environment is alive with all kinds of sensed presence, not all of them perceptible by just the five senses. When I asked Kalu Rinpoche if demons really existed, he replied honestly that they really existed in Tibet, but that he wasn’t sure about America. Along with the scientific worldview today, there is an increasing disengagement from the sensuous world, especially in urban areas. Perhaps also the written word has us in its spell now, more than the living, breathing world of nature. But it doesn’t take much time in the silence of the wilderness, alone at night, for the landscape to come alive. In that situation, sensitivity to the environment becomes essential, and our senses strain beyond their normal range to receive every bit of information. Once upon a time, it was just that kind of information that became the inherited wisdom of the tribe.

In Tibet, the living, inhabited landscape of sacred places and scary spirits was simply the world. The observation and prediction of malevolent and benevolent forces was the great human enterprise. The most precise study of invisible spirits is found in the medical sciences, where it is intimately connected with physical and mental health. In other words, it was considered a science. Knowledge of this world created professionals in the healing arts and in the ecclesiastic ranks, or in both together, as with doctor-lamas or astrologer-priests. Yogins and mendicants were especially suited to this job. They lived on the fringe, in a liminal zone between human and nonhuman elements, and their spiritual practices heightened their ability to communicate between worlds. This is especially true of the Chöd practitioners, whose
mendicant lifestyles and preference for this otherworldly society made them perfect ambassadors to the spirit world.

Why then are there so many injunctions to recognize the nonexistence of demons, to see them as projections of our own mind? We even get impatient with this more-than-obvious advice that is continually impressed on us. But in Tibetan Buddhism there is far more literature describing how to appease gods and demons than there is on how to recognize them as nonexistent. Are these two approaches contradictory, or meant for different elements of the society: the “simple folk and the lamaist elite,” as David-Neel calls them? I think not. Rather, these two approaches reflect the universal Buddhist instruction on dealing with all perception: to recognize it as inherently empty, and to apply skillful means and awareness of karma at the same time. Certainly gods and demons are not excluded. In fact, if one sees the world in terms of good and evil, then that is precisely where the teachings must be applied. This holds true whether one experiences actual gods and demons, or friends and enemies, or thoughts of love and hate. The point is that all experience, visible or invisible, has the same quality: empty manifestation.

We say that something is “only in your mind” as if that is a small matter. Yet what could be more powerful? And where else could something be? The main point of divergence in “modern” thinking is the split between what is experienced inside, “only in the mind” and what is truly out there, “for real.” We take these to be two separate worlds, but the authors of this literature did not experience this dichotomy—internal and external were one continuous, seamless whole. This was taken for granted and even unanalyzed. But it is extremely important for us to remember it while surveying this kind of commentary or the sense of it will be lost and we will attribute the belief in the spirit world to earlier influences of pre-Buddhist Tibet, and logic and emptiness to the Indian Buddhism that entered Tibet from outside. Then we will see Tibetan Buddhism as some kind of tension of these two opposite influences, calling one shamanistic and the other “pure” Buddhism.

We find in Machik’s Complete Explanation a profound exposé of the psychological functioning behind the notion of evil and of how consciousness reifies concepts of good and bad into gods and demons. Then, without skipping a beat, it goes on to a minute description of the styles and behavior of those very gods and demons that have been deconstructed. There is no self-conscious contradiction and no indication that there is a polarity that needs to be explained.
This is not just something peculiar to Machik—I think it is found throughout Tibetan Buddhism. The famous yogi Milarepa, a contemporary of Machik, was also known for his many dealings with gods and demons through which his own spiritual path was enhanced. In one instance, his realization that such apparitions were not only unthreatening, but were actually supportive for practice elicits the exclamation, “Today I have witnessed the fact that all the Devas and demons have become Guardians of the Dharma.” The remarkable thing is that the spirits don’t just disappear once their illusory nature has been realized by the yogin. Rather, a new relationship with them is formed. Most stories end with the demons promising to serve the practitioner. But of course! “Emptiness is no other than form,” so why should the world vanish just because it is recognized?

**Deities and Gods**

There remains the question of the relationship between the manifestations of enlightened beings, as it was explained before, and that of the appearance of spirits. The word in Tibetan that is most often translated as deity and the word for the first half of “gods and demons” are the same: lha (Sanskrit: deva). Yet these two terms seem to be conceived differently. This may be another instance of a Tibetan word that already had a full range of meaning being employed as a translation of a Buddhist Sanskrit word. And there may be some ambiguity because of this, such that all beneficent spirits are grouped together, whether they represent an embodiment of total enlightenment or just a friendly mountain spirit or a local demon that has been “converted” to the Dharma.

Is it important to make this complete division? Or do transcendent deities and worldly gods fall into the same category of empty, luminous being that is mistakenly perceived as dualistic appearance?

Fortunately, Machik does have some advice on this. In a remarkable attempt to make sense of it all, she applies the twofold template of gods and demons to all levels of experience. The categories (in chapter 4) are the gods and demons (1) as designated by worldly people; (2) by their essential mode of being; (3) superimposed on observed appearances; (4) natural or coemergent; (5) as inevitable karmic forces; and (6) as ultimate gods and demons. She makes it quite clear that discrimination is absolutely necessary in just the last two cases, and for the rest: fearless compassion.
You need to know that this is definite: gods and demons are what is to be accepted or rejected. Both ultimate gods and karmic gods are definitely gods to be taken into practice. Not to take these two gods into practice is contrary to my dharma system. Both ultimate demons and karmic demons are definitely demons that must be rejected. Not to reject these two demons is contrary to my dharma system, son. Gods and demons other than the karmic gods and demons and the ultimate gods and demons, such as those explained before, though called gods and demons, are not definite. Remain in equanimity without discrimination toward those gods and demons. Whether they are gods or demons, know that they are your mothers and fathers. Hold them with the hook of love and compassion and nurture them by giving your bodily flesh and blood. (chapter 4)

**Chöd**

Chöd is first and foremost a method for releasing the fixation on the intrinsic reality of a self and of phenomena. In that sense, it is no different from any other practice of Buddhism. I once asked Thrangu Rinpoche about how Chöd (gcod) differed from Chö (chos, “Dharma”), and he said it was the same—only more so. Chöd is distinctive in its radical methods of intensifying obsession and inducing emotional upheavals and apparitions of fear, the better to observe and sever them.

Contrary to that oft-stated purpose, it is pursued both in Tibet and in the West mainly as an encounter with the spirit world. Jamgön Kongtrul laments:

> The charity of the body and the feast ceremony both have extensive instructions concerning preliminary and concluding parts. The main practice [of feeding the spirits] should be understood as an offshoot [of those]. But these days, most so-called Chöd practitioners don’t get the main point and only seem to desire the branches.50

In Za Patrul’s delightful diatribe in the much-loved *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* we find a strong critique of improper Chöd practice. He states:

> What today’s so-called Chöd practitioners mean by Chöd is a grisly process of destroying malignant spirits by killing, slashing, chopping, beating or chasing them. Their idea of Chöd involves being constantly full of anger.
Their bravado is nothing more than hatred and pride. They imagine that they have to behave like the henchmen of the Lord of Death. For example, when they practice Chöd for a sick person, they work themselves into a furious display of rage, staring with hate-filled eyes as large as saucers, clenching their fists, biting their lower lips, lashing out with blows and grabbing the invalid so hard that they tear the clothes off his back. They call this subduing spirits, but to practise Dharma like that is totally mistaken.\(^{51}\)

Even early on, the practice of Chöd was associated with exorcism and demon suppression, being adapted to these important activities that were in practice long before Machik came on the scene. At some point, even prajñāpāramitā literature itself was used as an exorcism tool. A ritual employing *The Heart Sūtra* is “prescribed as a cure for a wide range of calamities, misfortunes, dangers, and afflictions, including epidemic, possession by demons, sick livestock, loss of wealth or property, dying under a bad star, false accusations, and bad dreams.”\(^{52}\) The use of Chöd for these kinds of remedies is by now ubiquitous in Tibet, and even in the West touring lamas perform Chöd exorcisms. But in the text translated here, Machik makes it abundantly clear that she did not intend it as exorcism but as a practice in relinquishing the self rather than protecting it. Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche even says that practitioners are advised to remove their protection cords when practicing Chöd, since self-protection contradicts the spirit of total generosity.\(^{53}\)

Machik’s relationship with her spirits is one of compassion, and it is compassion that is yet another skillful method to undermine ego-fixation. One cannot but feel that this relationship is particularly feminine and motherly, suited to the woman who developed it. At the very least, it more than lives up to the feminine stereotype of nurturing and nourishing. But the healing and protecting possibilities have been the biggest appeal, and the outrageousness has had the most press. Before succumbing to the “gothic charm” of ritual dismemberment and engorging demons, however, let us look briefly at the traditional teachings of Chöd.

**Sources**

The Chöd practice in Tibet has antecedents in India, though no actual Indian practice manual has yet been identified in Tibetan translation. Four currents are mentioned by Tibetan historians;\(^{54}\) the one associated with
Dampa Sangye (eleventh–twelfth centuries) has by far the most direct connection with Chöd as it is practiced today. Pa Dampa Sangye was a great saint from South India and is considered the founder of the tradition known as Dukngel Zhije (ṣdug bsngal zhi byed), “Pacification of Suffering.” Dampa Sangye’s uncle and one of his teachers was Āryadeva the Brāhmaṇī, the author of a poem usually cited as another main source of Machik’s Chöd. Dampa and Machik made contact during his third visit to Tibet, and it is clear from the account translated here that they held each other in the greatest esteem. Machik received some teachings from him, although it is not certain if these included the specific teachings on Chöd. These she may have received through her main spiritual master Kyotön Sönam Lama, who in turn had received them from Dampa. With only the little-known Sönam Lama as an intermediary, Dampa is thus often credited as the originator of modern Chöd, and it is often classified as an adjunct of Zhije.

Although no Chöd texts were known to be authored by Dampa Sangye, Āryadeva’s poem provides many hints on the terms and ideas of Chöd that have come down from Indian traditions. The definition of the word Chöd (severance, cutting), for instance, is quoted in The Religious History of Zhije and Chöd (though attributed there to Machik herself) as follows:

To sever the root of mind itself,
And sever the five toxic emotions
And sever extreme views, disturbed meditation
And hopes and fears about results in activity—
To sever all inflation—
That is the definition of “severance.”

The author of this history, Kamnyön Jigdral Chökyi Senge, has added this comment:

Thus, the inflation of both subject and object, that which is to be severed and that which does the severing, is severed by the transcendent knowledge of realizing its unreality, and therefore it is called Severance. The important points of the path according to that and the important points about the way it is enacted and practiced are taught in the sūtras and tantras in general, and specifically can be found in the source texts of Chöd and in the lama’s instructions.
These are the Indian sources. The other main “source text” is Machik’s own composition, *The Great Collection of Precepts*, which she insists is based upon actual precepts of the Buddha (chapter 2). But there is no question that it was Machik who developed the particular system in Tibet known as “Severance of Evil Object” (*bdud kyi gcod yul*) or “Chöd of Mahāmudrā.” Numerous texts are attributed to her: ten principal texts are mentioned in this book as well as other compositions. Her long life of active dissemination of this system caused it to flourish far and wide, such that its popularity has hardly waned for nine hundred years!

Three main currents are usually identified in Machik’s Chöd: the “sūtra tradition,” including the influence of the prajñāpāramitā and the transmissions from Dampa Sangye; the “tantra tradition” incorporated from the transmission directly from Tārā, including the teachings on creation and completion; and the “Combination Sūtra Tantra”: Machik’s own synthesis. With these sources, then, Chöd is classified as a combination of the methods and practices from both sūtras and tantras, as Kongtrul affirms:

Currently famous, this unbroken tradition of ripening and liberating instructions [has] the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras as the scriptural source of its view, and the various methods which distinguish the mantra[yāna]. [Therefore] it is accepted as the combination of sūtric and tantric realization.

Some aspects of Chöd, whether from Indian sources or Machik’s own syncretic system, obviously contain elements that can be identified with traditional shamanism. Given the adaptive nature of Buddhism, it would be surprising and disappointing if this were not the case. One shamanic element, for example, is that of contact with the spirit world and its connection to healing. More interestingly, the act of ritually envisioned dissection of one’s body may have parallels in certain forms of shamanism. On the other hand, the offering of the body as an act of supreme generosity also has many well-known precedents in Buddhism, such as the Buddha’s gift of his body to the hungry tigress in a previous life, and the story of Sadāprarudita in *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Verses*. Although the practitioner is often warned not to actually attempt such bodily sacrifice, the visualized offering in Chöd practice is close enough that the Tibetan sources almost always mention these Indian precedents to verify the authenticity of Chöd, as does Machik herself. She asks:
Are dharma practitioners nowadays unaware of the fact that previously the Buddha Śākyamuni actually gave away without hesitation his head, limbs, appendages, and anything that anyone desired? Or are they aware but say “these days it isn’t necessary” and ignore the Buddha’s paradigm? (chapter 3)

Other elements of Chöd practice can also be found both in so-called shamanic practices and in Indian Buddhist sources. These include the practice of separating mind and body in ejecting consciousness (powa), the use of the hand drum and human bones, ritual feasting, the dances, and the complex offerings. Most of all, the incorporation of a whole set of indigenous spirits commingling with those transferred from Buddhism indicate that Chöd is truly a Tibetan Buddhist system. That is to say, it is virtually impossible to separate out what might have been preexisting elements and those of Buddhist origins, especially since all of it has been fully imbued with Buddhist intent. And for the practitioner, there is little benefit in doing so.

The Practice Environment

Chöd is practiced widely in one form or another in all sects of Tibetan Buddhism as well as in the Bön tradition. The vagrant lifestyle enjoined upon Chöd yogins probably contributed to the fact that a network of monastic institutions of its own was never established. Indeed, one class of Chöd-related practice is named “the mendicant’s practice” (kusali or kusulu), and the homeless and unconventional (even outrageous) lifestyle is an integral aspect of Chöd.

In the West it is most famous as a “charnel ground practice,” and people who don’t know the name Chöd will recognize it by that appellation. In general, the life of a mendicant is part of a larger picture of Buddhist lifestyles tracing back to yogic and forest traditions that are often seen in contrast to the established monastic forms. This lifestyle is obviously conducive to the Buddhist ideal of nonattachment to the usual worldly concerns and possessions. In addition, within Vajrayāna Buddhism, it falls into a category of prescribed behaviors for the enhancement (bogs ’don) of meditation experience, which depend on the type of tantra in question. In the case of Chöd, Kongtrul mentions specifically “vanquishing conduct [to train] awareness” (rig pa brtul zhugs). According to another great author, Dakpo Tashi Namgjal (1513-1587), this conduct is associated with the “essential practice” (grub
snying) of Saraha, an Indian mahāsiddha also considered to be a source of Chöd teachings. According to this system, the yogin purposefully seeks out intense situations, often creating them through uninhibited behavior and the (now famous or infamous) “crazy wisdom.” Dakpo Tashi Namgyal specifically refers to Chöd as part of mahāmudrā and the superiority of practicing in rough, haunted places rather than monasteries. He states:

Therefore, it is explained that one should do the kusali’s offering and charity [with the body] and then cut off ordinary speech and enter into [mahāmudrā practice] on scary, frightening mountain peaks or mountain retreats, in haunted places where nonhuman apparitions occur, in cemeteries where corpses and skeletons and such will petrify you, at the foot of lone trees that have been claimed by nāgas and tsen spirits and so forth, and in ghost towns and crossroads where hungry ghosts and demons and such cluster.65

For the Chöd practice, it is the charnel grounds or cemeteries (dur khrod) and “haunted places” (gnyan sa or gnyan khrod) that are particularly conducive. I use “haunted” to convey the sense of eerie power places that induce fear and anxiety, either naturally or because of the presence of spirits. Places of death fit this description quite well. In India, charnel grounds were full of corpses in various stages of putrefaction, and thus were particularly good places for yogins to confront impermanence and their own attachment. These places were also the ancient abode of the original ḍākinīs, who were considered primarily demonesses “delighting in the taste of human flesh and blood and dancing with ornaments fashioned from the bones of decaying corpses.”66 As these images became incorporated into the Buddhism of Tibet, the ḍākinīs’ native ability to thrive in these circumstances and the charnel ground image itself came to symbolize the transformative power of Vajra-yāna, which seeks out the matrices of neurosis as fuel for realization.

The provocative nature of the charnel ground and the original association with the ḍākini make it the ideal place for Chöd. Practitioners were encouraged to stay there or in other such frightening places with nothing more than their tents and their ritual instruments (the human thighbone, skull-cup drum, and so on). This was recommended in order to enhance realization through vanquishing conduct. In Tibet, disposal of the dead often takes place in what is known as a sky burial, wherein the corpse is taken to a high
mountain location, chopped up, and fed to the vultures while onlookers perform ritual prayers. It has been suggested that this practice may have originated through the influence of the Chöd tradition. In any case, the similarities are hard to miss.

Using charnel grounds and places of terror to quickly advance spiritual realization is certainly a major component of Chöd. There has been some concern, however, that cemeteries may no longer function in the same way for the modern practitioner. In the West, cemeteries and even corpses are thoroughly sanitized, and our projections onto them considerably diminished. This is not to mention the possible legal consequences of trying to inhabit a charnel ground today. When asked about this dilemma, Kalu Rinpoche replied:

If you feel like going to a cemetery, fine, but this is not necessary. A cemetery is a place where corpses and frightening and repulsive things are found. Milarepa said that we permanently have a corpse at our disposal, it is our body! There is even another cemetery, the greatest of all cemeteries, it is the place where all our thoughts and emotions come to die.

Meditation

Though Chöd did not develop into an established sect of its own, innumerable commentaries and practice texts were written by masters of all lineages. They vary somewhat in their details, but all share common elements. The description of the practice translated in chapter 5 is consistent with the sädhanas in the Kagyu tradition with which I am familiar. It follows a general format common to all Vajrayāna practices.

Vajrayāna practices begin with the two excellent preliminaries: refuge and bodhicitta. One goes for refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha, and other enlightened beings and then sets the intention for the practice: to reach enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Changing the usual order, the Chöd liturgy and Machik’s commentary begin with bodhicitta, emphasizing the fact that Chöd is essentially a method for training the mind (lojong) in compassion. Then the “guests,” the objects of our compassion and generosity, are summoned. At this stage, these are classified into eight principal kinds: antagonizing enemies, harmful obstructors, disruptive conditions,
karmic bad spirits, body bad spirits, bad spirits of the haunted places, and one’s own mother and father of this life. The inclusion of one’s parents not only recalls their kindness to us in this life but serves as a reminder that all of the guests, no matter how malicious they seem now, have also been our parents in innumerable previous lives and are thus deserving of our love and personal sacrifice.

Next is refuge, followed by the cultivation of the four immeasurable states (love, compassion, joy, and equanimity) and the all-important accumulation of merit. In Chöd, merit is accumulated by invoking and supplicating the manifestations of the awakened state (buddhas, and so on), and making profuse offerings to them, including that of one’s body. Purification practice through the recitation of the prajñāpāramitā mantra of the Great Mother (Om gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha) is included here, revealing the ever-present influence of this source material.

The main part of the practice is the cultivation of wisdom. This occurs during the separation of body and mind, or powa, usually translated as transference or ejection of the consciousness. Jamgön Kongtrul summarizes the sequence of practice so far:

In the exceptional preliminary practice, gathering the accumulations internally through the body, the devotional supplications incur the crucial blessings. In the main practice, by focusing exclusively on awareness (rig pa rkyang ’ded), one searches for the faults within the mind. When this is straightened up, the methods of settling are presented. Based on “Opening the Door to the Sky,” the meaning of the Mother is introduced: the guidance on meaning reveals it, the guidance on words establishes the meditation, and the guidance on experience cultivates the meditation.69

It is clear from this and other statements by Kongtrul that he considers powa to be the heart of Chöd, rather than the more sensational bequest of the body to spirits, which is considered an enhancement (bogs ’don) of the essential realization. The particular form of powa associated with Chöd is called “Opening the Door to the Sky” (nam mkha’ sgo ’byed), a transmission that Machik received from Sönam Lama. Kongtrul calls it “the main practice of the Mother’s enlightened intention, and the ultimate meaning of Severance of Evil Object consistent with the uncommon [Vajra]yāna.”70 And Kalu Rinpoche reports that “it is said to be one hundred times superior to ordinary powa.”71
Several kinds of powa are described, geared toward the different capacities of practitioners. They are classified as being with or without a support. Transference without a support, for the superior type of person, is simply resting in the true nature of the awakened mind. Machik states:

Mind—free of arising, ceasing, or abiding—is great emptiness. Like the center of space or the inherent lack of real existence, it is free of all limitations. Once you have mastered emptiness, you understand that the body is a reflection of emptiness, that it is without true existence. You realize it is untrue. Then the mind is not attached to the body and the body is not attached to the mind. “Was not attached, will not be attached, and is without attachment” means that there is freedom from attachment to anything at all, such as body, mind, and so on. In that way, being free of concepts of both attachment and nonattachment to all phenomena, such as both body and mind, and so on, is called “the emptiness of great conceptlessness.” It is without something to be transferred and without a transferer. That is “separating body and mind without a support.” (chapter 5)

Transference with support employs a visualization technique whereby consciousness is identified as a vital essence drop or sphere (thig le, Skt. bindu) inside the central channel of the subtle body. It is then ejected, either instantaneously or by stages that often include purifying the energy centers (cakras), imagined to be the abodes of the six realms of beings, as the consciousness-drop ascends. It flies out through a hole in the crown of the head, separating from the body, which is now imagined as an inanimate heap. Consciousness then blends with space, and one is instructed to simply “settle in the equipoise of the great pervasiveness where awareness and emptiness are inseparable” (chapter 5). This can be sustained or done repeatedly until experience arises.

Kongtrul describes everything after this as postmeditation activity: “Everything from the body maṇḍala on down are branches of the activity of subsequent attainment (rjes thob) and enhancement in keeping with the mantra[yāna practices] such as the vanquishing conduct [to train] awareness.”

After the powa practice, the separated consciousness is visualized as a ḍākini, sometimes Machik herself, and in other practices either the Wrathful Black Mother (Tröma Nagmo) or Vajrayogini. The practitioner, as the
ďakini, then prepares the abandoned body as a vast and beautiful maṇḍala of
the whole universe for offering to the honored guests: the lama, Three Jew-
els, yidam deities, heroes, ďakiniś, and dharma protectors. It is very similar
to the maṇḍala offering practice found in the Vajrayāna preliminary prac-
tices, except that it uses human body parts to construct the visualized maṇḍala. After this there are more prayers and supplication specifically for
bringing down their blessings. Finally, there is the part that has become so
famous.

The Dreadful Mystic Banquet

This section heading, taken from Alexandra David-Neel’s Magic and Mystery
in Tibet, is a good indication of the impression that this “branch” of the
Chöd ritual has made on most foreigners. Evans-Wentz, who published the
first translation of a Chöd liturgy (the well-known treasure text Laughter of
the ďakini, translated by Kazi Dawa Samdup), titles the section “The Path of
the Mystic Sacrifice: The Yoga of Subduing the Lower Self.” But the imagery
itself seems to appeal to our “lower self,” in the same way that horror films
do. The appeal is universal and not without intent. Whatever it is about grue-
some dissections, bloody sacrifice, human dismemberment, and ravenous
demons that strikes a deep chord in the human psyche is purposely evoked
in Chöd. It aims for the deepest, most hidden level, and in that lies its power
and appeal. It is, as Machik so often says, “unlike other dharma systems.”

In the visualization sequence, one’s body is prepared and offered by the
separated consciousness in the form of a ďakini. This important point is
often left out in descriptions of the practice: one is no longer in the body
when it is cut apart but has flown out the escape hatch, so to speak. But if
extracting the mind from the body did not totally sever attachment to it, the
subsequent sharing of it with spirits offers another opportunity. There is no
question that if we truly do the visualization vividly, we come up against our
most tenacious, deep-seated attachment to our self as our body. We might
like to identify the self on a more sophisticated level as certain personality
traits or free will or ethnic identity or cultivated qualities or even the reflec-
tion of a higher power. But when it comes right down to it, our real attach-
ment is to the body. We sometimes don’t notice the extent of this
identification until the beloved body is threatened with disease or disfigure-
ment—or until some shape-shifting ďakini starts chopping it up!
After the practitioner has ejected consciousness and offered the body maṅḍala, the consciousness-as-ḍākini then turns to prepare the body in various ways that will suit the hordes of invited guests. There are as many recipes as a gourmet restaurant has, and for as many diners. Although the specific acts of skinning and carving the body are valuable graphic experiences in body-self attachment, the real focus here is on pleasing and satisfying the guests. (The customer comes first.) Overlapping with some of the eight guests summoned at the beginning of the ritual, Machik counts five distinct parties at this point: (1) the lamas, yidams, ḍākinis, and dharma protectors; (2) karmic creditors; (3) beings of the six realms; (4) good local spirits; and (5) terrifying, hostile gods and demons. Each of these has different tastes that must be satisfied individually, and so various banquets (‘gyed, literally “distributions”) are prepared, such as the white banquet, the red banquet, the black banquet, and the mixed banquet. The graphic liturgies of Chöd evoke repugnance and resistance while one is identifying with one’s corpse, and at the same time a sort of chef’s (or mother’s?) pride in the culinary masterpieces. Here is a sample of the focus on the guests’ satisfaction from the red banquet in the Chöd cycle of Tröma Nagmo:

Gesturing with the curved knife in her right hand [the ḍākini]
flays the skin, which covers the ground.
Upon that the body’s bloody flesh mass is chopped open and
becomes mountains of flesh to eat,
Oceans of blood to drink,
Rock piles of bones to gnaw
Hills of fat and grease to lick,
Long bones and gristle to suck—-
A space treasury of desirables, veritable pleasure itself!

Kongtrul describes six different white banquets and ten different red banquets in his commentary “Grove of Pleasures.” Some of them involve slicing off the top of the head to turn it into a stew pot for the rest of the body, spreading the skin out as a tablecloth, charring the flesh like blackened Cajun catfish, setting out neat squares of flesh in a checkerboard skin like a sushi plate, and even putting little banners of skin on the protruding bones that are sticking out from the grease and fat, like the tiny umbrellas in tropical drinks. Machik describes a particularly luscious visualization for the gods and demons:
Imagine the corpse immediately after the breathing stops, before the warmth dissipates. It is young and plump, with smooth, soft skin and rosy, radiant flesh. It is big and brilliant, fat and oily. Think of it as pervading throughout the whole world. Just by catching sight of it, the hostile gods and demons are mentally satisfied. Coming into contact with it, their evil minds are all pacified, and deep feelings of happiness and joy arise. Imagine the gods and demons all coming together uncontrollably like a swarm of bees in a flower grove. Then, when it’s time to give over the flesh and blood, make it still warm with the steam all wafting up and the oil of grease and fat all slithering off, possessing a hundred excellent flavors, such as that of sea salt. The potency of its excellent trace aroma is like the smell of camphor or sandalwood, a very fine fragrance that pervades the whole world, or all the appearances of the lands surrounding the place where you are. 

(chapter 5)

No wonder this has caught the popular attention! What is going on here? Certainly there is an indulgence in the sensuous goriness, for whatever deep psychological catharsis that evokes. Perhaps one feels a sense of relief that the worst possible scenario is finally being played out: death by horrible mutilation. It recalls our own inevitable death and confronts it with purpose. Rippling one’s mind from its deep-rooted attachment to the body, which will die anyway, the fearless yogin of Chöd takes control now and uses it for the greater good. Chagdud Rinpoche, a renowned master of the Tröma Chöd, explains:

During our countless lifetimes we haven’t been able to hold on to our bodies no matter how we tried. Death always intervened and changed our cherished body into a mass of decay. If we stacked all the bodies we have had since the beginning of our existence they would form a mound larger than the earth itself. If we collected all the blood that ever ran in our veins, it would be greater than the oceans. Therefore, we resolve that this time we will not hold on to our body. This body will be offered perfectly to the four guests and the obscuration of attachment will be purified.\(^{75}\)

The ritual death of body-self and its resurrection as the ḍākīni of timeless wisdom is an obvious theme that runs through all spiritual and psychological journeys: something must die for something to be born anew. Both spir-
Itual and actual death are featured in Chöd practice because it is the power of fear that it seeks to tap. Along with confronting the destruction of our body, there is the invocation of demons, those vicious beings that are out to harm us. The very forces that we have spent our lifetime avoiding are summoned and seduced by the selfless body-fest. This fear is no joke, though we may make some fun of the theatrics. But it is the dakinis who are laughing. The demons may be “only in our mind,” but they look hideous enough. Anyone who has experienced hallucinations can testify to the fact that the knowledge of their illusoriness seems to cower and vanish in the face of a snarly, grisly, oozing phantom about to pounce.

This part of Chöd practice is not about the theoretical understanding of emptiness that is cultivated in the prajñāpāramitā section; rather it is about putting that theory to the extreme test, face-to-face with whatever horrifies. Compassion is the important part here, for it is compassion that ultimately undermines self-fixation. After the meticulous visualization of the body banquets, the practitioner imagines how each of the guests is delighted with its custom-made meal and goes home fully satiated, too full to do any harm anymore. Whatever grudges or debts they held against us are resolved. In the future, they will help and serve. We have made friends with our demons. By invoking them, by making them conscious, by not running away from them, and most of all by taking care of their needs, we have rendered them harmless and even helpful. If we had set out to destroy them, as in exorcisms and healing rituals, then we would have experienced only resistance, or perhaps they would have remained invisible.

The psychological parallels here hardly need comment: nearly everyone has had the experience of unconscious material such as fear becoming monstrous as long as it is kept within the deep recesses of the psyche, and then the release and resolution when it is confronted with awareness and compassion. Visualizing subjective fear in some physical form and then confronting it is a well-known therapeutic technique. Chöd certainly functions at this level and can be very useful as a therapy. It is currently being taught by some Western dharma teachers as a psychological technique for working with fear. A statement by Carl Jung could be the motto for psychologized Chöd: “One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.”

What happens in the spiritual practice of Chöd? Ultimately, it is simple: the body as the illusory embodiment of the self is fed to the gods and demons
as the illusory embodiment of (love and hate for) the other. Giving up the self, it is fully imbibed in the other. Subject and object are no longer two separate entities. The whole problematic world of duality becomes eminently workable: empty while appearing, appearing and yet empty. Chöd truly is an exemplary Vajrayāna method for realizing the perfection of wisdom. In response to her son’s question “What is Chöd?” Machik says:

In fact, there is nothing to sever;  
To conquer cowardice “Chöd” is explained.  
When you realize that everything is mind,  
There is no object to be severed elsewhere.  
When you realize mind itself as empty,  
Severance and severer are nondual.  
When you experience nonduality  
There is no severing of evil, it was already cut.  
It is like a thief in an empty house.  

After more feasting, dedicating the merit, and making auspicious prayers for the sake of all beings, the dākini Machik absorbs into the meditator and our whole visualized world dissolves. Not for long, the calm, cool emptiness. The practitioner arises again in the form of Avalokiteśvara or Tārā to continue manifesting in compassionate display.
1. Training

Homage to the host of lamas, yidams, and ċākinis.
Bowing at the feet of the mother, the nonmortal, the ċākini,
I have arranged this complete explanation of casting out
the body as food according to Machik’s own teachings.

First, a brief explanation of Machik’s history.

Previous Life in India

Machik is the ċākini of timeless wisdom, the birth mother of all past,
present, and future buddhas. She is the vajra ċākini of the mind fam-
ily. With the intention to help sentient beings, she took birth [in her previ-
sous life] as the son of King Śṛiṣura Ārya in Kapila in India. The young prince
was called Mönlam Drup. He learned to read and write all the sets of letters
and all other sciences with barely any studying, just by hearing or seeing
them. From the age of five he could understand everything without hin-
drance. Everybody said that he must be an emanation of the Buddha.

At the age of ten, he took monastic ordination with Paṇḍita Pitibhadra
and received the name Döndrup Zangpo. He stayed with this master for
three years, during which time he became more learned in grammar, logic,
pāramitā, vinaya, and abhidharma collections than even the master himself.
The master realized that he was an exceptionally talented person and so
taught him the Four Tantras, in which he became particularly adept. In the
presence of his master he assiduously studied the collections of scriptures
(piṭakas), and even made many clarifications in the Four Tantras. Most
important, he offered the realizations that had arisen in his own mind. The
master was utterly pleased and said, “Döndrup Zangpo, I am not capable of
being your master any longer. Now you should go north to Zangling (Tam-
radvipa). Guru Ratna lives there. He is a great adept of Cakrasaiva and
is actually able to manifest the emanated maṇḍala. He is learned in all the scriptures and is adorned with all good qualities. Go to him and work through all your doubts. Practice the Highest Secret Mantra\(^9\) and become an adept. You will help many sentient beings.”

The next day Döndrup Zangpo arrived before Guru Ratna. Guru Ratna could see that he was a worthy recipient and emanated the maṇḍala of the sixty-four deities of Cakrasaṃvara in the sky in front of him. The four empowerments were bestowed in their entirety, and Döndrup Zangpo attained supreme spiritual powers (siddhi). He could travel through the pure realms of the buddhas without obstruction. He stayed with this master for three years and resolved his misconceptions concerning all the teachings of sūtra and tantra. In particular, he became learned and adept in the stages of creation and completion in Highest [Secret Mantra].

Then the master told him, “You should go north to the Vajra Seat at Bodhgaya and convert the heretics.\(^10\) There is no one able to debate as well as you.” So when he was sixteen years old, Döndrup Zangpo went to Bodhgaya and debated with the heretics. They were defeated, and one hundred thousand of them entered the Buddhist order. Döndrup Zangpo stayed in Bodhgaya for four years.

Then Exalted Tārā told him that he must go to Tibet to help the beings there. “Hurry up and get accomplished!” she said. He decided that he should visit some sacred places and set out to the north. He came to a cemetery, and as soon as he lay down to rest, a ḍākinī of that charnel ground appeared. She was wearing bone ornaments and carrying a hooked knife and a trident.\(^11\) She said, “Don’t you have anywhere to rest besides my cemetery?” and then conjured up all kinds of apparitions. But he overcame them with his meditative absorption (samādhi), and the ḍākinī offered her life-essence and pledged herself to the Dharma.

At dawn, he beheld the faces of the fifteen goddesses of Nairatmyā,\(^12\) who said to him, “Yogin, go to Potari and quickly become accomplished and then go on to Tibet.” Then they vanished like a rainbow. He thought to himself, “Being young, I should achieve success in practice, but I wonder what practice will bring success? And taming the wild, unruly Tibetans will be difficult. I don’t have [any idea] what it takes.”

Immediately the five deities of Great Magical Illusion, Mahāmāyā,\(^13\) appeared in the dim light of dawn and said, “Yogin, go to the Bhadra cave\(^14\) at Potari and accomplish the heart practice of the Five Goddesses of the
Black One. 15 You must soon tame the people of Tibet, so hurry up and arouse diligence!” They dissolved into light and vanished. As soon as it was daylight, the cemetery dakini announced that she would be his guide. Accompanied by the dakini, Döndrup Zangpo traveled by swift-foot 16 and arrived at Bhadra cave without delay.

He practiced the Five Deities of Exalted Lady 17 and after fourteen days the common spiritual powers developed. In one month, he directly perceived the Five Deities of his heart practice. They conferred complete empowerment in the secret mandala of timeless wisdom (ye shes; jñāna) and pronounced many prophecies, such as the need to tame the people of Tibet. Finally, they dissolved into light and seemed to melt into his heart. After one month, Exalted Tara appeared and made the Tibet prophecy again and then dissolved into his heart. Then on the third day of the waxing moon, the Lord Amitayus made a prophecy and granted ritual authorization 18 and many blessings. On the eighth day, Avalokitesvara blessed him and made prophecies. Padmavajra 19 with a host of dakinis appeared on the tenth day and interrogated him about the Dharma. There was nothing that he did not know. So the secret mandala of Hayagriva-Varahi opened up before him and the empowerment was conferred, after which prophecies were made about Tibet. The dakinis made offerings to him and begged him to go to Tibet. From the tenth to the fourteenth day, one by one the dakinis urged him to go quickly to Tibet. Before dawn on the fifteenth, the full-moon day, a very wrathful, dark-blue dakini wearing bone ornaments and brandishing a trident and hooked knife said to him, “Yogin, prepare to go to Tibet! When I kill you, quickly dissolve your consciousness into my heart.” She flourished the hooked knife as if killing him, and his consciousness dissolved into the dakini. (He was twenty years old at this time.) 20 The dakini blessed the corpse so that it would not deteriorate. So, with the dakini as his escort, [his consciousness] arrived safely in Ei Gangwa 21 in the Lapchi region of Tibet and entered his mother’s womb. (That was on the fifteenth day of the fifth month of the Horse year.) 22

**Her Birthplace, Parents, and Birth**

There is a village called Tsomer in lower Tamshöd in Ei Gangwa of Lapchi. 23 The lord of that village was called the ranchers’ minister or chief or elder, or by his name Chökyi Dawa. He would be her father. Her mother, the daughter of a wealthy family, was named Bumcham. Both father and mother were
of noble birth, attractive, and wealthy. They were well-mannered and treated all subjects and their own servants with kindness. Whatever they did was in harmony with the Dharma, and they gave all of their possessions over to it. With faith in the Three Jewels, they were especially meticulous in serving the Saṅgha. As they themselves followed their own spiritual advice and transformed their body, speech, and mind in the Dharma, so they encouraged others to do so as well. This lord and lady with control over five hundred villages were the best kind of bodhisattvas.

Just past midnight on the fifteenth, at the time of conception, Bumcham had a dream that four white ḍākinis carrying four white vases came and bathed her from head to foot, leaving her radiant and clean. Then she dreamed of red, yellow, and green ḍākinis, seven of each, presenting many offerings and saying, “Offerings to the mother. Please be our mother.” Then she dreamed of a blue-black ḍākini with wrathful attire, wearing bone ornaments and brandishing a hooked knife, surrounded by four sky-blue ḍākinis holding hooked knives and skull cups. The four ḍākinis in the front, back, right, and left were standing up in the manner of greeting. The blue-black ḍākini brought down the hooked knife from one cubit away down to the center of her breast and said, “We will draw out your dark heart of ignorance and devour it.” So saying, she laid open Bumcham’s breast and pulled out her heart. The spilling blood filled the skull cup of the ḍākini in front, and they all drank it. Then the main ḍākini blew on a white, right-spiraling conch shell that the whole world could hear just by thinking of it. In the center of this conch the white syllable \textit{ah} shone with five-colored lights. Saying, “I will replace your heart with this luminous conch,” the ḍākini nestled it into the heart cavity. Then it seemed that a five-colored light ray emanated from [the ḍākini’s] heart and dissolved into her head. The light of the four blue ḍākinis pervaded her body. Then they dissolved into light and were absorbed into the black one, who then also seemed to vanish within the light-filled space.

During this whole dream Bumcham was not worried or frightened. Even when her heart was removed she felt no pain or suffering but actually felt happy and blissful in body and mind, with lucid awareness. Many unprecedented joys had developed in this dream and continued even after she awoke.

The next day, just as the sun’s light was spreading, a village woman named Amen came by and announced, “I’ve come to report an auspicious dream I had about the chief’s household.”
She was invited inside and shown into the large shrine room, where she continued: “I had a very wonderful dream. The merit of the chief’s family has not diminished for many generations, and now it will become equal to the sky.”

Lady Bumcham thought to herself, “Last night I also had an unusual dream, and even now my body and mind and all my perceptions are joyful and blissful. I wonder what this woman Amen has dreamed.” So she summoned the rest of the family, gave the woman an excellent commission, and asked her to describe the dream.

“It was yesterday around dawn. This mansion of yours appeared to be three times its height, and the golden finial was also three times as big. On the top of it there was a three-tiered umbrella. Around it in the four directions were four silver mirrors the size of moons. As the wind stirred them, their light filled all the realms with radiance. Four girls identifying themselves as dākinis appeared in the four directions and blew four white conches that could be heard as far as the four continents. On the four corners of the house were four big white banners blowing in the four directions. Many butter lamps were arranged along the sculpted ledges all around, and their bright blazing light illuminated everything. A red ray of light from the sky penetrated the mansion. I was on the upper, back part of the house, so I asked one of the conch-blowers what was going on. ‘We are preparing the mother’s residence,’ she said, as music resounded from the shrine room. ‘What is going on here, and who is this mother?’ I wondered, and tried to find a way to go inside. But as soon as I stood up, I awoke from the dream.”

There were many other excellent dreams as well. Bumcham’s sixteen-year-old daughter Bumey described a dream from the previous night:

“A white light from the sky came over Mother and illuminated the whole house. Then an eight-year-old girl holding a vajra appeared and said, ‘Sister, are you well?’ When I asked whence she came, she replied, ‘I have come from Potari.’ ‘Where is Potari?’ I asked, and she said, ‘I am from India.’ I asked who she was and she replied, ‘Don’t you know me? I am Tārā.’ Just as I was trying to grab her to see if this was true or not, she escaped into Mother’s lap and vanished. Then I woke up.”

These and many other good omens occurred. Bumcham, although she had reached the age of forty-eight, started to look younger and more radiant; even her wrinkles cleared up. Everybody said, “Lady Bumcham is benefiting from the blessings of her virtuous religious work; now she has become young again.
and you can’t tell her apart from her daughter Bumey.” The mother herself felt physically light. All her perceptions were pleasant, and she had incredible, pure visions in her dreams. Even at night she could see everything without obscurity as if the lights were on. At times she could intuit all the good and bad qualities of others, and everyone talked of the Lady’s vivid dreams.

From the 25th day of the rabbit month (which was the second month of the Sheep year), Bumcham could feel the sounds of ah and ha ri ni sa. On the morning of the third day of the dragon month she could hear [her unborn] child calling, “Mother, what I need is a new white cloth smoked with incense and frankincense, and anointed with saffron.” So Bumcham got the cloth ready. Then, on the fifteenth day (of the third month of the Sheep year),24 at the first light of dawn, she gave birth. The house filled with rainbow lights and the fragrance of saffron and incense. The melodious sounds of many instruments reverberated through the sky and flowers rained down. All the local people spoke of how the offerings to the family deities had caused a rain of flowers and rainbow lights and sweet music from the sky.

As soon as the baby was born, she sat up with one leg drawn in and one leg extended, surrounded by rainbow light, and said, “Mother, are you all right?” and intoned the sound of ah. A spinning, radiating red syllable hrih appeared on her tongue, and in her forehead an eye shone with fine hairs of five-colored lights like a rainbow. On the crown of her head there was a white light about the size of the little fingernail, with a single white syllable ah marking it. Her sister Bumey wrapped her in the cloth and held her on her lap for awhile, and the hrih syllable on the baby’s tongue was absorbed and no longer manifest. She was given sweetened white butter, but she regurgitated and didn’t wish to eat, and just gazed up into space with her three bright eyes. After a while the light on top of her head subsided and the five-colored lights on her forehead dissolved back into the eye. Then she lowered her head a little and stared directly into her sister’s face. After a while she began to smack her lips, so she was again given the butter. She ate it nicely and then, suddenly acting like a regular baby, she looked at her mother and smiled and then fell asleep in her sister’s lap. The mother was unharmed [from the birth] and filled with joy and happiness.

In the morning Bumey found the child looking up brightly and called her mother. “Mama, this girl is looking right at me with her beautiful three eyes. Isn’t this wonderful for us?” she said in great delight. But she heard, “Father
is coming! Bumey, hide the girl!” She wrapped her in cloth and placed her behind the door. The father came into the shrine room and Bumey told him, “Lord of the family, sir, mother has given birth to a bad girl with three eyes. We got rid of it!” The father said, “Where is she? Bring her here.” So Bumey picked up the baby girl and brought her to him. He examined her carefully and declared, “This girl’s middle eye has a hair-thin white \( ab \) in the middle. She has all the signs of a \( \text{d\text{"a}kini} \) (such as the slightly webbed fingers, slightly reddish fingernails luminous as mother of pearl with various colored lights like a rainbow, and the appearance of the syllables \( \text{om ab hung} \)). Look after her carefully. Bumey, don’t you take this girl outdoors, and don’t go into the village. Keep her a secret.”

**Childhood**

So she was well guarded and she grew up nicely. From the age of three she would prostrate to the deities in the shrine room while reciting the six-syllable mantra \( \text{om mani padme hung} \), the \( \text{tare} \) mantra of Tārā, the syllables \( \text{brih} \) and \( \text{ab} \), the \( \text{gate} \) mantra of the prajñāpāramitā and \( \text{ha ri ni sa} \) mantra of Vajrayogini. Her mother started teaching her to read and write when she was five, and she learned just from being shown the letters. The family chaplain, Jowo Dampa, was asked to teach her the great letters, and by the time she was eight years old she had mastered all written letters on paper and could recite *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Verses* twice in one day.

The chaplain said, “My Lady, this girl is very unusual. She must be a sublime \( \text{d\text{"a}kini} \). I cannot contain her intelligence (\( \text{shes rab; prajñā} \)). Her superior wisdom blazes like a wildfire spreading in a great forest. Call her Sherab Drönme, ‘Light of Wisdom.’” Even before that her mother had called her Dröntsema, “Little Light.”

The local people had all heard talk of Lady Bumcham’s little girl with three eyes, and they wanted to see for themselves. When they saw her they loved and honored her, and her fame spread. All the locals called her Ahdrön, “The Light of \( Ab \)” and said, “This Dröntse is surely an emanation of Buddha.” Everyone prostrated to her and sought her blessing. Even her sister Bumey shaved her own head and was ordained as a nun by Geshe Atön. She received the name Töntso Rinchen Bum and became the foremost of the learned monastics.

Then the ruling king of the area organized a great festival and sent a mes-
senger to invite Chökyi Dawa Gyaltsen and Lady Bumcham to bring their little girl. So the parents and their household, twenty-two in all, set out with Dröntse and arrived at the ruler’s place. He had heard about the girl and had arranged an excellent reception for them. Afterward the mother and daughter had an audience with him. The mother was quite shy, and with her shaky voice couldn’t properly answer any of the ruler’s inquiries, so Dröntse herself replied. The many paṇḍitas, geshes\textsuperscript{28} and government ministers who were present wondered what kind of a person this famous three-eyed girl was. She couldn’t be a regular person. The king asked if she knew her letters, and Dröntse answered that she did. Seeing a copy of the \textit{Noble Condensed Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra},\textsuperscript{29} she read it straight through with triple voice modulation. Everyone admitted that she was very skilled in reading and reciting. But did she know the meaning? She claimed to know it and proceeded to explain it. Then everyone agreed that she was no ordinary person and that she was certainly a wisdom ḍākini emanation.

The king said, “Come here! I want to examine you.” He looked her over and saw the \textit{ah} syllable in the eye in her forehead, as well as all the other signs of being a ḍākini. The king was very impressed and asked, “What is your name?”

“I am called Rinchen Drönme, and also Dröntse or Ahdrön,” she replied.

Then the king announced, “Since your name is Drönme and your birthplace is Lapchi, the name Lapdrön will make auspicious connections.” The paṇḍitas, monks, nuns, chief ministers, and three hundred thousand local people all approved, and she became known to everyone as Lapdrön. All the townspeople called her Lapdrönma, and when they saw her they were filled with faith and joy and good wishes.

The king exchanged her old clothes and shoes, giving her new ones to wear, and he kept the old ones. He gave her and her parents thirty gifts, including three horses, and said to them, “You, masters and servants all, do not let this girl Lapdrön wander about all over the place. If she comes into contact with evil people it will contaminate her. Guard her very carefully. She has the power to benefit all of us here in the Land of Snow.”

They went back to the fortress of Tsomer in Tamshö and mother and daughter both made a resolution that for five years they would recite the short, middle, and long \textit{[prajñāpāramitā sūtras]}\textsuperscript{30} in the shrine room. By the time Lapdrön was ten, she could finish four volumes in a day, and when she was thirteen she could finish eight. Then, when she was thirteen, her mother
passed away and her sister Töntso Rinchen Bum brought her to meet Geshe Atön.31

The geshe said, “Bumey, this little sister of yours has all the signs of a śākini. Let’s see if she can do a bit of reading.” She read the Eight Thousand Verses in the time it takes to grind a measure of barley. The teacher exclaimed, “Ah la la! Here we have recitation with eight different excellent voice modulations.32 She will be the best of the recitation monks. Now I will teach her the meaning of it.”

Lapdrön and her sister Bumey stayed with this teacher for three years. He elucidated the six pāramitās, the ten stages, and the five paths. But neither the teacher nor the disciples nor even the other geshes could outdo her facility with exposition of the meaning. Then the teacher said, “It seems I can no longer be your master. Now, at Yoru Dratang, at the monastery called Dopthrang,33 there is one called Drapa Ngönshechen.34 He is a most knowledgeable teacher who has profound understanding of all skills. He presides over many monks. Go there and resolve all your doubts.”

Life As a Recitation Chaplain with Lama Drapa

At the age of sixteen, Lapdrön and her sister went before Lama Drapa. He asked Bumey if this was the sister who was so skilled with letters. She replied that it was, and he said, “Well then, we’ll see if she compares to my recitation chaplain.” He had a monk whom he called Gya Parchin Drukgyur (“Pāramitā Six Mode”) who could recite in one day four volumes of The Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Verses by reading in six voice modulations. One day this monk and Lapdrön began reciting at the same time, and when Gya Drukgyur had finished four volumes, Lapdrön had finished all twelve by reading in eight voice modulations. Drapa said, “Oh my, this lady surpasses Gya Drukgyur by two modes. I won’t find anyone nearly as good as she. I will make this little lady my official reader.”

Bumey then said, “Ahdrön, shouldn’t we two practice and go to the heavenly realm of Kecara?”35 But Lapdrön said, “I, for one, am not going. Sentient beings need help. If you wish to go, then quickly become accomplished and go enjoy heaven. I will meet you there when I have finished my work for beings here.” So Töntso Rinchen Bum practiced for three years and went to the heavenly realm without leaving any physical remains behind.

Drapa Ngönshechen could see that Lapdrön was a worthy recipient and
gave her the reading transmission (lung) for the Many Sūtras,\textsuperscript{36} The Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Verses, Twenty-Five Thousand Verses and Eight Thousand Verses, and many minor sūtras, along with extensive explanations of their meanings. She became learned in the meanings contained in the great commentary of the One Hundred Thousand Verses, and the lesser commentaries on everything from the Twenty-Five Thousand Verses right down to the Single Syllable Sūtra.\textsuperscript{37} Extraordinary realizations about them arose in her mindstream, and she offered these realizations to the lama. He was extremely pleased and said, “Jomo (great woman),\textsuperscript{38} you have completely assimilated the extensive, middle, and short versions of the prajñāpāramitā and so have attained mastery over the sūtras. Even for me it would be difficult to comprehend them to such a degree.”

He presented her with a hat of maroon felt with lotus design appliqué on the outside and lined with white on the inside, shaped like a ten-petaled lotus flower, with five even pieces of brocade in five colors on the back, and to the left and right. He also offered a complete set of the finest outer and underclothes, along with a pair of small boots. Lama Drapa invited her to take her seat on three stacked cushions spread with a new carpet, and then made his request: “Please stay here for four years and be my recitation lama.”

Sitting there with focused eyes, she donned the headdress. She was resplendent, all covered in blue and red silks down to her waist. The lama said, “When this Little Pönmo (female leader)\textsuperscript{39} wears this small hat, she is beautiful,” and henceforth all the people called her Jomo Little Hat.

Pönmo Ahdrön’s manners were always restrained and pure, and she was obedient and diligent in thought, word, and deed. She remained conscientious and stayed among the monastic community. She had no interest in going to town and dwelled within the confines of the monastery with enthusiasm. She was respectful toward her lama and monastics and friends, and had sincere faith. She promised to remain as the lama’s recitation master for four years. All of the monastic community had faith in the Little Pönmo and wished her well. She became quite famous.

First Meeting with Dampa Sangye

At that time a rumor was going around among the people that there was a certain clairvoyant ācārya\textsuperscript{40} who had arrived at King’s Temple inquiring as to the whereabouts of an Indian pañḍita who had meditated in Bhadra cave in
Potari and had now been born here in Tibet and was called Lapdrön. That evening the Little One had a dream of a white dakini who said, “A black acārya has arrived from India. Tomorrow he will come to see you.”

“Who is this acārya?” she asked.

“His name is Dampa.”

When she awoke the next morning, wondering whether this had been delusion or truth, she stepped outside the door and there, on the stone path of the monastery, she suddenly met the acārya. She tried to prostrate but he wouldn’t accept it, and instead touched foreheads with her. She said, “Dampa Rinpoche, how wonderful that you have come to Tibet.”

Dampa replied, “Drönma, dakini of timeless wisdom, it is even more wonderful that you have come to Tibet to benefit beings. That is cause for rejoicing.”

“How will I help beings?” she asked.

Then Dampa made this prophecy: “Girl, expose your hidden faults. Overcome hesitation. Carry what you dare not. Cut your fetters. Give up attachments. Keep to haunted places. Know that beings are as vast as the sky. In haunted places, seek the Buddha within yourself. Your doctrine will arise like the sun in the sky.” Then he left. Lapdrön went back inside and started doing her recitation.

Meeting with Sönam Lama

One day around that time she met Sönam Drakpa, a relative of Kyozur Penchen Shakya Jung. He was learned in the outer teachings of the Tripitakas and in the inner teachings of the Four Tantra Classes, and had developed power. He had been in charge of many thousands of monks but had grown weary of all worldly activities, of constantly listening to and explaining the Dharma, and of his attendants and monks. So he stayed alone, adhering to nothing, and kept to mountain retreats. He was known as Kyotön Sönam Lama, “Merit Lama, Teacher from Kyo.”

“Little Pönmo”, he said, “you have mastered the words of the pāramitā, but do you understand their meaning?”

“Yes, I do,” she said.

“Then explain it,” he said. So Machik explained in detail according to the ten stages and five paths how to traverse the path, how to practice the meaning, and how to ultimately gain the fruit, complete awakening.
The lama said, “You appear to be very clever at explaining the meaning, but you have not internalized it in your own being.”

“How should I do that?” she asked.

“What you have just described is called understanding,” he told her. “It is to correctly comprehend the meaning of all things just as they are. But when that understanding of the truth of all phenomena arises in your innermost being, it will be a completely different experience from your previous intellectual grasp of it. A new mind is born, a mind free of all fixation (’dzin pa). You are released in nonfixation, free of all conceptual activities. The great fire of the great transcendent knowledge of nondoing spreads and banishes the darkness of ignorance fixated on a self. The main point is to reach resolution by thoroughly examining your own mind.” With these words, the lama departed.

Lapdrön did as the lama instructed, doing her recitation practice while contemplating the meaning. While reciting the chapter concerning devils, she suddenly understood. A special realization arose within her unlike anything before. Suddenly she was free of all mental elaboration, and the knot of self-fixation was released. The sun of transcendent knowledge, the realization of nonself, arose and dispelled even the sound “darkness of self-fixation.”

As a sign of having cut through ego-fixation, she stopped wearing the fine clothes and bright, flashy colors that she had worn previously and wore only the bad, dirty clothes of a beggar, showing that she had cut through the craving for clothes. Whereas previously she had only kept company with abbots, masters, and monastics, never with lay people, after this realization she kept company with lepers and beggars—a sign that she had cut through craving for friends. Before, she had always stayed in monasteries and mountain retreats, but afterward she would stay anywhere, even in lepers’ houses and by the roadside—a sign of having severed the craving for pleasant places. Except for trips to the land of her people, Ei Gangwa, and the land of her religion, Yoru Dratang, she never went anywhere. Now, as a sign of having destroyed any preference for location, she wandered aimlessly in the kingdom. She had never eaten anything but the purest food, such as the three whites and three sweets. But after this experience, she would eat anything, except meat, without consideration of good or bad, even from the hands of lepers and beggars—a sign that she had severed the attachment to food. Whereas previously she had praised herself and enjoyed her pleasure, afterward she scolded and criticized herself. She didn’t act timid or fearful even
when suffering arose. To her, all pleasure and pain, love and hate, good and bad were of equal value in the expanse of reality (*chos nyid kyi dbyings*), so she developed an attitude of total indifference toward unhappiness.43

She was twenty when she finished her time as chaplain for Lama Drapa. She asked the lama for empowerment, but he said, “I don’t have the ability to grant you empowerment. Ask Sönam Lama. Aspiration prayers have been made in previous lives, so there won’t be any obstacles to the empowerment, and you will attain the spiritual powers.” With that prophecy, he presented her with seven measures of good yak meat and a piece of red cloth and sent her off.

**Empowerment**

Little Pönmo first went to her family place in the Apo region and asked her brother Shakya Gyaltsen to give her something for the empowerment. He gave her thirty loads of barley, and she took the barley, the pieces of meat, and the cloth to Kyotön Sönam Lama. Coming before him, she said, “In keeping with Lama Drapa’s prophecy about me, I request you to give me empowerment.”

The geshe could see that she was a worthy recipient and agreed to do it. In the temple of Ei Gangwa he conferred the empowerment on five of them (four mantrins: Lokya Lhakyab, Jatrompa, Jinglha Zao, Zhangtön Özer Pal, and Little Jomo). It consisted of (1) the direct introduction (*ngo sprad*) of the four empowerments through profound absorption called “Reality Empowerment Conferred on Mind”44 from the sūtra tradition in the lineage of Dampa; (2) “Opening the Door to the Sky” that confers blessing empowerments through exceptionally great blessing; and (3) the empowerment of Mahāmāyā, also from Dampa’s lineage. During the descent of the wisdom [beings],45 just when the stars were fully apparent, Jomo’s body rose up off the ground one cubit high and displayed the twenty-four peaceful dance postures. Her voice displayed the sixty branches of melody in Sanskrit, language of the gods. Her mind experienced transparent reality in the vajra-like absorption.46 She passed unhindered through the walls of the house and disappeared outside. She then flew through the sky and came to the tree called Serlak. At its base was a pond called Upo Namkhol where the näga king Drakpo Dakyong lived and where no one dared to look. The näga king was overwhelmed by her meditative absorption and he became infuriated. He summoned the
others from all directions and assembled a huge army, displaying all kinds of amazing apparitions. But Little Pönmo cast out her body as food for the demons, and they had no opportunity [to cause harm]. They offered their life essence as a pledge, and from then on the nāga king Dawa Kyongje (Drakpo Dakyong) and all the others wouldn’t hurt any other beings and vowed to protect the teachings of Little Pönmo.

Then, just around midnight, she saw the five deities of Mahāmāyā, and the five goddesses conferred the complete four empowerments. After that, the five deities of Tröma (Wrathful Mother) conferred the full four empowerments and said to her, “Hurry up and exert yourself in the work of controlling the humans and nonhumans of apparent existence and establishing them in supreme awakening.” After that, the deities of Cakrasaṅvara, surrounded by a host of dākinīs, granted her many prophecies and ritual authorizations (rjes su gnang ba). Then the Great Mother surrounded by the buddhas of the ten directions arrived and stretched out their hands, blessing her and saying, as if with one voice, “Yogini, keep to random haunted places and maintain the vast altruistic aspiration for the sake of sentient beings.” At dawn Exalted Tārā came and bestowed the hundred empowerments from the *Tantra of the Heart’s Essence That Clears Away the Darkness of Ignorance*. Tārā made many prophecies about Machik, saying, in particular, “You, yogini, will set up the [union of] method and wisdom with a yogin named Töpa Bhadra, an emanation of the Buddha Kapala, who will come to Tibet. You will accomplish the welfare of beings in 108 haunted places and lakes. Your doctrine will shine like the sun, and you will reach the level of a nonreturner.” Then she faded away like a rainbow and vanished.

In the morning, [her dharma companions] went looking for her and found her at the foot of the Serlak tree. She came inside and, with only a single piece of cloth, came before the lama and said:

No neurosis, no clothes, naked I prostrate  
Without modesty or shame  
In homage to the sublime lama  
Who truly removes all coverings.  
Homage to you who leads to higher realms.  
Homage to you who protects from lower realms.

Saying that, she prostrated to him. Her companions pointed out that Little
Pönmo had missed the main part of the empowerment the night before, but the lama said, “What you all received was the empowerment with composed substances, but Little Jomo got the ultimate empowerment into the nature of reality.”

Nevertheless, the next morning Machik requested the main part of the empowerment with a maṇḍala offering. This is how she offered the maṇḍala:

The outer maṇḍala adorned with appearances,
Sprinkled with the internal four elements,
Heaped with the six kinds of sentient beings,
And all precious inexhaustible treasures
I offer to the sources of refuge: the sublime Three Jewels,
And the lama, yidam, and ḍākini.
Accept this adorned maṇḍala of external appearance
And grant your blessings.

And for the secret empowerment:

The inner maṇḍala of the body aggregate,
Sprinkled with innately occurring coemergence,
Heaped with the eight groups of consciousness,
And the precious treasure of ground consciousness,
I offer to the sources of refuge: the sublime Three Jewels,
And the lama, yidam, and ḍākini.
Accept this maṇḍala of the inner body aggregate
And grant your blessings.

For the word empowerment she said:

The secret maṇḍala of reality,
Sprinkled with the clear light of intrinsic awareness,
Heaped with unimpeded meditative experience
And the bliss treasure of clarity-emptiness,
I offer to the sources of refuge: the sublime Three Jewels,
And the lama, yidam, and ḍākini.
Accept this maṇḍala of the secret reality
And grant your blessings.
After she offered the maṅḍala in this way, the complete four empowerments were conferred along with the full explanation of the practices. The Little Pönmo took in the meaning of all this and experienced exceptional, infallible faith in the lama.

Other Masters

She then received the Five Dharma Cycles of Maitreya from Lama Shamarpa, as well as teachings concerning the awakening mind (bodhicitta) and on translation and many other subjects. She comprehended all of these. She also heard many precepts about the Great Completion from Lama Betön and came into her own in the practice, including reaching the level of warmth. From Lama Yartingpa she received and genuinely comprehended each of the teaching cycles of the Mahāmudrā Symbols, the Six Yogas of Nāropa, the Exalted Lady, the Six Branch Unions of the Wheel of Time (Kālacakra), the spiritual songs (doha), and kriyā tantra.

She polished her understanding of the Five Dharmas of Maitreya with Drapa, after which the lama predicted that she would go down to central Tibet. She did go, and when she arrived in Lhasa, she made a huge offering to the Jowo statue. As she did so, rainbows appeared and the sound of music reverberated in the sky. A rain of flowers fell and many other amazing sights occurred. Everyone who saw them was inspired with faith and requested her teachings.

Teachings from Dampa Sangye

Then she went back to Dratang and stayed for a while. Dampa Sangye was staying in the Sun Cave (nyi phug) in Phenyul at the time, and a local protector ḍākini came to him and said, “Machik Lapdrön is staying at Dratang.” So Dampa went there and found her doing pilgrimage. Lapdrön did prostrations to him and requested an instruction that could liberate all sentient beings. Dampa Rinpoche spoke these words:

I sing your praises, Lapdrön,
Ḍākini emanation of the Great Mother,
Endowed with fourfold transcendent knowledge.
You who open the three doors to liberation.
Dampa gave teachings to three of them, Lady Khargoma, Lady Chötso, and Lapdrön. Using the ultimate esoteric instructions of sūtric and tantric precepts of the pāramitās, he gave the instruction in the profound meaning of the fourfold empowerment through profound absorption, the Reality Empowerment Conferred on Mind, the advice about the level of warmth, and the direct introduction to Opening the Door to the Sky, including the complete, unabridged instructions on transference of consciousness.99

To Lapdrön in particular he gave the following cycles of teachings: Pacification (zhi byed); the instructions of the six feasts of Chöd;60 the three cycles of hung practice in Pacification; the Red Guide;61 and the practice of p’ē; symbolic teachings of Utpala; Mahāmāyā; Lady with Two Faces;62 The Profound Path of Guru Yoga of the Precept Lineage; instructions on the transference of entering a corpse from “The Crucial Point of Drawing Up Energy-Mind to Enter the Excellent Path”;63 the crucial points of the subtle-drop esoteric instruction that teaches the simultaneous cultivation of illusory body, dream, and bardo practices;64 and the esoteric instructions of the Seal That Severs Illusion, including the eight instructions on practicing Chöd in one sitting using the great charnel grounds as visualization objects.65 All of these were thoroughly [transmitted] in their dialogue and nothing was omitted. Machik fully comprehended them and praised Dampa Rinpoche, saying:

Father, all-knowing, all-understanding Dampa:
All the buddhas of the three times’
Sublime son, lord of beings,
I pay homage to your emanated form.

Machik stayed in Central Tibet for three years. Then she went up to Latö and stayed in her homeland for six months. Then in Dratang, this is what Dampa said:
Thereupon the great wisdom dakini, sublime birth mother of all buddhas of the three times, the source of all wisdom dakinis, secret awareness wisdom, Vajravārahī the awareness [aspect] of Cakrāśāṅvara, the chief dakinis of Nairātmyā Great Secret, manifested in the wrathful dark-blue form of the changeless realm of reality and brought all dakinis under her control. This sublime chief of great transcendent knowledge, known as Dorje Dudulma (Vajra Devil-Tamer), abides in the pure realm of Kecara. But due to the power of karmic forces and previous aspirations, her intention to help beings produced birth in the city of Kapila in India as the child of Rāja Śrisura Ārya under the name Mönlam Drup. The Buddha himself prophesied that she was destined to tame beings in Tibet. In the eighty-second chapter of the Sūtra Distinguishing the Essence from the Residue it says:

When degeneration and conflict increase
In the northern Land of Snow,
An emanation of the victors’ mother
Named Drönma will come.

Also, in the root tantra of Mañjuśrī, King of Tantras:

During the degeneration of my doctrine
In the Land of Snows to the north,
A mind emanation of the Great Mother Wisdom
Called Lapkyi Drönma will come.
Teaching the meaning of unborn essence,
She will wander through towns, villages, and valleys,
Charnel grounds and hermitages,
And her teachings will spread.

So the pañḍita that was prophesied by the Buddha, called Döndrup Rinchen, realized it was time to fulfill his destiny with the people of Tibet. In particular, there were four dakinis who had taken birth in Tibet and were threatening to take control of all of Tibet. The time had come to subdue those four heretical dakinis. So she emanated as four wisdom dakinis in Tibet.

The first is Machik Zhama of Latö, and she will tame beings by means of the Path and Fruition teachings. The second is Zhangcham Dröchungma
of Dringtsam, who will tame beings with the Great Completion. The third is Shelza Drönema of Nanam. She will tame beings by means of the combination of four symbolic teachings of mahāmudrā. And the fourth one is Lapdrön of central Lap. She is the main one. She will tame beings through severance of the four devils by giving up the fixated cherishing of the body and throwing out the flesh and blood as food.

The four heretical dakinis who will be thus tamed by these emanations are Parwa Karmo of Parphu, Chemo Namkha of Tölung, Shelmo Gyalcham of Tsang, and Zhangmo Lhatri of Lhading. Afterward, each of them will become a very fine wisdom dakini with the ability to benefit sentient beings.

That is what Dampa Rinpoche said in Dratang.

Synopsis

Briefly, then, when Lapkyi Drönma was thirteen years old, her mother passed away to Kecara. When she was sixteen, her father passed away and took rebirth in India, where he developed the ability to benefit sentient beings. When she was twenty, her sister Töntso went on to Kecara without leaving any physical remains and was reunited with their mother Bumcham. Her elder brother, Shakya Gyaltsen, became a scholar of all the Tripitaka and advanced through the ranks of the monks, eventually taking charge of them. He became accomplished in Secret Mantra and attained the level of warmth of the body. The younger [brother], Palö Tridey, took their father’s place as head of the clan and exerted himself in the service of the Buddha’s doctrine. His merit increased and he became very powerful. Then Lapdrön went and stayed with Lama Drapa.

This was the first chapter on the life story; a few words in summary of the initial history of Lapdrön.
2. Maturity

Here follows a brief description of Machik’s disciples and how she acted for their benefit.

Meeting Töpa Bhadra

Lama Drapa had a benefactor named Lhamo Drönma who had a husband but no children. She was very wealthy. One day she came and asked the lama, “Please let your master chaplain come to our home and perform her services there. We will give her whatever we have and whatever she should ask for in appreciation of her work.” The lama agreed and said to Lapdrön, “Go to Echung village and act as Lhamo Drönma’s chaplain for one month, reciting The Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Verses thirty times. She will give you all her husband’s things.”

Little Jomo went to meet Sönam Lama to ask him whether she should go to read the sūtra. He said, “Go. There is a previous karmic connection and you can help beings.”

With both lamas giving the word, Machik decided to leave for Echung the very next day. That evening, a red dakini with a single eye in her forehead appeared. “Unite as means and wisdom with Töpa Bhadra of India. It will bring great benefit for beings and you will reach the stage of a nonreturner,” she said and then vanished.

At dawn, a blue-black dakini wearing wrathful attire said, “You will engage the path of Secret Mantra through the union of means and wisdom with the emanation of Buddha Kāpāla called Bhadraya. Your family lineage will proliferate and your doctrine will flourish. You will transcend the tenth stage.” With that, she vanished like a rainbow into space, and in that instant Machik woke up. In the morning she started out for Echung. That night she stayed
at the house of a nun and dreamed this time of seven white women. They said, as if with one voice, “Yogini, you and the Indian paṇḍita Töpa Bhadra have connected karmic aspirations. So don’t be shy—get involved in this activity.”

Jomo thought to herself, “What are all these prophecies? Are they the deceptions of a devil? Or are they the manifestations of my two lamas?” Just as she was about to ask, the seven đäkinis disappeared. Then, first thing in the morning, an actual white woman riding a white donkey arrived. She said, “Machik, great secret wisdom đäkini, great Vajra Devil-Tamer, I have come ahead to greet you.”

Machik said, “Where have you come from, and who are you?”

The white woman dismounted and did prostrations. “I am Dungkyöngma (Śaṅkāpāḷi). I have come here at Lama Töpa Bhadra’s orders. He says you are our great Pönmo, the great mother of the great secret timeless wisdom.”

“What is the family lineage of this Töpa Bhadraya?” Machik asked, “Where is his home?”

The woman answered, “Lama Bhadraya is from Kośala in India. His father was the Śakya nobleman Ratna Siddhi and his mother was Samati. The lama himself is an emanation of Buddha Kāpāla called Bhadraya. He is skilled in the outer canon (piṭaka) and the inner tantras. In particular, he has accomplished the practice of Cakrasaṃvara and become a great yogin adept. He came here to Tibet in order to meet you, Great Mother. He awaits you at Echung and sent me ahead to greet you.” That said, she mounted the donkey and took off, saying, “Please come.”

Machik departed early in the morning and by midday had arrived at Shel- drong. A teacher there named Sherab Bum, a great scholar of the canon, was in the process of explicating the pāramitās to about three hundred monastics when Machik arrived. The geshes all said, “Jomo, aren’t you the famous Lapdrön, Dawa Gyaltsen’s daughter with three eyes? Are you the one?”

“I am,” she replied.

“Well, then, you are well known for being a đäkini and a master of the pāramitās. Let’s have a dharma debate!”

“Very well,” said Machik, and debated with the seven most famous geshes. But the geshes found no opportunity to defeat her, and all of the monks said that it must indeed be true that she was an actual wisdom đäkini, an emanation of the Great Mother.

“Would you like to meet our lama?” they asked.
“Yes,” she said, and got up to go. But they said, “Not yet,” and she thought perhaps there was no chance to go and remained where she was. Just then, twenty-five monks carrying incense and playing musical instruments came out to greet her and lead her into the lama’s presence. She saw the lama as the actual Red Mañjuśrī and started to prostrate to him, but he wouldn’t accept her prostrations.

“Machik Lapdrön, have you really come?” he said, and stood up on his throne. Machik was invited to sit on three stacked cushions by the side of the lama’s throne. The lama perceived Machik as White Tārā. Then Machik and the lama engaged in a minute examination of his teachings, and he was impressed and praised her. Then Lapdrön requested a dharma teaching from him.

“We have no teaching to give that you don’t already comprehend,” he said. Again Lapdrön requested any teaching that he felt would be appropriate to establish a dharma connection. So the lama said he would do just that, and he gave an excellent explanation of the twelve links of interdependent connection in forward and reverse order. She listened carefully for twelve days and in the end fully ascertained its meaning. Understanding the manner in which all phenomena are interdependent and related, she could explain all phenomena by means of interdependent relation and enact the way of liberation based on that interdependence.

Finally, she arrived at Echung. Lhamo Drönma took her up to the roof where a swarthy yogin with staring, bloodshot eyes was practicing the Cakrasaṃvara self-empowerment. In the language of India he said [to Machik], “Mother, didn’t you have a hard time getting here?”

“Yogin, didn’t you get disoriented coming from India?” she retorted. Then, staring directly ahead, she went straight into the shrine room. There she stayed, reading the One Hundred Thousand Verses and sometimes discussing the Dharma with the pañḍita or asking him for tales of India.

On the evening of the seventeenth day, the eighth day of the lunar month, Bhadraya and Lapdrön entered into the union of means and wisdom, and their radiance shone throughout the house. The patroness thought that the butter lamps had set fire to the house and went upstairs to see about it. What she saw was the whole place filled with five-colored rainbow light, and within that two shining lights like moons, red and white, joined together. She didn’t see anything else and became alarmed. She went outside on the roof and sat down, eventually falling asleep. When she woke up at dawn, she went to
look again and saw the ritual master Bhadra emerging from Jomo’s room. The patroness was not at all pleased and went downstairs. When she came in to bring the food, she said, “Last night that ritual master seduced you. I even thought that the house had caught fire from the butter lamps and came to have a look.”

Lapdrön replied with a verse:

Vulgar prophecies are the devils’ deceptions.
Sexual friendship is to befriend the devil of adverse circumstance.
Even the patroness comes in chased by the demon of shame.
How can this possibly help sentient beings?

Töpa Bhadra left after seven days to go on pilgrimage. Jomo stayed for a month and completed the recitation of the *One Hundred Thousand Verses* thirty times. The patroness and her husband offered many of their possessions, and Lapdrön brought them over to Lama Drapa’s place. The patroness said nothing about the whole affair with Bhadra and Lapdrön, keeping it strictly secret. She had even developed an extraordinary faith in the two of them and was convinced that they were no ordinary beings, and she said as much to Lapdrön.

Lapdrön told Lama Drapa that a ritual master named Bhadraya had seduced her. But the lama said, “That will create an interdependent connection that will bring about the welfare of beings. Don’t shy away from it.”

She then took some offerings and went to see Sönam Lama. She told him, “In Echung I met a man called Töpa Bhadra and he seduced me.”

“You are not a nun,” the lama said, “and Bhadraya is not a bad person, so there is no problem. Your family lineage will increase. You should stay with Bhadraya and it will create the karma and interdependent connections to bring vast benefit to sentient beings for very long time. In fact, last night I had an excellent dream about it.”

Both of her lamas had given her their prophecies concerning the man, plus many other prophecies had come up. So she decided that she would settle this auspicious connection with Bhadraya. At the age of twenty-three she went to live with Bhadra in Central Tibet.

When she was twenty-four, Machik gave birth to a son. “Now all of the prophecies have been accomplished, so I will call this boy Drupa (‘Accomplished’),” and so he was. Then all the people of Central Tibet and Tsang...
became inflamed and shunned them, so they moved to Dvagpo and stayed for one year in Nyangpo. Then in Kongpo, when Machik was twenty-five, another son was born. He was called Drupse, and also Kongpo Khyap. At the age of thirty, while they were holding a great feast at a place called Tradolgo on the Nga pass and many dakinis had gathered, she gave birth to a daughter. She was called Drup Chungma ("Little Accomplisher"), but sometimes she was called Duma ("Gathering"), because she had been born on Nga pass where the dakinis gathered. When Machik was thirty-four they moved back up to Penyul and stayed in Langtang. When Machik was thirty-five, many dakini prophecies occurred, and she demonstrated weariness with cyclic existence. She left the girl there [with Töpa Bhadra] and went to Latö to see her two lamas.

Empowerment from Sönam Lama

Lapdrön requested Sönam Lama to give her the heart practice of the Five Deities of Vārāhi and offered this eight-branch prayer as a preliminary for the empowerment:

Homage to all lamas  
Who teach the timeless wisdom of intrinsic awareness.
Homage to the yidam deities  
Who surely grant spiritual powers.
Homage to all the buddhas  
Who have total renunciation and realization.
Homage to the sacred Dharma  
That brings peace and freedom from desire.
Homage to all the saṅgha  
Where offerings become meaningful.
Homage to the dharma protectors  
Who surely clear up obstacles.
From now until enlightenment,  
I supplicate all of you.
I go for refuge in you.
I offer the five sense desirables.
I confess each and every misdeed.
I rejoice in the virtue of all beings.
I supplicate you to turn the dharma wheel.
Please stay and do not pass beyond our pain.
I dedicate the roots of virtue to help beings.

The lama was pleased with Lapdrön’s composition and offering of this eight-branch prayer, and he conferred the complete empowerment. From then on, the lama saw her as an actual dakini, and Lapdrön demonstrated stability in her creation-phase practice of the dakini. She was given the practices of the lama’s Highest Yoga Secret Mantra, the textual transmissions that empower explanation, composition, and debate, and the secret name Queen of Vajra Space.  

She offered Lama Drapa her critical understanding of the twelve links of interdependent connection, and he was pleased. “These days nobody has a better way of explaining the twelve links of interdependence in forward and reverse order, including how to practice, understand, and ascertain it. You are the great adept (mahāsiddha) of interdependence.”

She then requested a ritual for the awakening mind (bodhicitta). He said, “You don’t need to have awakening mind conferred on you. You are the indisputable Great Adept, the Great Dharma Master. You are the Great Mother, progenitor of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. You are the Great Eyes with mastery over both sūtra and tantra. You are the Great Nursemaid who loves all beings like your own children. You are the Great Source and Treasury of All Dharma. You don’t need an awakening-mind ritual. In your presence, I am like a star beneath the moon. Nevertheless, for the sake of establishing the interdependent connection of my role as your master, I will do the ceremony.”

So he prepared to impart the ritual for the resolve of awakening mind, as well as the vows of a lay practitioner. During the ceremony, she saw the real Buddha Śākyamuni with Mañjughoṣa to his right, Avalokiteśvara to his left, and Vajrapāṇi in front. Actually seeing these four, the principal and entourage, she prostrated and sang these praises:

Body resplendent as the gold of Jambu River,
Homage to you, omniscient lord.
Possessing the qualities of beautiful youth,
Homage to you, soft-voiced Mañjughoṣa.
Truly replete with compassion,
Homage to you, Avalokiteśvara.
Subduing evil with great power and force,
Homage to you, Vajra Holder.

She then had a vision of receiving the textual transmission from the lama inseparable from the Buddha. One-faced two-armed Avalokiteśvara held a round anointing vase, and a stream of white light flowed out of it and filled her whole body with light. Mañjuśrī, holding the sky-blue sword blazing with five-colored lights in his right hand, brought it down on her heart as if killing her. Vajrapāṇī’s black vajra shot out vajra sparks to drive away all obstructing forces. Having these visionary experiences, she took the bodhisattva and lay practitioner vows.

Then the lama made a prophecy: “You should go down to Central Tibet. There is a red mountain the color of copper where you will help many beings who are to be tamed.”

“Just now I will go to meet Dampa in Latö, and then go down to Central Tibet,” she replied, and he consented.

**Empowerment from Dampa**

So Machik went to Dingri. With his clairvoyance, Dampa knew that she was coming and sent out the whole population of Dingri to welcome her. Upon meeting Dampa, she requested an especially profound instruction, but he replied, “I possess no more profound instruction than I have already given you. However, I do have something from the sūtras connected with the profound meaning of the paramī.t 10 [To practice it], one invokes the Great Mother surrounded by her children, the buddhas of the ten directions, the buddhas of past, present, and future, the bodhisattvas, the eight close sons, the eight great śrāvakas, the four great kings, the divine boys and girls, and many offering goddesses. Inviting them all into the great feast palace, one presents the feast ceremony and the offerings. When a yogin receives their blessing empowerment, all life-threatening obstacles will definitely be cleared up and there is also the ability to receive the supreme spiritual power.”

“Grant me that one,” she said, and he agreed. So they arranged a maṇḍala and vast offerings and invoked the deities with burning incense and music. Machik witnessed the Great Mother with her whole entourage come to the center of the palace and bestow many blessings and prophecies. She realized that Dampa was actually Red Mañjughoṣa and said:
I present the offering!

I offer all form appearing
In all worlds of the three-thousand-fold universe
As the mudrā of sublime Body.
Grant the spiritual power of unchanging Body.

I offer all the sounds resounding
In all worlds of the three-thousand-fold universe.
As the mudrā of sublime Speech.
Grant the spiritual power of unimpeded Speech.

I offer all the thoughts in the minds
In all worlds of the three-thousand-fold universe.
As the mudrā of sublime Mind.
Grant the spiritual power of undeluded Mind.11

The lama was further pleased and bestowed the complete empowerment. Machik thoroughly mastered the means of accomplishment (sādhana) associated with it. Dampa also gave her the blessing empowerments of the lamas of the precept lineage,12 the esoteric instructions of the exceptional profound instruction, the specially important “red guide” of the inner science [for causing the energy] to enter the central channel, and the way to make the energy currents (rlung; prāṇa) viable using the physical exercises. He gave her many other esoteric instructions as well during the three months and thirteen days that she stayed with him. She praised the lama’s place and form. The lama prophesied that she would subjugate 108 haunted places and that disciples would gather at Copper Mountain.

The Red House of Copper Mountain

Then Machik left Dingri and traveled to Yarlhatse, Tanglha, Gangri Jomo Jechen, Genyen Khari, and other places and subjugated 128 haunted places.13 Finally descending to Lho Mön itself, she came to Zangri Khangmar, the Red House of Copper Mountain,14 when she was thirty-seven years old.

The local spirit Zangri Kyil15 came and avowed his resolve for awakening (bodhicitta) and promised to protect the doctrine. A lady called Jomo Chötso
offered to be Machik’s servant and stayed with her. Chôtso, the patroness Dardrö, and the elder Kadrak all said that a divination had indicated their death within a year, so they requested Machik for a profound empowerment [in order to avert it]. They offered the empowerment articles and Machik did the [hundred] empowerments from the Mother Tantra of the Transforming Dakini and the Hundred Feast Offerings. The divination was successfully altered, and everyone spoke of the great blessings of Mother Lapdrön.

From the time she was forty years old, Machik’s qualities and reputation echoed like thunder throughout the provinces of Amdo, Central Tibet, and Kham. One cannot imagine her meritorious activities and her sphere of influence. The four great kings requested teachings and protected her doctrine. The twelve Tenma Goddesses vowed to obey her. Five [other spirits of the mountains of] Yarlhatse, Tanglha, Ode Gungyal, Gangri Jomo Je, and nāga king Dawa Kyongje avowed their resolve for awakening. She gave them the vows of lay practitioners, and they vowed to never again harm sentient beings and promised to protect the holders of Machik’s lineage. They listened to the training for refuge and awakening mind for twenty-one days. The seven realm-protector dakinis were continuously present and even ordinary people could see them.

Later many groups of learned practitioners joined her: Shubu and his students were eighteen in all, Lama Yarti and his students were twenty-five, and there were thirty-five in the group of Tölungpa and his students. There was a great deal of debate, but no one could outwit Machik in either the words or their meanings. So all the lamas, masters and students, developed indisputable faith in her and requested her teachings, saying that she was the real Tārā. Thus her reputation spread unbounded. Even the geshes developed faith in her. Töde Ngagi Wangchuk and Drolde Gyalwai Jungne, two teachers who were learned in the Tripitaka, requested teachings. She taught the Dharma to a great many practitioners, and her fame increased.

The great adept Phamttingpa came and interrogated her about the Dharma, but there was nothing that she did not know. He also asked about the way the realizations had been experienced in her mind and the way she had established her dharma tradition. He was most pleased with her answers.

“It is incredible that you, an emanation of the goddess Mahāmāyā, have come to Tibet to establish all human and nonhuman beings of this snow-bound region in happiness,” he said. “Not only do I rejoice in that, I prostrate to you with offerings and praise.”
Then Machik asked him for some dharma connection and he agreed, saying that they had an auspicious connection. He gave an extensive explanation of the abhidharma. Also, he gave an extremely thorough teaching of the trilogy of the Stainless Mirror from the aural transmission of mahāmudrā, which Machik fully integrated. Thus it became known to all that Mother Lapdrön had a special teaching called “Mahāmudrā Chöd” that could prevent the 404 kinds of disease and eighty thousand kinds of obstructions from afflicting them—a most extraordinary teaching that could establish them in buddhahood. The news spread like wind throughout the whole world.

**Encounter with Tārā**

Machik was now forty-one years old and staying in a good practice cave called Chipuk (“Death Cave”). On the evening of the eighth day of the last month of spring, Exalted Tārā surrounded by many ḍākinis came to her. She conferred the full four empowerments for each of the five families through the *Udumwara Tantra* of Secret Mantra, and Tārā herself was the female consort for all five of them. Then Tārā made this prophecy:

Yoginī, having pacified the five poisons and magnetized the five nāgas, use this profound empowerment of the five families which actualizes the five wisdoms to benefit all beings. You, a destined yoginī entrusted with great deeds, should practice the *Secret Mantra Udumwara* and the *Heart Essence Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance* as profound internal teachings. Practice the traditional creation and completion phases of these two teachings, which are the heart-core of Secret Mantra, and your lineage of descendants will be liberated and your [dharma] lineage will be like a string of pearls. After ten generations, the lineage of this dharma system of Secret Mantra will resolve into the realm of space. Yoginī, I empower you as the great proprietor and chief of three mantras: secret, dhāraṇī, and knowledge mantras. Abiding as the principal one of the maṇḍala, you are Vajraḍākini, the blue-black secret ḍākini of the vajra family. You are the Great Timeless Wisdom, Vajra Tamer of Devils, and the Queen of Vajra Space who controls all the ḍākinis. Your mate is the heruka covertly present as the trident, and based on that you will develop the secret vanquishing conduct. Bring all fortunate beings into the maṇḍala and ripen and liberate them.
Machik then praised each of the five buddha families in turn and chanted the twenty-one-verse praise to Tārā. After that she said to Tārā, “Out of your great love, you have given me exceptionally powerful empowerments and blessings. Your kindness makes me wonder if even a foolish and humble woman like myself might be able to do some good for sentient beings. From now on please keep me under your protection.”

Tārā smiled and glanced at the ākāśiṣ around her. “Yogini, don’t be so timid,” she said. “You have fulfilled the purpose of your previous limitless studies of the Tripiṭaka and tantras. Now it is only symbolic that I give you teaching. You are a mind emanation of the Great Mother, inseparable from me. You are the wisdom ākāśi called Dorje Yingchukma, Queen of Vajra Space. You yourself are the source of all that is to be known. Therefore, arouse a broad mind and don’t be timid.”

“How can I be the mind emanation of the Great Mother, inseparable from you? In what way am I the source of all phenomena? And where does the Great Mother dwell now?” Machik asked her, and this is what Tārā said:

“Yogini, although the past is still clear in your mind, listen well and I will pretend to explain it. The one known as the Great Mother is “emptiness,” the true nature of all phenomena. She is the transcendent knowledge of nonself, the immaculate essence of the realm of emptiness, the absolute reality free of all veils and obscurations. Thus she is called the mother who give birth to all the buddhas of the three times.

“But the Great Mother that all people worship in order to accumulate merit [came about like this:] I prayed with fervent yearning and aspirations for the sake of all beings. By the power of compassion and those aspiration prayers, there arose from the radiant light of empty reality an orange sphere of light marked with the syllable mum. From its blazing light the Great Mother manifested: gold in color, with one face, four arms, two legs in vajra sitting posture, and all the marks and signs of a buddha. She was surrounded by her children, the buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions. That is the sublime palace, the place of utter purity, the extremely pure realm of Akanisṭha, where she dwells even now.

“At that time, a dark-green light ray in the shape of the syllable hung emanated from my heart and entered the Mother’s heart and evoked her being. Light rays emanated out and gathered the power of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions, which dissolved into the Mother’s
heart. Totally transforming, she became a light-blue dakini, like the color of the sky, with one face and four arms. The dakini Queen of Vajra Space was thus enthroned. The Queen of Space spread forth an unimaginable number of emanations of her body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities. But the essential mind or heart emanation was the Vajra Devil-Tamer, with one face, two arms, and a pig’s head protruding through her hair. Bringing all the dakinis under her control, she overwhelms the three realms of existence and employs all the fierce spirits in her activity. She is the dakini who is the source of the arising of all phenomena. For the sake of all living beings, the Vajra Devil-Tamer, in order to tame whomever needed to be tamed, took many births as ordinary beings, studying the Tripitaka and accomplishing boundless benefit for beings. Finally she came to Tibet as Lapdrönma. She is you.”

“Exalted Great Lady,” Machik said, “When you say these things, they do indeed arise again in my mind. If all of these Secret Mantra teachings that you have given me are spread about and explained, wouldn’t it bring great benefit to beings and cause the teachings to grow and flourish?”

“Those profound, crucial points of the Highest Secret Mantra that I have explained to you should not be propagated to the masses. Practice them in a hidden way, and make a one-to-one link. The few individuals who have the fortune will be matured and liberated by them. The particular teachings to be propagated that I have taught you are the special methods of the meaning of the four mudrás and the view of the meaning of the essence of the perfection of wisdom (prajñāpāramitā). These two combined inseparably into one will accomplish the welfare of beings. As the Sage Śākyamuni himself predicted, the age of conflict will be your time to tame both the humans and the nonhuman spirits in the Land of Snow. Yoginī, your doctrine will flourish and grow, and you will reach the level of a non-returner.” After she had said that, boundless light rays emanated from Tārā’s heart and pervaded all over, above, below, and in between. Then light gathered together and dissolved into Machik’s heart. Then the light of Tārā and her entourage filled all of space, dissolved, and vanished in the early morning haze.

Machik went on her way to Copper Mountain. The Black Guardian wearing a black cloth overcoat and the Draklha Guardian, each with their retinue, came out to greet her and convey her to Red House.
One evening when she was forty-two years old, Machik had a dream [which she later recalled]: “I was in a big flower garden. There was a flower with a thousand petals and various colors that seemed to be made of light. Kyotön Sönam Lama was sitting on it, and he was white with the nature of a rainbow. Dampa Sangye was above him, and the great Vajradhara was above Dampa. To their right was Red Mañjuśrī, to the leftĀryadeva, in back Sukhasiddhi, and in front Exalted Tārā. They all appeared in the forms of the enjoyment body (saṃbhogakāya), without any substantial nature. They blessed me and bestowed the spiritual powers of Body, Speech, and Mind. They gave me many ritual authorizations. There were four white dakinis in the four directions around me, and they blew four white conch shells. Just as I thought that their sound could be heard in the four directions, I woke up.”

The next day, as the sun reached its zenith, Machik’s younger son and daughter were brought by their father, Töpa Bhadra. Mother and father compared their experiences of realization and made their aspiration prayers and composed songs for each other’s well being. Then Töpa Bhadra left for India.

Her son Drupse was then fifteen years old. He knew his father’s practices of Cakrasaṃvara, the Lake Born (Padmasaṃbhava), and Akṣobhya, as well as the secret means of accomplishment of Vajravidarāṇā and of Black Haya-griva. Her daughter, the dakini, was only ten but already knew the means of accomplishment of Red Exalted [Tārā] and Mahākaruṇa Kharsapaṇi, and the letters of the Twenty-Five Thousand and One Hundred Thousand Verse prajñāpāramitā sutras. Drupse was sometimes gripped by fits of madness and blanking out. Machik gave him an exceptional instruction called The Precious Lamp That Completely Calms All Suffering. He slept in a charnel ground for seven days, and afterward the madness was cured and extraordinary insights arose in his mindstream. Machik gave him all of the cycles of that instruction, and the son impressed all of it in his mind.

Dampa Sangye was invited to Copper Mountain and a great celebration was held for Drupse’s ordination as a monk. Machik insisted that she choose her son’s [ordination] name herself, and Dampa agreed. Machik said, “I need the name to be an auspicious connection for the future. His father is Tö-pa. The boy himself has just recovered from mental illness. Now he has met you, lama, the essence of all the buddhas of the three times, and taken ordination. Through all of this his wishes will be accomplished. So I will give him
the name Tö-nyön Samdrup, “Crazy Skull Accomplishing Wishes.” He will become the holder of my dharma lineage. It became apparent that he was a worthy recipient when I dreamed of four dakinis blowing four white conch shells that I thought could be heard in the four continents, and then he arrived that very morning.”

Dampa Sangye gave Tönyön Samdrup the ritual authorization for Manjushri as his personal practice (yidam) and also conferred the complete empowerments of The Five Deities of the Exalted Lady and The Five Deities of the Great Mahāmāyā, Magical Illusion. He also gave him the profound teaching of guru yoga, and the complete instruction of the Main Commentaries on Six Consciousness Groups without skipping anything. He predicted that Tönyön would become the holder of Machik’s doctrine and benefit sentient beings. They made a great offering to Dampa Sangye Rinpoche, and afterward he returned to Latö.

Tönyön Samdrup developed exceptional faith in Dampa Rinpoche and would say, “My father is Dampa Rinpoche.” Three times a day and three times a night he would pray intently to both his Father Dampa (Pa Dampa) and his One Mother (Ma Chik). Thus Dampa became known to everyone as Pa-dampa.

Machik’s oldest son, Drupa, had taken a wife from the ruling family called Goyak of Arawa. He adopted the customs of Arawa, and the Dharma played no part in them.

So Machik saw that Tönyön was the worthy vessel, and she gave him all the teachings: First, using the pāramītā, she gave the Reality Empowerment Conferred on the Mind, that is, the four empowerments of meditative absorption, the direct introduction to Opening the Door to the Sky which is the instruction on transference of consciousness, including the Red Guide of oral advice. Then she conferred the complete three hundred empowerments: Hundred Empowerments of the Transforming Buddhas of the Ten Directions, Hundred Empowerments of the Transforming Dakinis of the Mother Tantras, and Hundred Empowerments of Utilizing Torma. Then she started him in the mind training of the completion phase of those practices. In four months he gained stability. After training in the completion phase for three months, he attained the level of warmth. The powers of both creation and completion emerged. Then Machik gave him the cycles of her dharma system, the Mahāmudrā Chöd, and he developed the powers and gained inner mastery of them.
When he was sixteen years old, Machik told Tönyön Samdrup to go to Shampo Snow Mountain to make an auspicious connection with the practice, and sent him along with three friends. One day a month later Machik left at dawn and magically flew through the sky to Shampo Snow Mountain. She arrived [before them] at sunrise and set up a great feast ritual (gaṇacakrā). Her son and his friends arrived just as the day was beginning to warm up. “You four must be all tired out,” she said.

“We’re not tired,” the son replied. “How kind of you to come.”

Machik then conferred the great empowerments of the Precept Lineage Blessings, the Five Families, and the Five Deities of Vāraḥī Secret Practice in full. She released all the sources of the aural lineage, and he received all the instructions without exception. Machik stayed for seven days and caused blessings to descend on the area and on the cave. Limitless heroes and heroines and ḍākiniś gathered there. Her son saw her as the real Vajravāraḥi, and many marvelous sights occurred, such as a rain of flowers, the appearance of rainbows, and the sound of music. She commanded the local spirit (shidak) Shampo to assist her son’s practice by preventing obstacles, and he vowed to do so. She told one ḍākini of the padma family named Drimema to be his benefactor and provide sustenance, and she promised to do it.

Then she told her son, “Stay in retreat for thirteen years. Change your aggregates, elements, and sense bases into the palace of the deities. When the pure perception of the buddhas’ realm arises in your mind, you will have attained stability. At that time, the benefactor that provides your sustenance will be here.” He entered the cave and sat down in the meditation position known as the seven points of Vairocana. Machik blocked the door of the cave until she could no longer see her son. Then she and the host of ḍākiniś ascended into the sky and went back to Copper Mountain.

Three months passed before Tönyön felt something like hunger or thirst. He noticed that the provider of sustenance that his mother had promised was not around, and he thought, “This place was blessed by my mother and is a sacred spot, so it should be enough to rely on the food of the meditative absorption that Mother blessed me with. I probably won’t die of starvation.” As soon as he had that thought, a brilliant red woman on a fine shaft of light like a sunbeam appeared and said, “It is nectar.” She held out a full chalice and said, “Practitioner, drink this and carry your practice to its conclusion.” As he drank, the nectar with a hundred flavors spread great bliss throughout his whole body. It completely eclipsed any desire that he had had for worldly
food. He thought that perhaps this was a wisdom dakini and that he should explain his experiences of warmth. But the dakini said, “I am the one that Machik told to provide for you. I am not your master, so don’t tell me about the signs of warmth from your practice.”

Bury it in the treasure of reality.
Doubts still trouble you —
Scrutinize your mind.
Resolve intrinsic awareness.
Blend the view and action.
Mix the many in the one flavor.”

She disappeared then, but she came back every three years to bring a portion of provisions. After five years, Machik sent a yogin who had no previous knowledge of the situation to make sure that Tönyön hadn’t died. The yogin came to the outside of the cave and called him.

“Ah?” came from inside.
The yogin said, “Aren’t you cold or hungry? Aren’t you hurt? Your mother sent me.”

Tönyön said, “Didn’t you go to a lot of trouble? Well, I am glad to hear that Mother is well. I am eating the food of meditative absorption. Since I have no craving for food, how could I be hungry? Since I wear the clothes of inner heat (tummo), I don’t crave clothes. Since appearances arise as my friends, I crave no friends. Wherever I look I see buddha forms and realms, so I don’t crave other regions. Craving has passed.”

The yogin returned to the mother and told her this story. She was very pleased and said, “He has so much ability already.”

Machik had a vast number of disciples. They came from Amdo, Central Tibet, and Kham: everyone from important lamas with parasols, to geshes and monks, to the popular kings, ministers, chiefs, queens, and even Mongols, to nuns and lay men and women, even down to lepers and beggars. [Her place] became the meeting ground of all manner of fortune and the resting place of all kinds of disaster. Machik was always surrounded by about five thousand people of good or ill fortune. Many people even came from Nepal to meet her. The reputation of her merit and teachings became known even in India.
The Inquisition of the Indian Panḍitas

Paṇḍitas assembled in Bodhgayā, the Vajra Seat, to discuss the authenticity of the source of this dharma. They said, “Now there is an unknown teaching called Mahāmudrā Chōd. Since it was introduced, it has taken over Nepal and Tibet. It is supposed to prevent the 404 kinds of disease and the eighty thousand kinds of bad spirits. The propagator of this dharma is known to be a woman with three eyes, supposedly an emanation of the Mother. Well, maybe she is indeed an emanation of the Mother, or maybe she is an emanation of a horrible devil or a gyalsen demon, which would be hard to suppress. It would be difficult to know which antidote would work. Since this woman has already laid waste to Tibet, she is capable of coming to India. We must send someone to investigate her.”

Everyone agreed with this plan, but whom to send? It had to be someone who would return and not succumb to the great sorceress upon reaching her place, someone powerful, learned, and adept at meditation. So they found three such yogins who could fly in the sky and return like Mongolian hawks. They took off and arrived in the courtyard of the Red House at Copper Mountain by the time the next morning’s sun was warming up the land. Sōnam Gyen, who was serving Machik’s tea, saw them and said, “There are three men above our courtyard with bluish skin and deep, round eyes. They are wearing black silk jackets. They don’t seem to be from around here. Maybe they are Nepali or something.”

“They are Indian swift-foot adepts,” Machik informed her. “Prepare a good seat for them.” When Sōnam Gyen had stacked up three cushions for their seats, Machik had her show them in. As she beckoned them, the three came inside and sat on the seats that had been prepared. Machik asked them in their own Indian language how they were doing, and they responded in kind. She asked them about some Indian stories, and they answered all her questions. “But how do you know our language?” they asked.

“I was born many times in India,” she replied, “and I know the language.”

“So you remember your lives?” asked the ācāryas.

“I remember my past, future, and current lives.”

“Then please tell us about them,” they said. But Machik realized that if she instructed the three ācāryas in the language of India, then her own students would not understand, and that since these three Indian inquisitors were here, all of the Tibetans should be able to hear about her lives. Translations
should be made into Indian, Nepali, and Tibetan. She opened the guest-house and put the three ācāryas in there, meantime dispatching swift-foot messengers as far as Amdo, Central Tibet, Kham, and even Nepal to spread the word that men from India had come to debate the Dharma with Machik. Everyone was invited to come hear the dharma debate and Machik’s explanation of her lives. They were told to bring at least a month’s supplies. Five hundred thousand five hundred seventy-three women and men came, including four learned translators (lotsawa) who had been to India. Machik gave teachings to the assembly and generously provided for all their needs. There were about seventy thousand monks and nuns.

With the lotsawas translating, the three ācāryas and Machik exchanged views about the Dharma, but Machik could not be surpassed. The ācāryas said, “All dharma teachings originally spread from India. You in Tibet have no dharma.”

“You are correct,” Machik said. “India is the original source of all buddhas and all dharma. Tell us the purpose of all those teachings, and by which buddhas they were propagated, and at what times.”

The ācāryas replied, “We don’t know which buddhas appeared, nor what cycle of dharma they taught, nor how they cultivated their disciples. If you know all the buddhas and all of the dharma wheels that they turned, then tell us.”

With the lotsawas barely able to keep up with the translating, Machik spoke for seven days. Then the ācāryas demanded, “Now tell us about your recollection of other lives, and explain the circumstances of your own dharma.”

“Oh, listen to this, all of you assembled here. The Indians don’t believe in me or my dharma, so they have sent these three ācāryas to check up on me. They ask about my dharma and tell me to report my lives if I remember them. If I don’t explain the circumstances of my dharma, not only will the Indians be most skeptical, but you, my students, and all those gathered here and in fact all the people of Tibet will discredit my teachings. If I don’t reveal my lives, then you won’t believe in me. Therefore, listen now, all of you.

“First of all, I studied the long, middle-length, and short precepts (bka’)

of the great Sage, Śākyamuni. In the manner of liberation that upholds those precepts, and based on those precepts, I composed the Great Collection of Precepts on Chöd.”

Machik then explained everything about the Great Collection of Precepts.
After that, she taught all the personal experiential dharma that had arisen in her own mind. She went on to teach all of the dharma that she had received from various lamas in the way of their lineages, the dharma that had been given to her by Tārā and other personal deities, and a bit about the way they had made prophecies about her. As for her lives, she explained that from the thought generated in the mind of Exalted Tārā, the Vajra Queen of Space had emanated from the heart of the Great Mother, and then how she had taken 107 births from then up until the present life as Lapdrön.

“In the life before this one, I was born in India as the paṇḍita Mönlam Drup. That body is still there in Bhadra Cave in Potari, the cave blessed by Exalted Tārā, youthful and healthy looking just as it was before, without any deterioration in complexion and radiance. If you burn it on white sandalwood, the fine aroma will pervade throughout the whole country and other various offerings will manifest, such as the sound of music and jeweled parasols. All kinds of multicolored flowers will rain down, and rainbows and lights will fill the space. All these and many more sights will occur, but particularly there will be amazing relics (rten). On the skull there will appear, as a raised relief, the five buddhas with Vairocana as the principal one, each embracing one of the five goddesses, Mamaki and so forth. Each of the vertebrae will be a victory stūpa, each of the teeth will have a right-turning conch shell, and on the mandible there will be a naturally occurring white syllable ah. The Great Mother will be on the collarbone, the Lords of the Three Families on the lumbar vertebrae, White and Green Tārā on the two shoulders, Śākyamuni at the heart, and Vajradhara on the center of the chest. Those and many other figures and bones will yield innumerable ringsel in the five different colors and sha riram from the bodily remains the size of large peas and as numerous as the sands of the River Ganges.

“If it does not happen just as I have described with no variation, then [you can assume that] everything I have told you is a lie. You three paṇḍitas should investigate this properly according to my instructions and see if any signs occur. Now, at the age of fifty-two, I have completed just half of my work for the welfare of beings. When I am ninety-nine I will demonstrate the way of transference of consciousness and take birth once in the Akaniṣṭha pure land.”

The whole gathered assembly resolved their doubts and believed everything Machik had said about the Dharma, her succession of lives, and her narrative. But in order to cut through all misconceptions once and for all, they invited Dampa Sangye.
“Dampa Rinpoche,” they implored, “for the sake of all of us here in the Land of Snows, please go with these three swift-foot adepts to India. Machik said that there would be amazing relics from the purification of the bodily remains [of Mönlam Drup]. Would you be so kind as to bring one such excellent relic back here to us?”

Dampa agreed to do it and left immediately for India with the three swift-foot adepts. The crowd dispersed to their homes.

Dampa and the swift-foot adepts gathered a group of people at Bodhgayā, the Vajra Seat. They reported faithfully everything that Machik had said, and the group decided that they should definitely verify her claims and see if these sights would occur in Potari. So fifty-two paṇḍitas went to Potari and found the body undecayed, just as Machik had said. They cremated it, and the relics she had described were found. Then the Indians all believed in her and dispelled all their misconceptions. They said that she must indeed be a rebirth of the Great Mother. There was talk of inviting her to India, since the barbarians of Tibet were not worthy and her emanated body might just disappear. The relics were divided up among all of them to be used as supports for their faith. The skull with the entwined five families was installed at the Vajra Seat, and Dampa carried the heart relic shaped like Śākyamuni to Tibet.

When Dampa and the three swift-foot adepts returned to Copper Mountain, they came before Machik and paid homage, kneeling and circumambulating her. After making their offerings, the three adepts said, “Machik, you are an amazing mind emanation of the Great Mother. Everything happened just as it came from your mouth without any error or omission. We have brought the heart Śākyamuni.”

All the people from Amdo, Central Tibet, and Kham were satisfied and received blessings from it. Then Dampa said that he would keep it as a support for his practice and he brought it to Latö. From then on both the Tibetans and the Indians had indisputable confidence in Machik, and even her detractors and critics decisively dispelled their doubts and became her devotees. The sacred teaching of Severance of Evil Object spread and became famous in both India and Tibet.

Machik was invited to India, but she said, “There is little benefit for beings if I go to India. My destiny with disciples lies with those who must be tamed in Tibet, and now is the right time. I will not go to India in this lifetime. You Indians are the source of all buddhas and all Dharma. All the teachings have
come from India and then must be disseminated in Tibet. There has never before been a teaching from Tibet that has become well known in India. But I have had many lifetimes in India, so I have many dharma connections with you Indians. Now I have been born in Tibet, where I teach the Sacred Dharma Mahāmudrā Chöd, hitherto unknown in India. The dharma system of this beggar woman, this Severance Object or Chöd, is famous throughout the snowy land of Tibet. I should also make a present of it to India.”

Just as she said, the special teachings that were born in Machik’s mind would be carried to India. Machik had studied and realized the long, middle-length, and short precepts of the Conqueror. In particular, she had studied and become liberated through the section on devils through such passages as:

Know that clinging to anything, from form to omniscience, is the work of the devil . . .

and:

Form is neither white, nor yellow, nor red, nor blue, nor green, nor even purple . . .

and:

Form does not come from something, nor does it go somewhere, neither does it abide anywhere . . .

and:

All phenomena are equanimity; the perfection of wisdom is equanimity.

She had tasted the extraordinary personal experience of severing the four devils in their own ground and composed this extremely profound Dharma in these ten texts:

1. The Great Collection of Precepts
2. The Further Collection
3. The Quintessential Collection
4. The Appendices
5. The Steps of the Crucial Points
6. Refutation of Detractors
7. The Secret Symbol Dharma
8. The Three Cycles of Recitation
9. Taking the Ground As the Path
10. The Special Esoteric Instructions

These were taken to India, and all the Indians believed in them and had experiences of the Dharma. This was how a Tibetan dharma spread to India.

MACHIK’S TEACHINGS AND TRANSMISSIONS

The lineage of the dharma of Machik’s personal experience went from Machik herself through the family line of her sons and daughters and through lineages of dharma holders, such as the 116 and so on. These lineages did not exist before Machik.

I. There are three lineages of the esoteric instruction of ultimate meaning of the precept lineage (the sūtra lineage):

(1) The Lineage of Means
   Buddha Šākyamuni
   Māṇjuśrī
   Nāgārjuna and his spiritual son Āryadeva
   Brāhmaṇ Āryadeva
   Indian Dampa who connected with both the greater and lesser Āryadevas
   Kyo[tön] Shakya Yeshe
   Sōnam Lama and Khupön
   Machik, then the lineage continues from her.

(2) The Lineage of Transcendent Knowledge
   The Great Mother
   Tārā
   Sukhasiddhi
   Brahmāṇ Āryadeva
   Dampa
Sönam Lama
Machik and on down

(3) The Nondual Union Lineage
The Great Mother
Śākyamuni
Tārā
Mañjuśrī
The two Āryadevas
From then on it is the same as the previous one.

II. The Secret Mantra (or Vajrayāna) Lineage
Vajradhara
Exalted Tārā
Machik

Machik had these three teachings:
(1) Secret Mantra Udumwara, (the precept lineage of transformation, Essential Drop Mirror)
(2) Suppressing the Five Poisons and Nāgas (Transforming Buddhas of the Ten Directions)
(3) The Heart Essence Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance
(Hundred Empowerments of the Transforming Dākinis of the mother lineage)

In Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance there is:
(1) Creation phase, Precious Verdant Tree
(2) Completion phase, Vajra Subtle Drop
(3) Three Cycles of Essential Drop Mirror

In Suppressing the Five Poisons and Nāgas she composed:
(1) Creation phase, Lamp of Wisdom
(2) Completion phase, Clarifying the Three Stages, Consummating the Profound Path

In Udumwara she composed:
(1) Creation phase, Beautiful Pearl Necklace
(2) Completion phase, Sun Rays Dispelling the Darkness of the Two Extremes

In the Secret Five Deities she composed:
(1) Creation phase, Treasure of Gems
(2) Completion phase, Secret Cycle in Five Phases

The Lineage of Creation and Completion:
  Tönyön Samdrup
  Gangpa Muksang
  Gangpa Lhundrup
  Sangye Tensung
  Nyamey Dorje
  Gangpa Rinpoche
  Lama Dorje
  Tongshik Namkhai Gyaltsen
  Tashi Gyaltsen

  Up until Namkhai Gyaltsen, the creation-completion system remained intact. It included the cycles on longevity, the peaceful and wrathful burned gifts, and the fire offering of the four activities. That is known as the Mantra Tradition.

  The tradition of esoteric instruction of the ultimate meaning of the precept lineage includes the four empowerments of meditative absorption in the perfection [of wisdom], the feast offerings of the five families, and the torma empowerment. That is known as the sūtra tradition of the pāramitās.

III. The Combination Sūtra-Tantra is the unified meaning based on just the empowerment of the Transforming Buddhas of the Ten Directions, and so on, along with Chöd. All of this is intact.

  After Tashi Gyaltsen, the tradition of creation-completion was broken. There was nothing more than what was based on the mere mixed-up remains of the empowerments and feasts.48

The Lineage of A Hundred Empowerments, A Hundred Feasts:
  Tönyön
All the instructions of śūtra, mantra, and the union of the two that Machik held in her mind were fully received and mastered by Tönyön, who didn’t miss anything. Coming from the esoteric instruction of Ultimate Meaning of the Precept Lineage, the esoteric instruction about the Pāramitā, along with the exceptional instructions on the crucial points of profound meaning, that is, everything about the Perfection [of Wisdom], was transmitted to Machik’s son Gyalwa Döndrup.

The cycles of the Union of Śūtra and Mantra, the cycles of the dharma of Machik’s personal experience, the Profound Path of the Four Empowerments of the Đākini from the Mother Tantra, Mahāmāyā, the Profound Path of Guru Yoga, the Three Cycles of Visualization Using the Three Family Lords, and especially the esoteric instructions on meditation on Avalokiteśvara, the Knot of Precious Jewels, and the Vajra Verses were all thoroughly received by Machik’s daughters, the four Gyens, and Khugom Chökyi Senge.

The limitless, scattered interior instructions on the prajñāpāramitā were given to Töde Ngakgi Wangchuk, Drolde Gyalwai Jungne, the sixteen individuals who were the special recipients of Machik’s precepts, and so forth. Altogether, 1,263 people were matured and liberated and could benefit other beings with them as well. Not only that, 430 lepers were completely cured, with their flesh restored to its former condition, and innumerable beings afflicted with disease and bad spirits were helped. Her powers of helping people on the journey of subsequent lives were unimaginable.

Machik’s body passed into bliss at the age of ninety-nine. (Even though Machik had never washed or done anything to her hair since birth, its fullness and other qualities were undamaged, and it was described as falling in perfect tresses. It was so black and glossy that it shone with rainbow lights.)

Machik’s son Drupa came before his mother at the age of forty-two, driven by circumstances. Machik saw that the time had come to tame him and gave him teachings. He took the vows of a lay practitioner and was given the
name Gyalwa Döndrup. By the time he was forty-eight he had attained mastery, which he expressed in many ways, such as spontaneous songs. Gyalwa Döndrup had two sons: the elder one named Tsangwang Gyel was a householder, and the younger one called Khambu Yale became a monk. Tsangwang Gyel had three boys: the oldest was Dampa Tönchung and the youngest was Kyeme Ösel. The middle one was known as Tönyön Samdrup. During a time of conflict, when he was unable to respond in a debate, a daughter was born to him. She was named Lentokma (“Lightning Response”), and she was one aspect of an emanation of Machik. She spread the doctrine of Mahāmudrā Chöd far and wide, and the lineage also greatly increased.

The above story of Machik is just a short list of the early profile and just the briefest mention of the later [activities] in the form of a summary. It is the second and final chapter on her life.

[Note] (After “a Tibetan Dharma spread to India” is not from the original text. From “born in Machik’s heart” until “the lineage also greatly increased” was added by myself, Namkhai Gyaltsen. I am the last in Machik’s lineage of the creation and completion stages of mantra. Just the mixed-up remains of the feasts and empowerments and the incomplete explanation of the meaning of the view fell to Tashi Gyaltsen.)
3. The Questions of Tönyön Samdrup

Machik was fifty-six years old. A large gathering was to take place, and fifty-three packloads of supplies such as butter, meat, tu, and tsampa were brought in. There were 113 women and nuns, including the four daughters named Gyaltsen Ne, Sönam Gyaltsen, Palden Gyen, and Bumtso Rinchen Gyen. In addition, there were 150 monks, principally Shamar, and 150 laymen. They were all dispatched to the Great Snow Cave (gangs phug mo che). On the twenty-fifth day, Machik, riding on a white lioness surrounded by dakinis of the four families and others, all in all one hundred thousand dakinis, flew through the sky to Udḍiyāna and there held a feast circle. They stayed for three days. Then, together with the heroes and dakinis of Udḍiyāna, they arrived at Norbuling, “The Land of Excellent Gems,” where the Secret Mantra teaching of Udumwara was explained. A huge empowerment ritual and feast circle was held for ten days, and the fortunate gods were liberated. The heroes and heroines of Norbuling held a feast circle, and they stayed for one day each in the lands of the four great kings, teaching the Dharma. Then, with the four great kings and their armies, they came down to the Great Snow Cave.

[From his retreat], Tönyön saw them arriving from the sky and leaped up. Machik opened the door to his cave and said, “Has the practitioner consummated the practice?”

“Machik!” Tönyön answered. “Landing from the sky! Are you well? As for me, my degree of liberation is middling.” He offered up his realizations to Machik and she was pleased.

“Did you really see me coming down from the sky through the closed door of your cave, or was it your imagination?” she asked.

“I realize all objective appearance to be like an illusion or a dream,” Tönyön replied, “so I don’t have the obscuration of objects. Even the wise
have the same range of vision. I saw you, Machik, come down from the
abode of the four kings together with heroes and heroines. [Yesterday] the
four Gyens came to my cave door and said, ‘Ah la la! With heroes and hero-
ines and đäkinis and the four kings with their armies, she will arrive with the
first rays of the morning sun.’ So there had already been much talk [of your
arrival].”

Machik then manifested the great mañḍala of The Mound of Jewels
Tantra. To Tönyön and Gangpa Muksang and the four Gyen daughters
and Khugom Chökhyi Senge—to these seven she bestowed the complete four
empowerments of the Mound of Jewels. They did 108 feast offerings. A
crowd of three thousand gathered. All of them had the definite experience of
pure vision. The four Gyen daughters saw Machik with a retinue of ten đäkinis, her body blue in color and with one face and four arms, adorned
with various ornaments. The sky filled with rainbow light, flowers of various
colors rained down, and the sound of cymbals reverberated from the sky.
Many clouds of different colors drifted in, very clear and vivid. The whole
outer space was amazing. A soft rain shower wafted down and washed away
the searing heat. The ground and everything that was not already moist
became slick. Soft fingers of mist of various colors shimmered, and the light
naturally formed into miragelike shapes. Many more such wonders were seen
by nearly all the people of that region, arousing their faith effortlessly.

Tönyön got a headache and went into a little swoon. He went senseless for
a moment as if sleeping. Then, like someone waking up, he revived and his
senses became clear and sharp.

“Looking up, I saw hovering before me in the sky about a spear’s length
away a matted cloud of various colors, the nature of light. Upon it was a
tunnel of intricate five-colored lights, filling the center of the retreat hut.
Two cubits above that was an eight-petaled multicolored lotus with Machik
at its center. She was blue in color, with one face and four arms, standing
with her two legs in dancing posture, and covered with ornaments. Above her
was a dark-blue đäkiní, and then a white one in the east, yellow in the south,
red in the west, green in the north, light yellow in the southeast, orange in
the southwest, brown” in the northwest, and light green in the northeast. All
of these đäkinís had one face and two arms; held a curved knife, skull cup,
and trident; and were standing with one leg straight and the other bent. They
were appearance without intrinsic nature, light-formed.

“A spear’s length above that appeared the Great Mother surrounded by the
buddhas of the ten directions. Above that one spear’s length was Vajradhara surrounded by the lamas of the lineage. Further to the right of Vajradhara was Śākyamuni surrounded by the assembly of arhants. Lord Amitāyus was to the left, surrounded by the eight bodhisattvas and all the others. Each buddha was surrounded by its own retinue. Around all of them were endless heroes and heroines and protectors of the doctrine. On the right side of Vajradhara was Cakrasaṃvara, Buddha Kāpāla, Red Yamāntaka, and boundless other Highest Yoga Tantra deities, each with the oath-bound protectors of their individual lineages. In front of Vajradhara were the five deities of Tröma Nakmo (Wrathful Black Mother), Sangwachenmo, and Mahāmāyā, or Great Illusion. They each had their own retinue as well as a host of one hundred thousand ḍākinis. Behind Vajradhara there were continuous blue and red lights like a rainbow consisting of many interconnected spheres of light. Inside each sphere was a buddha with a golden body, and above each of their heads golden three-tiered parasols encircled them. The four kings appeared beneath Machik, each with his own retinue, and around them the ten-direction protectors, each with their own retinues.

“I saw them all clearly amidst the clouds and wondered whether they were all emanations of Machik herself, or else the host of deities invoked by Machik, or even whether it was that pure land of all buddhas that is always here but that I had never before seen. Just as I thought I’d better ask Machik herself about this, the four Gyen daughters set up a feast and started dancing. Rising up one cubit above the ground while singing with the sixty airs of melody, they offered immeasurable offerings to the deities. Then the four of them sang to me as if with one voice:

Ema! You, honorable and dazzling,  
Emanation of heroic Hayagrīva,  
Surrounded by an ocean of ḍākinis,  
Blessed by the eight great adepts,  
With a host of heroes and heroines:  
Take the feast and enjoy it!

“From behind and above me a great light arose and came to the front. Looking up, there was Nāgarjuna and his heirs, Luhīpa, Padmavajra, Kukkuriṇa, Buddhajñāna, Dampa Rinpoche, Mañjuśrīmitra, Virūpa, and many other great adepts. They were wearing bone ornaments and, together
with the deities, they appeared wherever I looked in the gaps of the floating array of radiating clouds. Then everything dissolved into light and was absorbed into the clouds. Then even the clouds dissolved into light and disappeared.”

**HOW TÖNYÖN PERCEIVES MACHIK**

During the third morning Machik taught *The Clear Words of the Definitive Meaning of Chöd* and *The Complete Explanation of the Ways of Mantra, called ‘The Clear Lamp of Eight Vajra Forts.’* Then the crowd dispersed. There were 121 left who listened to the teachings for seven days. The day the teachings ended, an enormous feast circle was assembled. During the assembly, Tönyön asked Machik his question:

“Machik-la, people have many different ways of seeing things. The four Gyens and I actually see the wisdom ma˚žala. There are also hosts of deities, such as those of father tantra and mother tantra, heroes, heroines, great kings, doctrine protectors, direction guards, and so on, great adepts such as Luhipa, the lama lineages such as that of Vajradhara, and so on. Seeing all of these and other unimaginable sights, I wonder if they are all emanations of yourself, Machik, or if they are the result of invoking your own deities, or if they appear in accordance with the pure karma of the perceiver?”

Machik answered:

Son, intelligent and karmically destined,
Listen and keep this in mind:
You saw this buddha pure land,
A sign of being free of afflictive emotion, purified of obscuration.
When the obscuration of afflictive emotion is thoroughly purified,
You see the buddha pure land anywhere.
Just as wherever there is water,
The moon’s reflection arises, noble son,
Wherever I am, a host of deities surrounds me.
Whenever there is a fragrant flower in full bloom,
A host of leopard bees naturally surrounds it.
When I, the goddess Queen of Wisdom Space,
Desire emanations, the host of deities arise from me,
As when nutritious crops grow from earth,
Cultivated with moisture and warmth, noble son.
Outwardly, I am the goddess Mâyā.
Inwardly, I am noble Tārā.
Secretly, I am Vajrávārahi.
In space, I am the Great Mother of the Victors.
At the outset of Buddha’s teaching I was the Goddess of the Ganges.
In the middle I was the dakini Sukhasiddhi.
Later, in Tibet, I was Yeshe Tsogyelma.
Now I am me, noble son.

HOW SHE EMANATES

Again Tönyön asked, “Machik-la, in this way you are the wisdom dakini, mother progenitor of all buddhas. Other than this emanation of body, speech, mind, and activity, are there others in other lands?”

Machik replied, “Son, listen! There are other emanations of me in other lands, just like me. In the degeneration of the doctrine of the Great Sage, Śākyamuni, in the north of a billion worlds, there are a billion Tibetans. In these snow mountain ranges, the Himalayas, there were a billion kings named Songtsen Gampo, emanations of the Great Compassionate One prophesied by Śākyamuni himself. I also manifested a billion times. Since the time had come to subdue all embodied or unembodied forces that would hurt sentient beings, especially hostile, wicked beings, I revealed the sacred teaching called Mahāmudrā, Severance of Evil Object (Chöd). It achieves the benefit of all beings, whether good or bad. When the five degenerations spread, just as the Sage himself prophesied, this yogini’s dharma tradition is needed to subdue all the people of the Himalayas, noble son.”

THE FIVE DEGENERATIONS

Again the son asked his mother, “Machik-la, what are the so-called five degenerations? Does this refer to the present time or a future time? Will beings of the degenerate time have dharma traditions other than your system of Chöd, or will there be no other means of taming beings?”
“Listen, son, the five degenerations are as follows. The doctrine of the Great Sage will last for ten five-hundred-year periods. Now we are in the latter part of the seventh period. That is the first degeneration, that of the doctrine.

“During this degenerate age, sentient beings are just dreadful, with bad faces of unpleasant coloring and small bodies. Their minds are coarse and they are clever only in bad behavior of perverted activities. They are violent and pursue unvirtuous activity, scorning the virtuous types. They don’t regard their fathers as fathers, nor their mothers as mothers. The prevalence of such wicked, cruel beings is the second degeneration: that of sentient beings.

“Those sentient beings will have such gross afflicting emotions that they are exploding. Cloaked by the darkness of stupidity, they are too dumb to discern what to do or not do, so they will fall into the abyss of the lower realms. The great fires of anger burn the seeds of their own mindstream to ashes. The sprouts of enlightenment won’t grow, and the path to freedom is cut off. Blown off course by the roaring hurricane of jealousy, they are propelled through the great ocean of suffering, difficult to escape. They are a race of people bent down and oppressed by an enormous, weighty mountain of pride. The great torrent of desire overwhelms them, and they cannot reach the dry ground of freedom. This is the degeneration of afflicting emotion, the third degeneration.

“The life span of sentient beings, which now averages sixty years, will diminish until it is only ten. Not only that, the conditions that terminate life and cause sudden, premature death will increase, such as disease, toxins, evil, scarcity of food and clothing, and murder and warfare. These obstacles will arise and shorten the life span. This is the fourth degeneration, that of life span.

“From now until we reach the tenth five-hundred-year period, harsh snow and rain will fall out of season, perverting the weather. Rivers will surge and overflow. Great storms will rage, upsetting the mountains and valleys, moving mountains and the whole earth. Pressing, searing hot winds will dry up all the plants and crops. There will be fatal hail, robbers, and battles. The eras of weapons, famine, and disease will flourish. This is the degeneration of occurrence, or the degeneration of the times, and it is the fifth. These five degenerations will only increase.

“Alas! It is that to which ‘five degenerations’ refers, noble son. These days, an individual who genuinely practices the sacred Dharma is extremely rare. Whatever dharma you know, it must be applied to counteract afflicting emo-
tion. People these days use whatever little dharma they know to augment afflictive emotion, and then engender tremendous pride and conceit over it. They teach the Dharma without taming their own minds. But as with a river rock [that sits in a river but is never soaked through], not even a hair’s tip of benefit penetrates the other people. Even worse, incorrigible people [are attracted] to this [false] dharma that increases conflict. When individuals who could be tamed by the Dharma encounter such incorrigibles, their desire for the sacred Dharma is lost. It is not the fault of the Dharma; it is the fault of individuals. Also, when beings reach the degenerate age, they all become incorrigible. Because the authentic Buddhist teaching has less and less effectiveness as we approach the end of the Buddha’s doctrine, it is difficult to tame sentient beings these days through the orthodox tradition (gezung lugs) of the authentic Buddhist teachings. It is like when a very fine and noble gentleman gets old and declines, loses his powers, and finally becomes meek. In comparison, an ordinary youth who is healthy and in his prime will be in some ways better than the old man. Just so, those beings who were not tamed by the authentic Buddha himself were especially helped by the doctrinal teachings newly composed by the bodhisattvas, since it was the right time for the taming by bodhisattvas. Likewise, people of the Himalayas had the fortune to be tamed by Avalokiteśvara. The time for this yogini to be involved is right now. In particular, the Sacred Dharma, Severance of Evil Object, which has been given the name ‘the timely Chöd’ teaching, is propitious for taming unruly sentient beings, noble son.”

The Specialness of Chöd

“Machik-la, in what ways is this dharma system of yours, this Chöd, more profound and significant than other teachings?” he asked.

“Listen, son. My dharma system, Mahāmudrā Chöd, is much better than other teachings. Its meaning of crucial significance is very profound. It is an uncommon, distinctive dharma doctrine, a teaching of esoteric instruction unlike the others. This teaching is the marrow of all religions, the pinnacle of all vehicles, the most sublime essence of all sūtra and tantra rolled into one. The teaching that liberates the four devils in their own ground is the supreme method to forcefully eliminate the five poisons. It is the axe that cuts the roots of the green tree of ego-fixation. It is the army that decisively averts the battle
of cyclic existence. It is the force that conquers the eighty thousand kinds of obstructing forces. It is the good medicine that overcomes 404 kinds of disease. It does not come to fruition at a much later time; rather it is an instruction for complete awakening in one life and in one body. Unlike any other dharma system, this Sacred Dharma Chöd is this yogini’s special teaching.

“Noble son, dharma practitioners these days lust for this life and are attached to it, so they cannot renounce ego-fixation. Due to this crucial point, they desire the enjoyments of their bodies. They employ all kinds of methods, such as wrathful mantras, charmed substances, and magical power, to turn back any person or any nonhuman spirit who endangers their friends and relatives or their power and fortune. They apply intense vigilance in methods of self-protection, meditating on [protection] circles and camps. Some teachers who expound the Dharma to audiences attract enough monks to get hold of a monastic estate. Achieving worldly esteem and fortune, they run a business dealing in donations. This vehicle is very inferior and doesn’t even measure up to a horsehair [against the power of] cyclic existence. Their kind of dharma system and that of this beggar woman are totally different.

“The devils that those people avert and exorcise (bskrad) through hate-filled wrathful activity I draw in through the power of love and compassion and gather around me as retinue. The enjoyments and body so cherished and coveted by others I offer up without coveting as an offering substance to the Three Jewels, and down to the six realms of sentient beings, and to the needy creditors of karmic debt. In particular, to all those evil ones who hanker after body and life, terrifying nonhuman spirits, I make it the object of greatest generosity and relinquish it without attachment.

“In order to turn the mind away from mundane cyclic existence, and to forcefully cut through the entanglements of friends and relatives, the method to spontaneously cut through the mind that craves and clings to all appearing objects is to dwell alone with one’s nonself in an empty, uninhabited place and cut the ego-fixation of external appearing objects. That is the dharma system of this beggar woman.

“This living body that is held so dear—if it is cast away without a thought as food for demons, then fixation on the self of this interim body will be severed spontaneously. That is the dharma system of this beggar woman.

“Abiding within the state of emptiness, unborn cognizant awareness hidden in the basic space of the sky is unimpeded and automatically, innately free. Thus, fixation on ‘I’ is spontaneously severed, and awareness without
action captures the stronghold. That is the dharma system of this beggar woman.

“As for achieving the greatest welfare of beings, it is more valuable to help even one unembodied spirit who is wicked, cruel, and immensely powerful than it is to help a hundred embodied beings. One powerful nonhuman being can hurt innumerable embodied and unembodied sentient beings and make all beings wretched. Also, [in the current life] that being is continuously associated with a bad, evil mind and as such will experience boundless suffering in the lower realms [in the next life]. Therefore, in order to [prevent] harm to other beings and to protect that wicked being from the suffering of the lower realms, it must be tamed. Nowadays individuals perform mostly exorcisms. Even if they are able to exorcise one time, sentient beings will certainly be afflicted again later on. Even if they could exorcise powerful spirits, I see it as much more valuable to tame them and then establish them in happiness. Using charms (thun), substances, and wrathful mantras is not taming. Catching them by the hook of compassion and love, taming them only by means of warm flesh and blood, and helping them to attain unsurpassable enlightenment—that is the dharma system of this beggar woman.

“Moreover, it is more important to benefit a single man than to benefit a hundred women. It is more important to benefit a single monastic than it is to benefit a hundred men. It is more important to benefit a single person who has unconditionally entered the door of the doctrine with remorse and renunciation than it is to benefit a hundred people driven by conditions. It is more important to benefit a single smart person than it is to benefit a hundred fools. It is more important to benefit a single person with the courage of altruism than it is to benefit a hundred who strive only for their own welfare. It is more important to benefit a single being who knows how to talk and comprehends meaning than it is to benefit many hundreds and thousands of animals. It is more important to benefit a single novitiate than it is to benefit a hundred lay practitioners. It is more important to benefit a single fully ordained monk than it is to benefit a hundred novitiates. But it is even more important than that to benefit a single person who has realized the meaning of the perfection of wisdom.16

“It is more merit to collect the accumulations based on one’s own body than it is to collect a hundred accumulations of things. It is more important to practice generosity by offering the body for seven days in a haunted place than to practice special virtue for a hundred days while staying in a
monastery. It is more important to meditate with a loving mind on a single being who demonstrates hostility and anger toward you than it is to meditate with love on a hundred beings who are affectionate and thoughtful of you. It is more important to remember for a moment that all conditioned things are impermanent, and not get mentally involved in the activities of this life, than it is to undergo hardships because you desire the fruits of worldly life. It is more important to tame, even a little bit, the gongo-po spirit\(^\text{17}\) of ego-fixation than it is to tame a hundred evil demons out there. It is more important to meditate for a flash on the true nature of nonself than to practice virtue for a hundred years with ego-fixation. It is more important to recognize for a moment the thought of one’s own mortality than to pursue education and erudition for a hundred years desiring to be wise and famous. It is more important to remember for a moment to dedicate to sentient beings and to practice virtue while maintaining humility than it is to practice virtue and engage in Dharma for a hundred years desiring to be learned, righteous, and noble, and to gain profit and fame. All of those are the dharma system of this beggar woman.

“Nowadays, those who are stricken by disease and bad spirits (gdon),\(^\text{18}\) trying to separate them from their body and life force, arrange the worst of their food and wealth and then summon a so-called Bönpo named Mulong Tokhen (Blind Exorcist)\(^\text{19}\) from outside. The Mulong Bönpo makes contact with the obstructing spirit and offers it a bribe to refrain from harm, while claiming to help the possessed patient. Then, killing an innocent animal, the Bönpo beseeches the spirit not to cause suffering. Collecting the fresh flesh and blood, as well as the patient’s requisite ritual objects,\(^\text{21}\) the Bönpo makes contact and bribes the obstructor not to cause harm, saying, ‘Accept the ransom (glud) for the physical life force.’ Killing a healthy, innocent sentient being, Mulong makes the contact and cures the disease of the sick and afflicted, averts conditions, and clears away obstacles for the desired long life. Such are the ideas and meaningless perverted activities a fool.

“In contrast, those who offer whatever fine food and wealth they have to the Three Jewels and request the blessing of curing disease and affliction clear away illness and obstacles while gaining merit. Summoning a skilled doctor for the sick and directly applying good, uncontroversial medicine will cure what ails. This is the general worldly custom, and it is good. But as for this beggar woman, when it comes time to die, I won’t be able to find even one-hundredth of a single hair to take along from all the causes and condi-
tions of material things, all this worldly abundance, life and limb and so on. Freed of outer and inner ego-fixation, without any reason at all to pay heed or care, I will cast out life and limb without hesitation as food for whoever desires it. What need to mention most reasons for attachment to food and wealth that others are subject to? Whatever the conditions may be, whether illness or affliction, I cure them by means of the visualization of inner absorption within the state of nonself. I have no need of external medical diagnoses, divinations, healing rituals (gto go), and so forth. That is the dharma system of this beggar woman.

“There are those who don’t altruistically give their own bodies, enjoyments, fortune, and power to others. Out of concern for their own welfare, peace, and happiness, they practice dharma that harms other sentient beings. Are dharma practitioners nowadays unaware of the fact that previously the Buddha Śākyamuni actually gave away without hesitation his head, limbs, appendages, and anything that anyone desired? Or are they aware but say, ‘these days it isn’t necessary,’ and ignore the Buddha’s paradigm? Or if not, are they so attached and focused on worldly activity that they create enough stuff to live for ten thousand years? It doesn’t make sense. On the other hand, it does make sense that they are deceived by devils.

“Proponents of Dharma! Followers of this beggar woman, do it this way. This is my dharma system without suffering. I practice like this myself, so take it to heart, my disciples. Give away your own body, enjoyments, fortune, power, and roots of virtue without hesitation for the welfare of others. Without indulging in even a hair’s tip of the stain of selfishness, establish utter confidence. Keeping the juice of awakening mind, love, and compassion is called the Sacred Dharma of Chöd. It is called Mahāyāna. It is called the great path of the bodhisattva. It is called the source of the great adepts. It is called the avenue of the buddhas. Such a dharma as this has the power to liberate you from cyclic existence. It is very difficult to attain awakening that is free from cyclic existence through the lesser vehicles when you pursue your own goals while displacing and abandoning sentient beings. For instance, in a great darkness, the moon or all the stars or the fires from lighting butter and wood are only bright enough to prevent the darkness from invading their own space. They can’t illuminate everyone’s darkness. But the Seven Horse King (the sun) with just his light in the sky illuminates all darkness to its recesses. Similarly, my dharma system, the Chöd of Mahāmudrā, dawns as the sun of Mahāyāna Dharma and clears away the gloomy darkness of cyclic existence.”
About Mahāmudrā

“All phenomena, consisting of the environment and its beings, have never had even a hair’s bit of true existence in their basic nature from the beginning. Therefore, inherently they have the abiding nature of emptiness, and that is called Phenomena Mahāmudrā.

“Once a yogin has understood this meaning and become familiar with emptiness, then it can be integrated into the path. Having demonstrated ability in the yogic exercises of channels, energy currents, and vital essence, the yogin practices with an awareness-possessing wisdom consort and integrates great bliss into the path, greatly enhancing physical strength through great pleasure. This is called Action Mahāmudrā.

“This kind of yogin practices in such a way as to hide all qualities and always maintains the outer articles of the sacred pledge. This is called Sacred Pledge Mahāmudrā.

“The experience of emptiness that is free of attachment to that kind of special bliss is [like] steam from heat. It is called Bliss-Emptiness Mahāmudrā.

“That kind of yogin is free of the shadow of afflictive emotion, or all the veils of obscuration, and so all experience arises as unreal (bden med) and empty, like a dream or an illusion. That is called Clarity-Emptiness Mahāmudrā.

“But for our present purpose, this famous Mahāmudrā (‘Great Hand-Seal’) of mine that cuts through everything [can be understood etymologically as follows]: ‘Hand’ means all objective appearance. ‘Seal’ means that those appearing objects are fundamentally, since the beginning, without even a hair’s tip of true existence from their own side. Thus, appearance that is internally great emptiness, and the emptiness of its being inherently unreal, are inseparable and called union (zung ’jug). That is the theory in outer mahāmudrā.

“The yogin who realizes both the outer and inner nonself causes the energy-mind (rlung sems) to enter the central channel. That force brings on the special experience of transparent bliss-clarity, and from within that state she or he is fully cognizant of past, present, and future. With heightened awareness of all phenomena, light rays spread. Numerous beings will be tamed by the light rays of many sets of fruitional qualities, such as unimpeded explication, debate, and composition. The [method] that possesses the great power and ability to accomplish that goal is called the Chöd of Mahāmudrā.
Therefore, dharma such as this is different from the dharma systems of others. Thus it is of profound significance, noble son.

“Some common people have glimpses and concentrations of a mere emptiness or mere clarity of the characteristic of real mind. Then those ignoramuses call it ‘mahāmudrā.’ Those who practice such a mahāmudrā without knowing that it is just the characteristic of unreal mind are idiots practicing a dharma system of fools. Pay no attention to it. Fling it far away.

“All phenomena are contained in the midst of mind-itself alone. Therefore, to know the center of mind alone is to know the center of all phenomena. My dharma, therefore, is the great Middle Way (dbu ma chen po; mādhyamaka).

“This dharma of mine is the fruitional dharma of the Great Completion (rzogs chen; mahāsaṃdhī). All phenomena including the apparent existence of cyclic existence and its transcendence are complete within mind-itself alone. Therefore, if one knows the complete way in which everything is contained within the meaning of mind alone, then the meaning of all phenomena is complete. So it is the Great Completion. Understand this, my disciples.”

Then Machik and her entourage came down and stayed for one month at Sakar, near Nol, and Machik gave the complete exposition according to the pāramitā tradition, called Moonlight Dispelling Darkness.

That was the third chapter from the pure appearance of the dialogue of mother and son.
4. The Questions of Gangpa Muksang

The Four Devils

“Machik-la, what, specifically, is the meaning of ‘devil’?” Gangpa Muksang asked.

“Son, listen. These are the characteristics of devils (bdud). That which is called ‘devil’ is not some actual great big black thing that scares and petrifies whomever sees it. A devil is anything that obstructs the achievement of freedom. Therefore, even loving and affectionate friends become devils [with regard to] freedom. Most of all, there is no greater devil than this fixation to a self. So until this ego-fixation is cut off, all the devils wait with open mouths. For that reason, you need to exert yourself at a skillful method to sever the devil of ego-fixation. As adjuncts, there are three devils that are born from ego-fixation; thus we have the four devils that must be severed. These are their names:

Devil of the Material and Devil of the Immaterial;
Devil of Exaltation and Devil of Inflation.

“Those are the four devils of ego-fixation.

The Material Devil

“The material devil is the form that is seen with the eye. Attraction arises in relation to fine form, and the attitude of aversion arises toward bad form. In the same way, good and bad sounds, smells, tastes, and textures occur as the sense objects of the ear, nose, tongue, and body, and produce attraction or
aversion. This is called the devil of dualistic grasping. One is attached to the [perceived] real existence of a sense object, and the sense organs get caught in the actual object of [attraction or] aversion. This creates the condition for harming sentient beings and thus becomes the cause of bondage to cyclic existence. For that reason it is called a devil. And it is called a devil because one is caught in the good and bad objects that really exist. Hence, ‘material devil.’

“Therefore, son, any good or bad thing that one clings to with attachment is a devil. Whatever the case, you must get rid of attachment and clinging. And as for form, the very essence of form is by nature empty. Therefore, son, since that form is by nature without real existence, you should meditate on that natural emptiness without attraction or aversion to form. You cannot stop form from appearing, [but realize that it is] mere appearance without grasping on to its valid existence. By eliminating clinging to that mere appearance, you will be liberated from form, noble son. It is the same with sound, smell, taste, and texture. Keep this in mind. This is the way of being of the material devil, and this is the way of liberation from that material devil.

The Immaterial Devil

“Listen, son. The immaterial devil arises like this, so pay attention and don’t let your mind wander. That which is called ‘the immaterial devil’ does not appear as an actual object of the senses. Rather, it is any of the good or bad concepts that arise in your own mind. They are called demons (’dre) when you apprehend them as frightful appearances that cause terror, and called gods when you apprehend them as pure appearances that cause cheerful and pleasurable experiences. In that way, the mental grasping at the two concepts of good and bad conditions the mind to become afflicted with emotion. Although afflictive emotion is without actual materiality and there is no real, actual object, it has the ability to inflict certain harm by causing you to stray into unvirtuous actions, so it is called a devil. Since it is not a real object and has no actual, material or sense-obstructing property, it is called the immaterial devil.

“The mind itself (sems nyid) that fixates on the duality of faults and qualities, such as the good ‘god’ and the bad ‘demon,’ has itself never had even a hair tip’s worth of actual reality in its own basic ground. Therefore it is
known as groundless, rootless emptiness (*gebi med rtsa bral*). Don’t try to block the sensations and such that arise in the mind. Also, don’t block any of the various good or bad thoughts and memories. Don’t even entertain any notions about them. Whatever thoughts and memories arise, don’t hold on to them by dwelling and reflecting on them. Mind itself is the clear nature of vast space, and any thought or memory whatsoever can arise within it. Just as waves and such can appear in the ocean without a mover, so any kind of good or bad thoughts arise in the mind. If you let the mind rest in its own place without interfering, the immaterial devil will be overcome by splendor. Eliminating mental dualistic grasping and letting the mind relax into its own state without disturbance will liberate the immaterial devil in its own place, noble son.

*The Devil of Exaltation*

“The devil of exaltation is said to be the mental attachment in which one delights and exalts, thereby giving rise to a great joy. The causes of it [might be] a tremendous amount of worldly prestige, gain, or fame; a large retinue; seeing the face of the deity; pacifying the pangs of disease by subduing demons with the power of spells; the arising of special meditative experiences; the arising of clairvoyance in vivid dreams; the blazing-up of bliss and power in body, speech, and mind; or the extensive service and worship rendered through the offerings of food, wealth, and enjoyments by gods, demons, and humans who have been irresistibly captivated. Delighting and exalting in any of these causes great arrogance and pride and becomes an obstacle on the path to freedom, so it is called a devil. It is given the name ‘devil of exaltation.’

“Therefore, whatever good things occur, however they arise, in the face of the nonduality of appearance and mind, don’t hold on to those qualities as qualities. Since neither the mind that delights and exalts nor the object of that mind has even a hair’s tip worth of permanent, true existence, understand it all as an illusion or a dream. Practice as if it were an illusion or a dream. Rest in the state of emptiness, free of all [dualistic] extremes of a mind gloating about its qualities or its objects. In that way, as you meditate in the illusory, dreamlike nature of all phenomena within great emptiness free of extremes and integrate it into the path, the dreamlike devil of exaltation will be severed and the welfare of all illusory, dreamlike beings will come to pass, noble son.
“Since the roots of these three devils reach down to inflation, it is extremely important to sever the root of inflation. Inflation (snyems) means ego-fixation (bdag 'dzin). Given that ego-fixation is the root of all problems and is the cause of wandering in cyclic existence, it is therefore the devil that withholds the attainment of freedom. Thus it is called the devil of inflation or the devil of ego-fixation. The mind that holds on to a self where there is no self has become afflicted. Then discursive thought holds on to any good or bad mental arising and fixates on it as true existence. That is called inflation.

“The object (that which is inflated; snyems bya) and the subject (that which inflates; snyems byed), or ‘I’ and ‘mine,’ all external and internal phenomena, are realized by the timeless wisdom of reflexive awareness (rang rig) as nonexistent, with no true reality. Then the root of fixation to true existence will be withdrawn from the object. Once inflation over thoughts of good and bad no longer arises, there is freedom from the extremes of all conceptual embellishment that causes mental creations and mental aspirations.

  Ephemeral—dispossessed of mental designations.
  Mind free and easy—fixation on I annihilated.
  Pristine—incapable of disturbance by emotional conditions.
  Clear—consciousness free of outer and inner dualities.
  Transparent—awareness free of attachment to anything.

“Once you are free of the inflation of fixating on true existence, you will encounter the untrue, spacelike absolute. This severs the devil of inflated object. If the devil of the inflated object is severed, then all devils that arise from afflicting emotion are severed. When there is ego, then there is the devil. When there is no ego, there is also no devil. In no-ego there is no object to be severed, and so no fear and no terror. That timeless wisdom of awareness free of extremes expands intelligence to [encompass] all knowledge (shes bya). This is called the fruition of liberation from the four devils.

“These are a few words of explanation concerning the way to enumerate the four devils and the way to sever the four devils and liberate them in their own ground to attain the ultimate fruition. Gangpa, son with karmic destiny, and all of you fortunate ones, keep them in mind. Hurry and exert effort. Make it your priority and engender the vast mind of altruism.” Thus she spoke.
When to Sever Them

Again Gangpa asked Machik, “Are these four devils severed all at once, or is there a particular sequence, or is there a difference between early on and later [in regard to these] four devils?”

In answer, Machik replied, “Son, the material devil and the immaterial devil are devils at the time of the cause. The devil of inflation is a devil while on the path, and the devil of exaltation is a devil at the time of fruition.

“An individual who has not attained [any of the ten bodhisattva] levels and dwells in the Path of Accumulation and below the Path of Application is still on the worldly path. As such, the container — that is, the body — is more in control. The mind contained therein is not much in control. Due to that, sickness and other undesired mundane sufferings afflict such individuals uncontrollably. Since these individuals have no psychic or magical abilities, actual things with characteristics, such as the four elements, really impede them. So at the time of the paths of Accumulation and Application, it is difficult for them to have the capability to really sever the material devil. At that time, you should practice training with the mind.

“When the first level is gained, the mind is more in control and you have control over psychic and magical abilities. By that power, you have the ability to actually sever the material devils, all the actual things with characteristics, such as the four elements, poison, weapons, precipices, and so on. At that time, the internal body and all the actual things exist without valid reality. But, however freed of the characteristics of actual things you are, until you reach buddhahood you still need ascetic practice. However much hardship you endure, you will not experience physical or mental suffering.

“Up to and including the Path of Application, the immaterial devil should be severed. The apparitions of gods and demons, disease, suffering, passion, aggression, the eight worldly concerns, and so on are sensations arising in the mind. Even if a person has not attained the bodhisattva levels, if he or she is in possession of a powerful remedy, this devil can be severed. And it is imperative to do so.

“From the outset of Chöd, the ignorant mind and its coemergent ego-fixation, the root of all problems, the basis of all discursive thinking, the deluded intellect that gives rise to all afflictive emotion, is the inflated object. That ignorant, dark mind is to be severed by the timeless wisdom of inflating
reflexive awareness (*rang rig*). Moreover, from the outset of dharma [practice], it is a crucial necessity to find out that ego-fixation is the root of the inflation of ignorance. But clearing up ignorance from the outset and severing it won’t just happen. Training the mind continuously in nonself will reduce the root of the inflation of ego-fixation. Then the transcendent knowledge of nonself will increase and you will progress gradually along the paths, from Accumulation through Application and so on. Severing the devil of the inflated object and the birth of enlightened qualities occur at the same time. If the devil of the inflated object is not severed, there is no ability to progress through the paths. Therefore, the inflated object is the devil of the path and must definitely be severed from the outset of entering the Dharma until achieving the Path of Seeing. Even on the Path of Seeing, when there is no fixation on true existence, which is the root of afflictive emotion, mind training must continue until buddhahood is attained.

“There are two [sides to] inflation: that which is inflated (*snyems bya*) and that which inflates (*snyems byed*). The inflated object, or the ignorance that is the basis of fixation on true existence, is that which is to be eliminated. That which inflates, the timeless wisdom of reflexive awareness that cognizes ignorance, is the [agent] that will eliminate it and therefore must not itself be eliminated. Even if you tried to eliminate it, you couldn’t. The essence of inflation is the timeless wisdom of awareness that gives rise to the exceptional experience of realizing nonself. Right when that comes, the above-mentioned qualities [that cause] exaltation will arise, and the coming attainment of buddhahood will be withheld. Therefore it is called the devil of fruition. [But] if you integrate the previous teachings on dream and illusion, all the qualities will be enhanced and cause the welfare of beings to occur. In that way, you won’t need to eliminate the arising of exaltation. Even if you tried to eliminate it, you couldn’t. For instance, crops cannot be stopped from growing when exposed to warmth and moisture. Likewise, there is no need to prevent the proliferation of abundant qualities. Whatever qualities arise, integrate them onto the path as illusion. “Thus, the material and immaterial devils are objects to be eliminated. The devils of inflation and exaltation are the eliminators. Moreover, ultimately you must be liberated from both the eliminated object and the eliminator, noble son.”
Six Kinds of Gods and Demons

“Machik-la,” said Gangpa, “you have described the characteristics of those devils. But is the term ‘gods and demons’ also applied to these devils, or does it refer to something else?”

“Listen, son. ‘Gods and demons’ refers to those devils but can definitely refer to something else as well. There are six categories: (1) gods and demons as designated by worldly people; (2) gods and demons by their essential mode of being; (3) gods and demons superimposed on observable phenomena; (4) gods and demons that are natural or coemergent; (5) gods and demons of inevitable karmic forces; and (6) the ultimate, absolute gods and demons.

“In each of those categories there are so-called gods and so-called demons. In the ultimate category, the [distinction between] god and demon is definite, whereas in the former [categories] it is not definite; a god may be a demon or a demon a god.

Gods and Demons As Designated by Worldly People”

“Gods and demons as designated by worldly people are well known to all worldly people. What is called a god is anything that appears objectively to worldly people as nice, pleasing, uplifting, or inspiring. Whatever appears objectively to the mind as ugly and unpleasant, or in a frightening, life-threatening form, is called a demon. In short, whatever helps is called a god, and whatever harms is called a demon. These are labels used by worldly people based merely on good and bad, or help and harm. It is the lewd talk of fools and has no real truth to it. Moreover, the good can also cause harm, and the bad can be beneficial. There are many cases of what is at first beneficial later causing harm; and what is harmful at first may later be helpful—there is no guarantee. The good object of attachment that you take to be a god could really hurt you. The bad, displeasing demon may be of some help. Whether you call it ‘god’ or ‘demon’ makes no difference; nothing is definite. Holding on to the polarized ideas of gods and demons based on good/bad and help/harm is the superstition of worldly people. There is no real truth to it. Therefore, Chöd practitioners never believe in fixating on gods and demons based merely on good and bad, help and harm. They don’t even use the labels ‘gods and demons’ for mere good, bad, help, or harm. They don’t
even make those sounds. Knowing that they are not true, you should know how to integrate this on the path.

*Gods and Demons by Their Essential Mode of Being*”

“The gods and demons by essential mode of being are divided into two kinds of gods: those of worldly cyclic existence and those that transcend the world. Furthermore, there are two kinds of transcendent gods: those that transcend both the cause and effect of cyclic existence and the dwelling place of cyclic existence; and those that do not transcend the place of cyclic existence. Great Vajradhara, the buddhas of the ten directions, the Great Mother, the Buddha Amitabha, and so on dwell with their own retinues in the [pure realm called] Highest Richly Adorned Realm. They are gods that transcend both worldly place and karmic cause and effect. In this universe called World-System Endurance, the victorious conqueror, the great Śakyamuni himself; the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara; the bodhisattvas Maitreya, Vajrapāṇi, and Mañjuśrī; and all the other bodhisattvas are gods that do not transcend the place of this world but do transcend karmic cause and effect of cyclic existence.

“Worldly gods are gods of the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm. In essence, they are what are called worldly gods. All of these are gods according to their essential mode of being.

“The so-called demons are those formless [spirits], well known in the world, that can manifest great magic, powers, hostility, and arrogance and that cause embodied sentient beings much harm. These are, for instance, the ones called yāma (death lords), dūḍ (devils), tsen spirits, the eight classes [of gods and demons], and so forth. All those with the intention to harm are called demons. They are called demons by their essential mode of being because to the worldly minded, in all times and forms, those eight classes and other malicious beings functionally exist. However, if we call that which benefits us a god, then those eight classes and so on that can benefit us through producing food and wealth for worldly people or engendering merit could also be gods. If we call whatever causes harm a demon, then those worldly gods who hurt ordinary people when they don’t like them must also be demons. So according to worldly customs, those who benefit us are called gods and those who harm us are made into demons. Worldly gods by mode of being are made into definite gods, and the eight classes, and so on by mode of being are made into definite demons.
“For practitioners in the Chöd tradition, this should be just the opposite. Your loving and affectionate friends and relatives tell you how unreasonable it would be to go into mountain retreat and practice the Dharma, that by yourself you’ll be destitute of food and wealth, and that once suffering and illness come there won’t be any support or loving care and you’ll become neurotic. ‘Stay at home!’ they say. ‘We’ll provide all the excellent conditions. We won’t abandon you.’ Thus they act as the devil on the path to freedom and make themselves a demon that interferes with virtue. You should know that loving and helpful people are devils or demons.

“As for those who hate and hurt you, meditate on them with compassion and reflect on how they must be collecting on some previous karmic debt (lan chags). Meditate joyfully, thinking that those beings are gods to convert you to the path of enlightenment. And don’t be attached to worldly gods. If you are attached to them, you make them into demons [that cause you to] wander in cyclic existence. Don’t place even a hair’s tip of hope in these worldly gods. Fix on the eight classes of gods and demons and the others with firm compassion in mind. Keep them around and guard them dearly. You have been instilled with virtue because of them, so they are gods. Thus, to meditate with love on those who cause harm, and give away your own living body without hesitation for their benefit, and to always have a compassionate attitude is the ideal way to relate with gods and demons in this system of Chöd.

“Both the gods and the demons by essential mode of being are merely designations on a relative level. That is, they are such according to how they function. Being as they are mere appearance, don’t fixate on them as true, but understand that on the absolute level they are inherently unreal.

*Gods and Demons Superimposed on Observable Phenomena*\(^{15}\)

“All these are worldly beings, such as the celestial mentsun,\(^{16}\) that are somewhat inclined to virtue and move the spirit of ordinary women and men, inspiring them to report on all the profits and problems of the world.\(^{17}\) Also, when many paranormal things of different sorts occur, such as flowers and crops suddenly sprouting in the unseasonable wintry cold, or nonhumans practically displaying their forms openly and making many predictions, or visible rainbows and figures, people say that it’s spiritual powers, or it’s sacred, or it’s a god, or it’s glory. They superimpose [these ideas] and make it into a god.
This is called a superimposed god. In the same manner, when out-of-season snakes and frogs and such appear in the wintertime, and many other weird and frightening sights occur, such as the appearance of unseasonable otters and large pir\textsuperscript{18} in the summer eating a lot of creatures, or fish flopping on the dry land, and frightening, dreadful, ugly shapes appearing before the eyes and many other strange and disconcerting sights occur, they are said to be demons that will cause problems. Since the name ‘demon’ is superimposed on them, they are called ‘demons superimposed on observable phenomena.’

“Though these are held to be definite gods and demons in the customs of worldly people, in the tradition of Chöd those mere sights are not believed to be gods or demons. In the functional sense, the mere observable phenomena are not called gods and demons. Those gods and demons of observable phenomena are just worldly superimpositions. Therefore, Chöd practitioners don’t exalt them or fixate on them. [When practitioners] rest in great equanimity, help and harm are incapacitated and liberated in their own ground. Chöd practitioners who don’t understand this and are embroiled by concepts of mere sights as gods and demons are in violation of my dharma system and have discarded the purpose of Chöd. Develop definite understanding of the meaning, son, and then practice it!

*The Natural, Coemergent Gods and Demons*\textsuperscript{19}

“Five great wisdoms occur in the pure appearance aspect of reflexive awareness, and this is called god. Ignorant ego-fixation produces the five poisons of afflicting emotion, and this is called demon. From the very beginning of eternity, the timeless wisdom of reflexive awareness, which is primordially pure, unborn *dharmak\text{\={y}}a*, and the afflicting emotion of ignorant ego-fixation emerge together. Awareness and ignorance are joined equally and exist as such. This is called god and demon joined together, or coemergence.

“This kind of coemergent god or demon is not generally known by worldly people. People become obscured by their personal superficial defilements of ignorance and accumulate negative karma, creating unlimited causes for cyclic existence. They are constantly trapped in their karma and afflicting emotion. Therefore, the root of all problems is ego-fixation. Not knowing how to apply the antidote—the completely illuminating firelight of intelligent timeless wisdom—is remaining in the dark about the general meaning of karma and about all actions. Then there is grasping at the dual-
ity of gods and demons based merely on the objective appearance of good and bad, help and harm. That is ignorance. It is therefore necessary to make a distinction between coemergent god and coemergent demon. The shining light of the five wisdoms endowed with the fourfold knowledge of coemergent reflexive awareness is the antidote that severs ignorance. The ignorance that obscures that timeless wisdom of reflexive awareness — that is, ego-fixation — is the object to be severed by the timeless wisdom of reflexive awareness. It is through not making this distinction between the coemergent god and demon that most worldly people fail to distinguish between virtuous and unvirtuous karmic action, making mistakes that become the causes of cyclic existence. In contrast, Chöd practitioners do distinguish between coemergent god and demon. The thing to be severed is ego-fixation, and the antidote, the thing that severs it, is the timeless wisdom of reflexive awareness that cognizes nonself.

“At first, in the primordial basic ground, both awareness, the dharmakāya of timeless wisdom, and the lack of awareness (ignorance), the delusion of ego-fixation, existed inseparably; hence they are called ‘coemergent.’ This was not produced from any causes or conditions; it is a natural occurrence. Since there is no way to say exactly when the beginning occurred, it is naturally inborn, and so it is said to naturally emerge together. When it is not examined and distinguished, it seems that awareness and ignorance are together. Failing to distinguish the difference is ignorance. But if you examine and distinguish them, it is like the inseparability of the moon and the water [it is reflected in]. Since there is a difference in essence, a difference is distinguished. [This realization will] depend on [meeting] a lama with the eight qualifications.

“That concludes the exposition of the characteristics of natural, coemergent gods and demons.

Gods and Demons of Inevitable Karmic Forces

“The gods and demons of inevitable karmic forces are of two kinds: the naturally occurring collective karma and the particular karma of behavior, the individual point of entry.”

“First, collective karma [relates to] the four elements; the four seasons of summer, winter, fall, and spring; day and night; birth and death; sickness and health; and the prime of youth and the decline of old age. Of the four
elements, wind is the nature of naturally occurring great movement and coherence, so it becomes the substratum of everything; water is the nature of moisture and movement, gathering everything together; fire has heat and warmth of touch, ripening all things; and earth is firm and solid, so it is the place on which everything depends. When these four elements remain undisturbed and behave peacefully and naturally, then they are the cause of all desirable things to occur and are called gods. But when they move violently and become disturbed, they cause big problems and are called demons. Summer is a god and winter is a demon. Fall is a god and spring is a demon. Daytime is a god while nighttime is a demon. Birth is a god and death is a demon. When the body and mind have ease and comfort it is a god, but when they are struck by disease and disturbed by discomfort, it is a demon. When we are young and in the full bloom of our functional power it is a god, but when we get old and experience the decline of functional powers we make it a demon. These things definitely come to all the world, inevitably arising from our shared collective karma. So it is called the gods and demons of collective karma (spyi mthun las). The four elements arise due to the karma collected by sentient beings in general. Since it is natural karma or arises as a natural occurrence, it is called naturally occurring (rang byung). You should understand this.

“Second, the gods of the point of entry. The birth parents of this body which was created by karmic forces, the genuine lama who shows the path of freedom of the resolve to awaken, and the five patron gods all came about from the forces of your own accumulated karmic actions, making them your personal gods in the inevitability of karma. Hence, they are called the gods of inevitable karmic forces. What is more, the forces of karma [determine whether] your parents enjoy great wealth or little wealth, or are high class or low class, and whether you are beautiful or ugly or are engaged in virtue or vice. Although it is necessary to distinguish those [according to the] individual point of entry, it is not permanent and so is not definite. It is just the individual circumstances that make a god or a demon [according to its function as] helpful or harmful, so it is a specification. Parents, siblings, teachers, and students, and all those who love and care for each other may argue and dispute back and forth, becoming harmful demons to one another. Then the karma of love and care is finished, a malicious mind takes hold, and they get involved in malicious karmic action. In that way, after they pass on, those loving, caring ones can become nonhuman, hostile beings (gdug pa can).
They can be dangerous demons to hostile sentient beings who were former friends and relatives. Likewise, after passing on, the former enemy who murdered you might become a helpful god. As in these and many more examples, sentient beings cycle through the six realms, so there is not a single being in those six realms who has not been your own mother, father, friend, and relative. Therefore you cannot say ‘demon.’

“Without understanding that situation, people label mere individual circumstances as gods or demons. Having specifically distinguished them, they fixate on duality. When any sort of negative condition occurs, not knowing that it occurs due to their own accumulation of karma, they think, ‘Just my luck!’ and make themselves wretched. But with a bit of growth in worldly fortune, they think, ‘I am so virile’ and get all puffed up with arrogance. Such people, who don’t understand karmic cause and effect, hold on to helpful or harmful events that come from their own karmic accumulation as gods and demons. Reacting with passion and aggression, they wander in cyclic existence. In this way, holding on to concepts of liking or disliking one’s own involvement in one’s own accumulated karma should be known as the perverted view of worldly people.

“Since there is not even a single one of all the sentient beings of the six realms who has not been your own parent, know them all as parents. Mentally holding them as parents, remember those parents’ kindness and stop aggression. Protect them with an attitude of love and compassion. That, noble son, is the custom of a Chöd practitioner.

“The nonhuman, evil, vicious beings who hunger for flesh, blood, and vital breath and cause much harm to many sentient beings, and especially those nonhumans who cause you yourself harm, are called demons. Those ‘demons’ have also been your own personal parents more times than you can count. When they have passed on, they won’t recognize you. Then, through the power of accumulated bad karma, they’ll cause you harm. However, once you have understood that they are your parents, you’ll want to protect them from their own suffering. Love and compassion will arise. Giving them your own flesh, blood, and vital breath without hesitation, hold them with a loving mind. If you don’t send them off anywhere, they are tamed and established in freedom. If that doesn’t tame them, use both peaceful and wrathful means to tame them. If that doesn’t work, then they must be tamed through wrathful means. If that doesn’t work, tame them using only wrathful methods by engaging the activity with wrathful meditative absorption together
with giving away your flesh and blood. That will definitely tame them. They must be brought to the sacred Dharma. If, when anger over your own welfare arises, you perform wrathful methods in order to harm them, it becomes the cause of suffering for both yourself and the other. That is a contradiction of my dharma system. But if you employ wrathful methods only for the welfare of others, then it is not a fault. The Glorious Wisdom Lord will display his terrifying form, extremely ferocious, eagerly wrathful, black in color, scowling intensely and baring his fangs, and the hostile beings will be liberated. It is not meant to harm those beings, but rather to relieve them of suffering and establish them in freedom. When parents discipline their children, it is for their children’s welfare, not their own. Likewise, to benefit sentient beings, you must be unblemished by the stain of self-interest, son.

“Gods and demons are thus not distinguished based on their form, and it is even difficult to distinguish them based on their behavior. There are those who behave nicely and are pleasing to behold but are demonic in harming the mind. And there are ugly, frightening, dangerous beings who act as gods in terms of benefit. Nonhuman, malicious, wicked beings, if they like us, act as gods to assist in creating conducive conditions for achieving enlightenment. Since demons act as gods, they are called god-demons. You should know that there is not a separate essence of a god or a demon—they are the same. When hostile demons pass on, they might take birth as a worldly god by essential mode of being, so they are called god-demons and are essentially the same. Similarly, when beautiful worldly gods are displeased, they act as harmful demons, so they are god-demons. And when those gods pass on and become nonhuman, hostile demons, they act as demons and are called god-demons. In order to help vicious sentient beings, wisdom gods display fierce forms surrounded by black birds and black dogs and jackals and such. If ordinary folk were to see them, they would believe that those wisdom gods were demons and, calling them god-demons, would become alarmed. In order to cause harm to all sentient beings, even frightening, wicked demons that cause terror can display extremely beautiful shapes that please and attract ordinary people. When they then injure those people, they are both gods and demons. The frightening form from the fierce wrath of the wisdom god is not that which is displayed by evil beings. And the wicked demon that has the ability to display forms similar to gods of the form realm displays that fine form in order to harm beings. No matter how fierce a god of wisdom seems to be, it is protecting sentient beings. Not understanding that, people hold
on to the duality of ‘god’ and ‘demon’ based only on good and bad, or help and harm, and become afflicted with emotion. Then the result of virtuous or unvirtuous karmic action is the experience of happiness or suffering. So they say the gods help and the demons harm, clinging to concepts of gods and demons. They don’t understand that help and harm come from the accumulation of karmic action. They fixate on the truth of their designations. In keeping with that cause, it becomes yet again the cause of cyclic existence and suffering that is hard to measure. That is why it is so important to understand karmic cause and effect.

“You must understand that good and bad, help and harm, joy and suffering, high and low, love and hate, cyclic existence and its transcendence, and so on—this whole boundless, indescribable, unthinkable mass of manifold karma—comes from the accumulation of the various virtuous and unvirtuous actions of each individual sentient being. If you don’t want all the harm and unhappiness and unpleasantness, forsake all unvirtuous action. If you want to achieve happiness and everything desirable, and you want happiness to lead to more happiness, then exert yourself in accomplishing all virtuous activities. Happy existences and bad existences are individually created by the forces of inevitable karma. Karma is definitely the main thing. Except for the consequences of karma, there is not even a sesame seed’s worth of any other point of entry. Karma is all-powerful. It is not possible that there would exist even one-hundredth of a hair’s tip of any reason to put your hopes in something other than karma. Therefore, karma is inevitable. So we say ‘gods and demons of inevitable karmic forces.’

“While understanding that everything comes from the accumulation of karma, know that the defining characteristic of having karma is that it has no truth or permanence. Abandon fixating on permanence and true existence. Roam alone in empty, uninhabited places, without a thought for your life or body — cast it away as food for demons and achieve the welfare of others. Seal all actions with p’e, and rest in utter simplicity.

The Ultimate, Absolute Gods and Demons

“Genuine, complete awakening that transcends cyclic existence is the ultimate refuge place of those who want to be free. Whatever can offer that refuge from cyclic suffering is called ‘god.’ The other worldly, sansāric gods cannot give refuge from cyclic existence, so they are not the ultimate source
of refuge. Even though they might be of some slight specific benefit on occasion, since it is not ultimate, they do not act as ultimate gods.

“The ultimate demon is the place of cyclic existence. In particular, it is the three lower realms, where there is no end of suffering and no opportunity to escape the constant mental and physical torture. The demons that cause that suffering are the three lower realms. In order to take refuge from cyclic existence in general, and particularly from those three lower realms, you should go for refuge in the Three Jewels, the genuine gods, the ultimate refuge.

“Nonhumans, such as the eight classes and so forth, though they cause harm, don’t have the ability to involve us in the three lower realms, so they are not ultimate demons. Rather, the demon of the three lower realms in particular and cyclic existence in general, because it persists for a long time and is difficult to escape, is called the ultimate demon. You should understand in this way the meaning of these two, the ultimate, absolute gods and demons.

“In particular, since both gods and demons occur as karmic action, karmic gods and demons are definitely primary. Positive, virtuous karmic actions are gods, whereas negative, unvirtuous karmic actions are demons. Since these two gods and demons of virtue and vice are gods and demons whose function doesn’t change, you must treat them as definitely of primary importance. Also, son, understand that whoever practices virtue is a god and whoever practices nonvirtue is a demon. Thus the gods and demons of karma and the ultimate gods and demons are inseparable and not distinct. You need to know that this is definite: gods and demons are what is to be accepted or rejected. Both ultimate gods and karmic gods are definitely gods to be taken into practice. Not to take these two gods into practice is contrary to my dharma system. Both ultimate demons and karmic demons are definitely demons that must be rejected. Not to reject these two demons is contrary to my dharma system, son. Gods and demons other than the karmic gods and demons and the ultimate gods and demons, such as those explained before, though called gods and demons, are not definite. Remain in equanimity without discrimination toward those gods and demons. Whether they are gods or demons, know that they are your mothers and fathers. Hold them with the hook of love and compassion and nurture them by giving your bodily flesh and blood.

“On the relative level (kun rdzob), the essence of means, the defining characteristics of gods and demons certainly do exist, just as I explained before. But you need to understand that existence in terms of their characteristics and to practice according to that understanding. Again, the places of the higher
realm are gods, and the places of the lower realms are demons. Positive, virtuous karmic actions are gods, and negative, unvirtuous karmic actions are demons. Deeds and behaviors that are beautiful and peaceful are gods, while deeds and behaviors that are ugly and vile are demons. However much you can reflect on dharma and virtue, it is a god, and however much you think of vice and sin, it is a demon. However much yearning you have that focuses on dharma and virtue is a god, and however much recollection you have that focuses on negative, unvirtuous things is a demon. To summarize, in the ground of all (kun gzhi; alaya), the essence of the awakening mind is the god of reflexive awareness. And your own sordid behavior [under the influence] of the five poisons of afflictive emotion devoid of awareness is a demon. Called ‘gods and demons, the two,’ there is but one singular substance. There is only a difference in awareness and [its absence,] ignorance. Therefore, from the point of view of the absolute (don dam), those matters that were explained above are without even a hair’s tip of true reality. In the authentic, absolute truth, there are no gods and demons. You should know the view of inherently pure dimension of reality unblemished by stains of ripening karma.

“Son, the yogin who understands it in this way needs to practice this sacred Dharma called Mahâmudrâ Chöd with the knowledge of the four different [aspects]: outer, inner, secret, and suchness. Do it like that. Practice the altruism of gods and demons, noble son. Don’t have meager resolve for enlightenment, noble son. Don’t have meager compassion, noble son. Don’t have meager diligence, noble son. Don’t have meager generosity, noble son.” Thus she spoke.

Evidence of Success at Severance

Again Gangpa says, “Mother, from the unborn, utterly pure realm of reality, you display the apparition of birth as the emanation body — the ordinary body endowed with awakened perspective.
I bow at your feet, Single Mother who helps beings. That Sacred Dharma of Chöd has outer, inner, secret, and suchness severing methods. Please explain this thoroughly and I will listen.”

“Son, listen. This dharma system of mine must be divided into four aspects: outer, inner, secret, and suchness. First I will explain the four objects or areas (yul) of severance. Make the particular haunted place the outer severance
object. Make sickness and bad spirits the inner object to be severed. Make
discursive thoughts and sensations the secret object to be severed. And make
the three or five poisons the suchness object of severance, son.

“Now, ‘controlling’ is like this. Outwardly, to control gods and demons,
be without attachment and free of clinging. Inwardly, to control sickness
and negative forces, be free of concepts of help and harm. Secretly, to con-
trol secret discursive thinking, be free of reference to good or bad. In such-
ness, to control everything, be free of the basis and root of mind.

“Now for the exposition of the outer, inner, and secret evidence of sever-
ance. If you are not terrified no matter what frightening apparitions of gods
and demons occur, it is the outer evidence of severance. If you know that
whatever sickness, suffering, or afflictive emotion occurs is karma, it is the
inner evidence of severance. If you have no aggravation when good, bad, or
middling discursive thoughts occur, it is the secret evidence of severance. No
matter what various external or internal desirable things occur, if you are
free of ego-fixation it is the suchness evidence of severance.

“Now for the exposition of the three levels of the evidence of success:
excellent, middling, and least. For someone of least capacity, to remain peace-
ful and gentle in the face of various and sundry apparitions is the outer evi-
dence of success. To be given various spiritual powers when any faithful and
respectful gods and demons arise is the inner evidence of success. To be men-
tally and physically well once sickness, bad spirits (gdon), and thoughts are
pacified in equality is the secret evidence of success. And when, pained by
love, compassion, and impermanence, you enter the Dharma with faith and
renunciation, it is the suchness evidence of success.

“For those of middling capacity, the outer evidence of success is to be free
of panic no matter what fearful, terrible thing happens. The inner evidence
of success is to be peaceful and undisturbed no matter what sickness, spirits,
pain, or suffering occurs. The secret evidence of success is that whatever poi-
sonous, afflictive emotion arises, it is liberated in its own ground. And the
suchness evidence of success is to be free of the mentally fixating self [with
regard to] the outer and inner evidence of uprisings that the mind grasps at.

“For those of excellent faculty, the outer evidence of success is to overwhelm
all the fearsome, vicious, evil apparitions. The inner evidence of success is to
be free of inflation no matter what problems occur, like sickness, afflictive emo-
tions, spirits, and so on. The secret evidence of success is that whatever unfa-
vorable conditions and obstacles occur, they become supportive. The true
nature of nonself is inherent emptiness. That actualization of stainless reality is suchness, the evidence of success for those of excellent faculty, son.

Mere realization of the inherent nature of mind
Overwhelms the outer haunted places.
Freedom from fixation on anger, desire, or cherishing
Overwhelms inner sickness and spirits.
Freedom from calculating what is or isn’t
Overwhelms secret discursive thinking.
Freedom from prejudice
Overwhelms cyclic existence.

These profound, crucial points of my dharma system
Are summarized in a few words, easy to practice.
Fortunate son with karmic destiny,
Don’t forget, keep them in mind.
If you love this old woman
And respect this sacred Dharma,
You won’t see the bardo, I promise.”

Having said that, Machik finished giving the explanation of the deep Dharma. Then they held a great feast circle. Great pure perception arose in everybody. All kinds of people gave boundless offering bags. They took them to Lhasa where they made a huge offering, and Shamarpa and some disciples came there. Then Machik and her entourage went to Lhodrak, where they stayed for nine months. She did *The Full Explanation of Sūtra and Tantra Combined* and *The Elucidation That Overwhelms the Two Extremes.* Pertainning to *Moonlight Dispelling Darkness,* she did *The Moonrays.* She gave an extensive explanation of *Jeweled Vast Knot.* Then she also explained at great length the twenty-one sacred pledges, the twelve links of interdependent origination, the red guide of inner knowledge, and many more dharma subjects. Zhibpo Hurtön gained the path of liberation, and more than a hundred other disciples benefited. Then Machik and her entourage proceeded to Copper Mountain. Tönyön, Gangpa, and the five disciples went to the Great Snow Cave and remained there.

This concludes the chapter on the dialogue with Gangpa.
5. Tönyön’s Questions on Chöd

After thirteen months had passed, Tönyön dreamed one night of a woman radiating five-colored light. She asked, “Yogin, do you know everything there is to know about Mother Lapdrön’s dharma system?”

“There isn’t anything about Machik’s dharma system that I don’t know,” he answered.

The woman then said, “Yogin, you know the general and interior dharma system of Mother Lapdrönma. Especially, you most certainly have the conviction of skill in the Secret Mantra Dharma free of embellishment. But the condensed meaning of all dharma, the root meaning of practice, is the meaning of offering and charity of the body. Now you should investigate it thoroughly. Go to Copper Mountain.” She then dissolved into light and vanished.

Tönyön said to himself, “This woman might be an emanation of Machik. There is still something that I don’t know yet about practicing offering and charity of the body. I must go ask Machik.”

So Tönyön and his disciples proceeded to Copper Mountain, where they found Machik bestowing the empowerment of the Five Deities of Vārāhi. Tönyön perceived Machik as the actual Vārāhi with entourage, all five of them. The four Gyen daughters also saw Machik as Vārāhi, but in the four directions they saw only mirrors of white, yellow, red, and green respectively, all of it blazing as if fanned by the wind.

The next morning at sunrise, Machik asked, “Tönyön, why have you and your students come?”

“A multicolored woman told me to come to inquire about the dharma system of offering and charity of the body, so I came,” he said.

“That multicolored form you speak of is a realm-protector dakini (zhing skyong). She came here and told me that Tönyön would arrive,” she said.
Then Tönyön and the daughters told Machik about how they had perceived her before as Vārahi. This was her reply:

“Outwardly, I am the Great Mother of the Victors. Inwardly, I am Exalted Tārā. Secretly, I am Vajrārāhi. Furthermore, the four đākinis of the entourage, outwardly, are the clarity of the four elements. Inwardly, they are the four đākinis of timeless wisdom. Secretly, they are the four syllables. The Buddha Đākini is the white syllable ha. Ratna Đākini is the yellow syllable ri. Padma Đākini is the red syllable ni. Karma Đākini is the green syllable sa. I myself am the blue syllable bam. We five, principal and entourage, are the five syllables. Earth is Buddha Đākini. Water is Ratna Đākini. Fire is Padma Đākini. Wind is Karma Đākini. I am pure space. We five, principal and entourage, are the five elements.

“Moreover, we five, principal and entourage, are outwardly the nature of the five bodies or dimensions of buddha (kāya). Inwardly, we are the five wisdom đākinis. Secretly, we are the five great wisdoms. Buddha Đākini is the body of reality (dharmakāya). Ratna Đākini is the emanation body (nirmāṇakāya). Padma Đākini is the essence body (svabhavikakāya). Karma Đākini is the body of manifest enlightenment (abhisambodhikāya). I myself am the body of perfect rapture (saṃbhogakāya).

“Buddha Đākini is the wisdom of the realm of reality (dharmadhātu). Ratna Đākini is the wisdom of equality. Padma Đākini is the wisdom of discernment. Karma Đākini is the all-accomplished wisdom. I myself am mirrorlike wisdom. The pure five poisons are the five timeless wisdoms.

“We are these five: view, meditation, conduct, fruition, and sacred pledge. I am Vārahi, the view. Meditation is Vajra Đākini. Conduct is Ratna Đākini. Fruition is Padma Đākini. Sacred pledge is Karma Đākini. So it is.

“I, Lapdrön, an ordinary woman, am the five wisdom đākinis, principal and entourage. As Vārahi, I am consciousness. The form aggregate is Buddha Đākini. The feeling aggregate is Ratna Đākini. The perception aggregate is Padma Đākini. The formation aggregate is Karma Đākini. The feeling aggregate is Ratna Đākini. The perception aggregate is Padma Đākini. The formation aggregate is Karma Đākini.

“Of five extracts, I am the seminal essence.® Flesh and bones are Buddha Đākini. Warmth is Ratna Đākini. Blood is Padma Đākini. Breath is Karma Đākini. Like that, I am the ordinary woman Lapdrön.

“The five buddhas and the five mothers, and the host of heroes, heroines, and đākinis, dwelling or gathered in the palace are all me, fortunate son. Just as the elixir of all desirables comes forth from the supporting earth aggregate,
my aggregates, constituents, and sense bases are of the nature of gods and goddesses, son. Just as humming bees naturally gather in a grove of fragrant, blooming lotuses, heroes and heroines gather like clouds wherever I dwell, son.”

Tönyon said,

Wow!
An ordinary woman in impure aspect
Is Vajravārahī herself in the essence of pure perception.
Mother—five buddha families and the five mothers,
Host of heroes, heroines, and ḍākinis,
Immeasurable millions emanating and gathering—
Your enlightened activity skilled in methods of taming anyone
Guides countless sentient beings.
In this snow mountain charnel ground, in these degenerate times,
Your kindness is great, Great Mother.
I pay homage to you with devoted body, speech, and mind.
Through aspirations, karma, and interconnection
I have become your son.
I have entered the teaching of the Mahāyāna Dharma.
This sacred Dharma, Severance of Evil Object,
Is just as Machik has taught.
Holding your hand, I have practiced.
Both the signs and level of warmth
Are stabilized, thanks to the lama.
Remember me over and over, and bless me.
Repaying you is endless, Machik.
Open the door of your heart and mind.
Explain the instructions, the profound teachings;
Please give them all without exception.
Once again I beseech your kindness.
As in the prophecy of the local protector ḍākini,
I request you to give clear, unobscure teaching
On how to practice offering and charity with the body.
I, and all those like me,
Will listen with devotion and unshakable faith.
The mother replied, “Son, endowed with faith, diligence, and intelligence, you are incomparably engaged with your destiny of awakened potential. Insatiable holy man, listen! Although the offering and charity with the body is just as I explained before, once again I will explain in detail the stages for practicing offering and charity with the body, and especially the visualization and how to do it. So pay attention, for it is like this.

“A wise individual who has distinguished the virtue and vice of cyclic existence in general, and all phenomena in particular, and who has fully understood the difficult-to-obtain, free and endowed human life, and the enumeration of meaningful or meaningless karmic cause and effect, and especially one who has comprehended my dharma system and wants to pursue freedom through this Mahāyāna mind training should always stay in mountain retreat and practice offering and charity with the body. This is important. For such an individual to begin the stages of offering and charity with the body, there are seven parts, but twenty-four completes it:

1. Arousing the resolve for enlightenment and gathering the guests.
2. Meditating on the objects of refuge, training the mind in the four immeasurables, and inviting the field of accumulation.
3. Paying homage with the eight branches and making offerings.
4. Separating body and mind, and offering the maṇḍala.
5. Supplicating and bringing down blessings.
6. Offering the body and giving it in charity.
7. Concluding with the dedication, prayers, and dissolution.

Giving Rise to the Resolve for Enlightenment and Gathering the Guests

“First of all, having conducted a thorough examination of the specific haunted place, do the suppressing of the power-spot [ceremony]. Then settle down on your seat. You must form the resolve to awaken for the welfare of all sentient beings, principally the eight objects of the resolve. Those eight principal kinds are: antagonizing enemies, harmful obstructors, disruptive conditions, karmic bad spirits, body bad spirits, and bad spirits of the haunted places for six, and your primary father and mother makes eight.

“Antagonizing enemies (sdang bar byed pa’i dgra) include embodied beings that do all kinds of bad things to you without provocation, like beating,
murdering, robbing, plundering, abusing, burning, and slandering. Also they are any unembodied gods and demons who manifest sights and various weird apparitions to the eyes and cause fear and terror and then alarm and horror, with trembling and hairs standing on end. These are called antagonizing enemies.

“Obstructors that cause harm (gnod pa’i bgegs) are anything that afflicts your body or mind with sickness or bad spirits, instigating suffering.

“Conditions that cause obstacles (bar chad byed pa’i rkyen) are anything that causes interference in your accomplishment of freedom, or in your body, life, fortune, power, or merit. These are the three kinds of outer harmful forces.

“The karmic bad spirit (las gdon) is coemergent ignorance. Or, it is the ego-fixation that thinks ‘I am.’ Or, it is called the devil that comes simultaneously. Or, whatever name it has, it is that which withholds attainment of freedom and is the root of the growth of all problems and source of everything undesirable. It is the subtle mind, extremely difficult to notice, that sleeps in the inner recesses, causing trouble. That’s the one who has caused the mind to be stuck in exclusively bad karma since beginningless lifetimes. It is called the bad spirit of karma.

“The bad spirit of the body (lus gdon) pertains to the time after the so-called scent-eater (dri za; gandharva), the consciousness in the intermediate state, enters a mother’s womb and a fully formed body develops, until at some point at the time of death the flesh, bones, and skin all separate. It is the lord or owner of this outcaste body made of flesh and blood, a vicious inhuman spirit that says, ‘This is I.’ That bad spirit leads us around by the nose and makes us engage in bad karma.

“The bad spirits of haunted places (gnyan sa’i gdon) refers to anything that dwells where we live. These are called the three inner harmful forces. So those are the six outer and inner bad spirits.

“Of those six kinds of bad spirits, and all sentient beings of the three realms, there are none who have not been your mother and father. If you doubt whether they are your parents, then you’d better meditate on parents. Particularly, cherish the two parents who produced this current body, the so-called root parents. Those two parents and the six kinds of spirits, mainly these eight, along with all sentient beings of the three realms, have suffered cyclic existence in general, and particularly suffered the three lower existences, and specifically each individual has been pained by all kinds of sub-
tle suffering. In order to relieve them of that whole range of suffering and establish them in unsurpassable enlightenment, you must attain buddhahood. Think, ‘For that reason I will practice the Chöd of Mahāmudrā and commence the stages of offering and charity of the body.’ Form this resolve again and again, training the mind until you reach an extraordinary epiphany of altruism without even a hair’s tip of a stain of selfishness.

“Until that kind of attitude arises, meditate again and again. Then that definite epiphany will arise. In the state where the juice of that resolve has not dissipated, imagine that all the spirits (‘byung po) of the entire possible apparent phenomenal world are gathered. Think, ‘In order to protect them from the suffering of cyclic existence, I go for refuge to the Three Jewels, the genuine gods.’ The genuine, perfect Buddha is the ultimate refuge place in genuine reality. Therefore, once you’ve gone for refuge in the Three Jewels of genuine reality, you can definitely gain refuge from the suffering of cyclic existence. There are other worldly gods who have power and magical abilities, but those gods are sentient beings who are themselves not liberated from cyclic existence. So there is no use in going for refuge in worldly gods. In fact, those worldly gods have no ability to provide refuge from cyclic existence to other sentient beings, so you must be the guide who liberates those same gods from cyclic existence. So don’t put your hopes in worldly gods. Rather, since the genuine, perfect Buddha is the ultimate place of refuge in the absolute sense, go for refuge in that.

“In this particular going for refuge, you gather together in front of you all the hostile, nonhuman spirits and so on, and then think, ‘We go for refuge to the Three Jewels.’ First utter a loud p’e three times, and then blow the thighbone three times to gather the gods and demons. Blow three times with a tight, sharp sound on a melodious, unimpaired thighbone.

“An unimpaired thighbone is one that has both upper and lower joints. White is best, brown is mediocre, and mottled is the least best. Gray and other sordid ones will cause problems, so they are inappropriate. The shape should be somewhat curved, and the bone front ridged, with the inside front smoothed out and slightly concave. It is improper to carry a thighbone that curves to the left or the right, is crooked in its sections, has a dented sheath, has cracks and such, has many clefts in the inside structure, is really thick and hunchbacked, is not bent but very straight, is much too fat, has a tight sound without sharpness that goes flat, is deformed‘ with the holes in the bottom part being too small, has many overlapping cracks along its length, looks
engraved, is rough and gritty, has many ridges, is flat, or is just plain ugly and unpleasant. It is inappropriate to carry a bone that has the bad characteristics of being that of someone who was younger than sixteen or older than sixty; who has died by his or her own hand or by family feuding or famine; who was a child of incest, a barren woman, or a butcher; or who died of hunger. You shouldn’t keep or blow a bone without a head, or a bone with cracks, or a leper’s bone, or [one with a cover of] iron, copper, wood, or horn, because those are impaired. Particularly, the horns of black yaks are instruments of suppression, and so they are bad, noxious articles. If you find such a horn and blow it, whoever hears it will hear it as a perverted sound and become unhappy and violent. Wherever that sound is heard, all kinds of negativity will occur, so never carry a bone of black horn. Even when it is an article of human thighbone played as a horn, it may be inappropriate to carry. It is important to examine it to know whether it has the bad characteristics, such as being an article that impedes others or produces various problems.

“What you should have is a quality thighbone, one without those faults that make it inappropriate to carry, [for example, a bone belonging to] an infuriated man whose voracious rage at another had no chance to subside [before he died], who had no time for any other thought to arise in that voracious mind and who attacked and killed that person with a weapon. It could be the bone of a qualified woman, or a monastic whose sacred pledge is unbroken, or a man of sincere faith who has avoided sin, or someone belonging to the family of bodhisattvas, and so on. Any of those should be someone between the ages of sixteen and sixty. In particular, the right leg of someone who died in his or her prime with an unimpaired intellect is the instrument of heroes, and the left leg is the instrument of heroines. Without going underneath the corpse, use what can be hooked from above. Cut it where it is soft and thin, between the first yellow, rotten joint and the small bump underneath. The small [knee] joint should be undamaged like the nostrils of an elephant. On the front of the two bone knobs of the lower joint, drill a thumbprint-size area so that the joint head will be undamaged, and the connection between will be like the nose of a lion. Make it round like porcupine quills. The hero’s instrument is particularly a thighbone of an adult man killed by a weapon. The dākini’s instrument is the thighbone of a qualified woman. The instrument [to call] ordinary nonhumans is whatever is appropriate to carry.
“Now, the first sound blown on such an appropriate thighbone should be
done with this visualization: Say, ‘Hey! Listen, everybody,’ with a tight, sud-
den sound. Imagine that all the beings of the three realms are cleared to hear
it, and they take a break from whatever pressing personal activities they were
involved in. They all instantly come to attention and become enraptured
with a desire to come [to that sound].

“With the second blow, say, ‘Hey, everybody gather here,’ and meditate
on hearing that sound. This creates a bustle of readiness, and they all come
out from their individual places.

“The third blow gathers everybody with a great urgency, and they come
together like an assembly of the whole populace in a big field in front of
you. Imagine that they all have faith in you and venerate you, offering their
respects. Then utter pê three times, with a visualization similar to that of the
blows of the thighbone.

Meditating on the Objects of Refuge,
Training the Mind in the Four Immeasurables,
and Inviting the Field of Accumulation

“In order to give refuge from cyclic suffering to those gathered guests, the
place where you must seek refuge is the Three Jewels. Generate the Three
Jewels in the space in front of you, and make them the object of visualization
as before. That is the first part.

“Second, there are five aspects of the Three Jewels: (1) the outer Three
Jewels; (2) the inner Three Jewels; (3) the secret Three Jewels; (4) the such-

ness Three Jewels; and (5) the intimate Three Jewels.

The Outer Three Jewels

“Directly in front of your forehead, just one cubit away, up in the area just
about a body-size high, visualize a natural, spontaneously present palace with
four sides, four doors, ornaments, and pediments. In the center of it is a vast
and wide jeweled throne held up by eight lions. On that there is a multicol-
ored lotus with four petals creating a rim. In its center, on the moon maṇḍala
like the full moon, is the Great Mother. Above her head is Śakyamuni. Med-
itate on their faces, hands, and colors as [described] in their individual expla-
nations. Around the perimeter of the moon seat are the buddhas of the ten
directions, and above Śākyamuni’s head in the four directions are the deities of the four classes of tantra. That is the Jewel of the Buddha.

“In front on a lotus petal I myself am the blue dakini, surrounded by an entourage of the four kinds of dakinis. On the lotus petal to the right are the eight close son bodhisattvas and the whole saṅgha of bodhisattvas, all adorned with silks and precious jewels. On the left lotus petal are Śāriputra, Maudgalaputra, and the rest of the śrāvaka saṅgha, shaven and barefooted, wearing the three dharma robes, and holding the staff and begging bowl. They are all in the posture of obeisance to the Mother. The lamas of the precept lineage are above them all like a heap of lotuses. That is the Jewel of the Saṅgha.

“On the lotus petal in back are the Buddha’s precepts (bka’), the written collections of the Perfection of Wisdom; the meaning of the Perfection of Wisdom and of Mantra combined together into one essence, that is, the written collections of the esoteric instruction of Mahāmudrā Chöd that integrates the four devils; and the written collections of other authentic precepts—all bound into volumes arranged precisely in stacks. All of them resonate with the natural sounds of the syllables. That is the Jewel of the Dharma.

“Around the perimeter of the lotus, the male tantra dharma protectors stand to the right, and the female tantra dharma protectors to the left. An ocean of heroes, an ocean of heroines, and an ocean of oath-bound protectors stand all around.

“These are the famous outer Three Jewels that are traditional in all three vehicles.

The Inner Three Jewels

“The Buddha Jewel is, mentally, never to disengage for even a moment from meditating on your own mind as the deity. The Dharma Jewel is, verbally, the continual recitation of the yidam deity’s essence-mantra and never disengaging the inhalation, abiding, and exhalation of the breath from the three syllables, the essence of enlightened Body, Speech, and Mind. That is, when breath is drawn in, it is inhaled as the form of the syllable om, the abiding breath abides in the form of ah, and the exhaled breath arises in the form of hung. Maintaining that continuously and reciting a verbal recitation continuously is the Jewel of the Dharma. The Saṅgha Jewel is, physically, to
dwell definitely as an incarnate spiritual practitioner (śramaṇa). Those are the inner Three Jewels.

**Secret Three Jewels**

“The Buddha Jewel is that the five poisons and all afflictive emotions, aroused in their own ground, come to arise as wisdom. The Dharma Jewel is the wellspring of vajra song that pours forth when you experience for yourself that bliss of afflictive emotion arising as wisdom. The Saṅgha Jewel is the benefit to others while abiding continuously in the virtue of that [experience]. Those are the secret Three Jewels.

**The Suchness Three Jewels**

“Mind itself, free of all afflictive emotion, cannot be swayed by any conditions whatsoever. Steadfast, it has the power of unobscured clarity. That is the Jewel of the Buddha. In that power of clarity, the transcendent intelligence of discernment fully distinguishes all phenomena. That is the Jewel of the Dharma. All beings with the wisdom that thus fully distinguishes all phenomena, having clarified ignorance, reveal timeless wisdom of awareness and guide [all beings] to the state of buddha. That is the Jewel of the Saṅgha. Those are the Three Jewels of suchness.

**The Intimate Three Jewels**

“The spiritual master, your own root lama that you conceive of as the Buddha, is the Buddha Jewel. The sacred Dharma spoken from the mouth of that lama is the Dharma Jewel. Dharma friends whose appearance and conduct are harmonious are the Saṅgha Jewel. Those are the intimate Three Jewels.

“... but the others gathered around must definitely go for refuge in the outer Three Jewels. So do the refuge to the outer Three Jewels for everyone, yourself and others. Imagine that all those gathered around—mainly those eight (the six kinds of harmful spirits and the two parents) and all sentient beings of the three realms—are having the single-pointed thought: ‘I seek refuge in the divine Three Jewels from the fear of the suffering of cyclic existence.’ Generate that attitude by means of a single-pointed mind.
“‘Until cyclic existence is empty, we have no other hope, no other refuge, than you, divine Three Jewels. You know. In happiness, in suffering, in higher existences or lower, in misfortune and in obstacles, no matter what kind of harm-doers, bad spirits, and obstructors occur: Three Jewels, you know.’

“Pray enthusiastically from the depths of your flesh and bones, from the innermost center of your heart, from the cavities of your bone marrow. Imagine that all those gods and demons gathered around pray in just the same way as you do—everyone praying with a great twittering noise.

“‘All sentient beings, mainly the six harm-doers and two parents, from now until awakening, go for refuge in the lama. We go for refuge in the Buddha. We go for refuge in the Dharma. We go for refuge in the Sangha. We go for refuge in the yidam deities. We go for refuge in the dakinis and dharma protectors. Please bestow great, vast blessings.’

“Do that 101 or 21 times, and then the sound of pê says, ‘let the prayer rest,’ and so let the prayer rest.

“‘Then imagine the Three Jewels saying, ‘All you noble children, abandon sin and unvirtuous actions and cultivate faith and devotion continuously, and we will be your refuge lords and allies.’ Then the various colored light rays arise from their body, speech, and mind and strike the body, speech, and mind of you and everyone else. All the sins and obscurations accumulated through body, speech, and mind are purified. Your bodies all become sparkly clean like crystal vases. Think, ‘Now we have come into the refuge of the Three Jewels.’

“Within that state, remain free of reference to these three: the refuge object, the Three Jewels; the refugee, oneself and gods and demons gathered there; and the essence of going for refuge. Rest serene in the state of emptiness. Be convinced that the refuge object and the refuge subject have no real existence in the absolute sense. That is called the genuine going for refuge, and it is the most excellent refuge. It is refuge in the genuine meaning, and it is also the view of emptiness. You should know these defining characteristics of going for refuge.

The Four Immeasurables

“These are immeasurable love, immeasurable compassion, immeasurable joy, and immeasurable equanimity.
Immeasurable Love

“All sentient beings without exception, even those who have personally harmed us, have been our parents. An unimaginable number of times they have acted as our only mother and nurtured us without regard for their own health or wealth. They have nurtured us while enduring many hardships, regardless of any conditions such as their own unvirtuous action, suffering, and bad reputation. Think, ‘All sentient beings are my mother.’ Once you’ve seen those mothers suffering, you’ll think with undivided yearning, ‘In order for me to clear away the suffering of all those mothers and help them, I will give up my body, enjoyments, and roots of virtue for their sake and work for their welfare until cyclic existence is empty. I will cause all grandmother sentient beings to have all happiness and the root of happiness, which is virtue.’ That is called love with sentient beings as a reference.

“Essentially, in the ultimate sense, nothing is established as existing. However, just in the relative sense, since I will attain enlightenment based on those grandmother sentient beings, they have been tremendously kind to me, and I must definitely benefit them. Furthermore, they don’t understand that all phenomena lack even a hair’s tip of true existence, that they are like a dream or an illusion. Holding on to the truth of confused appearances, they create only unvirtuous karma and experience the consequence, unbearable suffering. Freeing them of this ignorance of ego-fixation, I will show them the timeless wisdom of reflexive awareness and place them on the path of enlightenment.’ That thought is called love with Dharma as a reference.

“Those grandmother sentient beings that are the object of meditation on love, the self that is the one who meditates on love, and the essence of love itself—these three have no real existence from their own side. They are empty of their own essence. In that, the radiance of emptiness is unimpeded; the mind of love is aching; the altruistic mind is resplendent. To remain free from all extremes of embellishment and abide without dualistic fixation like the midst of space, within the continuity of reflexive awareness, is called great love. It is called love without reference.

“You need to blend this with your mind after meditating on it for a long time. Then it is called immeasurable love.
Immeasurable Compassion

“These mothers who have been so kind to us are unhappy and pained with suffering. Remaining in the causes of suffering, they participate in the resultant suffering. They are not clever at methods of eliminating suffering and don’t have the conditions for getting rid of it. Without relying on a qualified lama, they are like the blind without a guide. These mothers have not gained self-control over their own consciousness, so violent afflictive emotions control them, and they live like crazy people.⁹ The result of engaging in a variety of unvirtuous actions is cyclic existence in general, and particularly the unbearable suffering of the three lower realms. In this wretched state, they don’t have a single ray of hope or place of refuge. There isn’t even a moment of respite from the suffering that they experience like the torrent of a river. These mothers—how pitiful! Considering this, meditate to the point of tears.

“These suffering mothers see suffering and its origination as ornaments,¹⁰ and then grasp nonself as self, nonexistence as existence, impermanence as permanence, and suffering as happiness. Craving and obsessing over a mere dream of the abundant desirables of this life, they will again enter the path to bad existences. These mothers—how sad! How pitiful! To think, ‘I will free them from all suffering,’ is compassion with sentient beings as a reference.

“The thought of impermanence does not arise for even a moment in the minds of these mothers who are not free of suffering, who are so bound up with cherishing. They never go on the path of dharma practice even if they want to practice, because their thoughts are perverted by the delusion of fixation on true existence. Augmented by afflictive emotions, pride and arrogance arise and again create the supreme cause of cyclic existence. These mothers—how sad! sad! sad! ‘These mothers who are not free of fixating on true existence like that, I will free them from that fixation, the root of suffering, and make them realize the lack of true existence, revealing the transcendent intelligence of reflexive awareness, so that all phenomena are fully distinguished. I will free them of suffering and all causes of suffering and place them in the awakened state.’ That thought is compassion with Dharma as a reference.

“The object of compassion, sentient beings, the self in whom it arises, and the essence of compassion itself—these three are inherently unreal and empty of their own essence. The unimpeded radiance of that emptiness is the mind moved by great compassion, the natural disposition free of dualistic fixation,
equal to space. That is called compassion with no reference. It is called emptiness with the heart of compassion. It is called immeasurable compassion.

Immeasurable Joy

“Because such love and compassion have not arisen in their mindstreams, people don’t understand that all sentient beings are their kind mothers. They hold on to them as friends or foes, and the power of bad karmic action causes them to experience the immeasurable suffering of cyclic existence. ‘Wouldn’t it be a joy if I could carry the suffering of those mothers, and if all beings could have all of my happiness and virtue? In order to establish these mothers in happiness, what a joy it would be if, until cyclic existence is empty, their suffering and the cause and effect of suffering, their sins and the cause and effect of sins, would all ripen in me and these mothers would become abundantly happy. I give my body, enjoyments, power, prestige, and roots of virtue in all times for the sake of these mothers. I won’t pursue my own peace and happiness for even a moment. I will work for the welfare of beings without regard for life or limb. These mothers must have the entire range of happiness and the causes of happiness.’ With that thought, meditate on joy.

“Furthermore, I will not shrink away from the specific harm done to sentient beings, or any kind of sickness, suffering, misfortune, enemies, and obstructions that happen to me for their sakes. What a joy if all the suffering of beings ripened in me, so that I would have that kind of suffering. And even a greater joy when those suffering beings are free of suffering and dwell in exceptional happiness.’

“Generate an extraordinary attitude with that thinking. It is important that such joy does not stray into any kind of bias. And if you know it all to be like a dream or an illusion, free of fixation to true existence, it is called immeasurable joy.

Immeasurable Equanimity

“Thus the great affectionate, altruistic thought for beings develops by means of love, compassion, and joy. That thought has great attachment for sentient beings, but if it is without bias, it is the Mahāyāna generation of the thought of awakening. However, the affectionate, attached thought itself is empty of its own essence. So that emptiness is the very essence of nonat-
attachment; it was not attached and will not be attached. When you make [the thought and the emptiness] inseparable, whatever arises in the mind is also not swayed by anything. Rest directly upon the natural disposition of that very emptiness. That altruism that is a caring concept with attachment to sentient beings will be calmed. Then the reality that was two becomes one, and it is called equanimity.

“The thought that the great responsibility of liberating all beings from the suffering of cyclic existence has fallen to oneself alone is called the highest intention (\textit{lhag bsam}). The thought that wishes to greatly benefit all beings, that attachment to beings and aversion toward beings, are possessed by ordinary people. So the sentient beings that are the object of attachment and aversion, and the self who is attached or angry, and the essence of both attachment and aversion have all three been designated as having that individual essence. You should carefully investigate whether or not the bodies and minds and sufferings of those beings who are the object of attachment have any real existence. Then you will find the meaning of the absence of true, real existence. Once that comes, since there is no object of attachment, it is the dawn of the great conceptlessness that is without any clinging. Similarly, with [objects of] aversion, perform the investigation of the bodies, minds, and sufferings. Perform the investigation of the body, mind, and suffering on the individual self as well, and, as just now, great conceptlessness will dawn. Once attachment and aversion are thus both liberated in their own ground, there is equal flavor in the expanse of great emptiness of reality. That is called equanimity free of both attachment and aversion. Coming to an understanding of the meaning in this way and abiding in that meaning is immeasurable equanimity.

“You should understand that you need to train the conceptual mind well in these four immeasurables and engage conceptual mind in them with enthusiastic conceptual mind, ultimately making conceptual mind fully trained (\textit{blo 'byong}).

\textit{Inviting the Field of Accumulation}

“For the visualization of purifying one’s own and others’ sins and the field of accumulation of merit, think as follows. Imagine that just a breath’s width above the crown of your head in your ordinary form is a multicolored lotus and moon seat. I myself sit atop that in cross-legged posture, with the attrib-
utes of saṃbhogakāya, white in color, holding drum, vajra, and bell. The syllable \textit{om} is in the crown of my head, \textit{ah} in my throat, and \textit{hung} in my heart. Light radiates from \textit{hung} and strikes the heart of the Great Mother, who is in the sky as before. It evokes the Great Mother’s mindstream. Light rays emanate out from her heart and strike the hearts of her attendant deities, evoking their mindstreams. Light rays from their hearts gather back into hers. That light gathered in the Great Mother’s heart evokes the mindstream of the Great Mother of Akaniṣṭha. The Great Mother and her children, the buddhas of the ten directions, are invoked and arrive without delay in a great wave. All the fields of refuge come to dwell in the sky about an arrow’s length above them. Imagining that, say:

\begin{verbatim}
om sarwa tathāgata sapariwara vajra samaya dza dza
om sarwa tathāgata sapariwara argham pratitsaye svaha . . .
padyam . . . pushpe . . . dbupe . . . aloke . . . gendhe . . . newidye . . .
shapta ah hung svaha
\end{verbatim}

“Make the offerings using that mantra. Then say \textit{dza hum bam ho}, and they dissolve into the pledge-being.\textsuperscript{12} Imagine that they completely blend with the pledge-being. Light rays radiate from the Great Mother’s heart and strike the deities in the entourage. Light radiates from their hearts and collects the power of all buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions. That light is gathered back into the Great Mother’s heart, where it shines as white, red, and blue light rays. The white light, like flowing milk, emerges and enters the crown of your head and that of all the spirits gathered around. All of your sins, obscurations, unvirtuous habitual patterns, causes, and effects that have been accumulated through body, speech, and mind since beginningless cyclic existence emerge like black soot when the body is washed. It is expelled from the head and, by stages, from under the nails and from other lower orifices. It falls nine levels under the earth to the Devil of Death, or the Yama of Karma, or the Lord of Karmic Debt—a black, fearful form with extremely fierce attributes. The black soot goes straight into his huge, gaping jaws and the Lord of Death is satisfied. Imagine that this clears up all of your karmic debt and that you and the others are like pure crystal, totally purified. Imagine that my form on the crown of your head dissolves into my form in front of the Great Mother in the sky. Think that you and the others all become purified of all sin and obscuration, and a moving faith is born
in everyone. While thinking that, concentrate in single-pointed thought, free of distraction and imagine everyone standing up and prostrating.

Paying Homage with the Eight Branches and Making Offerings

“Say as follows:

I pay homage to the lamas
Who show the wisdom of reflexive awareness.
I pay homage to the yidam deities
Who definitely bestow spiritual powers.
I pay homage to the buddhas
Who have excellent realization and renunciation.
I pay homage to the sacred Dharma
That is peaceful and free of desire.
I pay homage to all the saṅgha
To whom my offerings are meaningful.
I pay homage to the dharma protectors
Who definitely clear up obstacles.
Until I attain enlightenment,
I supplicate all of you.
I go for refuge in all of you.
I offer you the five desirables.
I confess each unvirtuous act.
I rejoice in the merit of all beings.
Please turn the wheel of dharma.
Please stay, do not pass beyond misery.
I dedicate the roots of virtue to beings’ welfare.

“With that, offer the eight branches. Then utter the sound ṝē and say, ‘Everyone stay.’ Imagine that when the guests hear that they stand at attention and pay homage.

“Furthermore, [when visualizing] the offering of a vast and great offering to the host of deities in the sky, you should know the genuine meaning of nonreferential offerings. Once you have transformed all your sense objects into offering goddesses and offering substances, imagine that the nonrefer-
ential goddesses pick up the nonreferential offering articles and make these offerings, all emanated by mind, and they fill up the sky. Imagine that the infinite, boundless threefold universe of worlds, as much physical form as the conceptual mind can imagine, is the buddha dakini goddess. Imagine the entire range of all sound as the vajra dakini goddess. Think of all fragrances as the ratna dakini goddess. Imagine all tastes as the padma dakini goddess. And imagine all textures as the karma dakini goddess.

“Moreover, to say ‘form is the buddha dakini’ is also speaking of the meaning of nonconceptual mahamudra. You should understand that all unconditioned phenomena are offerings of nonconceptual great bliss. ‘Sound is the vajra dakini’ is also saying secret mahamudra. You should know that all phenomena of apparent existence of cyclic existence and transcendence have no real, true existence and are the unembellished offerings. ‘Smell is the ratna dakini’ is also saying ‘appearances arising in indefinite variety’ and should be known as the nondualistic offering without attachment or clinging. ‘Taste is the padma dakini’ is also saying ‘nonattachment’ and should be known as the offering in equality free of faults. ‘Textures are the karma dakini’ is also saying ‘the great effortlessness that is free of all efforts of pursuing the ultimate or relative.’ You should know that the full extent of all appearance is the offering of great nonactive, nonconceptual, nondual, ineffable, naturally occurring, innate freedom. You must come to understand that in this way all the objects and so on—the offering objects, the offerer, and the offering—are an offering cloud that is inherently nonexistent. To summarize all that, you should know that it can be subsumed into three: body, speech, and mind. The five mothers also can be subsumed into three: form, sound, and thought. Form is the body, sound is the speech, and thought is the mind.

Imagine that as many forms as appear are all innumerable goddesses of form holding mirrors. They emanate and purify the clinging of form-clinging of all beings. That bliss of form is offered to the Lama Jewel. The Lama Jewel is pleased and the spiritual powers of the Body appear. Everyone’s sins and obscurations are purified and you are endowed with the experience of physical great bliss. Imagine that this is the blessing of Body entering the body. Imagine that as many sounds as resonate are all innumerable goddesses of sound holding lutes and emanating. They purify the clinging of sound-clinging of all beings. That bliss of sweet sound is offered to the Lama Jewel. Imagine that the Lama Jewel is pleased and the blessing of Speech enters your speech. Imagine that all thoughts and memories are innumerable god-
desses of Dharma holding dharma sources and emanating. They purify the perverse thoughts of all beings. The great bliss of the timeless wisdom of reflexive awareness endowed with fourfold great transcendent knowledge is offered to the Lama Jewel. The Lama Jewel is pleased and bestows the spiritual powers of Body, Speech, and Mind. The sins and obscurations in the minds of all beings, yourself and others, are purified. Endowed with the experience of the mind as emptiness, clarity, and great bliss, think that the blessing of Mind enters your mind. In the end, imagine that all the goddesses dissolve into you. Then all bliss and suffering is equal in the expanse of reality. Within the state of the great emptiness of natural nonexistence, like space, do the natural visualization, and say:

I offer all form appearing  
In all worlds of the three-thousand-fold universe  
As the mudrā of sublime Body.  
Grant the spiritual power of unchanging Body.

I offer all the sounds resounding  
In all worlds of the three-thousand-fold universe  
As the mudrā of sublime Speech.  
Grant the spiritual power of unimpeded Speech.

I offer all the thoughts in the minds  
In all worlds of the three-thousand-fold universe  
As the mudrā of sublime Mind.  
Grant the spiritual power of undeluded Mind.

I offer all the happiness and suffering  
In all worlds of the three-thousand-fold universe  
As the mudrā of nonduality.  
Grant the spiritual powers, both common and sublime.

When happy, I dedicate it to collective happiness;  
May the sky of benefit and happiness fill up.  
When suffering, I carry the suffering myself;  
May the ocean of cyclic suffering dry up.
May beings of the three realms have happiness.

p‘e!

“The self who performs the offerings, the object of offering, and the essence of offering, along with the specific rites of offering, are without any inherent real existence. To rest in that state of emptiness is the suchness of making offerings.

Separating Body and Mind (powa) andOffering the Mandala

“There are two parts to separating body and mind: separating without a support and separating with a support.

Separating body and mind without a support

“Mind—free of arising, ceasing, or abiding—is great emptiness. Like the center of space or the inherent lack of real existence, it is free of all limitations. Once you have mastered emptiness, you understand that the body is a reflection of emptiness, that it is without true existence. You realize it is untrue. Then the mind is not attached to the body and the body is not attached to the mind. ‘Was not attached, will not be attached, and is without attachment’ means that there is freedom from attachment to anything at all, such as body, mind, and so on. In that way, being free of concepts of both attachment and nonattachment to all phenomena, such as both body and mind, and so on, is called ‘the emptiness of great conceptlessness.’ It is without something to be transferred and without a transferor. That is ‘separating body and mind without a support.’

Separating Body and Mind with a Support

“Visualizing the mind as a substance or a thing, concentrate with mindfulness and maintain attention. With the power of awareness, draw [the consciousness up] the unerring path of basic space. Boosted by the force of powerful energy currents, mind itself shoots up to the space of the sky. This separates body and mind.

“Here is the way to practice with the visualized substance of consciousness
as a vital-essence drop that transfers through the crown of the head, so pay attention, son. Listen, and I will explain it well.

“You own seminal essence, the red and white drops, blend into one. From that, you should visualize [consciousness as a sphere] the size of the first bird’s egg in a new nest.16 It appears vividly white, coated in oil, shining with natural light. It’s about the size of the last joint of the little finger. It is perfectly round with no unevenness.

“In India, the south face of Potari is a cliff that is so blue it is like lapis lazuli. In the middle of it there is a cave called Zangpoi Pal (Glory of Excellence) that is shaped like a “source of phenomena.”17 It is a red cave with designs of five colors of interwoven rainbows. It is a most excellent cave with many qualities. There, in that cave, where heroes and dakinis always gather to feast, I once lived [in my previous life]. During that time, there was a little bird called jolbu chokchung18 that lived in the growth of a great sandalwood grove. Its plumage was blue-green with two white wings like half-moons, and a tail of five flat [feathers] the nature of the five primary colors. Its feet were equal in color to mother-of-pearl, and its claws and beak were white. It had red eyes, and above the neck [the colors of] its head was similar to the colors in the eyes of peacock feathers. On its head it had a crest of three plumes of red that shone with multicolored light. It did not kill insects, and it did not set foot on the ground but always lived in the openings of flowers and shrubs. It constantly made an extremely sweet sound translating tare and tuttare. It lived on the various kinds of very fragrant medicinal substances such as those found inside camphor and in the stamens of fine flowers. After it made its resting place inside the stamen of a flower at the top of a camphor tree, its desire was satisfied by the breath of its own two beaks meeting. Two eggs came up into that little bird’s mouth, and it placed them inside the camphor flower. A male and a female bird developed in that nest.

“These were birds blessed by Exalted Tārā. Some people say they were even emanations of Tārā. In any case, they were certainly not ordinary birds. If you take the droppings of those birds and ingest them, it will overcome and cure all 404 kinds of disease. If you smoke them, the eighty-thousand kinds of bad spirits can’t penetrate. If you rub them on the body, all kinds of skin diseases will be cured. If you eat the flesh of those birds, you will gain supreme spiritual power. If you eat even its feathers and down, you’ll gain common spiritual powers. Just seeing or hearing them has the power to free you from the three lower realms and establish you in the god or human
All beings that live and breathe in the mountain forest or an area with those birds will not experience misery for a whole lifetime. Those birds are few in number and very rare. Anyone who does not have good fortune and karma, no matter who they are, can never see them.

"Those two birds had the auspicious connections and karma to make a dharma connection for the insects, other birds, and many animals that lived in the forest, and establish them on the path to liberation. [Once the hatchlings of] their two eggs each had the wing strength of fledglings, the mother and father birds felt no attachment to the nest or to the two fledglings or to that area, and they took off in opposite directions, like east and west, or south and north. From then on they did not construct nests but displayed an attitude of remorse toward the activities of cyclic existence. In turn, the two fledglings made a nest and had two eggs that developed into two fledglings. The male and female then took off alone in their separate directions and henceforth did not desire to nest. The species lineage of this creature chokchung is that of one-time nesters.

"Obscured people don’t see these two birds. Only a holy person with good karma and fortune can see them.

"The size of the chokchung [can be compared to] that of the bird called joldzinma (byol ’dzin ma) that we have here now. It is light yellow with white eyebrows. It’s about the same size, but the throat is a little longer. The shells of the chokchung’s eggs are white with a hint of red rays and are radiantly glossy. They are without blemish or covering, like a clear crystal. Light rays that can illuminate the darkness for four fathoms shine from them. This outer shell demonstrates the five wisdoms. Inside the egg, the outer layer is white and inside that is red. Inside that is yellow, then green, and then light blue. Inside that is a dark-blue vital-essence drop, intensely blue like the color of space or lapis lazuli, the size of a pea. In the center of that is a drop the size of a mustard seed highlighted by multicolored moving lights. The layers of the egg’s insides abide inseparably as one, but like the moon [reflected] in water or a reflection in a mirror, yet they manifest as distinct and unmixed. They indicate the five families and the lord of the sixth family, the principal one of all families, Vajradhara, in their layers of six colors. The light of their shining lights indicates the female buddhas of each of the victors. Since these auspicious karmic connections are garnered in the egg of the chokchung bird, if you meditate on your own consciousness as being like the chokchung’s egg you will gain great merit. In the chokchung’s egg are the five buddha fami-
lies, or the six including the principal of all families, Vajradhara, together with the feminine aspects, and the five wisdoms. Just recalling that egg you gain merit. Visualizing your own consciousness as the egg and then transferring it is the easy way to gain the supreme state. It can bring you to buddhahood in one body and in one lifetime. No doubt about it, noble son.

“Now then, this is how you should visualize the transference, so listen, son. Sit on a comfortable mat and settle mind and body into an alert, relaxed state without wavering. Assume the seven-point posture of Vairocana and exhale three times. Imagine that the sins and obscurations accumulated through body, speech, and mind, along with all the inner filth, are exhaled in the form of breath. The body and mind, everywhere outside and inside, are purified of obscuration and become sparkly clean. Imagine the inside of the body from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet to be empty, like a balloon. The five main cakras (rtsa ’khor) are inside [the central channel] at the crown, throat, heart, navel, and genital area. The petals of the radial fronds are face-to-face in pairs, and the two tops of the fronds are back-to-back. Or, the two [cakras from the] tops of the fronds of the genital area reach from inside the thighs to the soles of the feet. Alternatively, as a substitute for the fronds, [you can think of the cakras as] two lotuses touching, or else two umbrellas touching face-to-face.

“There are two methods: transference in stages and transference all at once. Here, the first, transference by stages, is the drawing out of the six realms of beings. In that method you visualize yourself standing up with your two anklebones touching. Your two hands are in the dharma-source mudrā on the crown of the head. Visualize a red drop on the sole of the right foot and a white one on the left. Imagine them the size of a barley grain or a pea in the fortunate eon, the nature of light. Then draw up the breath and shout p’è, thinking that you are calling them up. They rise up and join in the lower cakra, the white and red drops blending into one drop the nature of light, about the size of the new egg of a hen. It is unbearable to look straight at it, like the heart of the sun. Imagine that it is throbbing and flashing with potential movement [as if about to take off]. As you shout p’è, it moves to the navel, the heart, the throat, and then the crown. Then it is expelled out the hole in the crown and becomes a shining, blue-black syllable ha in the space about one cubit above you. This is the instruction of transference with a functional visualization.

“As it emerges through the crown, the empty space and the immaculate,
fresh awareness blend inseparably together as one, then settle in the equipoise of the great pervasiveness where awareness and emptiness are inseparable. Measuring a breath as one exhalation and inhalation, remain in that equipoise for twenty-one breaths. Then, whether you do the instantaneous transference described below or this one, in any case, do the mind transferring into the sky, then mixing, then settling in equipoise, and then again transference—in that way [a total of] twenty-one times for one session, twenty-one [times] during the day, and twenty-one [times] at night. Finally, when it is time to end the session, imagine in your heart a red lotus with eight petals. Imagine that the consciousness is there on the center of it, and then visualize the lotus closing. This is the esoteric instruction of training in transference with the visualization for falling asleep or for doing daily activities.

“If you want to do the instantaneous transference, and also for application to activity at the time of death, meditate on me in saññabhogakāya form one cubit above the crown of your head. Imagine in your heart a red lotus with eight petals, opening upward. Above the eight petals is the central channel. It is white outside and red inside, about the size of a cane whip. The upper end emerges at the brahma aperture in the crown of the head and reaches into my heart. The lower end rests pressing on the lotus petals. Imagine the consciousness inside it, on the lotus stamen. When the signs of death occur, invigorate the awareness, arouse the strength of awareness, and then, with the sound of p’ê, it comes out through the tunnel of light and dissolves into my heart mañḍala. Imagine that the lotus and channel are also the nature of light. The lotus is a symbol of freedom from attachment. The blue center is love, and the red petals are compassion. The white stamen and anthers indicate the resolve for enlightenment. The channel being white outside indicates skillful means, and the red inside is transcendent knowledge. The channel disappears at the same time as the consciousness, while the radiance of the lotus gradually dissipates. That is the transference with visualization, and it includes the esoteric instruction for the time of death. It is the instruction for separating body and mind with reference to a supporting substance. It is called the transference accomplished with substance because the substance of consciousness is visualized as a bird’s egg based on the white and red drops and is then transferred to unborn space. This is the dharma system of this yogini, noble son.

“To benefit the dead, imagine that the abode of hell is in the soles of your feet, the abode of the hungry ghosts is in the genital area, animals are in the
navel, humans in the heart, demigods in the throat, and gods are in the brain inside the skull. The consciousness emerges from the skull at the crown of the head and blends with space. This makes an auspicious connection for the six realms to be liberated and pass beyond cyclic existence into nirvana. This is known as transference with reference to drawing out the six realms. Remember it.

Offering the Body Maṇḍala

“Once body and mind have been separated, here is the way to generate the body as a maṇḍala and offer it to the lama, Three Jewels, yidam deities, heroes, ḍākinīs, and dharma protectors. Listen and I will explain it.

“Imagine that in the crown of your head is the blue syllable ha. It completely transforms into a blue ḍākinī with one face and two hands, the right holding a curved knife and the left a trident. She is surrounded by four others just like herself, making five, with principal and entourage. With her curved knife she strips off the skin of your supine corpse so that it is completely turned out. Saying p’ê, imagine that the flayed skin becomes the great golden ground. P’ê, and the blood becomes a big ocean of perfumed water, moistening the whole ground. P’ê—the nails become the iron mountain circumference. P’ê—the four limbs are the four continents. P’ê—the eight limb segments are the eight subcontinents. P’ê—in the middle the belly is Supreme Mount Meru. P’ê—on top of Supreme Mountain, the head is Indra’s palace. P’ê—the right eye is the moon, and the left is the sun. P’ê—the teeth are the stars and constellations. P’ê—the lungs are the intelligent, excellent horse. P’ê—the heart is the precious wish-fulfilling gem that brings about all needs and desires like rain. P’ê—the white and black intestines are the white, black, and yellow seven mountain rings and the seven great lakes in between them. P’ê—the inner organs are the seven emblems of royalty. P’ê—the veins and tendons are the eight auspicious substances. P’ê—the eight consciousness groups are the goddesses of desirables. P’ê—the flesh is excellent, fine medicine. P’ê—the hair and the body hairs are uncultivated crops, mountain meadows of saffron and forests of sandalwood. P’ê—the ears are parasols and banners. Clearly imagine it like that. Visualizing offering this all-inclusive abundance of the wealth of gods and humans to the assembly of lamas, yidams, and ḍākinīs, recite:
On the golden ground of my skin,
Centered in the mountain rings of my nails,
The Supreme Mountain palace of my belly
Is surrounded by the sun and moon of my eyes,
The four continents are my four limbs, and so on.
This complete and perfect body maṇḍala
I offer to the Lama Jewel and yidam deities,
To the dākinīs and dharma protectors.
Please enjoy it and grant your blessings.
P’e

“Then settle in a state without any reference to the subject and object of
the maṇḍala offering. This is the suchness of maṇḍala offering.

Supplicating and Bringing Down Blessings

I pray to the root and lineage lamas
On the lotus and moon seat above my head.
I pray to the whole host of yidam deities
In the palace, the pure appearance of reality.
I pray to the wisdom dharma protectors and guardians
Who keep their sacred pledge and protect the doctrine.
Grant your blessings to all sentient beings.
Guide this child to the unborn realm.
Bestow supreme and common spiritual powers.
Please inspire [me to see] interfering conditions as the path.
P’e

“While thinking, ‘Lamas, yidams, and protectors have been well suppli-
cated,’ invigorate your awareness. Then meditate on me as the object of
refuge in the space in front of you. From my heart, like a second flame divid-
ing off from a single flame, I and the four-family dākinīs surrounded by an
immeasurable host of dākinīs arrive with a great commotion in the place
where you sit. While we five, principal and entourage, stay there in the space
one cubit above your head, imagine that together with the dākinīs of the
entourage we will all grant blessings.
The realm of reality has no coming and going, yet
In truth you arrive here with miraculous speed
By the spontaneous responsiveness of unimpeded nature.
Please hold us with unbiased compassion,
We who are your followers and
All beings confused by ignorance.
In truth, bestow your definite blessing.
Mother, from the wide reaches of the realm of reality,
With your host of many ḍākinīs,
Send down blessings on this haunted place.
Hold with compassion the gods and demons gathered here.
Bless all sentient beings in the three realms.
Grant me and all devoted children the spiritual powers.
Please stay here as the crowning jewel.
Please stay here and grant your blessings.

P'e
“Saying that, imagine that I and my host of ḍākinīs arrive in a great wave
and bless everyone’s consciousness streams. All are deeply moved. This is the
descent of blessings.

Offering the Body and Giving It in Charity
“Here, there are five parts:

1. Consecrating the body as five desirables and visualizing it as cloud
   banks of offerings that are offered to the lamas, yidams, ḍākinīs, and
dharma protectors.
2. Recompensing debts to the guests of karmic retribution.
3. Giving it in charity to beings of the six realms, which empties out
   those places.
4. Giving it to the good shidaks and nāgas according to their individ-
   ual desires.
5. Satisfying the terrifying, hostile gods and demons with raw flesh
   and blood.
Offering to the Lamas and Others

“The separation of body and mind is the same as explained above. Imagine the consciousness emerging from the crown of the head as the red syllable ha. Alternatively, it shoots up into my heart where, from the inherent red ha syllable, there arises a red dakini with one face and two hands, the right one holding a curved knife and the left one a skull cup. She is awesome and dazzling with bone ornaments, standing upright with her two legs in a dancing stance. As you say p'ê, red light emanates from her heart, strikes my heart, and evokes my mindstream. Light rays emanate back out and strike the dakinis in the entourage. They each emanate similar figures, which become an entourage of red dakinis. Maroon light rays emanate from my heart and dissolve into the hearts of the red dakinis. Their awesome splendor blazes up even more than before, and they are infused with the power of action. The red action dakini and her entourage bend down and flay the skin of the corpse with a flourish of the curved knives. The corpse’s head faces east as it lies supine, as big as the three-thousand-fold universe, or the size of the inside of one of the iron mountain rings of the circumference [of the world], or the size of the four continents, or of one continent, or of Tibet, or just the size of where you live, or five or eight leagues, or at least as far as you can see—whatever you can handle in your mind. It is the nature of gold, extremely pure (a maṇḍala of five-colored lights).

“On top of that is a wind maṇḍala arising from the winds or energy currents of the body. In the center of that is an ah-marked triangle that is the nature of the body’s red menses (rakta). From that arise the hearth stones of three human heads, and on that, from ah, the vast and wide skull cup with the forehead facing you. Inside it, all the flesh and bones are pulled apart and chopped up and, with the blood, make a heap as big as Supreme Mountain. Visualize that the white moonlike seminal essence is on top of that, marked with a white hung above it and the syllable ham below it. Then light radiates from the seed syllable in your (the performer’s) heart, and strikes the yam [of the wind maṇḍala]. The wind billows, the fire blazes, the skull heats up, and all the flesh and blood melts and boils. Light rays emanate from the ah in your throat and strike the heap of flesh and blood, purifying the actual stuff and dissolving it into light. Light emanates from the om in your crown and strikes the seminal essence, which is the nature of the moon, and it melts. A stream of elixir flows down from the ham syllable and falls into the skull.
cup. Light rays from hung invoke all the buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions in the form of the fathers and mothers of the five families, and they arrive in the sky in front of you. They join in union and streams of elixir from their area of union flow down and dissolve the hung and the seminal essence with the ham. That melts into the skull cup, and the pledge and wisdom [substances] blend inseparably into one. The boiling steam with five-colored light rays fills the whole sky.

“On the tips [of the light rays] are the five goddesses of sense desirables: vajra form, vajra sound, vajra smell, vajra taste, and vajra touch, as well as vajra phenomena [of the mind]. These are offering goddesses of oblation water, washing water, flowers, incense, light, perfume, food, and music. All of the goddesses hold skull cups filled with elixir in their right hands and in their left hands their own characteristic offering substances, swaying in dance as they make the offerings. Those light rays themselves are also the entire set of various pendants, parasols, victory banners, standards, canopies with ribbons, tassels, the eight auspicious signs, the seven precious emblems of royalty, and various designs. The entire unimaginable variety of offerings fills up the whole sky like thick clouds. Visualizing that, offer it to the host of lamas and their lineages, yidam deities of the mañḍala, buddhas, bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas, and śrāvakas. Pleasing them, request them to look after you through their Body, Speech, and Mind, to protect you from mistaken paths, and to teach you the unmistaken, supreme, sacred path of our Teacher, [Buddha]. Then utter p’ê.

“Next, visualize offering the five desirables to your yidam, the deities of the four classes of tantra, heroes, heroines, and ḍākinis. Pleasing their mind-streams, request the spiritual powers of Body, Speech, and Mind, the common spiritual powers, and the supreme one. In particular, supplicate them to be your sacred, supreme, special deities (lbag pa’i lha) for unerringly traversing and completing the path of the special, highest Vajrayāna. Say p’ê.

“Then offer to Glorious Mahākāla and Mahākāli and so on, all the inner and outer protectors of the male and female tantras. Having fulfilled them, supplicate them to accomplish all your desired purposes and to grant blessing to prevent obstacles by devils on the paths and levels, and to accomplish the welfare of beings by performing the enlightened activity of increasing and enhancing the Buddha’s doctrine by means of the four kinds of activity, and to be your wonder-working army. Shouting p’ê clarifies the visualization.

“Then mentally let go of the offering, the substance of offering, and the
offering goddesses with their emanating light rays and cut through with a final \( p'e \).

“This is the giving of the body in offering and charity by generating your body as the five desirables with which to please the lamas, buddhas, bodhisattvas, yidams, \( \ddot{d} \text{\={a}} \text{kini}s\), and so on, as well as the outer and inner dharma protectors.

“Now, if you want to do ‘Skull-Face’ and ‘Elixir Vase’ banquets,\(^{30}\) it is fine to do them just as you learned them before.

_Recompensing Debts to the Guests of Karmic Retribution_

“Utter \( p'e \), and the movement of fire and wind and the skull with its elixir are all transformed into desirables for the guests of karmic retribution (\textit{lan chags}). Alternatively, without reference to fire, wind, and so on, just imagine your body looking like a corpse. Retribution guests are of various different colors and represent all the races in the four continents. Physically, they look like attractive male and female humans wearing clothes and jewelry in a variety of colors. They experience intense longing over whatever personal debt is owed them, and their craving, attached mind is riveted with interest and devotion on you. Imagine that in getting what they each want, they become even more radiant than before. Freed of their attitude of being owed, moving faith and interest in Dharma arises in them.

“Your own body, life, enjoyments, fortune, power, splendor, radiance, glory, and wealth naturally become spontaneous palaces, calves and kids, horses and oxen, silk, brocade, various jewels, various kinds of grains, copper utensils, various clothes, meat, blood, intestines, skin, and all the special specifics of the body that are naturally formed from that flesh and blood into an abundance of desirables. The head and body hairs naturally form flowers and various woods. The five internal organs\(^{31}\) become a mass of various rainbows of desirables. Big clouds and mists of desirables accumulate from the breath, winds, heat, and steam. Think of it all as the complete five substances desired by obstructor-type retributors. The eighty thousand obstructor-type masters and mistresses of the karmic retribution of short life [due to repeated] killing, the karmic retribution [causing] much illness due to having beaten, and the karmic retribution of poverty due to having robbed, and so on, as well as the eighteen great bad spirits afflicting children—all these guests of retribution are each personally satisfied. The debts that cause karmic retri-
bution since beginningless lifetimes until this final moment are cleared up. Having settled up the accounts with the debts of flesh (sha ’khon), may all re-
tribution guests be happy and free of suffering and ultimately attain the state of buddhahood.

“Say p’ê and rest for a while in the state without any mental activity about either the guests or the torma offering.”32 Son, that is the suchness torma of karmic retribution.

Giving the Body in Charity to Beings of the Six Realms

“The body melts into light inside a vast great translucence without obscura-
tion of inside or outside, as crystal clear as the white color of a jewel. Alternate-
vatively, the leftovers of the karmic retribution torma themselves melt into light and become uncontaminated wisdom elixir. It is white with a red radi-
ance and consists of the eight sublime flavors. It is the most excellent quintessence that dispels all suffering. It has all desirable qualities with none left out. It is like the sublime medicine that cures death and revives the sick. Think of it as something that has the power to dispel all suffering just by touching it. Then imagine that innumerable white goddesses with one face and two arms each carrying white skull cups emanate from your heart. A goddess arrives in front of every sentient being, up to the peak of existence and down to the incessant hell, and presents the elixir. Just touching it to their lips alleviates their individual sufferings. Imagine that the sentient beings attain great enlightenment and the six realms are cleared and empty, and utter p’ê.

“Immeasurable light rays emanate from the goddesses’ bodies, speech, and minds and pervade the empty six realms. Think that the lands of hell become pure like the color of lapis and the nature of vajra. The hungry ghosts’ place becomes pure, like the color of ruby and the nature of the lotus. The animal place becomes pure like crystal and white, the nature of the wheel. The human place becomes pure like gold and the nature of precious jewels. The demigods’ place becomes pure like emerald and the nature of crossed vajras. The gods’ place becomes the five lights of empty clarity, the nature of great timeless wisdom.”33 Imagining all that, utter p’ê.

“Alternatively, if you can’t manage visualizing all six realms at once, think that the goddesses emanate to the place of hell, and each goddess arrives in front of each hell-being and offers it the elixir. Just by touching it to their lips
and just by seeing all the goddesses carrying the skull cups, the hell laborers delay their work of torture and the sentient beings are instantly liberated from the afflictive emotion of anger and from the results of anger, such as the sufferings of heat, cold, and being pulled apart and chopped up. They attain enlightenment. Also imagine that the burning iron ground becomes the nature of vajra lapis lazuli. Similarly, the greed and hunger of the hungry ghosts is relieved. The animals’ suffering of stupidity and dumbness and preying on each other is relieved. For humans, attachment to desire and poverty is relieved. The jealousy and fighting of the demigods are relieved. And for the gods, pride and the suffering of the fall [from their status] are relieved. Think that they all attain unsurpassable enlightenment, and utter p’ē.

“Your very own body is like a wish-fulfilling precious gem. All needs and desires pour down like rain through the open gates of this great treasure. The individual sufferings of all six kinds of sentient beings are assuaged, and they are established in great enlightenment. This is not an occasion to gather all sentient beings of the six realms as guests for this torma; they can’t be assembled. Goddesses [must] emanate to each of their six realms and distribute the elixir over there. So it is called ‘distribution [or banquet]’ (gyed) in the six realms.’ Thinking of the individual sufferings of the six kinds of beings, you are moved to tears and compassion is born in your being.

“Finally, all the goddesses are gathered into you. Remain in the state without reference to the torma, torma tray, torma guests of six kinds of beings, or the mental continuum of performing the torma leftovers. Uttering p’ē clarifies all the visualizations. This is the suchness torma for the six species. Remember it.

Giving the Body to the Good Shidaks and Nāgas According to Their Individual Desires

The Shidaks

“It is acceptable to generate the previous leftovers [from the six-realms visualization] as the torma for the shidaks. Alternatively, visualize a new corpse and generate it as a torma. Or else separate body and mind, and envision that these are the necessities desired by shidaks.

“Visualize brains, spinal cord, and fat as the ‘three whites’: yogurt, milk, and butter, and utter p’ē. Blood, grease, and lymph are the ‘three sweets’: sugar, molasses, and honey. Imagine that the marrow inside the leg hollows
and elsewhere is various fine medicinal herbs, such as camphor and saffron. Imagine that the skin, brain casing, and diaphragm are silk and satin filigreed brocade clothes, furred coats, and so on; all the wearable clothing in a variety of colors impossible to enumerate. Imagine that the heart is a wish-fulfilling gem that satisfies all needs. Think of the two kidneys as gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, red ruby, amber, diamond, coral, and all kinds of precious jewels. The flesh is barley, wheat, and all the species of grain. Think of the twenty-four vertebrae as deer, gazelle, wild sheep, antelope, and every other possible kind of hoofed animal. The seven cervical vertebrae are wild carnivores such as tigers and leopards. Imagine that the eighteen ribs are arrows and spindles. The bronchi and esophagus are ‘sky’ crossed-thread implements of various colors, and the arteries are yarn crosses. The large and small intestines are various colored yarn; the veins and ligaments are all various colors. The mouth’s warm vapors and the teeth, the so-called ten thousand white and one thousand black, are yaks and sheep. The nails are various kinds of birds, and the spleen is cattle and buffalo. The lungs are horse and the liver is elephant. The eight big joints, plus the four bones of the ankles and wrists, making twelve, plus the four of the neck and so on, making sixteen, plus the lower mandible and chest, making eighteen, are chain mail and various kinds of armor, copper utensils, gold and silver trays, vases, plates and bowls, and so on—all kinds of riches and wealth. The head, the stomach, and the colon are the house, the safe, and storehouse, and so on of the ruling palace. The eyes and the other sense organs are various flowers. The white and red sexual fluids, feces, urine, and bile are the five elixirs of immortality: yogurt, milk, butter, sugar, and molasses. The head hair and all the body hairs are boughs, petals, leaves, flowers, and fruits of all the various kinds of trees with none excluded. Visualize all these things that the shidaks desire.

“Then, in order to contemplate those shidaks and irresistibly draw them in, you must recall what they are like: their shapes and colors and perceptions. In general, shidak and naga guests need to be summoned in a gentle manner. So the shidaks should be visualized as having white skin. However, it is not definite; there are all kinds of different colors, such as blue, yellow, red, white with a tinge of red, blue with a tinge of white, red with a tinge of yellow, and so on. All of them have very fine human shapes, with faces about two cubits long. Their eyes and ears are somewhat similar to those of the gods, with long earlobes. Their eyebrows, eyelashes, and underbeards are the same color as our flesh. Their hair is black, light blue, dark brown, reddish
yellow, or blue. It is fine, long, and soft and done up in fine braids that are long and smooth. [Other styles are] buns on top, half bound and half loose, rolls in the back, done up with pendants, many buns in the front, and hanging loose. Their eyes are bright and clear, and the tips of the noses are slightly bent as if about to smile. They are radiant and clear. They have a tuft of beard on their chins under the lower lip, though some do not.

“They have various kinds of hats, such as tagzhu, bezhu, sazhu, zhatep, dukorma, zhakya, bolte lok lok, darzha, and dartö, which come in all kinds of colors. They have garlands of conch shell, crystal, pearl, gold, copper, iron, coral, turquoise, agate, and flowers. Their hand implements are magical splints, lassos, cymbals, axes, cudgels, sickles, spears, swords, bludgeons, and counting sticks. [They make clothing from] various wild animals such as tiger, leopard, black bear, brown bear, lynx, snow leopard, wolf, jackal, gung leopard, fox, wild dog, lion, and so on; and various kinds of fowl such as dragon, garuda, vulture, eagle, crane, peacock, and so on; and all the domesticated animals such as yak, sheep, goat, oxen, and so on; and all the wild hooved animals, such as deer, ass, wild sheep, antelope, and so on; and all the aquatic creatures such as crocodile, rejam, otter, and so on. The hides of all of these are made into cloaks, coats, upper garments, lower garments, and so forth. There are silk clothes, rough weave, and all kinds of woolen clothing, various colored cloth, and felt. All sorts of clothing such as skirts, shirts, slips, wraps, and so on are made from cloth in a variety of colors. Those are the particulars of their clothing.

“As for their horses, there are white ones with red manes and tails, and four black fetlocks with four blue hooves; red ones with white manes and tails, gray fetlocks, and green hooves; yellow ones with black manes and tails, red fetlocks, and white hooves; black ones with yellow manes and tails, green fetlocks, and red hooves; and blue ones with green manes and tails, yellow fetlocks, and black hooves. There are white ones with black markings, red ones with yellow, yellow with blue, black with white, or blue with red markings on the body and head, all but the four fetlocks, so that they are variegated. On the other hand, some are of uniform color overall on the head, body, and four legs, with the [individual] hairs being different colors. All the horses have long ears with uplifted heads and wide nostrils. Their leg bones are long, the tails are full, and they are quite stocky. Their fur glistens with oil. Such are the horses. Also [shidaks ride] the camel, ass, and wild yak. Those are the particulars of their mounts.
“The saddles are made of gold, silver, copper, iron, crystal, agate, conch, stone, rhinoceros and wood. There are the cloths described before, and seats and saddle blankets. The girths, chest straps, and cruppers made of the same material as the saddle are decorated with tassels of pearls, takshar, and various silk pendants. These are the particulars of the saddlery.

“The females are similar in color and shape to the males. Taking from the description before, they are adorned with necklaces of flower garlands, and their hair is hanging down in braids. They carry conch and flower garlands in their hands. Also, some carry gold and silver mirrors, arrows, lutes, fifes, buttered tsampa, vases and other kinds of offerings. They are adorned on the right, left, and behind with takshar. They ride on mules, does, camels, yaks, pigs, cows, and brown bears. Those are the particulars of their mounts.

“They move, slow and undulating, in the wide-open plains like mists gathering. Their followers come mounted on donkeys, yaks, low game such as hares, bad carnivores such as weasels, bad flying creatures such as bats, and bad aquatic creatures such as tadpoles. Those who travel on foot are of even worse coloring than those who went before, and have smaller bodies. They are a similar type, but they carry washboards, spatulas, brushes, brooms, bellows, backpacks, string, and rope. They follow at a distance of about a mile.

“All these guests arrive with a big commotion. Their individual desirables are dedicated to them and they are each satisfied. Pleased and delighted, they become more radiant than before, and once they have calmed down, a strong sense of faith arises. They are ready to perform with devotion whatever activity is assigned to them. The precious awakening mind is born in their mindstreams. Imagining that, say these words of giving the desirables:

This corporeal aggregate of my body
Is a collection of medicines, three whites, three sweets,
Fine silks and precious jewels,
Various grains and other desirables,
Cattle, horses, and elephants,
A treasury of various kinds of wealth,
Flowers, essences, medicines, whole forests,
All the goods that shidaks desire:
Unimaginable enjoyment of your cravings.
There is nothing whatsoever that I don’t have:
Whatever you want, whatever you need, I shall give.
I offer to all the shidaks.
Enjoy without leaving anything behind,
And may you be pleased and delighted.
Once your vicious, bad attitude is quelled,
May you possess the awakening mind
And ultimately attain awakening.
P'e

“Then, without thinking of guests and desirable offering substances or
the mental continuity of them, rest in equipoise.

“If you wish to request activity, then from the start summon them in order
to avert revenge. Imagine that all the guests have fierce forms with no incli-
nation to smile, blatantly wrathful with roving red eyes, the very nature of
aggression. They have armor and helmets made of the same materials as sad-
dles, [decorated with images of] tigers, leopards, brown bears, and black
bears—these four with protruding plumes of vulture and garuḍa. They are
slung three times around with weapons. They hold arrows and fine bows
crossed in their left hands. In their right hands are bow sheaths and quivers
and rhino-skin quiver belts, and sharp spears with white banners tied on.
The females carry lassos, magic charts, cymbals, axes, sickles, and cudgels in
their hands. They ride on tigers, leopards, and other wild predators, with
bridles made of snakes. They come whirling and swirling in like billowing
yellow clouds stirred up by fierce winds. Giving them flesh and blood makes
them even more ferocious and violently aggressive. Whatever they are to be
set on (ṛbad pa), visualize it being destroyed. Fix it with the visualization of
the enemies of the doctrine being conquered and evildoers being annihi-
lated. Whatever adversaries there are who have accumulated bad karma are
liberated, and their consciousness is shot into the realm of reality. Then seal
it with the aspiration prayers, noble son.

“Don’t spread this; hide it inside your heart. In relation to general doc-
trine, it is appropriate to request activity. But if it is for personal benefit,
then it contradicts me and damages the sacred pledge. The bad karma accu-
mulated will cause you to fall to lower existences. This is extremely sensitive.
Protect the doctrine, son. This is called ‘The Precious Torch,’ an esoteric
instruction illuminating the torma for the shidaks. Keep it in mind, child.
The Nāgas

“To generate the body as desirable for the nāgas (klu), imagine the corpse anew. Separate out the flesh, bones, skin, ligaments, inner organs, blood and pus, head and body hair, teeth, nails, and so on. Light rays from your heart radiate out and strike that flesh and blood and other [body parts]. Imagine that the flesh all becomes the wisdom elixir of immortality in the form of white light with a red glow, and clarify it with p’ê. Imagine the bones as the nature of fine medicinal herbs, and all the blood as the nature of milk, like the distilled essence of the milk of a thousand water buffalo. Then from the mixture of the milk, the fine medicinal herbs and the elixir of immortality, imagine lakes, ponds, pools, grasslands, and many other bodies of water with the eight qualities of pure water. Similarly, imagine the white and black intestines as the seven encircling lakes [between the seven mountain ranges around Mount Meru]. Imagine that the skin forms the seven consecutive encircling golden mountain ranges. The stomach, colon, and bladder are fine houses and treasuries of palaces in lakes and bodies of water. The heart is a wish-fulfilling gem. The kidneys are gems with three to eight facets and joints, and [gems with] one to eight eyes that satisfy from one to eight needs and wants. Think that there is an unimaginable multitude of various gems. Imagine that the lungs are various water horses, and the liver and spleen are water buffalo, water sheep, and various animals that live in water. Think of the arteries as sal trees with the eight aspects of roots, trunks, branches, leaves, petals, flowers, fruit, and spent fruit. They are white in color and soft to the touch with an excellent aroma, cool and so on. No quality is missing in this excellent tree called the sal tree. It is 150 leagues in height, and the branches spread out to 51 leagues. The bronchial tubes, esophagus, capillaries, and ligaments are trees of various colors bunched together in what is called a pleasure grove. Imagine them as places where the nāgas are happy, where they frolic and play. The white and red seminal essences, feces, urine, and bile—these five are the various excellent medicinal herbs that all nāgas desire. Imagine that all the nails are geese and cranes and other kinds of birds that make beautiful sounds and live by the water. The five sense organs are large groves of various flowers. The head hair and body hairs are all thickets of nāga paradise trees in great proliferating groves. All of these are very fine to behold and well formed. The paradise trees and others make sweet sounds as the wind moves through them, and the birds and other creatures living in the water also emit sweet sounds that enter the ear organs of all
the nāgas and satisfy their minds. The excellent aromas arising from all the desirables enter their noses and satisfy their minds. The medicinal herbs and so forth that they taste with their tongues also satisfy them. And as they touch all the textures with the qualities of softness and so on, they are satisfied. Imagine all of these unimaginable desirable things. Then clarify it with pê.

“When your concern is for the nāga guests, make them all peaceful. They are children of about eight years old, with round faces, plump and very white. Their yellow eyes are bright and clear, with the whites being rather large and shaped like a grain of barley. Their ears are white with a tinge of red, and the red is quite vivid. Their hair is bound with crystal and hanging down in very fine sections. Their eyebrows and eyelashes are yellow and long with yellow ointment. Their bodies are white with prominent blue watermarks. Their jewelry shines brightly with lights of five colors, and their wrists, limbs, necks, and ears are bound in ornaments. Their nails are white with a bluish light. They wear a slip of blue ‘water silk.’ They turn rosaries of jewels and conches in their hands. They come shrouded in a blue mist slightly formed, hovering above the ground about one spear’s length. Partaking of the desirables with great pleasure, they become even more brilliant and radiant than before. Even their ornaments shine with a special light, and they appear to be radiantly smiling. Imagine that they are bowing to you with faith and love. Then say these words of giving the desirable objects:

This corporeal aggregate of my body—
The blood is a big ocean of milk,
The bones are herbs with six fine qualities,
Flesh is immortality elixir filling the universe,
Lakes, ponds, pools, and Grasslands and wish-fulfilling trees,
Pleasure groves and fine houses,
Wish-fulfilling gems and saffron herbs,
Desirable form, sound, smell, taste, and touch,
All the goods that nāgas require.
There is nothing whatsoever that I don’t have:
Whatever you want, whatever you need, I shall give.
I offer to all the nāgas.
Enjoy without leaving anything behind,
And may you be pleased and delighted.
Once your vicious, bad attitude is quelled,
May you possess the awakening mind
And ultimately attain awakening.

"Rest in a state without reference to the torma or the guests.

"If you wish to request activity and set them on someone else, then all the nāgas must be in wrathful form from the time you first summon them. They will have five or seven or nine hooded snake heads, and on their single backside which is coiled up, a black fog boils up. Their eyes are red, and a rain of blood falls. Their mouths overflow with a bluish red substance carrying their various nāga diseases, and wherever they are focused the local folk [become afflicted] with copious frog, snake, and scorpion messengers coming out of their lower orifices. The red wind of sickness rises up from the feet of the nāgas. Their hearts are obscured by the black darkness of evil. Their hands hold lightning lassos and wave flags of disease. Dark-yellow clouds boil up from their nostrils and issue forth, overflowing. Wild thunder issues from their ears, and lightning flashes and sparks shoot out from all their pores. Hailstones whistle out from the edges of their hoods and eyebrows. Sounds of tsak tsak, ur ur, chom chom, stuttering and dragon thunder resound from all their orifices until the cliffs crumble into avalanches. All of them are black in color. From under their blue nails hooded snake heads flare out. Their bodies are a hundred bow-lengths long. Their hoods all telescope into the last one.

"Think of them all as low caste. When they are given flesh and blood, their aggression flares up even more, and their savage side intensifies. When setting them on humans, you need [to think of them as] mamo and dong spirits; when on wealth, gyalpo spirits; and when on crops, tsen spirits. For other [situations such as] kinds of disease, bad spirits, or whatever the condition is that they are to be set against, distinguish it with the particular visualization and then do it. It is important not to make mistakes about anything and to use skillful methods, son.

"The followers of the nāgas, if they are peaceful, are similar to their chiefs in shape and perceptions, except that they have no jewelry and their clothes are only water wool. They are a little smaller and of bad color. They travel upon the ground about an earshot behind the others. The wrathful ones are ten fathoms tall and have one or two or three hooded heads. They don’t
make thunderbolts and all the noise. They carry water-wind lassos in their hands and emit small hailstones and electricity. Controlling the winds or energy currents, they make the winds gather wherever they focus. When they are peaceful they are not low caste, but when they are to be incited, you should visualize them as only low caste. For others, such as wealth, kings, and so on, it is the same as when setting them on adverse conditions such as disease. Low castes should only be incited against enemies of the doctrine.

“There are many different varieties of nāga, but they can all be subsumed into four broad categories: the royal caste, the merchant caste, the priestly caste, and the lower caste. In regard to those, since the ones named Vāsuki and Śaṅkhapāla are mainly royal caste, they are yellow. Nanda and Takṣaṅaka are mainly merchant caste, so they are red. Padma and Vāruṇi are both priestly caste, so they are white. Karkoṭaka and Kulika are mainly low caste, and they are always black.

“When you request their activity, the first three show up as somewhat repulsive, manifesting as yellow, red, and white. Usually, though, red, and yellow would both be white. The eyebrows and eyelashes and body hairs are red, yellow, and white, like the skin. The priest, however, is green when wrathful. For the low caste, the white banquet is not done, only the red banquet. For the other three castes, the red banquet is inappropriate. This is the esoteric instruction of the nāga torma. Keep it in mind. Don’t forget it: practice it.

“When requesting activity, meditate on yourself as the Great Thunderbolt Mistress (thog bdag chen mo) and visualize the nāga banquet as black and toxic to [ensure] banishment.

“Do not spread this. Hide it inside your heart. If it is for your own purposes, rather than for the buddhadharma, then it contradicts me and you will certainly fall to the lower realms. Be skillful. In order to protect the Buddha’s doctrine and guard and develop my dharma system, hide the crucial esoteric instructions inside your heart. Exert yourself in the welfare of beings through skillful means and follow me, son. Understand the particulars of the peaceful and wrathful nāga torma in this way.

**Satisfying the Terrifying, Hostile Gods and Demons with Raw Flesh and Blood**

“To give the raw flesh and blood of the body to the terrifying, hostile gods and demons who crave flesh and blood, and then to gather the gods and
demons, bring them under control, and overwhelm them with brilliance, you need to create a dakini with that ability. Either transform yourself into an ordinary person and separate body and mind with the consciousness as the syllable ha, and generate a terrifying dark-black Tröma (Wrathful Black Mother), or else without changing yourself into an ordinary form, remain as the dakini that you were before. Then a single dark-black syllable ha emanates from the heart of Machik in the sky and becomes the dakini, who is invoked [as wisdom being] and arrives. You dissolve into light that absorbs into Tröma’s heart and becomes united.

“Visualize either a new corpse or that you have instantly become dark-black Tröma with one face and two hands. In her right hand she holds a flayed skin dripping with blood. In her left she blows a human leg bone, and the sound of u ru ru brings all the hostile gods and demons under control. She is attired in a flayed human skin on her upper body and a fresh tiger skin wrap on her lower body, with a crossed black snake sash hanging down. Her open mouth exposes snarling fangs, and her tongue flickers like red lightning. Her blazing orange hair and eyebrows swirl upward. She dances to and fro with one leg bent and the other straight, trampling on a human skin. Imagine the evil gods and demons quaking in fear. She is surrounded by an entourage of one hundred thousand dakinis, each holding a curved knife in the right hand and a human hide in the left. They all have an abundance of wrathful accessories. Imagine that they are pulling apart and carving up the corpse, giving it to the gods and demons. You, the main one (Tröma), make verbal contact with all the gods and demons.

“Imagine the corpse immediately after the breathing stops, before the warmth dissipates. It is young and plump, with smooth, soft skin and rosy, radiant flesh. It is big and brilliant, fat and oily. Think of it as pervading the whole world. Just by catching sight of it, the hostile gods and demons are mentally satisfied. Coming into contact with it, their evil minds are all pacified, and deep feelings of happiness and joy arise. Imagine the gods and demons all coming together uncontrollably like a swarm of bees in a flower grove. Then, when it’s time to give over the flesh and blood, make it still warm with the steam all wafting up and the oil of grease and fat all slithering off, possessing a hundred excellent flavors, such as that of sea salt. The potency of its excellent trace aroma is like the smell of camphor or sandalwood, a very fine fragrance that pervades the whole world, or all the appearances of the lands surrounding the place where you are.
“In giving away the flesh and blood, [there are different methods]: a plundering, a method of the guests, the three types of banquet celebrations, and four ways by which you must give. In particular, there are four ways to do the red banquets: (1) specifically dedicating the [parts of the] body to specific god-demon guests; (2) generally dedicating the body to general god-demon guests; (3) specifically dedicating the body to general god-demon guests; and (4) generally dedicating the body to specific god-demon guests. Whichever of those you do, visualize the god-demon guests as terrifying and horribly wicked, with gaping mouths and bared fangs voraciously [lunging for] the flesh and blood, the male devils and female devils each surrounded by an immeasurable host of others like them.

Specifically Dedicating the Parts of the Body to Specific God-Demon Guests

“All you hundred thousand action ḍākinīs,
Headed by the upper devil king,
Directed by the lower devil queen;
This heap of an illusory body:
King of upper devils—take the upper torso!
Queen of lower devils—take the lower abdomen!
Black low caste—take the midriff!
Eight classes—take the innards!
Gyalpo, senmo, and te’u—I take the organs!
Outer gods and demons—take the outer six flesh portions!
In between gods and demons—take the middle three flesh portions!
Inner gods and demons—take the inner three flesh portions!
All sadakṣ—take all the general flesh!
Low castes—drink the blood!
Nyen types—take the intestines!
Tsen spirits—take the joints!
Gyalgong—take the radiant complexion!
Senmo—carry off the warmth and breath and vapors!
Driwo and drimo—take the veins and arteries!
Damsi\textsuperscript{54} and serak\textsuperscript{55}—take the head hair, body hair, teeth, nails, and skin!
Especially whatever gods and demons are dangerous to me—be satisfied.

\textit{P’ê}

“Then rest in the state without reference to gods and demons or flesh and blood.

\textit{Generally Dedicating the Body to General God-Demon Guests}

“The action ˜škinis separate out the flesh, blood, bones, and skin of the corpse. Imagine the heap of carved-up pieces as big as Mount Meru. Imagine the heap of bones also as big as Mount Meru. Imagine the blood as a huge ocean. Imagine the skins as unimaginably innumerable. Imagining in this way, also repeat the words:

Since beginningless cyclic existence until now, I have cherished and fixated on body, speech, and mind as the self. Previously a zillion aggregate bodies have been destroyed and wasted without meaning. Carried away by the demon of ego-fixation, I have wandered so long in cyclic existence, taking on innumerable negative bodies and experiencing the immeasurable feelings of pain from the complete ripening of committing various sins of negative action. Now, finally, I have no clinging or attachment to this ego-fixation, the cause of cyclic existence. In order for all sentient beings in general throughout the three realms that are clinging and attached to the self to give up their ego-fixation, I give up my body. When sentient beings are not able to give up ego-fixation, and they fear the separation of body and mind with clinging and attachment, then I give up my body as ransom to the god-demons so that they won’t have to. In particular, in order to pay back the kindness of my most kind parents, I give my body away to the gods and demons. And I give this body to the lords and ladies of karmic retribution as compensation for the karmic debt that I have incurred since way before beginningless time all the way up until this final moment.\textsuperscript{56}

“Contemplating that, say \textit{p’ê}. The gods and demons from the peak of existence down to the lowest incessant hell all gather together. The hungry eat the flesh portion, the thirsty drink the blood portion, and the cold wear the
skin portion. They eat the bones with the cartilage and marrow, and they are satisfied. Imagine that the hatred and hostility in the minds of all those gods and demons is pacified. Say \( p'e \). Then rest without any mental fabrication about the gods and demons, flesh and blood, or the mental continuity [that conceives of them].

**Specifically Dedicating the Body to General God-Demon Guests**

“The workers carve up the corpse, separating and sorting out the flesh, bones, and segments. Imagine a big mountain of flesh, a big ocean of blood, a big billowing cloud of vapors, fat, and grease, as well as major limbs and minor extremities with their segments all unimpaired. Dedicate them to the general gods and demons by mentioning the particular body [parts]:

- The outer six parts of the body flesh, nine inner orifices, twelve segments, four wrists and ankles, major segments, minor segments, joints, ribs, spine, spinal cord, head, brain, brain casing, eyes, ears, nose, tongue, lungs and heart, inner organs, six hollow viscera, grease, lymph, blood, feet, cartilage, fat, bones, flesh, skin, large veins, capillaries, intestines, power, influence, luster, circulation, complexion, body, life force, enjoyments, head hair, body hair, and nails: all of this I give to all of the gods and demons of apparent existence.

“Think that those gods and demons of apparent existence carry off even the leftovers without remainder and all their desires are satisfied. Say \( p'e \) and then rest without any mental activity at all.

**Generally Dedicating the Body to Specific God-Demon Guests**

“The workers carve up the flesh, bones, and innards of your body, and, combined with the blood, it makes a mound big enough to fill the universe. This heap of the body, life force, breath, complexion, radiance, enjoyment, power, influence, head hair, body hair, teeth, and nails is essentially flesh and blood, but in appearance you think of it as the emerging glory of all the needs and desires of gods and demons. Then, once you have called all the gods and demons individually, say these words to dedicate to them in particular:
Immeasurable millions of male devils, a billion female devils, all the eight classes of gyalser, the three mu, düd, and tsen, näga spirits, planetary spirits, death lords, mamos, harm-bringers, ghouls, nyens, belly-crawlers, four sisters of mother devils, karmic debt obstructors, types of disease, lords of epidemics, tong species, te’urangs, knife demons, death demons, scent-eaters, incited demons, hungry ghosts, occurring spirits, vow-breakers, serak demons, black magic spirits, harm-doers, karmic bad spirits, body bad spirits, dwellers, and local lords, all of you with your retinues who send contamination and bad apparitions, and all those in apparent existence who hold a hostile mind—to you I give this heap of bodily flesh and blood. May all of you without exception be satisfied, joyful, and happy. May you come to possess a grateful mind.57

“As you say p‘e, the followers gather up the last of the leftovers and are satisfied. Then rest without any frame of reference to guests or flesh and blood.

“This, son, is the completion of an exemplary sequence of making offerings and giving in charity.

**Concluding with the Dedication, Prayers, and Dissolution**

“This is how to seal all the virtue of this generosity by dedicating it:

The virtuous roots of having offered and given my body in charity, and the virtuous roots of caring for gods and demons with my resolve for enlightenment, as well as any virtuous roots that accrue in the three times—all of that I dedicate to the welfare of hostile gods and demons and all sentient beings of the three realms. Based on the power of dedicating in that way, may all bad karma, sins, and obscurations that are present in hostile gods and demons and all other sentient beings be purified. May they completely consummate the six perfections and reach the ultimate. May they be empowered in the intention of the unborn Mother and attain the citadel of Vajradhara, the lord of father-families of all victorious ones. And once they have attained such a state, may they bring about vast and great benefit for beings through various enlightened activities until cyclic existence is emptied.
“That and:

May individuals who practice Chöd
Cut the strings of inflation
Without seeing their own minds as devils.
May they be free of conceit,
No matter what good qualities arise.
May they not create inflation
No matter what bad thoughts occur.
May this holy Dharma, Severance of Evil Object,
Pervade all times and directions
Like the sun rising in the sky.

“Dedicate with that and recite many aspiration prayers. Then, imagine that light radiates from your heart and strikes the heart of the Great Mother in the sky. Light radiates from the Great Mother’s heart and strikes her entourage. The wisdom-beings return to their own places. Then for the pledge-beings, the bodhisattvas on the right dissolve into light and melt into the dharma books in the back. The dharma books dissolve into light that absorb into the śrāvakas on the left. The śrāvakas dissolve into light and melt into the buddhas of the ten directions. The buddhas of the ten directions absorb into the buddhas of the three times, past, present, and future. The three buddhas absorb into the Mother. The lineage lamas above and all deities of the four tantras also melt into the Mother. The Mother also melts into me in front. The four entourage ḍākinīs also melt into me. Then I, who have thus become the essence of all buddhas of the three times, come to dwell an arrow’s length above your head. You and all others do many prayers. Then say p’ê. Then from your heart light rays strike me, [and I become] a shining light orb the size of a duck’s egg. As this melts into your head, think of yourself becoming Avalokiteśvara. You and others all recite many six-syllable mantras. Then say p’ê, and the guests who would be tamed through peaceful means return to their own places. Then you become the white worker ḍākinī as before and go into action. Then rest as if in the center of the sky of emptiness.

“That is the complete explanation of giving away the body aggregate as food. Nothing was left out, but it was just a brief explanation. With the dedication
and aspiration prayers it makes a complete circle. Don’t forget to contemplate the meaning of these words. Keep them in your mind. My fortunate son and four daughters, pledged ones, may you become the ultimate benefit for beings.”

This was the fifth chapter on giving away the food.
6. The Questions of Gyenema

Death and Dying

The daughter Gyenema asked, “We four sisters of inferior birth have little understanding. In the teaching of the Rite of Transference (las sbyor ’pho ba), you said there were signs of death. What are those like? And when you explained the general and four specific kinds of red banquet, what was outer, inner, and medial flesh? How do you enumerate the inner organs, the viscera, major and minor segments, and the joints, channels, and ligaments in the natural divisions of the body? How do you identify outer and inner [aspects of the body], such as the internal apertures? And when you identify outer, inner, and intermediate gods and demons, and so-called upper and lower devils, what do we have? We haven’t been able to comprehend all this. Mother, please consider it and explain it clearly.”

“Well-born girls and boys, listen carefully and I will explain,” Machik said, and then all of a sudden, as she looked into the sky’s expanse, her body started to blaze with light. She rose up to about one cubit up in the sky and in a delightful manner began to explain:

“The signs of death are the same as when I taught the manner of dying in the explanation of the stages of creation and completion. However, since it did not resolve the confusion [evident] in your question, girl, I will explain a little more. This is the uncommon version.

“At the end of a terminal illness, finally your bodily constituents fall apart, your body emits a bad smell, and you break out into a sweat and turn pale. Your speech becomes jumbled and your eyes roll upward. You appear
alarmed and want to leave. Your hands flutter around as if searching for a lost needle. The hairs on the head and body stand up, and the color in the nails is drained. Your mouth is parched and breath comes in short pants. Then, where there was pallor before, now the complexion becomes bright and flushed. Your arms start flexing and you get upset and flustered. There are hallucinations of things that don’t exist that feel like they are sticking to the body, and your hands try to get rid of them. Sometimes you see clearly and sometimes you don’t see at all and go into darkness. It seems like there’s a water mill in your ears, with sounds of ur ur, wing wing, and tik tik, like a continuous trickle. You smell nonexistent odors that seem to waft in and out. You feel some kind of layers of dirt on the tongue, mainly bitter in taste. No matter what you do with your body, discomfort just increases. With a frantic mind making you restless, the nerves and ligaments inside your calves and forearms hurt and make you move with the torso coming out in front, like a speeding snake. Your head hair and body hairs become slightly dewy.

You constantly want to move your bed, and [you have strange] perceptions. You feel intense attachment for any friends and relatives and call out their names again and again. At times your senses deceive you, and you experience some events from other dream states. Then you don’t recognize your friends and relatives, and you mutter all sorts of incomprehensible nonsense. At other times you come to your senses somewhat.

“You should recognize these first signs of death. At that time, if your awareness is deluded in confusion, tighten up awareness and try very hard again and again not to fall into delusion. If you are attached to friends, relatives, food, and wealth at that time, think about how everything is impermanent, just like yourself, and without any attachment just remember the lama. At that time, don’t be timid. Rouse your awareness and be as confident as a warrior. Rely on the pride of being the yidam deity. If you are scared at the thought of dying, recall the pure perspective of emptiness like this:

“‘Intrinsic awareness is not something that comes about from causes and conditions. Even all the buddhas of the three times do not see it. This awareness that is essentially free of characteristics has no reason to die. Since it is not born, there is also no cessation nor even any abiding. Therefore it naturally has the character of emptiness. Since it is deathless, what is the cause for alarm?’

“At first, right after these signs of death (in the normal manner of an ordinary person’s death), there is a progressive dissolution and absorption of the five elements. When the five elements are disrupted, each of the five elements has
both outer and inner signs [of absorption]. There are five colors: earth is yellow, water is white, fire is red, wind is green, space is dark-blue or black. In the first place, the earth [element] provided the support for the formation of the body, water the cohesion, wind the movement, fire the maturing, and space the spaciousness to form a body. So earth, as the supporter, has the qualities of firmness and solidity. That now disintegrates all at once and dissolves inside the water element. Earth and water in combination are disrupted. Similarly, water dissolves into fire, fire into wind, and wind into space. Space is the companion of awareness; it is called the strength of space’s awareness or its generative force. The pure vital-essence drop (thig le dvang ma), the indestructible drop of vital essence whose nature is light, abides as the size of the smallest mustard seed. It provides the support for awareness. The very subtle life force energy current (rlung) provides the mount for awareness. Wisdom’s unimpeded dynamic energy current (rtsal) guides awareness into the pathway of the light tube of the central channel. With the doorway to freedom of great wisdom open, [awareness] is drawn through the window and expelled out, arriving in the place of Highest Great Bliss. This is called the esoteric instruction on the Rite of Transference.

“At first, when the earth dissolves into the water, the outer sign is physical deterioration. The body won’t bend, and it is as if a great weight presses down. You can’t get up and you can’t control urine. The inner signs are mental images like a flow of smoky light that makes a bluish slithering movement and like vapors that make a bluish wafting [movement], and the feeling that it comes back and covers you.

“When water dissolves into fire, the outer signs are a dry mouth, the breath rasping with fiery heat, the lips not meeting, and the tongue drying up and turning back, making it difficult to speak. The warmth in the five places moves. The inner signs are mental images of distracting appearances like dense, shimmering mirages that move precisely, the feeling of being overtaken by a great rainstorm, and thinking that the ground has become flooded with a huge river.

“As fire dissolves into wind, the outer signs are that the body’s heat is lost and the senses become unclear. There is much yawning and you can’t draw the breath, so you make [the sound] na ra ra, and each resting period [between breaths] becomes quite long. The inner signs are a shining flame, an [appearance] like a flame being carried to and fro, the flame increasing and the feeling that it will burn you. You think that all the mountains and valleys are ablaze with fire.
“The signs of wind dissolving into space are a darkening of some areas and black splotches on the external body and tongue, the body warmth all condensing into one round area, the breath vapors sort of wafting up, and a slight rasping audible in the windpipe. The inner signs are a bright radiance like the light in a cloudless sky. Within that, white lights like shooting stars arise and swirl all around like a snow blizzard. Thinking that a great wind is pushing you, you try to gasp and make sounds of hang hang, with a long gasping breath of har har. At that point all the great fears come.4

“When the eye organs fail, light feels like the points of weapons. It is as if you are whipped by tongues of flame and tail-hair whisks. There seems to be a stirring of great clouds. It is as if there were grates and fishnets, terrifying animals, smashing cymbals, a shimmering like the moving of mirages, all kinds and of every variety of color, and terrifying sights such as you have never before experienced.

“At the same time the ear organs fail, and [at first] there are innumerable subtle bristling sounds and at the same time immediately afterward there is a sound of tuk-chom, and you think that the sky has split open. Then there is an intense resonating sound like that of a thousand thunderclaps, and you experience total terror.

“Then there is no longer any sensitivity to external sensations, and the organs of the eyes, and so on are blocked (by four [experiences] like the pervasion of moonlight, of sunlight, of haziness, a total darkness, and the clear light of reality).5 As it continues for a while, you become somewhat afraid. Then the five elements dissolve internally and blend into one, becoming disrupted. The embodiment of that disruption (in someone who has very great obscuration) is the appearance of immeasurably numerous forms such as that of the wrathful Lord of Death. Distracted by this internal disruption of the five elements, you experience terrifying appearances.

“Then the five elements and the white and red vital-essence drops combine internally, and [you feel] enveloped in a covering, like when a flame is snuffed out by the wind and leaves you in total darkness. That is a mere moment, and then the refuse (snyigs ma) of the elements and the refuse of the vital drops are excreted below. The pure essence of the elements and the vital drops, called ‘indestructible,’ is extremely luminous and intensely radiant and unmoving. Within that, the luminous pure essence of awareness is utterly vivid, like the freedom from all obscurations. It is shining, like the direct perception of the truth of reality. For a moment, you know yourself and attain
total control over yourself. At that point, from within the central channel tube that is the nature of light, the fontanel aperture in the crown of the head is like an open skylight, and [the awareness] should be expelled through it.

“So, from the time when illness first strikes until finally mind and body are rent apart, until you attain the great enlightenment, you must stick very close to the lama, yidam, and genuine view. This is important in this esoteric instruction of the Rite of Transference with substances. Keep this in mind, girls, and accomplish boundless benefit for others.” Thus she spoke.

Divisions of the Body
Prenatal Development from Channels

“Girls and boys of awakened potential, listen well! I will now explain the clear divisions of the body aggregate, so try to remember how it is. The formation of our individual bodies (commonly, according to the general explanation in some of the mother tantras, where it is formed from the navel) began in the mother’s womb. There, the father’s white vital essence that is the principle of water, and the mother’s red vital essence that takes the form of fire, and between them the individual’s consciousness, called the ‘scent-eater,’ that rides on the mount of the life force energy current and enters there due to the power of karma, all combine together and take a subtle form called ‘karma.’ The earth provides support, water provides cohesion, fire causes maturing, wind causes development, and consciousness, called the element of space, provides spaciousness to form the body.

“The body develops first from the navel. The navel channel is the first support from which the body gradually develops. At first all the channels are extended. Then, first the cakra at the navel is formed with four tiers. The outer rim has sixty-four petals. Within that [is a circle of] twelve, then eight within that, like a stacked throne. This is called the emanation cakra, [associated with] the afflictive emotion of desire. At the heart, the cakra of aversion has two levels: eight channel spokes on the outside and four inside that. It is like the petals of a lotus and is called the dharma cakra. Developing upward of that, the throat cakra of jealousy has two layers: sixteen spokes on the outside and eight on the inside. It is like the neck of a vase and is called the enjoyment cakra. Spreading up to the crown, that cakra, the abode of stupidity, [forms] with three levels: the outer with thirty-six spokes, within that ten, and within that five, like an umbrella. It is called the crown cakra of great bliss. Then the
channels develop downward from the navel, [forming] the cakra in the genital area, the channels of lust. It has three tiers with fourteen spokes on the outside, eight within that, and four within that, like a seat. It is called the bliss-generating cakra. Spreading down from that, the channels of the ‘jewel’ (penis) develop sixteen spokes, the shaft eight spokes, and the tip four. Those are the channels of lust.

“In the navel, four channels branch out and become the four limbs. Then six channels spread out from the navel to form the liver, two kidneys, heart, lungs, and spleen. Channels spread out from each of those: the eye channels arise from the liver, the two ears from the two kidneys, the tongue from the heart, the nose from the lungs, and the lips from the spleen. Then channels spread from the navel to form the stomach, colon, white and black intestines, gallbladder, urinary bladder, and esophagus—all the hollow viscera. In the joints of the twelve main segments of the four limbs there are two-tiered cakras—that is, twelve outside and twelve inside evenly, making twenty-four. Each bone segment has five channels along its length, and in the joints at each end there are five inner and outer channels that have the shape of a wheel with two layers. There are also two-tiered cakras in the two soles of the feet and two palms of the hands. That is twelve on the outside and six on the inside. Along the length of the minor joints there are two straight channels.

“In the center of the four cakras that give rise to the energy currents there is the so-called central channel (dbu ma; Skt. avadhūti). It is white outside and red inside, about the thickness of a bamboo arrow. Its lower end reaches the center of the genital cakra, and the upper end exits at the crown and remains open. To the right of that is the roma channel that generates water, and to the left the kyangma channel that generates earth. The channel incidentally arising from that, which generates fire, is the crystal tube. Both [roma and kyangma] are similar in color and length to the central channel. Their lower ends terminate between the eight spokes and the four spokes of the genital [cakra]. The upper ends go up to the crown cakra and then turn back down into the central channel, becoming one. There are two very fine tips like little branches that bend back and reach to the two eyes. Where these three channels converge, a very fine branch channel of the central channel divides back and reaches to the hair-tuft at the midbrow point. Those three channels are wide and clear, straightened by the energy currents. Inside the central channel, the four cakras are shaped like the joints of bamboo. In the center of that is what is called the ‘central channel of reality.’ It is the color of quicksilver,
shiny and radiant without obscuration, transparent inside and out and pure as crystal. It is the size of the finest avadhūti channel, or the size of a fine needle, or the size of the finest silk thread, and it is hooked. Inside that, awareness accompanies the wisdom energy current and abides there. Inside the roma on the right, the channel of transcendent knowledge is very red with a ruby-red radiance, the size of a fine chopstick. Inside that is a red vital energy drop, a brilliant, radiant red color like red lac dye. It is the size of a large round pea and fills up [the channel]. Inside the left kyangma is the channel of skillful means. It is as white as a conch and the same thickness as the one on the right. Inside it is filled up with a white vital energy drop like quicksilver, the size of a large pea. It dwells there in the form of light. Similarly, wherever there are channels, both energy currents and wisdom abide there like the sun and sunlight. If there were no wisdom, mind wouldn’t happen. Without mind, energy wouldn’t happen. If there is a mind, then wisdom is established. In that way, since it is the dynamic energy of inseparable wisdom, whatever you call it, such as awareness or mind or energy current, it is not established when examined because it abides inseparably.

“Now, in women, the two channels on the right and left, and the cakra of the ‘jewel’ channel, are reversed. Other than that and the difference in male and female genitals, the rest is the same. In men, two finger-lengths, which is called a ‘channel hand,’ below the lower end of the white aspect channel of skillful means, a tube goes down until the middle of the cakra in the penis head, where it curls slightly up. In women, it is the same with the channel of transcendent knowledge. So it is on the right side in both male and female. When the time comes, the end is released downwards.

“This explains how first the body is formed from the channels. There is also an explanation of the body forming from the heart center in someone without afflictive emotion.

“From the spine is stacked up the primary skeleton, lumbar vertebrae, head, and limbs. All those bones gradually develop in dependence on the channels. The bones are assisted by the tendons and ligaments, and all flesh or muscle tissue develops from them, with the skin on top of that developing in seven stages like layers, and on top of that grows all the body hair. When the body is completely formed, it comes out of the mother’s womb.

“The bones, marrow, lungs, fatty tissue, tendons and ligaments, spinal cord, brains, and white seminal fluid are made from the father’s vital-essence drop, while the flesh, blood, grease, lymph, seven layers of skin, head hair,
body hairs, and menstrual blood are made from the mother’s red fluids. The channels and internal organs and everything else are created by both father and mother elements together. When the body is fully formed, the total number of channels is four thousand major channels, eight thousand minor channels, two hundred thousand extremely minor channels, and more than ten million tiny channels, equal to the number of body hairs. There are also more than ten million body hairs.

**Enumeration of Bones**

“There are 360 bones. If you count the extras and the tendons and ligaments, it becomes more than five times that much. As for the bones, there are the twenty digits at the ends of the limbs, each with four sections, making eighty. Then there are the two ankles and the two wrists, these four each with five pieces, making twenty. That is one hundred. There are twenty-four vertebralae, each with four parts, making ninety-six, and together with the four parts of the chin, it makes another hundred. In the limbs are the eight major leg/arm bones and four minor ones, making twelve, and the two hips have four parts each, making twenty. Plus the thirty-two teeth makes fifty-two. With the eighteen [upper] ribs, that’s seventy. Four lumbar vertebralae, the occipital bones, and the coccygeal vertebralae, each with five parts, making thirty. There is another hundred. The chest has eight parts, and three short ribs on the right and left sides makes fourteen. The clavicles have six parts inside and out, which makes twenty. The foot and hand ‘heads’ have three pieces each, which is twelve, making thirty-two. Then the two knee joints and the two elbows for four, plus the two outer heel bones makes six and the two shoulder blades, these eight each have three parts, making twenty-four. That’s fifty-six. And the flat pelvic bone has four pieces, making sixty. Those are the 360 bones. As for extras, the skull can be counted as anywhere from one to twelve pieces, so those are extras.

**Energy Currents or Winds**

“Between the muscle, bones, blood, and channels, ligaments, and skin, the energy currents do all the work separating the pure essences from the refuse and generating the thirty-two impure substances that form the so-called corporeal aggregate.
Outer, Medial, and Inner Flesh

“The outer muscles or flesh that form this body are the muscles of the two legs and two arms, making four, and the chest and trunk for six. The medial flesh is the muscles of the head and mandible, feet, genitals, and pectorals. The diaphragm with the life force channel, the loin, and the dorsals, and the *shuma* with the back muscles are called inner flesh.

Apertures

“The lungs are the aperture of the breath, the heart is the aperture of the channels, the spleen is the aperture of the blood, the liver is the aperture of the muscle, the kidneys are the aperture of the endocrine system (*rmen*)\(^{12}\), the stomach is the aperture of the nutrients, the colon is the aperture of food, the white intestine is the aperture of fat, the black intestine is the aperture of lymph. Those nine are called the nine internal apertures (*nang cha bu dgu*).

Solid and Hollow Viscera

“The seminal vesicle\(^{13}\) is the container or hollow viscus of grease, the gall bladder is the hollow viscus of bile, the bladder is the hollow viscus containing water, the stomach is the hollow viscus containing [digestive] heat, the colon is the hollow viscus containing food, and the intestine is the hollow viscus containing excrement. Those are called the six hollow viscera (*don snod*). The lungs, heart, spleen, liver, and two kidneys are called the inner organs (*nang khrol*) [or solid viscera].

Segments and Joints

“The twelve major segments are the six of the legs: the two thighs, two calves and the two hips, plus the six of the arms: the two forearms, two upper arms, and two shoulders.\(^{14}\) The two [sets of] digits and the spinal vertebrae are called the minor segments. The eight major joints\(^{15}\) are the two anklebones, the two wrist bones, the two kneecaps, the coccygeal vertebrae, and the occipital posterior fontanel joint called the devil’s door.\(^{16}\)
Skin

“The skin has seven layers: the inner muscle tissue layer, above that the silken muscle tissue, then the layer of tendons and ligaments, the layer of the veins or channels, then the layer of adipose tissue, then the dermis, and then the epidermis. These are the complete divisions of the body aggregate. Keep them in mind.

Measurements of the Body

“Whether a body is large, medium, small, or whatever, [according to its own relative measurements], its height equals its arm span”or 4 cubits, 9 hand spans, 10 index-finger lengths, 12 middle-finger lengths, 14 touching-index-finger widths, 16 four-knuckles widths, 55 thumb-joint widths, 108 finger widths, and 756 barley grains. These are the proportions of the outer physical shape. Be sure of it.

Particulars of the Individual Measurements of the Five-Aggregate Body

“The brain fills one’s cupped hands. The blood is four cupped handfuls. The lymph is six single handfuls. The phlegm equals a full handful. The winds fill the cupped hands closed together. The bile equals a mouthful. The red and white seminal fluids are two mouthfuls each, but if it increases it becomes immeasurable. Even when it is emitted, it won’t be exhausted. The feces and urine are cupped handfuls, but are definitely subject to great increase and decrease. Snot and saliva are both immeasurable and are the fluids that flow continuously. The mouth fluids, eye fluids, nose fluids, and perspiration are the four great fluids caused by conditions. The measurement of these four is indefinite. The lung stems (glo yu) are the length of the wrist to the elbow, the esophageal stem (rmid yu) is that of the elbow to the knuckles, or one cubit. The heart is said to be equal to the measure [and shape] of the left hand when holding together the heads of the five fingers, measuring up from the bulges of the joints at the border of the roots of the fingers and the palm. The three corners are angular and have the support of bones. The lungs equal the two hands cupped together, up above the wrists. The right and left lungs are each that size. The small lobe (rnol chung) is a sixth of that, or you could say a tenth. The spleen equals four lengths of one’s tongue. The liver is a little bit
larger than four spleens. The kidneys equal the two ears. The black intestine is nine of one’s arm spans. The white intestine is two arm spans plus one cubit. The colon is two cubits and four finger widths in length. The thickness equals the measure of one’s calf. The casing of the urinary bladder is the same as that of the heart, but the bladder varies according to how full or empty it is. The sex organ in men extends inside for the same length as it extends out. In women, as it is hidden inside where it becomes a container, it equals one’s own finger span [from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the middle finger]. The muscle tissue, in its extensive measurement, is 509 closed handfuls. The fatty tissue is indefinite, but at its full measure equals two single cupped handfuls. The marrow all gathered together equals half of the brain, or a little bit less. All the channels and veins are two closed handfuls. The ligaments and tendons are five closed handfuls. All the bones are one cubit.

Outer and Inner Gods and Demons

“Now, in the typology of outer and inner gods and demons, you should know the three divisions of general guests: outer, inner, and intermediate. The lamas, yidams, dakinis, and dharma protectors constitute the inner guests. The creditors and the six species of beings, including the nāgas, make up the intermediate guests. All the hostile gods and demons to whom you give your flesh and blood are the outer guests.

“There are three kinds of inner guests. The lamas of the lineage, particularly one’s root lama, and the victors and their heirs and disciples make up the inner [of the inner] guests. The deities of the four classes of tantra, or the particular personal yidam deities, and the host of dakinis and deities of the mother tantras, are the intermediate guests. Glorious Remati (lcam bral) and her entourage are the outer guests. These three are the ultimate guests for refuge. The intermediate also has three: the creditors are the inner guests, the six species in general are the intermediate guests, and the shidaks and nāgas are the outer guests. These three are the guests for charity. The purpose for making these triple divisions of outer, inner, [and intermediate] guests of these two, the source of refuge and the source of charity, is that they can
cause obstacles to the accomplishment of the levels and paths for renunciates. Therefore I explain them at every opportunity.

“Outer gods and demons have three [divisions] according to the individual’s intentions. For those who seek only emancipation [from suffering], karmic bad spirits are called conditions causing obstacles (as they cause obstacles on the levels and paths to accomplishing enlightenment). In relation to that, the masters and mistresses of karmic retribution, or creditors, and their circle are the inner gods and demons. The body bad spirits (those that cause harm to the body and life force in this life) and their circles are the intermediate gods and demons. When the residents where you live are wrathful and unpeaceful, or else there are frightening, fierce bad spirits in that area, or else a great epidemic has been sent that year, the regional lords (gnas bdag) [responsible for] those three [situations], the antagonistic spirits (sdang byed) and their circle (called embodied human enemies and unembodied god-demon enemies) are the outer gods and demons.

“If a person is not in immediate danger from disease or spirits, then the body bad spirits and their circle are the inner gods and demons, the regional lords and entourage are the intermediate gods and demons, and the karmic bad spirits and their circle are the outer gods and demons.

“Then again, if you are trying to subdue the regional lords, or else you wish to cajole them to work for you, then the spirits of the place and their circle are the inner gods and demons, the body bad spirits and their circle are the intermediate gods and demons, and the karmic bad spirits and their circle are the outer gods and demons. These are the divisions of outer, inner, and intermediate gods and demons.

“In the classification of the upper devils (ya bdud), so-called male gendered gods and demons are also called male devils. Female devils (mo bdud) refers to the types of female goddesses and demonesses, and these are called female devils or mamos. You already know the characteristics of male devils and female devils from before, noble ones with karmic destiny.” Thus she spoke.

Characteristics of the Body

Then Gyenema asked, “Mother, great wisdom dakini, all actions done by the body are done by virtue of the energy currents. Are there categories of energy, or are they innumerable with one [main] energy current functioning? What are the so-called thirty-two unclean
substances of the body? What are the characteristics of the so-called corporeal body and the aggregate?”

Machik said: “Listen, girl. The characteristics of the energy currents are just as I explained before during the [teaching on] Mantra, but I will explain it a bit again now. So listen, and remember how it is.

*The Energy Currents*

“The energy currents (*rtsa*; *prāṇa*) equal the number of channels. In a very abbreviated [list], they can be condensed into twenty-two. To be extremely concise, they can be condensed into three. And most concisely, they are condensed into two.

“First of all, when they are counted as twenty-two, there are four types: outer, inner, intermediate, and secret energy currents. The first has eight: (1) the equalizing energy that causes all the elements to abide; (2) the cutting energy that blocks each of the five elements; (3) the destroying energy that divides the nature of the five elements; (4) the moving and beating energy; (5) the energy that causes the destruction of the aggregate; (6) the energy that supports the aggregate; (7) the energy that performs all action; and (8) the energy that causes pervasion throughout.20

“The second also has eight: (1) the ascending throat energy; (2) the heart energy that generates all memory; (3) the transference energy that separates the pure essence from the refuse; (4) the descending energy of the genital area; (5) the energy of strength that produces the complexion and radiance; (6) the energy of afflictive emotion that is a karmic lack of compassion; (7) the energy of equanimity that is karmically great compassion; and (8) the energy of the great wisdom of reality that engenders transcendent knowledge. These are called the inner energy currents.21

“The third has five [energy currents relating to] the functions of the five organs, such as the eyes, and so on. When the first energy circulates, it causes the eyes to see forms. The second causes the ears to hear sound. The third makes the nose smell aromas. The fourth causes the tongue to experience tastes. And the fifth makes the skin feel tactile sensations. Those are the five intermediate energy currents.

“The fourth is called the inner energy of total equality of great enlightenment. It is a single abiding energy that equalizes the naturally nonexistent...
basic ground since the primordial origin, since all the inner pain and plea-
ure are of equal value in the expanse of the great bliss of reality. It is also called
the single secret energy. These are the twenty-two energy currents.

“In the extremely concise [typology], there are three [energy currents in the
breathing process]: when it moves externally, enters internally, and abides.
The exhalation moves as far as six fingers [from the face], then moves inside,
and then sort of abides. The exhalation is hung, the inhalation movement is
om, and the abiding is ab, [corresponding to] the Body, Speech, and Mind,
as you know from before.

“In the most concise version there are two: the energy current of afflictive
emotion and the energy current of timeless wisdom. In one day, there are
forty-two thousand [movements of] wisdom energy and forty-two thousand
[movements of] afflictive energy. So in a single day there are eighty-four
thousand alternating movements of gnosis and neurosis. Similarly, in the
night there are also eighty-four thousand alternating movements. So in a
twenty-four-hour period, the energy of wisdom moves eighty-four thousand
times, but there is no sensation and it is difficult to be aware of it. Since
beginningless cyclic existence, the wisdom energy has not developed much
strength through training, so it cannot manifest in the gaps of the energy of
afflictive emotion. The eighty-four thousand movements of wisdom energy
in a full day are swayed by the energy of afflictive emotion, giving rise to the
various concepts that stir the thought process in the afflicted mind and cre-
ate the cause for wandering in cyclic existence. The energy of afflictive emo-
tion accumulates unvirtuous actions and causes the connection to the six
realms of beings. Once the energy current of unvirtuous action leads the
awareness, the descending energy and the awareness associate together and are
expelled through the lower orifice and one is born in hell. When it attaches
to the descending energy and is expelled out the genital orifice, one is born
as a hungry ghost. When it accompanies the refining energy of transference
and is expelled out the navel, one is born as an animal. Associating with the
energy of no compassion, it leaves out the occipital posterior fontanel, or
devil’s door, and is born in the demigod realm. All of those are the conditions
created by the energy of afflictive emotion. When the wisdom energy is active,
[the awareness] associates with the energy of strength and exits through the
mouth or the nostrils and takes birth in the god or human realms. Specifi-
cally, it is taught that when it leaves through the left nostril, one attains a
desire-realm god form or a pure human form. When [awareness] is assisted
by the ascending movement and expelled out the eyes, one is born as a god of the form realm. Associating with the energy of great equalization, it leaves from the ears and is born in the formless realm. When it connects with the energy of the timeless wisdom of reality, it leaves out the crown aperture (anterior fontanel) and one takes birth as a pure type of god or, specifically, as a god of Akaniṣṭha. When it associates with the energy of great enlightenment, it absorbs into the indestructible vital-essence drop, and the awareness is awakened in the center of the heart. One sees the actual truth of reality, and the saṃbhogakāya and the pure lands arise right there. That is buddhahood.

“Furthermore, there are five energy currents from each of the two nostrils. When they move individually at the same time, the right ones are skillful means and the left ones transcendent knowledge. When the movement of energy is equal from the two nostrils, it is called the energy of the union of means and knowledge. The right is flawed by being mostly afflictive emotion energy, but the left is exclusively wisdom energy. If you want to work with them, it is problematic when movement is in the right side. You won’t be able to control the energy currents. When they move equally, or especially when the energy moves in the left side, you will be in control. First you need to fully expel the stale energy or breath (rlung ro). First count seven ha syllables and exhale from the mouth. Then count seven hungh exhaled from the nose. Finally, cut through with p’ê and press down with the upper energy current and constrict the lower energy current. As you prolong this squeezed energy longer and longer, it will finally enter into the central channel. Then, as body heat grows, you won’t need to wear clothes, and as the energy is unmoving, afflictive emotion will not arise. [You will attain the powers of] swift movement. Realizing that all appearances are like a dream and an illusion, [you will perceive everything] arising like an illusion. The five superknowledges, the five eyes, ejection and transference (pho ba grong ’jug), and all of the boundless qualities will arise. It can come to be. So generate great diligence in all the particulars of energy exercises that you have previously learned.

“At such a time, the intrinsic awareness (rig pa) gains its own ground in reality and cannot be swayed by any conditions whatsoever. It abides within the great radiant emptiness of the basic nature. That brilliance of powerful, pristine intrinsic awareness free of all obscuration is called the vajralike absorption. When you thus attain total self-control, it equals the sun and the moon. You attain many powers, such as the power to go to any pure land, and so forth. In my dharma system, this is called fruitional mahāmudrā.
“Since these sorts of qualities and signs of the energy currents entering the central channel can occur, it is important to concentrate on energy exercises. Nevertheless, even when you are not doing energy exercises, the energy [might] just barely enter the central channel. The sign of that happening is an occasional mere glimpse that comes to men and women. Awareness of it is difficult. Why? Because during intercourse between a man and a woman, or during an intense sneeze, or when a very big, powerful yawn comes upon you, in those three circumstances all thought ceases, and it is like fainting. Within that state there comes a special inexpressible bliss, but it is not felt [because] it occurs like a flash of lightning, or even shorter than that and subtle. That is the sign that the energy has entered the central channel. Also, when the body and mind separate, there is [an experience] like seeing transparently the truth of reality, which indicates that the energy has entered the central channel. You should understand that intercourse, yawning, sneezing, and [an experience] like seeing the truth of reality occur during the general course of events to all sentient beings.

“The whole environment and all beings will arise as energy’s function. Beings’ aggregates, constituents, and sources of perception, however, have arisen from the functioning by the energy. So, when you have partaken of food and drink with its six flavors, the life force energy leads it to the stomach. There, the fire-accompanying energy digests it, separating the [nutritional] pure essences from the refuse. The refuse flows out, while the pure essences become blood. The refuse of the blood becomes bile and phlegm. The pure essence is the muscle. The refuse of muscle is the excrement of the orifices. The pure essence is the fatty tissue. The pure essence of the fatty tissue is the bones and the refuse is the sweat. The refuse of the bones is the nails and the body hairs, and the pure essence is the marrow. The refuse of the marrow is the skin, and the pure essence is the vital drop. The refuse of the vital drop produces the radiant complexion of the body, and the pure essence produces the expression of qualities or great strength. That pure essence of the vital drop that generates strength is also completely refined by the energy into the pure essence of the pure essence, the extremely pure essence, and the great pure essence. The great pure essence becomes vital quintessence (beud). It is the pure essence that cannot by swayed by any conditions at all. It is the pure essence that causes mastery over all qualities. It is the pure essence of great timeless wisdom. It is the pure essence of great sublimity. Being like an immutable vajra, it is called the vajra pure essence. It is the ultimate level and
the tenth level. These are all the crucial points of the esoteric instruction on
the necessary distinctions of the function of the energy currents. They are the
same as those you have understood previously, so you should exert yourself
in practice.

“If a person does energy exercises and brings them into practice, the ten
vital drops cause all the qualities to increase more and more, and one can
reach the level of a buddha. That is the vajra pure essence. As it increases, in
the meantime it is called the increasing vital drop. When a person becomes
accomplished in the exercises, the ten vital drops increase. If they don’t
become accomplished, the ten vital drops don’t increase. Again, commonly
the vital drop of sentient beings neither increases nor decreases but abides
naturally at all times as four vital drops and two vital drops and one. How is
that? All sentient beings have the body vital drop at the forehead, the speech
vital drop at the throat, the mind vital drop at the heart, and the wisdom vital
drop at the navel, so those are four. The white vital drop obtained from the
father abides in the crown of the head. It is the embodiment of water and has
the form of a syllable. The red vital drop obtained from the mother abides
in the genital area. It is the embodiment of fire, and the form of the syllable
abides on the seat of energy. Those are the two vital drops. The indestructi-
ble vital drop is the single one.

“In this way you have comprehended all the functions of the channels and
energy currents and vital-essence drops. Therefore, girls, you should exert
yourselves in the methods of producing the qualities of these three—chan-
nels, vital drops, and energy currents—for the welfare of others.

The Thirty-two Unclean Substances

“There are thirty-two unclean substances. (This is discussing the gross body that is
circumstantially formed from flesh and blood and so on, this trembling body.) That is,
eight outer ones, eight intermediate ones, eight internal ones, and eight secret
ones, making four times eight. The eight outer substances are hair and nails,
skin and fat, veins and tendons, and muscle and bone. The eight intermedia-
tate substances are marrow and cartilage, spinal cord and brain, snot and spit,
and urine and feces. The eight inner substances are kidneys and intestines,
bile and phlegm, liver and spleen, and lungs and heart. The eight secret sub-
stances are blood, grease, and lymph, heat, breath (that is, energy) and sweat,
and the two seminal vital drops, red and white. Those are the thirty-two.25
The Body Aggregate

“All of these substances bound into one holey lump" is called an aggregate (phung po; skandha). This body—a bag of blood and pus, a stack of bone fragments tied together with tendons and ligaments, wrapped up with a net of channels and enveloped by skin — this upright bundle of belligerence is called an aggregate. This trembling (yor yor po) aggregate of all substances collected into one is called the aggregate. Since there is such attachment and clinging to this aggregate, the Teacher taught it as a bundle of unclean substances. Separating the one from the many and examining this bundle of substances, [one sees that] there is nothing whatsoever to be attached to. It is taught as unclean substance in order to instill detachment. In the functional sense also it is unclean substance. Since it is unclean, ultimately cast out to the cemetery, people will not consciously desire it. The collection of all the unclean substances that thus changes their attitude is called the aggregate. For example, mountains are aggregates of atoms. What we call a mountain is the collection of innumerable, infinite fine particles stacked up into one. When many water drops gather into one big one, it is called a body or aggregate of water. Likewise, you should understand that your own body, which is a great variety of substances stacked into one, is called an aggregate.

“Furthermore, the form aggregate along with feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness are also called [the five] aggregates (phung po lnga; pañca skandha). Since they are the support for the accumulation of all good and bad karmic action, or the aggregation of the gathering of all good and bad karmic action, they are also called aggregate. And again, since [a person is] an aggregation of both faults and virtues, we say aggregate.

“As in all these cases, this collected aggregate with its four limbs, extremities, head, and doors of perception, is also called form (gzugs). That form is also formed from composite substances. Until the illusory body is destroyed, this body is like a corporeal object because it is hindered by the elements of earth, water, fire, and wind and by mountains, cliffs, and so on. So it is called corporeal (gdos bcas). When separated from this body, free of corporeality, immediately the awareness is not obstructed by anything. Thereafter, the intrinsic awareness is accompanied by the energy current of whatever good or bad karmic action there has been and goes forth. This aggregate of form, since it is left behind (lus), is called the leftover (lus po), or body. It is ‘the aggregate,’ ‘the leftover,’ and ‘form.’
“Whatever name is given to it, once the occurrence of many compositional substances constitutes the foundation, the forces of karmic action and interdependence assemble it into an actual object with shape. This trembling thing that is fit to support for both karmic action and result and for consciousness is called corporeal. Since it is said to possess consciousness and karma, we call it possessing corpus, or corporeal. This corporeal body, impermanent and unstable, is like an illusion and may be destroyed at any time. Since this is the nature of the leftover body, understand it as such. Thus say all the noble ones.”

The Syllables Ha, Hung, and P’ee

Gyenema again queried, “Machik-la, about the energy currents: when one expels the stale breath through the nose or mouth, is it unacceptable not to use the three syllables ha, hung, and p’ee, or are there other syllables besides these that one could rely on when exhaling stale breath? How is it?”

“Girl, you are of sharp intelligence to know to ask this question. Very good! Now listen and I will explain. Don’t let your mind wander. It is like this: It is fine even if you don’t rely on syllables to exhale the stale energy. However, when the energy moves out from the mouth or the nose, that energy itself at all times moves in the shape of ha and hung. Especially, when you forcefully expel at the time of exhaling stale energy, ha and hung are naturally present. There is no need to create another ha and hung that is other than the energy itself. You should understand that that very energy is the nature of ha (when exhaled from the mouth) and hung (exhaled from the nose). There is also a natural exhalation of energy that is not ha and hung. When you don’t know that energy itself is ha and hung, the merit is less. When you know that energy itself is ha and hung and can visualize it, and the energy itself is correctly expelled outside in the form of ha and hung, it affects innumerable formless sentient beings and you gain great merit. That’s its purpose. You need to understand it in that way. Since I don’t see the need to exhale the energy with syllables other than ha and hung, it is not part of my dharma system.

“As for the necessity of p’ee, you should know that a strong p’ee is a very special syllable. It is a syllable that has the ability to pacify and overcome the force of the hostile minds of hostile nonhuman beings just by them hearing the sound p’ee. Uttering a strong p’ee, [even] without mentally visualizing it,
can burst the hearts of ordinary, meek demons. So don’t utter a strong p’ê carelessly. Applying a strong p’ê 108 times at once can annihilate any harmful force, so don’t do it frivolously.

“This p’ê equals my dharma system. [Of the two parts of this syllable, pha and t], pha is the meaning of the perfection of transcendent knowledge and t is the meaning of the supreme inner Secret Mantra. Combining these two strong letters into one, we say p’ê. Just uttering it has boundless qualities. Just uttering p’ê can flatten the head of inner ego-fixation. Externally, it can pacify disease and bad spirits. This dharma system of mine called Mahāmudrā Chöd combines the meaning of the sūtras of transcendent knowledge and the tantras of supreme inner Secret Mantra into a single arena. If you practice those two, it is called Mahāmudrā Chöd. So it equals the syllable p’ê. Furthermore, p’ê has three forms. It is like this, noble girl.

“The fierce syllable has two seeds: combining them and saying it powerfully brings forth the sound of p’ê. The significance is many and varied. It clarifies all visualizations, [specifically in] these three [cases]: say a gentle p’ê for giving and offering, a long p’ê for drawing in and sending off, and an abrupt, strong p’ê for setting boundaries. The gentle p’ê should be full and corpulent, like the tail tuft of the wild yak, or like the brush of a soft, pliant broom. Send the breath freely with its internal strength and visualize sending [the offerings]. The last, long p’ê should be strong, like the horn of a rhinoceros, fat at the bottom and tapered at the tip. Take a full breath and draw it out long, while visualizing [the guests] gathering and leaving. The abrupt p’ê should be full and fine, like grains from the excellent eon, without top or bottom, outside or inside. Cut it off strongly with the lips of the full mouth and visualize the flow of movement being cut off.

“Say the ha for visualizing dance and emptiness, sickness and spirits. The hung is usually uttered for sending and taking, achieving one’s purpose, or drawing in and driving off. Ha and hung are branches of p’ê. These three syllables that clarify the visualization hold the life essence of the sacred Dharma Chöd. Know this, all you noble ones. Understand all of the symbolic meaning of the sacred Dharma Chöd, smart ones. Don’t forget; keep it in mind. 28 Accomplish others’ welfare—wonderful!

“Thus are the three syllables, ha, hung, and p’ê.”

That was the sixth chapter on the questions of Gyenema.
7. The Questions of Chökyi Senge

THE TEN OBLIGATIONS

“Noble children, all my followers, practice like this. It can raise you from this place of cyclic existence.

1. Think, ‘Everything is the nature of death and impermanence!’ Calculate both the virtue (that is to be practiced) and the vice (that is to be abandoned) in your actions. Look at the sufferings of cyclic existence in general and in particular, especially those of the three bad existences. To always contemplate these three [subjects] is the first obligation.

2. Always stay in haunted areas, make offerings and gifts of the body (every day in six or eight sessions without fail), and don’t get mentally caught up in mundane opportunities even for a moment. With these three you will not be lazy for a moment. That is the second.

3. Love, compassion, and the resolve for enlightenment—these three are the life tree of my dharma system. Don’t be without these three attitudes even for a second. That is the third.

4. Practice the guru yoga as the profound path, the transference called Opening the Door to the Sky with the perfectly pure view of emptiness without a support, and the way to train in the rite of transference with the support of a substance. Do these three without fail in twenty-one individual [sub]sessions in each of eight sessions every twenty-four-hour period.

5. Whether doing the yidam [practice of] Exalted Tārā, or meditating on myself in the center of your heart, or doing secret meditation, or especially if meditating on Avalokiteśvara, or whatever meditation
you do, you should recite the heart mantra 121 times, the six-syllable mantra 121 times, and the exhaling, inhaling, and resting of the breath (121 times each session), with the recitation of the three syllables (from then on continuously without distraction). To do these three in eight sessions without fail is the fifth.

6. Every day without fail offer torma to Mañjuśrī, torma in the pāramitā tradition, and the hundred tormas with extras.¹ That is the sixth.

7. Every [lunar] month observe these four dates: the first, the tenth, the twenty-fifth, and the eighteenth. Also these three: the fourteenth or the twenty-ninth, the new moon, and the eighth or the fifteenth.² On these seven days, get up early, and once you’ve done prostrations and polished [the shrine], arrange the three supports¹ and light incense. [Then put up] food in accordance with your wealth, such as good dough, pure meat,³ beer, the three white substances,⁵ and so forth, as well as herbs, jewels, and fine silks as you can. With these, make an extensive feast ritual each time, offer a hundred butter lamps each time, and do a hundred peaceful fire offerings. Do these three things without fail. It is best to do it that way seven times, and middling to do it three times. At the least, you need to do it consistently once a month no matter what. Finally, even doing a feast circle, butter lamps, and fire offering seven times every month without fail [fulfills] the seventh [obligation].

8. Offer the body in a feast ritual; do seven prostrations and seven circumambulations each as explained above; and offer the water torma, make tsa tsas, confess downfalls, [recite] the profound Sūtra, and do Tārā seven times each. These three consistent daily practices are the eighth.

9. Abstain from eating these three: the five great meats and other murdered meats, the alcohol ‘black crazy water,’ made from the substances of foreign heretics, which produces all problems, and garlic, like the really foul-smelling garlic that definitely wipes out ten days’ worth of spiritual practice.

10. Do not beat down, drive out, or torture⁶ other beings by instigating harm on hostile, nonhuman sentient beings through charmed substances (rdzas thun), wrathful mantras, or doing wrathful practice. If you beat them down and drive them out, you contradict me and
have lost the way of Chöd. On the other hand, if my followers do not tame those hostile demons that harm other sentient beings, it also runs contrary to me. Therefore, the method to tame demons is to give up your cherishing fixation on the body and give your life and limb to those demons without hesitation. That is the way to tame the demons.

“These are my ten obligations. It is important to engender certainty in them and keep them. If you don’t keep them, you contradict me and damage the sacred pledge. That becomes the cause for falling into bad existences. Try hard to guard your sacred pledges, my disciples. If you could willingly give up your life, limb, wealth, fame, and power without hesitation for the welfare of others, then I will always be there to assist you, disciples.

With a loving mind, cherish more than a child
The hostile gods and demons of apparent existence,
And tenderly surround yourself with them.
Nourish them always with warm flesh and blood.
With the hook of love and compassion,
Befriend them and never dismiss them.
If, with pure noble thought and enlightened resolve,
You connect them to the sacred Dharma
And they are freed and established in happiness,
Then you, child, whoever you are,
Will be my inseparable friend.
Alas, awareness-holding disciples.

Thus she spoke.

Dress Styles of Chöd

During that time, one day when the sun wasn’t yet overhead, there came a wide-eyed, near-sighted vagrant yogin draped in a flowing dog-skin coat. He had a human skin flung over his shoulders, a white lynx bag strapped on his back, an antelope’s prickly horn held in his hand, and the mane of a wild ass bound around his forehead. He was telling a raksha-bead rosary with his hand and singing a melody of the Red Mañjuśrī heart mantra. He said,
“I have come before the mother without delay to pay homage and offer greetings.”

“Did you arrive safely, or did you succumb to the hardship of snowfall and lose your felt boots over a precipice?” asked Machik (displaying her knowledge). At this, the yogin made many prostrations over and over, weeping and crying out many times in supplication.

Then Machik said, “Mendicant yogin, Nyima Senge, sit down! Where are you from and what is your name?”

The yogin sat down, and after the tears passed he replied, “My country is the uppermost area of upper Pendruk. I am called Senge Dorje, and also Nyima Senge. Ever since I was small, my destined deity has been Mañjuśrī, and for thirteen years I did his approach-accomplishment and meditation-recitation. After the excellent abilities emerged, I proceeded to the energy-mind training. During that time, a hunter bound and beat me, and a great mental obstruction rose up that nobody could rid me of. Hearing of Machik’s reputation, I have been on the road for four months to get here. For two of those months I suffered under heavy snowfall. Once I came out on a cliff trail and my felt boots fell off and were lost down the precipice. I almost lost my toes to frostbite. Having faith in you, Mother, I never even flagged from the mental torment on my journey. When I arrived and saw this place from far away, an immeasurable feeling of exhilaration arose in me. Even now I feel physically and mentally happy, with brilliant, empty clarity free of all mental fixation. I feel an ebullient bliss in a state inseparable from the yidam deity. Before, when my mind was securely abiding in its normal state, there was a similar [experience]. But it’s been five years since then, and my mind has been tormented. Everyone said I was crazy. Now I got my mind back!”

Again Machik spoke: “Once your interest in me arose, you headed this way and one day stayed under a white cliff overhang. Since that evening I have been clearing away your obstacles. Sleep in the common room tonight. Tomorrow your two friends will arrive. I will give instruction and training to the three of you together.”

So the yogin Senge Dorje slept in the common room. In the morning, as soon as the sun’s rays emerged, the two [other yogins] stood in the courtyard. One yogin wore a flowing pale woolen cloak, carried a wool net on his back, had a human thighbone inserted in his belt, toted a begging bowl made of wild sheep horn, sported a grass hat, and carried a woolen litri in his hand, his eyes gazing upward. The other one had a black yak-hair cloak with fur
edging and a yak-hair cap with fur edging, carried a cloth roll on his back, held a cow-horn begging bowl, had a black teak hand drum\textsuperscript{10} strapped across his chest, and carried a black \textit{shershing} staff in his hand. Rinchen Gyen saw them through the window and described them to Machik.

Her mother said, “The one wearing the woolen cloak comes from Chijang Matang of upper Jang. He is called Kamdupa Yeshe Rangnang (also called Nyönpa Rangnang)\textsuperscript{11} and called the Nepali Yeshe Senge. He has been traveling here for six months. The one with the yak-hair coat is called Gyalwa Rinchen (also known as Jetsun Zilnön) and also called Po Nyön Senge. He came up from Kongpo. They met last night where they stayed together.”

Then Machik came onto the balcony to teach the Dharma to all the people who had gathered in the courtyard. The yogins also met there and engaged in detailed discussion. Machik gave the three of them, including Senge Dorje, the reading transmission of \textit{The Profound Path of Guru Yoga} and \textit{Opening the Door to the Sky: Transference with Substance} and said, “Now, I will teach you three instructions after this session is finished.” When the dharma session was finished, they were given the instructions, and their individual obstructions were cleared away. All three became adepts with unimpeded magical abilities.

Machik said, “From this day on you three have entered my dharma tradition. Therefore, some of your clothes and accessories must be abandoned. You, Senge Dorje (aka Pa Nyön Senge),\textsuperscript{12} must get rid of this dog coat, the human hide, and the antelope horn. Particularly this dog skin, since it has many flaws and is unfit to be near. This human skin is needed at some time,\textsuperscript{13} but until the instructions are obtained and the root of inflation severed, it is hidden. Once the instructions are obtained and the root of inflation is severed, you can keep any articles of unconventional behavior. But you should not display them to others, for they will offend people, so keep them secret. This antelope horn is a wrathful article, so in order not to harm any other person you should never carry it. This wild ass mane guards against contamination. It also protects against snow blindness. But it is contrary to monastic [rules], so it also is a small problem. When staying within dharma walls, please hide it.

“Gyalwa Rinchen, your yak-hair cloak and hat are the style of your country. But yak hair is the raiment of a non-Buddhist and contradicts the doctrine of Buddhism. So use this yak hair as a mat to sit on. The shershing staff has obscurations, so give it up. This teak drum is very rare in Tibet, an excellent
offering object that is difficult to find, and an instrument of the gods. Since you have such good luck, rattle away at it! The begging bowl or so-called goblet of cow horn is potent and very good. It has many good qualities and is appropriate in my dharma system.

“Yeshe Rangnang, your woolen cloak is very attractive. But the wild sheep’s prong is unfit to keep, so get rid of it. In my system, any object that could harm others, no matter what it is, definitely goes against the doctrine of the Buddha. So all deadly accessories are objects to be abandoned. Since this beggar woman’s tradition is that of the yogin, it is good to change into red and yellow colored hats and clothes that are consistent with the Buddhist teachings, but it is also fine not to change. Wearing styles of light felt, matted felt, woven wool, or cotton cloaks, wearing felt boots on the feet, and carrying cow-horn begging bowls is [consistent with] my dharma system. Predators’ pelts, black leather shoes, and especially dog skin are to be avoided.

Take Senge Dorje’s dog skin to the banks of the Tsangpo and trample it into the sand. Since the antidote of dog skin is sand, that will work. Procure felt cloaks for Senge Dorje and Gyalwa Rinchen and cow-horn goblets for Yeshe Rangnang and Senge Dorje. Get felt boots for all three of them.” It was done as she commanded.

Then Khugomchen Chökyi Senge asked, “Machik-la, what do you mean when you say that the skins of predators have flaws and especially that dog skins have many problems? Please explain these problems.”

“Listen, son,” she said. “In general, the skins of ordinary predators are unworthy, bad substances and shouldn’t be handled. Ordinarily, however, they do possess the qualities desired by worldly people, and as predators are very wrathful, they are especially elevated as a divine substance in the Supreme Mantra Vehicle. But it is inconsistent with the Buddha’s teachings to wear those skins that are always associated with the vicious mind of those wild animals. And it is extremely contraindicated in my dharma system. My dharma system is mainly about the resolve for enlightenment. If practitioners of my dharma system wear skins of predators, some of that fierceness carries over to the owner, and it won’t be acceptable in others’ minds. Since that obstructs the resolve for enlightenment, predators’ skins are something to be rejected. If you are free of [the notion of] self and unblemished by the stains of self-
ishness, then with only the insatiable altruistic attitude you will attain the
greater welfare by developing the ultimate qualities. Once you have attained
mastery in that purpose, then all kinds of vanquishing conduct (brtul zhugs)
can bring immeasurable benefit to beings. Although it won’t harm such an
individual to wear predator skins, it must still be abandoned because it is
undesirable to other people, except when necessary to set up auspicious con-
nections. Incompetent beginners must avoid predator skins. The loss of the
resolve for enlightenment will become an obstruction to liberation, and there
are many common problems besides. Therefore it is a factor to be renounced.

“In particular, the skin of dogs has many faults. In fact, there are nine
problems, so it is absolutely rejected. (1) Karma causes birth in the oppressed,
bad form of a dog. Due to the influence of bad karmic obscuration, the wis-
dom deities won’t come around. (2) The heroes, ḍākinīs, and glorious pro-
tectors won’t come around due to the bad contamination. (3) The pure
classes of guests won’t come because of the bad odor. (4) Since it is an
impure, bad substance, whoever comes in contact with it is defiled and
changed. Under that influence, sadak, shidak, yuldak, naydak, and drongdak
spirits don’t like it, and the ḍākinīs become disturbed and irritated, causing
harm. (5) When it is acquired at the wrong time, ordinary flies and tiny
insects are destroyed and killed. (6) All gentle people are disgusted by the
smell of bad remains and are displeased. (7) The village dogs fear all the
smells at the sight of it and run away. (8) Contradicting the Buddhist doc-
trine, you won’t be able to enter as a monastic into any order whatsoever. (9)
In particular, it is unharmonious with my dharma system and becomes an
obstruction to the meditation on the resolve for enlightenment. Disciples,
daughters and sons, that is why dog skin must definitely be renounced.”

Chökyi Senge again questioned her: “Machik-la, you have said
that in general the skins of predators have both faults and qualities,
but that dog skin in particular has only problems. In one sense of course
I understand this. When predators and dogs and all that are still alive,
they have faults and qualities and problems. But if something is not
flawed when alive, how does its dead husk then become something
that can generate problems? Also, you mentioned sadak, shidak, yuldak,
naydak, and drongdak. How are they individually distinguished?
Please teach these things.”
Machik spoke again: “All you disciples, listen! Predators in general as well as dogs certainly can have faults and qualities while they are yet alive. Even more, the dead corpse has greater faults and qualities. More than that, the skin has an extremely great power to produce faults and qualities. For instance, there are all kinds of species in the various crops of the field, such as the grains, the garlic family, flower family, herb family, medicinal family, poisonous family, grass family, tree family, and precious family. All of them have the power to produce both faults and qualities while still in the field. But the plants that are taken away from the fields have even more [potency]. In terms of the enjoyment of whatever the various beings desire, the plants have a much greater potency than before. In that way, the hides are more potent than the living predators. In particular, the corpses of humans, horses, and dogs have greater faults than the living beings. A dog’s corpse is definitely faulty. Exceedingly so: the dog pelt has the great faults that I have just explained before. Keep it in mind, child.

“Once someone has totally severed the root of cyclic existence, ego-fixation, and accessed the sky treasury of selfless emptiness, then all happiness and sorrow have equal flavor in the expanse of reality, and all apparent interfering conditions arise as spiritual power and glory that enhance the qualities. If you are such an individual who can transform [everything] to aid spiritual growth, then bad substances such as dog skin do no harm. But a beginner who is not such a person and who seeks liberation should not keep inappropriate substances like dog pelts. Understand this.

Identifying Local Spirits

“Now I will teach the subject of sadak, and so on, in two parts each. First of all, the sadak (earth-lord or earth-owner) in general and in particular. In general, the so-called sadaks are toche (lto 'phye, “belly crawlers”). The toche [believes] that a certain area of the earth is its own body and grasps it as the self. If anyone else appropriates so much as a little finger’s piece of it, it believes that its own body has been cut up. All ground is definitely “owned” by these toches, so the sadaks of ground in general are toches. Then based on the toches, the particular [sadaks] are those who grasp to the ownership of a certain area. [For instance], Pakgo, Lakpa, Bhadra, and Tese are four particular areas of ground that are each held to be “owned” by sadaks. They also have many attendants, and they are all called sadaks.
“Shidak (land/ground lord or owner) also has two parts, general and particular. In general, shidak is an appellation for what is called an earth goddess. Gaining control over the area of the ground that is the body of a toche, [the shidak] abides inseparably with that ground as the support. It is the goddess that spontaneously exists from the nature of the earth. She is the chief or mistress of the sadak of Pakgo and so on, and all occurring spirits (byung po) that abide in other grounds, mountains, and cliffs. So the owner or mistress of shidak in general is the earth goddess. The particular shidak is just the general name given to those individuals included in the entourage of the earth goddess that abide in particular places.

“Yuldaks (country lords) are also both general and particular. In general, yuldak refers to whoever is the local guardian (zodor)\textsuperscript{18} of a general area or native country given individual names, such as India, China, Mongolia, Jang,\textsuperscript{19} Bhutan, Nepal, Khotan, Persia, Shang Shung, Mustang,\textsuperscript{20} Mangey,\textsuperscript{21} and Tibet. Whoever is the chief ‘owner’ of an individual large country is called the particular yuldak.

“As for the naydak (lord of sacred places), there are two kinds of nay (gnas, a sacred or power place), general and particular, and also two kinds of naydak, general and particular. In general, a sacred place means the ground, or snow mountain, mountain cliff, river, tree, or anywhere that auspicious connections have come together, such as shape, color, and vital quintessence, [to create a place] endowed with many qualities and possessed of abundant power. They are places blessed by the Body, Speech, and Mind of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. All the heroes and dākinis who are endowed with the power of Body, Speech, and Mind gather there and always abide there. Either the Body or the Speech or the Mind of the victorious ones and their heirs abides there in some shape or form, so it is called a sacred place. Those kinds of grounds, cliffs, rivers, and trees are enumerated in whatever area they exist. These are unowned places, not created by someone on purpose. Such grounds and so on are natural, spontaneous sacred places. They are called general sacred places.

“Specific sacred places are created by someone on purpose. [These could be] representations of the Body, Speech, and Mind of the buddhas and bodhisattvas made of any substance that are in relief, molded, carved, or drawn, or the houses with roof ornaments where they are kept, or palaces containing various and sundry offerings. Any place endowed with blessing and power is called a particular sacred place.
“These kinds of general and particular sacred places are blessed by all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and the heroes and dakinis gather there. The general lords of those extremely blessed palaces are the twelve tenma and the kyongma. Those tenma and kyongma surround those places of the greatest blessing and roam around, acting as the owners. They assist sincere practitioners who keep their sacred pledges. But they can take the breath from pledge-breakers and nonpractitioners and connect them with bad existences. Such tenmas and kyongmas are called naydaks. Those are the general naydaks.

“There are two kinds of particular naydak: any naydak who personally takes possession of a particular place and continuously abides there, and any individual who temporarily takes possession of a sacred place. Those that continuously abide take ownership personally and individually of either a general or a particular sacred place, and then continuously occupy that very place. That spirit, by whatever name it is known, is called a particular naydak that abides continuously. The individual as a naydak is when some person who holds our dharma tradition, a Chöd practitioner, stays in any retreat place and takes over that place. The person calls it ‘my place,’ but only owns it temporarily. That is called the particular individual as a naydak.

“Drongdaks (town lords) are of two types: indigenous and transient extras. Town means a place that supports the gathering of humans, cattle, and spirits, or a community of many connected palaces or households. Nonhuman spirits that take ownership of large towns by virtue of karma and that abide there continuously are called indigenous drongdaks. The transient ones take ownership of a city but don’t want to stay there. They move from one regional town to any other regional town that they find and stay there for a few days, a month, or a few months. They cause various problems, such as plagues and pestilence. Those spirits that are on the move at all times and places are called transient extra drongdaks.

“Get to know these categories. Always maintaining an altruistic attitude, carry on with your many efforts in offering and donating your bodies, all you students.”

**Size and Quantities in the Chöd Visualizations**

Chökyi Senge again asked, “Machik-la, [your explanation of] the faults and qualities of predators in general and of their skins, as well as the
typology of sadaks and so on is most wonderful. You have said that
in our own dharma system the root of offering and charity is one’s own
body. And you have, of course, spoken extensively on how to perform
offering and charity of the body. At this point, [would you clarify what it
means] when you said that the body is one fathom when offering it?
If it is created bigger than that, how big can [we make it]? If it is not
a full fathom, is it all right when it is smaller? Are there occasions when
it is meditated on as smaller? Is there a specific number of corpses?
If there are many, must the same measure go for the four times?
When you talk about the hundred thousand action ḍākinis, what are
they like? You mentioned that the visualized surroundings of a haunted
place are five hundred leagues in size. What if it is visualized as greater
than five hundred leagues? Is it appropriate to visualize less than five
hundred leagues? Until now I haven’t found a satisfactory way to conceive of
these through semantic definitions. Please give an eloquent explanation.”

“Children, fortunate ones, listen. The size to make the body and the enu-
meration is as follows. Visualize the body from one arm span, or fathom, to
as big as five hundred fathoms.” Visualize the number of five-hundred-
fathom corpses as being five hundred.

“Here is the way to create one hundred thousand worker or action ḍākinīs
for five hundred corpses: Create ten main action ḍākinīs for each corpse.
Visualize that from each of those ten main ones an entourage of ten thousand
similar ḍākinīs surrounds them. Since each of the five hundred corpses thus
gets a set of one hundred thousand ḍākinīs, there is the enumeration of five
hundred thousand ḍākinī sets. Furthermore, since each corpse has
one hundred thousand action women around it, each group can individually
[present the offering] to the guests of offering in the sky in front. Visualize
the root and lineage lamas, yidam deities, buddhas, and bodhisattvas of the
ten directions and three times, heroes, heroines, ḍākinīs, glorious protectors,
and guardians for each one. All around each of the sets of one hundred thou-
sand workers, visualize the guests that receive charity: the karmic creditors,
six species of beings, shidaks, nāgas, and hostile spirits that are the guests for
the red banquet. Thus they are all counted for every hundred thousand.
Then do the offering and charity the way it was explained in its own section.
That is precisely and unerringly the meaning of the size for creating the bod-
ies, the amount in numbers, the way to visualize the hundred thousand sets
of workers, and the way to visualize the objects to whom it is offered and the
guests to whom it is given. Since it is definitely the way to do it, you must
definitely not forget it, disciples.

“A practitioner of the very best caliber who can do an even better visualization should expand the measure of five hundred fathoms for each corpse to visualizing the entire three-thousand-fold universe filled up by corpses. Individual corpses would have the hundred thousand workers, and the way of visualizing the guests of offering and charity would be the same as explained before. This is the system for those of exceptional faculties. Those with dull faculties, or those who are confused or small-minded, should visualize one corpse of five hundred fathoms with a single set of one hundred thousand action ḍākinīs and do the guests of offering and charity in that way. That is the system for those of lesser faculties. No matter what size or number of corpses you visualize, it is unacceptable to use rotten, putrid, moldy, discolored, pallid, fleshless, or dry corpses as visualization objects. You should visualize the corpse as youthful and with a radiant complexion as explained before in the red banquet.

“The surrounding haunted place is definitely five hundred leagues in size. However, there are differences according to highest, middling, and lesser faculties [of the practitioner]. If it works, visualize it as big as the three-thousand-fold universe; or [equal to one world system of] four continents, Mount Meru, and the iron mountain rings; or to one continent; or to the size of one big country such as India, China, Nepal, Tibet, or Kham; or to one of the smaller territories named within those big countries; or to one of the districts within those smaller territories; or to an individual valley; or else the distance that one can see; or as large as one [plot of] land under the umbrellalike sky; or at least one hundred leagues. [In any case, it should be] adjusted to your own mind, but not unreasonably large. It is most reasonable that the series of sizes for the haunted area should be decided according to the individual’s mind. Nevertheless, you disciples should know that the measurement of five hundred leagues is the particular standard.

“So the haunted area is five hundred leagues; the large corpse is five hundred of one’s own arm spans, or fathoms; in number there are five hundred of them; for each corpse there are two hundred goddesses, making up the set of one hundred thousand action ḍākinīs; and for each of them there is a set of deities for the offerings and guests as the field for charity, all visualized individually. Concentrate on that with utter clarity in the visualization, with-
out distraction, and aided by mindful attention. With body and mind naturally relaxed and gently tempered, always take into account the noble thought of compassion, the heart of naturally nonexistent emptiness. Wearing the armor of intense diligence, do [the practice in that way] eight times in one twenty-four-hour period, or definitely six, but at the least four times. Then the uprisings, apparitions, evidence of success, and evidence of severance will certainly come along nicely. Understand this and practice accordingly."

**Uprisings, Apparitions, Evidence of Success, and Evidence of Severance**

Again Chökyi Senge said, “Machik-la, you have taught eloquently about the way to make the size of the body, the numbers, the set of one hundred thousand workers, the haunted area, and the guests for offering and charity. It is incredible. But I have yet another question. When you say uprisings and apparitions, are those the same? If they are two things, where is the dividing line? Are the evidence of success and the evidence of severance also the same? Or if they are two, what are they like? Please tell us.”

Machik replied, “Listen, children. The evidence of uprisings and of apparitions are two [different things], and the evidence of success and of severance are also different and not identical. The signs come in this way: first the uprisings, then the apparitions, then the evidence of success, and then the evidence of severance. The specifics of this sequence do not revert. This order of occurrence is definite.

“First of all, the yogin must internalize both the practice of casting away the body aggregate as food and reliance on a haunted area. Once you have assimilated the cycles of esoteric instruction on the crucial points of practice in the manner of both relative and absolute truth, and the manner of those two in union, you should go live in a pleasing and attractive haunted area. Otherwise, as explained in geomancy (sa spyad), [stay in] a haunted vortex or power spot or wherever [the power] is concentrated. Whatever visualization you undertake, whether peaceful, enriching, controlling, wrathful, extremely wrathful, and so on, maintain undivided altruistic intention and the motivation of inseparable emptiness and compassion as the foundation. Troubled by your peaceful or other primary absorption, the spirits that live in that same
haunted area cannot bear the overwhelming brilliance of the yogin’s power of reality, and they become agitated. In order to interfere with the yogin’s practice, a spirit [relies on] any resources of its own, or summons other companions and gets them all riled up and they crowd in. When that happens, the yogin gets a slightly uncomfortable sensation in body and mind, like a queasy, light-headed, or hair-raising feeling. That’s called the initial uprising.

“Then the gathering of all those spirits consolidates and manifests all kinds of emanations by whatever powers and abilities they each have. They send a variety of problems, interfering with the yogin’s meditative absorption. At that point, the yogin [experiences] various unpleasant sights, either for real, as visionary experiences (nyams snang), as an overwhelming presence (gzi byin), or as dreams. Those are called apparitions.

“Although the spirits display a profusion of various apparitions, they find no purchase with that yogin. They are unable to bear the [yogin’s] power of reality; their power is exhausted and falls to the yogin. They become obedient and subservient, doing whatever is commanded. They can accomplish the worldly spiritual powers and minor wishes, serving like slaves. At that time, as a portent of the birth of the yogin’s qualities, all kinds of wonderful and delightful signs occur. That is called evidence of success.

“Then the spirits’ courage wanes, their strength subsides, and their malicious thoughts are weakened. They obey the yogin’s commands. Promising to do no more harm to sentient beings, they become allies for those who practice the Dharma. [In that way] the spirits themselves enter the path to liberation and begin virtuous activity. The signs will come to the yogin that those spirits will certainly attain the enlightened path of liberation through the force of protecting the side of good. At that time, the yogin has severed the roots of all apprehensions that her or his mind could be lost to the inflation of good or bad thoughts, and so on. Once the utterly pure view of the truth of reality, the meaning of the true nature of nonself, is actualized, you will accomplish your own welfare in attaining dharmakāya. You will possess prolific ability to establish beings in the citadel of freedom and [accomplish] the welfare of many other sentient beings, primarily those spirit lords of the place (naydaks) and their attendants. That is called evidence of severance.

“In this way, uprisings, apparitions, evidence of success, and evidence of severance should come sequentially without disorder. This is definite. Nevertheless, there are many different kinds of mitigating factors, such as the differences in the abilities of the individual, level of exertion, knowledge of
how to implement the visualization, grasp of the visualization, clarity of the visualization, strength of the visualization, discrimination of whatever is visualized, knowledge of how to implement the general esoteric instruction, understanding of the differences in peaceful or wrathful visualization, the differences in peaceful or wrathful naydaks; the differences in conditions of sickness, amount of obscuration, amount of training accumulated in the past, the level of courage; the differences in best, middling, and lesser faculties, and so forth. The great number of [variables] means that the proper order for uprising and so on is difficult. So the four [stages of] uprising and so on may come irregularly, as follows. There are cases of apparitions occurring without uprisings. Also without evidence of success there is severance. There are cases when success and uprising don’t come but both apparitions and severance do. Then sometimes after success and uprising both come, apparitions and severance do not. Or evidence of uprising and apparitions don’t come, but evidence of both success and severance occur. Evidence of success and severance don’t come, and then only evidence of uprising and apparitions happen. Sometimes without evidence of success, there is a time when both uprisings and apparitions come. At times uprisings and so on each come along but then the other three don’t come. You also have all four happening at once. In one day all four might be complete. But then there are types who don’t complete these four stages from uprising to severance for up to three days, up to five days, seven, fourteen, twenty-one, one month, two months up to a year, from a year up to sixty years up to a lifetime. So there are all these variations in the sequence of these four stages that can occur. It depends on the particulars of the individual and a little bit on the differences in peaceful or wrathful naydaks. Nevertheless, a disciplined person who definitely seeks freedom and can devote her or his whole life to it and has particular faith in my dharma system and hopes to comprehend all dharma, who then learns the stages and how to implement all the esoteric instructions and practices them well, will certainly experience these four in their natural order.

“Moreover, evidence of severance means knowing that all apparent external objects are without any true existence and understanding that they are not permanent and not stable. Once there is that realization of truthlessness, nonexistent objective appearance arises naturally as a reflection of emptiness. That is the evidence of severance of external objects. Internally, after the root of ego-fixation is cut at the source, the meaning of emptiness in the nature of nonself will be actualized. Understanding that you are a person arising as
the reflection of emptiness, the meaning of illusory truthlessness will be actualized. That is the inner evidence of severance. Although those two, subject and object, appear to be separate, they are ‘inherently nonexistent.’ Knowing that in relation to the ultimate they are of a single inseparable quality, like the [reflected] moon in water, to gain mastery in that is the evidence of the severance of the indivisible union of outer and inner [phenomena]. In that way, the force of the yogin’s aptitude for reality calms and subdues the hostile minds of gods and demons in the external haunted place. Making them part of your own entourage, you usher them to the path of liberation and establish them in the supreme citadel. Then you have interrupted the continuity of births in cyclic existence. That is the evidence of severance of gods and demons of haunted places, the object of inflation.30

“Subjectively, the person causes inflation (snyem byed) by ideas of good and bad, mental objects and apprehensions, and so on. Once all of that mentally constructed elaboration is cut off in its own ground, the meaning of the reality beyond mind, free of activity and elaboration, will be actualized. Then, once the five toxic afflictive emotions of ignorance are purified, light rays of the fully blossomed five wisdoms of intrinsic awareness will [shine on] those to be tamed. It will illuminate their dark dullness and bring about boundless benefit for beings. With just that, all devils arise as glory, all obstacles enhance your qualities, and all adverse conditions assist in the spiritual power to fully attain your aims. Just as there are no [ordinary] rocks on the Island of Jewels, whatever thoughts occur in the mind of such a person, whatever you say, and whatever deeds you do physically all become exclusively the cause for the welfare of beings. You must be like the wish-fulfilling jewel that fulfills the hopes and desires of beings. That is also called the evidence of severance of the subjective person that causes inflation.

“The object of inflation (snyems bya), the so-called gods and demons that are to be tamed, have never fundamentally been truly existent since the beginning but have been empty of their own essence. And the individual who causes the inflation has never been fundamentally truly existent since the beginning but is empty of the essence of personhood. Both are called ‘inherently empty.’ Since they are a single flavor in relation to the ultimate truth, they abide as inseparable and coemergent. In the aspect of the relative truth, mere appearances appear distinct and individual. But they are not as they appear. They are also not the same or other. The actual things [and their nature] are inherently indivisible, like a mirror and the reflection in it. Under-
standing that and gaining control in that kind of meaning is called the evidence of severance in union (zung jug).

“Evidence of severance such as that is very rare, about one out of a hundred Chöd practitioners. Most ordinary Chöd practitioners don’t have such evidence of severance. In fact, even getting and recognizing the first uprising is difficult for them. Therefore, it is important to not succumb to the powers of laziness and distraction, to befriend mindful attention, and to exert yourself in the way to implement the crucial points of practice.

“Some apparitions and evidence of success will come to everyone to the extent that a person is committed to Chöd and just in accordance with the person’s mind. Genuine apparitions and particular, special evidence of success occur only rarely. Apparitions, moreover, must be completed individually, [depending on] the particulars of outer, inner, and secret [kinds]. [Sometimes] the signs of outer common [apparitions] do not occur while the signs of uncommon ones do. You must understand and recognize all these particularities of apparitions. It is also important to know and recognize the particular categories of common and uncommon evidence of success. So comprehend and put into practice all these characteristics of uprisings, apparitions, evidence of success, and evidence of severance, noble disciples.”

The Common and Uncommon Evidence of Success

Again Chökyi Senge asked, “Machik-la, you spoke of the subcategories of evidence of success, common and uncommon, and how there are various different agreeable signs or portents of the qualities developing. What are the characteristics of those things?”

Machik said, “Listen, son. The common and the uncommon evidence of success each have five parts. The common ones are:

1. The evidence of success that the gods and demons have been controlled,
2. The evidence of success that the gods and demons are bound under oath,
3. The evidence of success that the gods and demons have bestowed spiritual powers,
4. The evidence of success that the bad spirits have been expelled, and
5. The evidence of success that disease has been expelled from the body.\textsuperscript{31}

Evidence of Success That Gods and Demons Are Controlled

“Gods and demons have been controlled [when you experience that] the valor of those apparitional beings is broken and falls to yourself, so you are honored with faith and devotion. They offer respect and excellent service. Becoming peaceful and gentle, they listen attentively to the Dharma. With affection and yearning they obey any directive that you give. They joyfully accomplish all the deeds that you commission. Until buddhahood is attained, they will remain as your attendants and promise to obey like your slaves. As for yourself, once you have become a Dharma sovereign, you will explain the Dharma to many human beings. As you yourself become a lord of humans, you gain dominion over all the people. Being in control, you will come to govern the whole world.

“Furthermore, [you might experience that] rivers or oceans become totally disrupted and waves roll and swell, but then again calm down and become tranquil. Even if you are submerged under the water, you will have no trepidation. That is gaining freedom over rivers and oceans. Volcanoes blaze with swirling fire and crackling sounds, and then again become gentle. Even if you leap in, you have no trepidation. That is freedom over fire. Even when thrown over the precipices of steep cliffs and great ravines, you have no trepidation but would be quite prepared to jump in again—that is freedom over those precipices. Great windstorms gust fiercely, covering all the sky, space, and ground, and in the end are calmed and cleared up. The sky and ground become radiant and extremely pure with a power of clarity. By that force, you experience joy and mental clarity. The power of brilliant awareness is greatly enhanced, and you attain the power over the banded ones.\textsuperscript{32} In debates with others you prevail and indoctrinate your opponents. In war disputes you are victorious and your adversaries become your attendants. You avert great, agitated hailstorms and avert and tame wild places. You ride and train vicious predators, tame wild yaks and scary elephants as pack animals, and tame unbroken, wild horses and mules. You control these and boundless other such hosts of beings.

“All this will arise as visionary experience or in particular occur clearly in dreams. These are the evidence of success that the gods and demons have been controlled.
Evidence of Success That Gods and Demons Are Bound under Oath

“Gods and demons have been bound under oath when you become a dharma sovereign and confer the training in ethics on many beings, who swear oaths to uphold that discipline. From now on until they attain buddhahood, they promise to abandon harming others and to practice helping them, doing whatever virtuous activity they can. You bring them into the outer, inner, or secret maṇḍala of your own deities, whichever is appropriate, and confer empowerment and place them under oath. They abide [in that oath], and they each offer you their personal life force heart with the soul-sign and swear to remain in your entourage until all of cyclic existence is empty. Held by the strings of your own visualized light rays, they cannot get away. You put them into a fine house and order them to practice for a certain number of years. Or you order them to stay in such and such a place, like a cliff or a mountain or a forest or an island, and to exert themselves in accomplishing such and such a practice until such and such year, and they are bound under oath to exert themselves in that practice. Or, you appoint a dharma chief to each group, and for this year or until they attain enlightenment they will obey the injunctions of this master and have no power to do otherwise. They promise to do whatever that master says and are thus bound to obey and practice the Dharma. A large group is thus bound under oath. Or, you become sovereign of the universe and secure many beings under many new ethical codes about worldly activities. After you apply those laws, the beings promise to uphold them properly and are bound under oath. You appoint another person to be the justice, and a large group are bound under oath to obey. Then again, animals of whatever species are herded into a corral and are unable get out. They are tied to railings or to other collars and cannot escape. Appointed as the chief of the shepherds, you protect the herds and they cannot go anywhere else.

“When these things occur in visionary experiences or definitely in particular dreams, they are the evidence of success that the gods and demons have been bound under oath.

Evidence of Success That Gods and Demons Have Bestowed Spiritual Powers

“Spiritual powers are yours when many beautiful bejeweled men and women offer you various offerings of song and dance and so forth. Furthermore, you

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are freely offered boys and girls as spouses and servants. There are mansions and various animals such as horses and cattle. Gold coins, silver coins, and all kinds of precious stones fill never-emptied vessels with extremely lovely shapes that please the mind. There is new worsted cloth in various colors and, similarly, various fine silks, various kinds of grain without any black grains, various elixirs of crops, and so on. There are young fruit trees in full foliage with nutrients and well-colored fruits, and very thick trees with the potency of fine smell—all kinds of trees that are not decayed. You are given various fruits and flowers of trees, and species of flowers from meadows and lakes in a variety of colors. Also new clothes of different colors, chairs, and various seat covers. Your lungs, hearts, entrails, and other organs that were previously taken are now being returned.

“When such things are given to you by others and then enjoyed by you in experiences and in dreams, it is evidence of success that spiritual powers have been bestowed.

Evidence of Success That Bad Spirits Have Been Expelled

“Bad spirits have been expelled when many different species, such as spiders and scorpions, frogs and snakes, fish and tadpoles, ants and beetles, moths and butterflies, all kinds of flies, small bugs, and very big bugs are expelled from your own body or the visualized body. Different species such as predators and domestic animals, particularly oxen, monkeys, white-chested dogs, tuljalep, pigs and donkeys, white and black rats, parrots, feathered species, venerable priests, shaman priests, those dressed as mantrins, men, women, children, and so on—any living, embodied beings included in ‘sentient beings’ that come to mind—are all expelled from the body. Furthermore, [there are] pouches and other kinds of empty containers, pots and other kinds of crockery, black buckwheat, black peas, and other kinds of black grain, black dog’s wool and other black furs, dog skin and other black skins, yak-hair and other black clothes, black yarn and rope, types of salt and garlic, black poison, crow’s feathers and down, hot cayenne pepper, hoes or spikes made of iron, and whatever else is made from bad substances that are essentially ugly and undesirable.

“When you experience or dream that those things are expelled from inside your body through the doors of the senses, the fingernails and toenails, or wherever, and they go elsewhere, or else were stuck to your body and then
come off and go elsewhere, then it is evidence of success in expelling bad
spirits.

**Evidence of Success That Disease Has Been Expelled**

“Disease has been expelled when you flush out or throw up blood, pus, actual
impure substance or their excretions, and the ferment of whatever food has
been eaten. Or when you discharge out of your sense doors or pores various
blue and red colors in the form of tongues of flame, various colored wind,
various colored light, various colored water, various colored steam, and var-
ious colored fluids. Or, if you have a sudden new sickness of the energy, bile,
or phlegm, to excrete blood and so on from the nucleus of the disease. Or,
frightening creatures consume that nucleus of disease (*nad mig*) and it is
eliminated. In any case, your body is left feeling light, clear, and blissful.

“Whether these occur in experiences or in dreams, they are evidence of
success in expelling disease.

“The five uncommon [kinds are]:

1. The evidence of success that obscurations are purified,
2. The evidence of success that the deity sign has occurred,
3. The evidence of success that the path of liberation is attained,
4. The evidence of success of exceptional, supreme spiritual powers,
   and
5. The evidence of success of attaining the fruition.

**Evidence of Success That Obscurations Are Purified**

“Purification of obscurations [has occurred when] you wash everything on
the body that could be washed, all stains are purified, and the body becomes
white and shiny. Inside, all impurities are purged down and out, and your
insides are left clean and shiny like a fish’s belly. Every single thing inside you
is thrown up, and your insides become empty and shiny like a bag of skin.
In between, a black sludgelike liquid soot from the channels exudes from
under your nails and pores, and all the channels become shiny clear like a
blown-up balloon.

“Your flesh and bones are separated. Many animals eat the flesh until not
even so much as a sesame seed’s worth is left and the unblemished bones
become as shiny and white as a conch. Or, the flesh is all burned and arises as white smoke with the fragrance of sandalwood, leaving no ashes. The bones are burned and leave white ashes like silver powder that the wind scatters into space. They fill the sky like a blizzard and then fall to earth and settle like snow, packing down and making the whole surface of the ground white and brilliant.

“You enter into pristine, pure large rivers or lakes and wash until all stains on the body are purified and it becomes radiant and shiny. Or else filth on the body is washed away and black stains like ink are washed away and purified, leaving your body all white. Or, somebody lifts a white vase, and a white stream of water washes your body outside, inside, and in between, purifying the stains and leaving it as clear as crystal outside and inside. Wearing immaculate, new white clothes of cotton and so on that are soft to touch and light in appearance, your body becomes as light as cotton wool and floats in the sky. You leap and dive without impediment into rivers and ravines. You experience your body as an aggregate of light. You realize that your body is empty and invisible. Many white flowers adorn your body. A conch-white stream of water shimmering with light emerges from between your body hairs. Your head hair, body hair, eyebrows, and nails turn white as conch shells. Shining white light pervades your whole body. You sit on a moonlike seat with white mats and drapes. Sitting inside a house built of crystal, you see everything without obscurcation, and your body is almost translucent. The white channel syllables appear from within the clear channels of your body. White groups of syllables fill space, sky, and ground. Buddha bodies and pure lands occur in actual or meditative perception or in dreams.

“When these and others occur in experiences or dreams, it is the evidence of success in the stages of purification of obscurations.

Evidence of Success That the Deity Sign Has Occurred

“[It is a sign of the deities when] you carry precious ornaments on your body or you are adorned by garlands of flowers and pearls. Carrying bone ornaments and vajra and bell, you fly in the sky. You carry various offering objects, such as umbrellas, victory banners, and pendants. You brandish a blazing sword overhead or hold a curved knife and blood-filled skull cup or carry a trident. You play resounding music, such as blowing a conch or beating a big drum or a small hand drum. You sit on a sun and moon seat. The sun, moon,
and stars appear at the same time in a completely cloudless sky that is filled with five-colored lights while the sound of music fills space and you experience joy and mental clarity. Riding on lions, tigers, turquoise dragons, garuḍas, and vultures, you play in the sky. You brandish a white pendant in the sky and carry a trident and blood-filled skull cup. You sit as the main deity on a multicolored lotus and sun seat in the midst of a precious palace of rainbow tents in the middle of a five-colored mountain of wisdom fire while countless bejeweled goddesses carry in various offerings and give them to you.

“Whether these occur as visionary experiences or dreams, it is evidence of success in deity signs.

Evidence of Success That the Path of Liberation is Attained

“[It is evidence of attaining the path of liberation when] you come out of the pit you have fallen in and arrive on top. Or you cross over a great river and arrive on the other shore. The sun or the moon recover from being captured by Rāhula [an eclipse]. You are bailed out of prison and freed from bondage. You are released from a trap. You arrive at clarity from a dark place. You escape from a dense forest. You climb from the edges of a snow mountain and reach the top. You get out of sinking in a foul black bog. You get free from being trapped in fire. You are released from smothering inside black clouds and vapors. Released from an unthinkable land of cities of local folks, you reach the expanse of Supreme Mount Meru. Climbing up the five staircases of a five-storied jewel mansion, you reach the top and dwell joyfully on the same level as the sun and the moon.

“[If these occur in experiences or in dreams, it is evidence of success in attaining the path of liberation.]

Evidence of Success of Supreme Spiritual Powers

“[It indicates supreme spiritual powers when] you consume an entire human corpse with a radiant complexion, attractive fresh flesh with lots of fat, and a delicious smell and yet still are not satisfied. You consume a head with hair on it and warm brains mixed with blood and are still not satisfied. Someone gives you a fresh skull cup filled with blood or with elixir possessed of a hundred flavors and you drink all of it. You are given a precious goblet or vase and are told that it holds divine elixir, and you drink it. Someone like a yāka
or dākini claiming to be a hero or heroine gives you what he or she says is white or red seminal fluid and human urine and feces and you eat it without hesitation. You sit upon a stack of many human corpses without any trepidation. You reach the top of the Supreme Mountain and see everything in the three realms distinctly without obscuration. A naked woman with bone ornaments turns her red eyes and glares at you. She holds a skull container of boiling semen and red menses and gives you the overflowing froth, which you drink without any doubts. All discursive thoughts cease, and nonconceptual timeless wisdom unfolds so that you comprehend all that there is to know. Something like seeing the actual truth of reality occurs.

“When these occur in experiences or in dreams, it is evidence of the success of special, supreme spiritual power.

**Evidence of Success of Attaining the Fruition**

“The force of fully completing the evidence of success of spiritual powers up to this point eclipses all ordinary conceptions and attachment to worldly appearances. The great timeless wisdom of nonconcept, nonperception, nonattachment, and nonaction fully unfolds. It is like when the sun rises in a pristine sky and a person with eyes looks out and clearly sees the whole country laid out without obscuration or covering. Once obscurations are purified, special realizations arise in your stream of being through the power of attaining the supreme spiritual power, and dreams become sharp and clear. Clairvoyance arises, and you see and meet the pure realms of the buddhas and bodhisattvas and all their environs in dreams. You sit upon the lion throne and teach the Dharma. You sit on top of a stūpa and spread light rays. You reach pure lands arrayed with flowers. You enter into the secret manḍala of your own yidam deity and receive the complete four empowerments. The force of clearly attaining all this in experiences and dreams produces special abilities in your body, speech, and mind. You have the ability to actually control gods, demons, humans, food, wealth, and enjoyments. In the daytime you assemble the humans and in the night you assemble the demons. In general, you gather the gods, and morning and evening you gather food, wealth, and enjoyments. The force of your ability will automatically subdue all demons and bad spirits and so on. Many such omens of your qualities will occur naturally and spontaneously, and all of your actions will be in harmony with the Dharma. This is the fruition of
completing the ninth evidence of success, and such qualities are the tenth evidence of success: the fruition.

“It is important that these ten evidences of success occur just as explained individually, without being mixed up, clearly and believably as special experiences in dreams. The majority of the qualities of the evidence of success of the fruition must really happen. Thus, the qualities of consummating the ten evidences of success are portents of the arising of the evidence of severance.

“As explained before, you must attain the first [bodhisattva] level for evidence of severance. If you fall into the inflation of arrogance and delight in the qualities of the evidence of success, it will act as a devil to prevent you from attaining the path of seeing and evidence of severance. Whatever qualities of success occur, do not get fixated or attached to them with a bloated mind. Practice with whatever occurs as if it were a dream or an illusion. Within that truthlessness, cut through the roots of inflation, son. Now listen again, you disciples gathered here.

Uprisings, apparitions, evidence of success
Are just mind’s labels—they never existed.
In the reality of their primordial nonexistence,
Any rejection or acceptance is the devil itself.
Don’t pursue objects; cut through inflation.
Realize the nonself of the self-fixated devil.
When you know nonself, you’re released from ego-fixation.
If you know that, severing and severance object,
This or that devil, don’t even nominally exist.
The devil of inflated object and the devil of inflation itself—
If you know what inflates, inflation can’t touch you.
Once you cut off inflation of that devil,
Mere inflation appears like the water of a mirage.
An illusory being can’t maintain self and other—
You are free of the impaired eye that sees two moons.
Clouds arise in the sky without rejecting the sky.
As everything is naturally appearing and naturally free,
How could you possibly accept or abandon yourself?
If it were possible, whatever you accept or abandon
Would therefore be cherished, and that itself is the devil.
Therefore, do not cherish anything, disciples.
Released from cherishing, there is no severance or object to be severed, Supreme path of liberation, or any supreme spiritual powers. The devil to be rejected is the same god to be accomplished. Know they are the same, mere designations that never existed, With no single thing to be demonstrated. Once you know your inflation, it is released in its own ground And you cannot speak or think of your own essence. Dualistic fixation of object and subject are cut right through. Disciples, rest freely without contrivance Within reality itself, pure as the sky, In emptiness, nonself, and utter simplicity.

That was the seventh chapter on the questions of Chökyi Senge.
8. The Question of Jetsun Zilnön

**Outer and Inner Apparitions of Spirits**

Jetsun Zilnön¹ asked, “O Machik-la, for us beginners of limited intellect, kindly explain very thoroughly the individual outer, inner, and secret ways that apparitions arise — the special and the common, general ways in which they occur.”

Machik said, “Listen, son. Those who have not attained the bodhisattva levels and do not possess clairvoyance cannot understand the minds of others. Those who have not mastered the meditative absorption in visualization cannot actually invoke gods and demons. Such neophytes who wish to inhabit haunted areas should examine the indications (mtshan ma) in dreams. That is, examine the indications of general gods and demons and examine the special indications of the eight classes specifically.² I will explain it well, so try to understand.

*Apparitions of the Male Gyalpo Dön*

**Inner Indications**

“First, I will explain about the [indications of] the male bad spirits, the gyalpo.³ These are the special times: Few apparitions show from daybreak through the morning up to midday, or from sunset until night. Also, they don’t come during the predawn time. It is taught that the special times for sending apparitions are from just after noon until the sun goes down, and from the time the stars show until just past midnight.⁴

“[At those times, the following things may occur in your dreams]: Murals in temples, molten images and various such representations. Pagoda-style
flared roofs\textsuperscript{5} nicely adorned with many offerings and riches. Blue balustrades\textsuperscript{6} decorated with male and female garu\textsuperscript{\textdegree}s, golden finials,\textsuperscript{7} golden birds, \textit{makaras},\textsuperscript{8} and lions. White stûpas, [housed] statues, gold houses, silver houses, turquoise houses, copper houses, agate houses, crystal houses, and coral houses with finialed balustrades strung with lotus and pearl garlands. The stûpas have many terraced steps or have none, and there are other unusual variations. They are with parasols or without, with \textit{bumpas} or without, with properly arranged terrace steps, and so on—various and sundry. The houses are with deity paintings and without, radiantly clear and unclear, built with one balustrade or two balustrades, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, and so on. They are without balustrades but with golden finials, male and female garu\textsuperscript{\textdegree}s, and other ornaments, or with balustrades and without finials and other ornaments. There are a lot of variations: houses made of earth, stone, wood, and terra-cotta with gold, silver, turquoise, copper, agate, crystal, and coral balustrades and finials, or without balconies but with finials, and with doors. The jeweled houses also have earthen, stone, wooden, and terra-cotta balustrades with their finials, or without balustrades but made with doors and finials, and so on. Inside those various kinds of houses are many clay statues, cast statues, painted images, and so on in various colors and expressions. Also, inside the houses there are various household goods, such as trays and vases, made out of the same materials as the houses, various offering things such as cymbals and conch shells, various offering items such as banners, parasols, and victory banners, and various colored fine silks, monastic robes and habits, \textit{zhatheb} hats,\textsuperscript{9} and scriptures. The balustrades and beam end supports\textsuperscript{10} are on the sides or in back. These naturally strange houses might be new or a little bit broken down or very broken down or completely dilapidated. You arrive in the area of an arranged group, or a pair, or a single house and climb up to it, or enter it, or go around it, or observe it lovingly. From the inside you can’t find a way out, or you get on top of it and can’t get down. Wandering around, you cannot get out of town. Finding yourself in the midst of many offering items, household goods, and statues, you take possession of them. You pick them up one by one and take care of them.

“Many well-dressed, venerable monks are clapping and debating the tenet systems. Buddhist and Bön high priests who say they are kings are dressed in golden attire with zhatheb hats and golden parasols around them. They wear a variety of many-colored clothes, such as silk brocade cloaks, long-sleeved
coats, lower robes, and so on. There are gold and silver thrones, seats covered with various brocades, rough silk, designed carpets, and quilts. They are hung with canopies of various silks and drapes, and many gold, silver, and precious items of wealth. Many well-dressed monks [serve] vessels full of rice beer, wine, barley beer, and tea. Venerable nuns in fine attire and jewelry are perched on turquoise thrones inside temples, with people riding on lions or on oxen or in chariots. You go there and pay homage, respectfully request teachings, circumambulate, and are overwhelmed by their charisma and a little afraid. Or even if you don’t pay homage and all that, you assist them, or engage in dharma discussions as an excuse, but they are not reconciled and disagree with you. These are all inner uprising signs. They are not deep uprisings.

Outer Signs

“These kinds of minor emanations of gyalpo spirits occur: There are many small children who are naked, or in cotton clothes or fur-lined coats, or yellow clothes, or with matted hair. They are sitting around playing and flourishing. They range from hairless young [babies] up to five-year-old children. You love them, take them onto your lap, carry them on your back, and help them walk. You are attached to the small children. Or there are lions, elephants, monkeys, peacocks, white dogs, multicolored or tawny-colored [dogs], white horses, camels, big black and white rats, jackals, wild geese, mallards, pretty woodpeckers, hoopoes, and so on that are in herds or in pairs or single. You take care of them, or are attacked by them and not reconciled, or grow attached to them, and so forth. These are the outer signs.

Secret Signs

“Extremely agitated turbid water overflows, or calm turbid water covers everything in a whole area. Many landslides come at the same time to many of the mountain valleys with a great roaring sound. You are sinking in them, or naturally alarmed and afraid, or almost struck by the waves, or you become terrified thinking that you have to get across the water. You feel love and compassion for the many creatures and trees and rocks and so on that are swept away by the water. A gusting storm wind fills all the mountains and valleys, and you are blown about in swirling rains of dirt and stone. Storm clouds fill the sky and wind swirls, whirling around and obstructing your view. Fire intensifies in the mountains and valleys and almost burns you. A
white light in the sky the size of a shield drifts all around. You are enveloped
in brown storm winds or caught inside the light, and so on. These are the
secret signs of uprisings.

“They are all gyalpo apparitions or evidence of uprisings or so-called soul
places or indications of the gyalpo. Thus the outer, inner, and secret signs
of gyalpos are exposed, so impress this on your mind. It is a sublime, esoteric
instruction important for effectively implementing the practice. A person
who can have the inner and secret indications and uprisings is rare, but the
minor outer indications are definite. Any person should be able to readily
identify whatever indications occur as I have explained without mixing them
up. If you don’t recognize them, then there is no way to work with the
gyalpo. By being undistracted and unmistaken, you can implement the med-
itative absorption of their harassment. The inner and secret signs will arise
and occur gradually. Do not ignore even little outer apparitions. This is the
esoteric instruction on working with gyalpos.

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Indications of the Mamo

“Now I will explain about indications of the mamo, so listen well and
remember. This also has three parts: outer, inner, and secret.

Outer Indications

“Many wolves are howling and attacking you. They run races either in sin-
gles or in pairs. They frolic and follow or precede you wherever you go.
Brown bears growl and make frightening displays. Many black pigs grunt and
jump. Many weasels and ferrets pop up. You take care of many small chil-
dren. You take care of many feminine clothes and ornaments, and various
colored yarns and women’s spindles and looms. Black hens, partridges, and
finches fly and soar. They make nests, and when you see them you take care
of them. Many donkeys bray and run up and down the valleys. Many does
gather together and dance. Various ugly women get angry and say many
things. Sometimes beautiful, attractive, adorned women emanate and make
you lust for sex. Sometimes mothers and sisters create longing affection.
These are the outer signs of uprisings.
“Extremely frightening women, ugly and terrifying, with bristly hair and snarling canines, are whistling through their teeth. They are naked and smeared with ashes, with a drop of blood [between their eyebrows] glistening red. They are wrapped in tiger skins and bear skins, girdled with human-skin belts. The flayed skins of children hang from their shoulders, and black snakes entwine their limbs. In their hands are notched boards, pestilence bags, blue and red yarn-ball weapons, intestine lassos, black-light lassos, human skins, and bat skins that they carry in various threatening manners. Some of them ride on wolves or tigers, leopards, wild dogs, jackals, brown bears, weasels, ferrets, wild boars, and donkeys. Also poisonous snakes, makaras, black kangka cemetery birds with long beaks, churning black tornadoes, black wind, black clouds, and black wind mounts. Some are extremely beautiful women shining with a great light and singing with sweet voices. They wear clothes of various colors like rainbows and are adorned with jewelry of gold, turquoise, zi stones, silver, coral, and so on, as bright as flowers. They are festooned with strings of conch and pearls, necklaces, garlands, and various flowers. They are clothed in various fine silks or gowns and decorations. They carry mirrors, lutes, flutes, and copper bowls in their hands. Some of them ride on does, musk deer, gazelles, camels, mules, and so forth. Some stay in charnel grounds full of new and old corpses, skeletons, and carnivorous birds. They dwell on gleaming red ground in places defiled with blood. They are inside dark-blue tents, or rainbow tents, or human-skin and tiger-skin tents, or silk and brocade tents. They stay in dense groves of many trees, or inside clouds and fog. Some of them show you a frightening attitude, some a respectful manner, some act enamored, some say they will befriend you, and some say they will give you food and money, and so on. They display a variety of different indications.

“There are different bodies, different mounts, different clothes and decorations, different hand implements, different dwellings, different colors, and so on. A variety of good and bad portents will manifest. So whatever occurs in your dreams, make it a part of your good meditative absorption and then it will change right away. If there is an apparition of a female demon and it does not change but stays as it is, it is possible that it is a deity sign. So whatever apparition there is, recognize it and deftly overcome it by
the visualization in meditative absorption. Those are all inner signs. They are not deep uprisings.

Secret Signs

“Five-colored rainbows envelop you and fill the sky. Blue-red gale winds envelop you and fill all space. A dark-red whirlwind tosses you around and fills the whole area of the mountain valleys. The wind carries leaves the size of shields up into the sky and you are caught up in it. Lights of various colors blaze like tongues of fire and swirl like oceans and flash like lightning and wrap around like coiled rope. There are large pieces of turquoise of excellent color, clear and shining with lights, the size of sheep’s livers and kidneys and all different sizes; coral of excellent color ranging in size from sheep’s heads to human hands, and so on; and black mottled zi stones from one cubit down to the size of a closed fist. You find them in the ground like treasure, or in storehouses, or chests, or arranged on seats, naturally in singles or pairs or in lines like garlands, and so on. You take care and look after them. These are the secret signs of uprisings. Get them straight and don’t mix them up.

Signs of Düd Uprisings

Inner Signs

“Listen well, you karmically destined ones with critical intelligence. The signs of the düd uprisings are like this. A naked man as black as if he were smeared with coal, or else wearing black clothes, holds up a yak-hair banner. A black horse with a high tail and mane and a very long muzzle with dark vapors like smoke billowing out. Black snarling dogs with gaping mouths, lapping with red tongues and barking. Black birds with extremely long wings, and sharp, long blue beaks and claws make clicking tak tak noises in their palates and fly around. Very scary black bears roar ferociously with gaping maws. Black yaks with blazing horns of fire make great charges, swishing their tails and pawing with their hooves. Frightening black men wear black silk bandanas and clothes made of tiger skins, their hair bristling upward and the breath from their mouths lapping out red like tongues of flame. In their hands they hold up notched boards, calculation tablets, three-pointed black spears, white and black pebbles of [astrological] calculations [that weigh karma], and black lassos. Drawing bows and arrows with their hands, they hold them
at the waists. They ride horses and wild yaks and display a fearsome manner. Also, some men are wrapped in bearskin on top and tiger skin on their lower body. Some wear flayed human skin. Some are naked with medallions of human guts, carrying fresh heads with the hair on them, and so on. They show up in a variety of different guises. There are terrible and frightening shapes made of a swarm of noxious black darkness. They are not flesh and blood forms, but more like black smog or black clouds. They appear en masse or individually or in pairs; it is not definite.

“Furthermore, you might find yourself terrified and frightened in the canyons of immeasurable black cities with no way out, or on the face of massive black mountains shrouded in clouds going up and down, back and forth with no end. Those are called ‘inner düd uprising from the depths,’ or the special indications of signs of inner uprisings. Remember them!

Outer Signs

“Black men, black dogs, black crows, black horses, black yaks, black bears, black choughs” with red beaks and talons, tobiti, or ravens, all seeming as if they are each right there with you wherever you are. They threaten you, or proceed before or follow after you, or you are among them. In addition, [there are people] wearing black hats and black clothes, and you take care of them. You arrive inside black yak-hair tents or dark, blank, empty houses. Or you go to a great river with a narrow bridge and can’t get over it, and you almost fall in. You are in a mass of black cliffs, or black slate mountains huddled like a herd of yaks, or a great black plain. You are among lions in a black land.

“All of these we experience normally like this now, but these are not permanent.” Being impermanent, each also has many different [versions and can appear] in groups or individually or in pairs. The particular numbers also vary greatly. These are outer uprising signs, but only if they appear as vivid and definite, not vague or mixed up.

Secret Signs

“Black light covers you or seems to bind your limbs. It seems like you are peering through five or six fathoms [of darkness]. You are on a dark, black island, or can’t see the way, or find yourself diverted inside a black whirlwind and panic. Or it’s freezing and a great chill makes you shiver. Billowing, overflowing
black clouds and black fogs surround you. Roiling clouds and fog move over you. You get upset thinking they will overcome you. There is a shershing staff said to be the notched board of a düd. It is vivid black, with eight sides and many holes, twice as big as you are. You have to carry it on your shoulders or hold it in your arms. You get upset and think you just cannot bear it. When any of these occur they are the secret signs of uprisings. You shouldn’t mistake them. All of them are the apparitions of board-toting düds. Remember them.

*Signs of Tsen*²⁰ *Uprisings*

Outer Signs

“Listen well. These are the kinds of outer uprising signs that will occur. Many red people, red horses, and red riders wandering around, standing, or moving. They are harming you or you are trying to help them. Also, you are threatened or surrounded by red dogs with red tails, wolves, wild dogs, corskak foxes, or foxes. You look after cocks, owls, cuckoos, and small owls. You take care of or are given new red clothes and red fine silks, or else you see many that are unowned. These are the outer uprising signs.

Inner Indications

“Though appearing in the bodies and shapes of regular people, there are hostile, voracious beings that overwhelm you with terror and are extremely dangerous. They carry red lassos, spears, and bows and arrows. They wear various fine silk clothes. Some of them have different, special attire such as tigers’ or other predators’ pelts, goat or sheep skin, small owl skins, makara, and dragon skins. They ride on red stags with antlers, wild asses, horses, tigers, and elk with upper and lower saddle straps made of snakes, and human skins draped over the front and back of the saddles. They are in mixed groups, some riding and some walking. Red lightning flashes. Also, you are in the midst of extremely frightening, dangerous red cities. These are called the inner indications or signs of deep uprisings.

Secret Signs

“A great red water fills the mountains and valleys. Red waves congeal and red clouds are blown by the wind in the continuously filled mountain valleys.
Red light moves in the sky like lightning bolts. Red storm winds fill all the mountain valleys, and a great thundering sound reverberates. There are great blazing red cliffs bristling [like weapons]. Many vivid red go’u gather. There are bunches of vivid red mountains, glowing red-hot substances, red earth fissures, deep red lakes, or many vermilion terraces. Those each have their own light and very fearful brilliance. You are nearby, or [trapped] inside, or perceive them from afar. You feel attached, or try to drive them away, or overpower them when you see them. These are the secret signs. Keep them in mind.

Signs of Netherworld Döns (Nāgas)

Inner Signs

“Listen, this is how the döns of the netherworld come. Black spiders and scorpions, or ants, beetles, otters or fishlike female dogs fall like rain and cover the ground and stick to your body. They are as big as puppies that have just opened their eyes, and extremely cold and wet. Just seeing them is unpleasant and frightening. Also, frogs, scorpions, fish, tadpoles, large pir fish, makaras, or lizards the size of young bulls with their mouths open as if ready to eat. Whether on dry or wet land, they all gather together, yelping and quarrelling. They are single or in pairs, their bodies sheathed in fog with slightly formed water droplets. Just looking at them upsets and confuses you and makes your flesh crawl. Or else snakes: black, red, yellow, green, multicolored, white, variegated red, variegated yellow, or variegated blue, like great trees in full foliage. They are as long as fifty bow lengths. They are in multistoried mansions, either in water or on dry land, all gathered together in one direction. The toxic vapors of some of them boil over onto your body as it lies in bed. They have great manes that blaze with fire. Various diseases exude from their mouths and eyes in the form of various colors, like oozing fog spreading out as far as a hundred bow lengths. Just seeing them terrifies you. Your hairs stand on end, your senses become paralyzed, and your body goes out of control from their contamination.

“Alternatively, [you experience] small children just eight years old with serpentine bodies below the breast and many blazing snake-hoods on their heads exuding bluish-red disease. Toxic vapors and fog boil up from their tails. Their torsos also are generally covered in mist. They are seen in various colors in wetlands larger than the eye can see. Sometimes their torsos are exposed
and sometimes their tails show above the water. These are deep uprisings or inner signs.

Outer Uprisings

“Dreams of spiders, scorpions, ants, beetles, fish, frogs, snakes, or tadpoles that seem as if they are really occurring in the moment. Also, many dzos and cattle gathered in herds, or in singles and in pairs, especially brown dzos and tiger-striped cattle. They look as if they will charge you, or they herd you, or you must look after them. Many beggars that are defiled, leprous, blind, and so on beg from you. You are in the midst of much filth, or [people] pitching camp, or going along a road, or setting up many campsites, or escorting, or loading or unloading goods that are enjoyed. They are all contentious, and you debate with them or you find yourself among them or you help to take care of them. There are empty nomad tents without any people, wealth, dogs, horses, or sheep. There are campsites formed from mist and nomad tents in singles or in pairs. These are outer signs. An empty nomad tent without mist is an outer sign of düd.

Secret Signs

“Great lakes of various colors with vapors wafting up, encircled by swaying jing trees and others also in a variety of colors. Many small ponds of various colors, swirling around where they meet each other at their heads or their bases and splashing where they cross. Great rivers of different colors swirling and splashing, or circling around in currents, or rippling like lakes. The bodies of water extend as far as the eye can see, each shining with light and covered with rainbowlike vapors. You are in their midst, sinking or sometimes enveloped in fog and light. Sometimes you are between them and can’t find your way out. Sometimes you see them from afar and feel attached or unhappy and intoxicated.

“Fog forms naturally into clouds, or mists of various colors collect and water drops fall, moistening the whole area. You are in the midst of that glistening [expanse] enveloped by moisture and fog and can’t see any way to proceed. Again, lights of various colors bind your limbs, and you don’t know how to walk. Or you are sinking in an area filled with whirling lights of many colors shimmering like mirages. These are the secret signs.
“When there is water, such as lakes, and so on, or fog, clouds, or mist without colors and vapors like we have now normally, then it is an outer sign.

**Indications of Lha Dön**

“Listen, it happens like this, so pay attention. There are people as white as polished conch with blue eyebrows and white hair bound atop their heads in topknots. They are dressed in silks of white, red, blue, yellow, green, ocherc, or orange, either all in one color or else mixed. Attendants all wear loose shirts or skirts or else are all in loose clothing. They carry magic staffs, conches, flutes, and other divine articles that are silent. Or else they hold white silk scarves and mirror and conch garlands. They glide without touching the ground, [traveling] in groups or individually or in pairs. When you see them you feel happy. Your mind becomes distracted and you wish to follow them. Or you think that they are your yidam deities, and your faith is aroused. Or your body drifts away into the sky. All these occur.

“Also, divine white yaks with white horns emanating white light, swishing their tails and butting horns, or white horses with raised blue manes and tails, coming through space one by one or many at a time. Again, there could be many very clear, white clouds in the sky, moving slowly in a pattern. Many white lights like rings are in the sky. There are white cliffs bristling like spear points on the mountaintops. Also, great, open plains where one or many big white tents are pitched. Or else they are striped in various colors like white and red, many of them arranged together. White birds as big as cranes with crests fly and soar in flocks or pairs or alone. Many white sheep fall from the sky and cover the ground, which appears white and undulating. White-breasted vultures stack up on white cliffs, or land on the plains and the mountains, or soar in the sky. All of those can occur in multitudes or just pairs or by themselves. In any case, you feel attached or try to take care of them. Sometimes they attack you, and sometimes they respond affectionately. These are apparitions of the lha dön, so don’t forget them. Keep them in mind, you fortunate ones.

**Signs of the Overworld Dön, Râhulas**

“Signs of the overworld bad spirits, râhula (planetary spirits), are like this, so please remember them. [They appear with] frog bodies, human heads, and
serpent tails. For one head there are nine faces. For hair, bunches of seven snakes twisted together lie between the faces and reach to the shoulders. Each of the nine faces has nine [pairs of] jackal-like ears. The nine faces, then, have a [third] eye each, making nine eyes. The segments of the limbs have one eye each, and there is a central eye in the belly. The nails are like the nails of great birds. The black head of a long-winged raven with meteorite-metal beak and talons is on top of their head. Red lightning shoots out of their mouths, and red clusters of sparks fly out from their eyes like a blacksmith soldering. Their whole body is the clear color of juniper smoke, unobscured and naturally transparent outside and inside. It radiates sparks and rising vapors like fog. The wind stirs [around] them. In their hands they hold a lightning lasso and a meteorite plowshare, or else a triangular stove and a bag of various diseases, or else a makara lasso blazing with fire and a bow and arrow made of meteorite metal that slices fierce spirits, or else a three-cornered dagger (phur ba) made of boiling molten metal and a boiling light-ray lasso with red-black sparks. They sit in a terrifying manner riding on the necks of blue dragons, or stay inside black toxic wind, or rest upon black clouds, or ride on the horse of the lightning light-wheel, spreading out in innumerable emanations to carry harm to all the beings in the world.

“Some of them are in the form of jackals, breathing out boiling molten metal like a black cloud that billows out from their mouths and covers their heads and necks until they disappear. Their tails are all wrinkled like the palate of a makara and emanate sparks that blaze up into radiant heaps of fire, extremely hot to the touch. The clamor of extreme movement accompanies them. Blazing tongues of fire cover them below the hips. Their smokelike bodies are clear, as before, and the wind blows around the boiling toxic fog. Some of them are in human form, blazing with light. A multitude of lights in different colors, such as blue and red, shoot out of their sense organs and pores like arrows. Some of them appear as Buddhist priests, Bön priests, mantrins, laymen, laywomen, nuns, and young children. Furthermore, whatever kinds of bodies they have and whatever various different sights you see, if their bodies radiate multicolored lights, blaze with lapping tongues of fire, radiate fire sparks, effuse a slight fog that wafts in the wind, and are extremely clear and without obscuration outside and inside, then they are drang song.

“Your own body also sparks or has the nature of hot flashes, or it quakes, or your tongue is so dry you can’t speak, or you feel unhappy and uneasy. You become senseless in a thick darkness, your limbs are [stuck] outstretched
or flexed, or your skin hardens and contracts, your brain suddenly heats up in the middle, your body becomes numb and prickly, or it boils and burns like a bonfire, or [it feels] intense nausea like ants running out, or heat surges up as if your insides were on fire: these are omens of drang srong.

“Also, the sky fills with fire, or lights of many different colors fall from the sky like a rain of arrows, or many lights the size of shields circulate around, or fire sparks as big as stars or finer are blown by the wind and sparkle in whirlwinds, or radiate naturally. The sun’s rays envelop you, or the moon and stars fall to the ground, or space becomes chaotic. Great heat and warmth pervade the mountains, valleys, lands, houses, and everywhere, so that you cannot bear to stay there. Or wherever water appears, it is boiling and overflowing, and the steam is like fire spreading throughout the sky and moving around so that you think you are about to be burned. When these things occur clearly in dreams that are not just vague and blurry, they are the apparitions of drang srong za.\footnote{Signs of Yāmas\textsuperscript{33}}

\textit{Signs of Yāmas}\textsuperscript{33}

Outer Signs

“This is how the outer signs of the yāmas (death lords) come. Don’t let your mind wander. Listen and I will explain. There are human corpses burned or stacked up. Many pack animals are loaded up and led around. New and old [things] cover the whole place. There are many horse corpses burned or spread around or flayed and chopped up. Wild animals are eating them, and their remains are scattered, dissected, and dismembered. The whole ground consists of human and horse skin, or it is filled with many fresh and stale heads. You are on large, rocky peaks, or slate crags, or mountains or in a dark, green immensity, crying in terror and panic, with tremendous fear arising, and so forth. These are the outer uprising signs.

Inner Signs

“There are human bodies that are multicolored or white, red, yellow, black, brown, blue, or green. They are the size of regular humans, or two or three or four times as big. They have heads like animals: tiger, leopard, brown and black bear, lion, ox, and so on. They are frightening, carrying various weapons in their hands and emitting loud, terrifying sounds. They snarl and
make smacking palatal sounds while consuming human lungs and hearts. They wear fresh human skin, horse skin, or predator skins wrapped separately around their upper and lower bodies. The ground seems to be all made of highly refined iron, and they are each in three-sided iron mansions, or else in vast cities that extend up and out as far as the eye can see, or else they are just in pairs or by themselves. You are afraid and horrified, your hairs standing on end. Just seeing them is terrifying. Those are called inner signs, or deep uprisings.

Secret Signs

“Iron tigers, leopards, brown and black bears, and other scary predators roar and fight while feeding on human and horse corpses. Iron eagles and other big birds of prey flap their wings and soar around, sporting with the flesh. Water buffalo and oxen with iron horns and hooves make terrifying grunting sounds. Axes, swords, clubs, impaling stakes, spears, hooks, wheels, and other weapons blaze with fire and shoot out sparks that swirl like lightning in space, or they are all laid out, carpeting the whole ground. This is the evidence of secret uprisings. It is important; don’t get it wrong.

Apparitions of Terdak Nöchin

“These are the individual indication signs, so get them straight. There are ministers and mantrins in nice monastic attire or nice merchant’s attire. Many people get into the outfits of the laypeople of Hor and load up various colored packhorses and come and go. Many merchants carrying various colored rhinoceros-hide armors pack up many oxen and dzo and lead them around with many loads. Many mantrins with extremely nice finery arrange many torma offerings and deity articles. All is very lovely, and they prepare to sound the drum. Laypeople saying that they are the ministers of human chiefs take possession of many fine clothes and many things all piled up in treasure houses guarded by many great chiefs. Impressive, hefty men with short limbs and big bellies sit on top of many jeweled thrones of gold, silver, and various precious gems. Some of them are on seats of sun, moon, rainbow, and light. Their backdrops are big trees or many various colored mountain cliffs. Or they are in groves of flowering trees or inside very elegant multi-storied houses or in clouds. You are attracted to them and want to help them,
or else they respond to you and you become their leader. Sometimes you
serve them. Sometimes they harm you. Sometimes they argue and disagree.
Sometimes they get very angry and come at you with all kinds of weapons
and fight with you. In other cases, you need to put a stop to the fighting.
Sometimes they cause a rain of jewels, flowers, or fruit to fall. Also, lions, ele-
phants, and excellent horses dwell in the clouds. Many black-breasted vultures congregate. Many mongoose bags [of wealth] and many victory banners
are arranged around. You find many gems and many precious treasures. You
take possession of all those and feel joyful. Whatever the case, whenever all
kinds of various different good or bad things are brought in, it is the appari-
tion of the terdak nöchin. Definitely keep this in mind.

Apparitions of Te’urang

“There are children under ten years of age with half their hair bound in buns,
carrying plain wood bows and arrows in their hands and wearing goat skins.
They have high noses, sunken eyes, and skin of various colors, each one dif-
f erent. Their bodies are covered by fog or steam and slightly formed droplets.
They ride on horned animals in groups or pairs or singles. Even if they have
no mounts, they carry snakes of various colors, sabers, spears, axes, and hammers in their hands. They carry stuffed goat victory banners or whole flayed
skins. They wave multicolored and light-blue banners. Conch shells decorate
their bodies and bind their topknots. They have gold coins for earrings, kuña
glass crests sticking up, and blue-green grass decorating their heads. Kite
feathers adorn them. They carry nyakma-wood staffs. They are wrapped in
corpse shrouds from the cemetery and wear musk deer pelts. They have
extremely long eyebrows and mustaches that are the same color as their skin.

“Sometimes many ten-year-old girls with silky hair wearing different-colored clothes look after herds of goats. Sometimes there are young mantrins
with matted hair knots. Sometimes there are great Bönpos wearing long hats
and beards formed of very long, yellow mustaches and sideburns. In any case,
it is a sign of te’urang spirits if they are wearing on their body or head, or car-
yring in their hands these five [items]: horns, goat skins, kuña grass, kite feathers, or green grass. Those five are the implements that are their personal signs.
Also, carrying staffs of nyakma wood in their hands is a sign of te’urangs.

“These all take place in caves, hollows, rock piles, landslide areas on plains,
abiding fog clouds, forests, cliffs, big craggy mountains, towns of one-storied
houses, or tree groves. They stay in all those places and engage in many different activities. Once you see them, you feel attraction to them, or you assist them, or they assist you. Sometimes you quarrel. Sometimes they give you various treasures. Sometimes they have really nice jewelry, clothes, and very fine figures. Sometimes they exhibit very ugly forms. All these and other various and different expressions will occur. Sometimes they play dice and gamble. Also, [there may be] many goats, or individuals or pairs of goats, especially, goat’s dice necklaces, small bells, goatskins complete with head and feet. Either you take care of these, or else you are in the midst of a great many that are naturally there, or others are taking care of them, or you see them being led away. Also, stuffed kites or their feathers, tsebu grass, nyakma wood, or kuña grass is either being cared for or is growing in patches on the ground, and in hollows, cliff caves, rock caves, mountain valleys, big plains, or wherever. It is bristling upright, or scattered all over, or growing in bunches. Whenever you dream of these things, you should know that they are the apparitions of te’urang spirits.

Apparitions of Hama Gab Demons

“Now, this is what happens, so listen attentively and I will explain. [You will dream of] small children whose forms are not straight but who have protruding mouths and eyes and faint voices. They come in groups or in pairs or alone. They are somewhat smaller than one cubit, with heads the size of juniper cones. Attaching themselves to your body, they make small sounds of tse re re and follow after you. They are in puddles or stone piles, or else somewhere with bluffs and mineral deposits of various colors all blurry, or hazy rock cliffs, or clusters of penma trees. Or they are inside a shroud of fog or near a dim, flickering fire the size of a donkey’s ear.

“Or there are very ugly women with hair standing straight up. Their bodies are very skinny, the pale-blue color of ashes. They wear ragged clothes of various colors each wrapped around their lower bodies. There are mouths on their two ears, below the nose, and under the chin. These are like the mouths of fish, without teeth, and each with two tongues. Those eight tongues are red and lolling and exude a wafting bluish-red fog of sickness. Their anklebones are twisted and make them lame. They carry wind lassos in their hands that are the nature of disease. There are many of them, or they are alone or in pairs. Just seeing them makes your mind become gloomy and perceptions
become unpleasant and ephemeral. Also, water from a craggy blue cliff mixes with water, or water of the ravines mixes with penma trees. There are many deep overhangs and scattered stones. All of these are blazing like butter lamps of sparky red fire, or issuing a slight bluish-red vapor, and thorns of fine fire. You arrive among those, or your dark shadow follows after you, or you are amid many shadow forms of others, or among burned wood scattered about, or heaps of coal, or what is called a place for burning corpses. When you dream that you are among those things, they are apparitions of hama gab demons. Get to know these specific apparitions, noble ones.

**General Apparitions**

“These are the different kinds of common, general apparitions that occur. Mountains collapsing, lakes overflowing, cliffs destroyed, avalanches tumbling, the earth quaking, caves collapsing, the ground moving and vibrating, and rocks and clay chunks being propelled from the ground. Your clothes are pulled, your back and side ribs hit with fists. You hear secret talk in your ears and your name called from afar. You are carried away from your place of rest; you hear melodies and laments or ha ha and loud laughter. There are great howling cries and various unpleasant noises.

“They say, ‘Don’t stay here, go elsewhere. If you don’t go, we’ll cut off your head, dig out your heart, eat your flesh, drink your blood, dismantle your bones, and inflict various illness, such as sudden pangs, so that you will be put to death from then on. It would be to your benefit to go somewhere else.’

“There are thunderbolts, fierce hail, thunder, lightning streaks, and great floods. There are great rumbling sounds, crackling sounds, booming sounds, and rattling sounds. There are meteors, cannons, and fire sparks shooting out red and swirling all over. There are clouds, fog, and vapors. You are overtaken and swept away in frightening storms that flail you. The whole area changes to black or other different colors that are unnerving. The sky is filled with fire, the earth is filled with water, and the forests seem to be weapons. Red-black storms and bluish-red whirlwinds fill the mountain valleys and shake them, obscuring your vision.

“There are lion, tiger, leopard, black bear, brown bear, elephant, buffalo, wild yak, monkey, wild boar, donkey, dog, wolf, jackal, makara, rejam, frog, scorpion, pir fish, and other frightening animal-headed creatures with gaping jaws and bared teeth, their tongues lapping and lolling. Fire blazes from their
mouths, smoke billows from their noses, and sparks of fire shoot out from their eyes. They carry snake lassos and various weapons in their hands and display a frightening mien. They appear in terrifying forms such as those of yāmas, nöchins, srinpos, and cannibals. Evoking the great strength of lethal predators such as tigers, bears, jackals, and so on, they spread their jaws to devour you. Makaras eat you with open jaws. Snakes squeeze you with their bodies. Bulls and yaks gore you with their black, fireblazing horns. Frightening black men strike you with blazing weapons in their hands. Animals, men, and women rise up as enemies carrying weapons and beat you, bind you, throw you over precipices, squish you, and carry you away upside down. Spiders, scorpions, ants, and beetles fall like rain. Frogs, fish, and tadpoles cover the ground. Many black dogs bite you and many monkeys dance around. Srinmo demonesses rattling swords utter war cries. All kinds of other unsavory sights appear to the eyes.

“Various sounds come to the ears, like ku ku, so so, ha ha ho ho, ‘kill kill strike strike,’ a rumbling sound, a hushed sound, a bristling sound, and many other dissonant sounds that unsettle you.

“Through the nose, you can smell garlic and various other bad odors. Your senses are muddled by various bad smells like singed horns, burned human fat, scorched greens, bad tree toxins, bad earth toxins, dog smell, and the smell from the folds in sexual organs.

“Your tongue tastes bitterness and other bad tastes so that you are repulsed by any kind of food or drink.

“Your body feels various unpleasant sensations such as roughness, cutting, numb flesh, quivering flesh, crawling flesh, boiling, swelling, abscessing, bursting blisters, fire blades, and heat pricks.\(^{40}\)

“Various undesirable mental states occur. Unhappiness, doubt, suspicion, indecision, and hesitation arise. You experience dismay, unrest, chronic depression, displeasure and irritability, unhappiness, remorse, and remorse about a companion who wants to leave. Stricken by the afflictive emotion of desire, practice is lost. Becoming cautious, anxious, and afraid, you get discouraged with Chöd. Various discursive thoughts arise and generate mental neurosis. Heartache\(^{41}\) rises up and causes depression.

“Furthermore, you fall between cracks, houses crumble, you wander in valleys and chasms, mountains crumble, rivers overflow to the sky, sun and moon strike together, or they fall from the sky to the earth. A terrifying form pulls out your heart, tears out your lungs, afflicts your intestines, rips out your
organs, chops your body into pieces, flays your skin, and cuts off your limbs and extremities. Displaying an ugly form, it says, ‘On this day I will take your breath away and leave you here to die and go to hell. I am the one who took the lives of your lineage lamas and ancestors.’ Thus it rises up as your enemy and instigates various terrifying appearances.

“Sometimes [the figures of your] mother, sisters, and beloved ones [show their affection] and beautiful, bejeweled women smile radiantly and act sexy. Sometimes ugly figures cry and wail. Sometimes fathers and brothers act helpful and beneficial and arouse your longing. Sometimes enemies rise up and produce hateful thoughts. Sometimes the figure of your yidam deity says, ‘You don’t need to exert yourself in virtue in order to accomplish the path, such as the six perfections of giving in generosity, maintaining your morality, and so forth. You have consummated the path. What is there to practice? You have refined the cause previously. Now this life is the ripened fruition. The time has come to subdue all the devils. Subdue all demons and devils.’ Then, [you go ahead and] tame the demon slaves and lead the village rituals. Thus you are led down the wrong path.

“Or they say, ‘Now is the time to indulge your desires. Indulge in all the afflictive emotions you like. To the extent that you indulge in afflictive emotion, all sentient beings obtain the path of liberation.’ Thus they instigate you to engage your neuroses and connect with the wrong path.

“Or, saying, ‘After this life, you will be a buddha with such-and-such a name in such-and-such a pure land,’ they will puff you up with pride and arrogance and send you down the wrong path. These are the düd emanating as deities.

“Sometimes, they’ll appear in the form of your lama or deity and say, ‘We have been mistaken about the Dharma and taken the wrong path. We have experienced a lot of suffering. You, child, abandon this Dharma and get involved in something other than this.’ In that way they turn your mind against the lama and the Dharma. Or, saying, ‘We deities cannot provide you with refuge, so you should go to another for refuge,’ they send you on the wrong path while posing as divine witnesses. Thus düds emanate as lamas and deities and cast down your mind. They cause doubt and suspicion to arise. You become disappointed in the lama and the deities and the Dharma, and reject them.

“They also cause various physical and mental discomforts. They create every kind of hindrance to liberation and the resolve for enlightenment. And
they afflict your mind with desire for the unvirtuous activities of this life. Whatever causes these things is called a düd, a devil. It is also called an apparition. So it is important to know these and to recognize them.

“These might occur for real or in dream experiences. Or else they arise as [meditative] experiences, in which case they are called experiences (nyams). That is [to say], neither sleep nor nonsleep nor [waking] reality. Within the state where appearances of the six consciousness groups are clear and vivid, and awareness is extremely bright, the perceptions of the present moment do not have the usual characteristics but are slightly changed. When something else arises to the mind, whatever particular apparition occurs is said to be a visionary experience (nyams snang).

“Alternatively, even when you don’t see or hear the forms and sounds of gods and demons, their great brilliance oppresses you, and you become scared and afraid and then feel panic and dread. Your head hairs and body hairs stand on end. You tremble in fear and break into a sweat. Your body goes numb with tinges, and your skin contracts and tightens up. Fearing [something] in front of or behind you, you twist your face and neck all around. Your body quakes in terror and cringes, and so on. These fearful experiences that are not actually visible are called apparitions of charismatic presence. Otherwise, apparitions need to occur clearly in dreams. There are only these two ways, son: as charismatic presence or in dreams.

**Special Occurrences**

*Signs of Karmic Debt*

“This is how special occurrences happen, so pay attention. If you dream that many women and men are begging, [or that people are] saying they want to argue and tax you at a party, or are carrying many empty vessels and lie in your doorway, or that many vagabonds are hanging around the doorway, then it is a sign that karmic debt has not been cleared. You should perform the charity of the body to the guests of karmic retribution a hundred times or, best, innumerably, in eight sessions a day without break.

*Signs of Obscurations*

“Dreams of gambling and dice-playing, or arguing and debating, and so on, where you are losing. Sinking in a filthy swamp, or filth adhering to your
body. Your heavy body is impaired standing or sitting and has little strength. Or movement is impaired and many pox appear on your body. Your limbs are crippled and broken into pieces and you can’t move. You are set on a black yak-hair mat, or you wear it as clothing. You cannot find the way to go because your eyes don’t see. You hold up large pack loads or carry many empty black sacks. These are signs of very great obscuration. Be particularly careful about misappropriating [anything that should belong to] the Three Jewels, or coveting people’s wealth, and exert yourself in methods of purifying obscuration.

Signs of Death within Three Years

“[Dreams of] the sun or moon setting before they are finished rising, or a black darkness covering you. Wearing a black hat, black clothes, and black boots, and waving lance banners of yak hair in your hands [but] the sheaf of arrows has gone empty. Carrying a load of dirt and a sack of dirt in your hand and being banished to the [other] side of a black mountain. Riding on a black female donkey without ears, you cross many valleys at dusk. These dreams [indicate] that your life expectancy and meritorious powers are exhausted and that death will come within three years. Abandon your own country and exile yourself far away from inhabited areas and keep to empty, unpopulated places. Without regard for life or limb, practice casting out the body as the food of nonhuman demons and donating it as ransom for sentient beings in general.

Signs of Going to Lower Existences

“Wearing extremely heavy clothes or black hats, black clothes, and black boots in layers, you cannot lift them. Overburdened with pack loads, you fall down the slopes of difficult roads. Your body is stabbed with many nails and damaged. Your feet tread on iron and you fall head first into a pit. You fall down from a mountain peak, or you fall to earth from the sky. These dreams are signs that you will fall to the bad existences of karmic torment. Putting all your trust in the Three Jewels, generate exceedingly strong diligence in placing your body, speech, and mind in virtue. Exert yourself in the offering and charity of the body and other practices, and apply all your strength without succumbing to laziness or distraction for even a moment.
“Thus, whatever specific, different and various apparitions occur, examine them well and unerringly, and distinguish them individually, each in its own circumstance. Apply the methods of implementing these esoteric instructions just as I have explained. For the most part, the view of emptiness will overwhelm them. Sever the mental attachment of great exaltation in all your good qualities. Whatever bad, deluded appearances occur, cut through concepts that come from the mind. Mix mind itself in the expanse of space without elaboration. How wonderful!

“Son, if you exert yourself in methods to implement this instruction, the lamas, yidams, ḍākinīs, and dharma protectors will foster you as a child. Especially, the blessings of the ḍākinīs of the mother lineage will bring cheer, delight, and clarity. Once signs of blessing power arise, the gods and demons of existence will serve you. Problematic conditions will arise as glory. After the obstacles subside, life expectancy, glory, merit, and the doctrine will increase. Common and supreme spiritual powers will come easily and without effort. No doubt you will ultimately attain the state of the unborn mother, noble child.

“Still, son, it is the final stage of the five-hundred [-year cycle], a time when inhuman evil abounds. It is the time of the proliferation of the five degenerations.”

That was the eighth chapter on the question of Jetsun Zilnön.
9. The Questions of Sönam Gyen

Sönam Gyen asked, “Machik-la, do the five degenerations describe the way it is now, or is it going to get worse than it is these days? If those five degenerations do get worse, what will people’s behavior be? Will the ethical codes increase or decrease from the present? Machik, will your dharma system remain as it is now? Will state law and religious law flourish or wane? Machik, please explain what you know.”

Future Corruption of State Law

Machik answered, “I will explain the future as best I know how. You, with your clear intellect, memory, and intelligence, should listen well. The five degenerations will get worse and worse until at some future date the five degenerations and conflict will be utterly widespread. This is what the future holds. At that time, people will be very coarse, and their behavior will be especially bad. At that time both state and religious law will decline. This dharma system of ours will be popular, but you won’t see it practiced properly the way it is now. Assuming the garb of various and sundry bad costumes, [people will] alter this sacred dharma, like medicine into poison. With many wrong realizations and wrong behaviors, they will accumulate a variety of unvirtuous actions. At some point during that time, the ethical codes (’dul khrims) of the Buddhist doctrine will be slightly more clarified than now, like a flash of lightning in the dark. Nevertheless, it’s the time when the warm breath of the gongpo spirits seethes up. Ultimately, conflict will spread and the ethical codes will not fare well.”

Again Sönam Gyenema asked, “Machik-la, in how many years will this occur? In the time of that degeneration, when the state and religion
decline, [you say that] the Buddha’s doctrine will be illuminated in the darkness like a flash of lightning. Will that come through your compassion, Machik, or what? What will cause it? What will be the signs that the degenerate age has come?”

“You four daughters, listen well and pay attention. I will explain. When five hundred years have passed, we will be in the midst of the time of the five degenerations. In that degenerate age, clarification of the doctrine will not be due to me. The person who will clarify the doctrine then is presently dwelling at the southeast border of Potari in India, a bodhisattva enduring hardships for the sake of beings. That person is endowed with great mindfulness, special intelligence, and special strengths. Sometimes he can request dharma teachings of Avalokiteśvara, sometimes of Lord Maitreya, sometimes of Lord Amitāyus, sometimes of Lord Mañjuśrī, and sometimes of Kukkuripa. The resolve to attain enlightenment for the sake of all beings is incredibly strong in him. The extremely wrathful [form of] Avalokiteśvara, the black, six-armed Great Protector (Mahākāla), obeys him like a slave and will guard the doctrine. That bodhisattva will come as a monk in the degenerate age and clarify the Buddha’s doctrine. His coming was predicted by the Buddha himself and delegated by Lord Amitāyus, Maitreya, and others. Such are the causes and conditions.

“These are the signs that the degeneration has come. In that degenerate age a devil, a dangerous evildoer, will emanate as a king. After he is born as this king, the five toxic emotions will blaze like fire, surge like water, and blow like the wind. In particular, [that king] will lust after wealth and women. Under the influence of his vulgar instincts, the king will join forces with a woman. The gods and nāgas who protect the doctrine will be displeased and lay a curse (dmod pa bor) on him. His actions will be ordinary and his merit weak. Coming under the power of his commoner woman, the king will lose his royal bearing and constantly wander around in the cities of commoners, mixing up state law [and causing anarchy]. The people will delight in unwholesome activities, war, and conflict. With little diligence and a great rapacity for wealth, the vulgar, common people will save face for the sake of women. Thus will come the king who destroys the state law and abdicates royalty. At that time, the ladies of [good] family lineage will join with common, so-called unfit men (mi thong po) in their own entourage. Their merit
and vitality will be weakened, and all their might and power will fall into the hands of these unfit commoners. The state law will be corrupted internally, and the royal race will be lost to evil lords.

“At that time, the lords of the law will be called the yoke of the ladies’ law. The role of a judge (dpang po) will fall into the hands of common men and women. When state law has fallen into the hands of the commoners, at that point the yardstick of power that straightens and upholds the commands will be completely broken. The common sectors and all the entourage will be divided (without leadership). There will be mass chaos, like [when] a serak demon suddenly rises from the field in the darkness. These are signs of the corruption of state law.

“The private counsel of the foreign and interior ministers and counselors will be blown helter-skelter in the wind and ripped open. Their private conversations will be as public as the wind. Private words and public words will blend like milk and blood, blending the essence with the refuse inseparably until it is lost. The court of justice will be delineated with superficial walls of law, but once they are broken it will become a public playground.

“The local chiefs and the local people won’t be bound by the rope of justice—everyone is on their own. At that time, the king will covet the wealth of the ministers, the ministers will covet the wealth of the justices, the justices will covet the wealth of the chiefs, and the chiefs will covet the wealth of the people, so that the meaning of law, integrity, and shame will be lost. Therefore, the people won’t listen to the decrees of the chiefs, the chiefs won’t listen to the decrees of the courts, the courts won’t listen to the decrees of the ministers, and the ministers won’t listen to the decrees of the king. The king and ministers will come under the power of the queen. The queen’s power will fall into the hands of unfit commoners. Thus the tail will adorn the head. Everything will be upside down and mixed up. The interdependent relationship of all phenomena will be disrupted, and beings will engender various vices. These are signs of the coming degeneration.

“At that time, all the devils that love the dark side will rise up and sway the minds of the men and women. They will be totally distracted by the conflagration of afflictive emotions and divested of conscientious behavior, without integrity or shame. All will be chaos. Friends and enemies will be mixed up; good and bad will be mixed up; virtue and vice will be mixed up; lords and subjects, ministers and servants will be mixed up; work and customary
behavior will be mixed up; and all activities will be mixed up. Stories and folk wisdom will be mixed up; decorating, dressing, and eating will be mixed up; hoarding food and wealth will be mixed up.

“All this amounts to trading the royal seal on the work of state law for wealth, and the stockpiling [of goods]. The power of the kingdom will be exchanged for food and handed over to the subjects. Abandoning greater means, [the leaders] will engage in the activities of vulgar commoners. They will have especially great hostility toward harmless, humble people and show favor to the harmful, wealthy, and famous. They will step aside when they see those who had shown them kindness and turn their backs when they see their elders and ancestors. They will find ways to avoid the Three Jewels. They will maintain that unwholesome action is beneficial. They will welcome chronic liars with their chat. They will show smiling faces to the wealthy, even if they are enemies, and be stone-faced and haughty with poor relatives. They will slander those with good qualities and praise scoundrels. They will cut the thread of traditional folk wisdom and associate with what is unprecedented and new. Abandoning discussion of former customs and laws, they will pursue conversations about women and dogs. Not relying on sensible, intelligent people, they’ll listen to the clever gossip of men and women. Quitting the lofty activities of [working on] temples, religious art, copying, and reciting, they’ll pursue the maintenance of dogs, horses, jewels, and animals. Forsaking the refuge of support places for offering, they’ll seek refuge and support in lying thieves. Rather than serving and protecting an incomparable lama, they’ll revere evil, brutish heroes. They won’t make offerings to the ocean of virtuous spiritual guides who uphold the doctrine of the Sage, but rather to outsiders, shamans, and heretics. Interrupting the flow of virtue and offerings to the Three Jewels, they’ll call for attention as they slaughter animals. They won’t protect the ethical customs and local community, and more specifically won’t even provide food and pay for their own entourage, subjects and indigents. Adopting the code of ruinous thieves, bandits, and swindlers, they will ignore the local community. They will be especially hostile toward humble attendants and commoners. Thus will there arise these emanations of devils said to be justices.

“At that time, the head father will be swindled by the son. The head son will be swindled by the father. The father will steal the child’s fortune, and the child will rob the father’s wealth. Even siblings of the same mother will quarrel over wealth and rise as enemies against each other. Sustaining many
woes, the sons and daughters will cut off ties to their own flesh and blood and befriend unrelated outsiders. They will accuse their kindly parents of robbery. With harsh words and beatings, they will regard them as enemies. Couples who have joined together through the power of karma will crave other partners and fight with each other. The mistress of the house will pursue the male servants. The lord will take the female servants as wives. Siblings will mate without shame.

“Since everything will be all wrong like that, the human lineages will be mixed up, and then all races will go bad. Then there will be all kinds of bad behavior. A good favor will be repaid with a bad one. Great kindness will be seen as evil. People will rejoice in evil, unvirtuous, brutish men who cause decline to the country, and will aspire [to be like them]. Engaging in hostile disputes, they will pursue the activities of armory and weaponry. Large armies will plunder smaller armies. Horses will be regarded as the highest wealth. Women will hold all the power. The justices will be the major armed forces. The chief ministers will all be hypocrites. The top counselors will all be con men. Diplomacy will be a pack of lies. People will aspire to practice vice and scoff at the practice of virtue. The wise will be distrusted while fools are believed. People with good qualities will be [seen as] flawed while impostors are highly valued. Holy spiritual guides will be seen as bad omens, and false prophets will be seen as gods. The Three Jewels will be shown their backs while evil friends will be taken on their laps. Helpful attitudes and gentle words will be forever abandoned while vicious attitudes and harsh words are pursued. Broad-minded and mentally stable people will be very rare, but bad-minded and mindless people will cover the ground.

“Many times even very agreeable friends and relatives will rise up as enemies. No matter how great a dispute with hated enemies, eventually they’ll end up being supported as relatives. If people see profit, they will even barter with their own parents. If they see a woman, they will gladly risk their lives. If they see edibles, they will even eat black, deadly poison. If they see valuables, they will even rob a leper’s possessions. If they see killables, they will kill a rotten stray dog. If they see loot, they will even loot religious contributions. Even with the power of karma, a father’s children will be few. [But even] without fathers or karmic precedent, children will fill the land. The majority will occupy the fertile land, while the minorities will be banished to the hinterlands. Bands of hoodlums will take charge of the country, and the justices will have to dig and plow their own estates. The chiefs and ministers
will pursue discussion about the issues of humble, unprotected people. The local men will pursue the activities of dogs, horses, and weapons. The women will pursue peripheral rules and regulations to chastise people. The boys will study gambling and shooting and pursue showing off. The girls will pursue athletics and men’s work. The noble races will [try to] increase but remain very few. The ignoble races will increase without trying, and their various bad behaviors will spread throughout the land. Even the enlightened intent of the buddhas will have difficulty clearing up those times.

“In particular there will be all kinds of actions based on nonvirtue in whatever form, difficult to identify exactly which is which; such a mix of so many things that have never existed or been heard of on earth before now that it is unfit to be told. For example, a patient with a congenital disease has never experienced a time of not being afflicted by the disease. But when the disease really hits, there will be a total reversal of the elements. When they eat sugar it tastes bitter, and when they sleep in soft wool it will be extremely rough. Even in very comfortable places they jump around in discomfort. Their minds become disturbed from the disease, and they get upset even with very loving relatives and doctors. Their bodies exude a bad smell due to the disease. These are the signs of the disease’s disruption. Similarly, the final era of the Buddhist doctrine will be even as I have now described—involved with such bad behavior that even hearing about it with the ears or recalling it in the mind is frightening. It will be like a mixture of blood and milk or a mixture of cow hairs and horse hairs, or a mixture of dogs, goats, and pigs. It will be bad like the quintessence of the vomit of a black dog, with no way to clean it up. Everything will be chaotic and turbulent. No matter what action or deeds are done, it all comes down to women and charlatans. Everything will come under the power of women and charlatans. Women and charlatans will rule the world.

“At that time, people who practice the Dharma correctly and sincerely will be as rare as daytime stars. But even when a single sincere spiritual guide comes to the country, like a precious stone that has not accumulated any dirt, the people will have exhausted their merit and won’t make offerings. They will just criticize and demean that holy one. But when they see a nonharmic person with wrong view, those meritless beings will gather around like flies around piss, making offerings and praise. Then ordinary men and women will proclaim the great speech of Dharma. So all the protectors who guard the good side will become weak and feeble, and all the devils of
darkness will grow powerful and plentiful in those times of degeneration. On the strength of that, the people who pervert the Dharma will accumulate food and wealth, and bad people will venerate them and proclaim their fame. Devils will set up obstacles for the holy ones, so that they will not find food or clothing. They will bear a great many illnesses and afflictions and become meek and humble. And when people of faith make offerings to the Jewels, [the devils] will cause various obstacles and problems, so that those people will change their minds and say, ‘The Three Jewels are not true.’

“Erecting walls around the temples and monastic schools, the army will turn monasteries into barracks. Killing innocent sentient beings, they will offer flesh and blood to the Jewels. Liars and charlatans will be given food so that they can be independent even when they go to some other country, while the righteous and humble people will be humiliated by their own relatives even in their own homes. This is the time of the suppression of the righteous and humble.

“People will leap into the den of a ferocious predator if they see wealth. They'll stay inside the palace of the lord of death if they see food. They'll drink even toxic water if they see drink. They'll wear black yak hair for clothes, black matted hair on their heads, black leather devil shoes on their feet, and various weapons on their bodies. Their pleasure will be flesh and blood, and their activity will be indulgence in various vices. If there is food and wealth, even if it is their enemy’s and the tree of poison, they'll scrape up the crumbs. If there is no food and wealth, even if it is their own parents and the tree of medicine, they'll abandon them and leave them far behind. They'll keep anyone who has no food or wealth at a distance, no matter how close and loving they were. They will diligently pursue new rich friends, no matter how hateful an adversary they were. They will spread dogs among the deer herds, fire in the mountains, and landslides in the hills, upsetting the earth spirits. Some who carry the guilt of theft, sin, and lies will swear [their innocence] by the Three Jewels.

“People at that time will have little knowledge, sharp intellects, coarse memory, and much frivolity. Most will be bright enough not to need to study, but will just come to understand things naturally. They will have short lives, few enjoyments, great afflictive emotion, gross discursive thought, tight fixations, clever flatteries, many moods, gross bodies, stark faces, and small stature and will engage only in unwholesome action. Friends will disagree after one day or after a month. Friends for a year will rise up against each
other as enemies. Old acquaintances will be totally discarded, and the new friends that are so well liked will be quickly despised. People will know nothing and everything, remember nothing and everything, think nothing and everything, do nothing and everything. They won’t go to their destinations and won’t stay in their places. They’ll engage in all kinds of impossible missions and activities. Bad gossip about the dead will spread throughout the country. No matter how close people are, they will start conflicts and civil wars with each other. The age of weaponry will flourish. Praising and venerating their horses, they will wage battles and raids. Unhappiness and unvirtuous actions all follow after the horses’ hooves. Prizing horses [above all else], everyone will be overcome by unhappiness.

“At that time, the ministers will have more power than the king. The youth will have more power than the elders. Sons will have more power than their fathers. Women will have more power than men. The whole country will be swayed by women, and they will gain leadership positions. Then the priests and the women will lay the ground for conflict, and everything will become the basis of contention and create the great demon of ruination.

“At that time, the golden rope of the law will be severed and state justice will be destroyed. The whole world will be in a great tumult, like when a flat stone is lifted off a city of ants. The laws of state will be crooked, the devils of wrong view will proliferate, the end of the Buddha’s doctrine will be at hand, and degeneration will spread. The signs of all this are as I have explained. I won’t explain it at greater length. When looking at that sort of business, this beggar woman’s heart quakes. I get upset and start to cry. My perceptions waver and I get scared. My hairs stand on end and my body seizes up. My mind recoils at telling any more. Don’t forget what little I have explained in these sentences—keep it in mind. Hide it within your heart and don’t tell of it.”

This ends the ninth chapter from the questions of Sōnam Gyen about the predictions of future corruption of state law.
10. More Questions of Sönam Gyen

They reassembled, and Sönam [continued] her inquiry:

“Machik-la, when the state law is corrupt like that, what will religious ethics be like? Will the religious law be corrupt or not? What developments will there be in the Dharma?”

Machik answered, “Alas, good people, men and women, listen! The times of the corruption of state law will also be the occasion for the deterioration in religious law. At one point the religious ethics will shine even more than now [because of] one monk who will keep the Buddha’s doctrine properly. But the doctrine’s fall into obscurity will not be stayed for long, [but it will be] like a rainbow fading in the sky. Then nothing will have the power to do anything for the doctrine until its demise. The cultivation of Dharma will become mere debate over dry words that have been overheard. It will become the basis of conflict. It will be a time of fixation on mere signs.”

Future Deterioration of Religious Ethics

Again Sönam Gyen asked, “Machik-la, who is this monk who will spread the doctrine during that time of the deterioration of religious ethics? Will the clarification of the doctrine be greater than it is now, or like it was before? Between now and the coming of that monk to spread the teaching, will its demise occur? What signs will indicate the corruption of religious law and demise of the teaching?”

Again the mother answered:
Sönam Gyen, born with the awakened karma of [previous] training,¹
Radiant as a lotus, free of desire, peaceful, and gentle,
Pleasant, attractive, devoted to the Buddha’s teaching,
Faithful, diligent, intelligent, and clever with questions;
All of you disciples: listen respectfully without distraction.
Listen, and I will explain the ways of the rise and fall
Of the Buddha’s doctrine in this snowy wilderness.

“A long time ago, the holy Dharma came to the gloom of Tibet and Kham
during the time when [another] doctrine was spread by the Bönpo of the Mu lineage.² An emanation of the Medicine Buddha called Nyen Tsen³ [first] proclaimed the Dharma.

“A long time after that, the actual Lokiteśvara⁴ appeared as a man to tame
the beings in Tibet. He was called Songtsen Gampo, of royal family, and his
lion’s roar of holy Dharma defeated the fox pack of Mu savages. The intro-
duction of the doctrine of Śākyamuni illuminated the darkness in the land
of Tibet. Supports [for the Buddha’s Body, Speech, and Mind] were initi-
ated, such as the building of palaces and innumerable temples. Laws were
introduced for the benefit of beings. In order to establish all the people of
Tibet and Kham in happiness, the Tibetan lord took two queens who were
special protectors of the doctrine. They were the daughters of the ruling
kings of China [and Nepal], emanations of Tārā, the protector from the fears
of cyclic existence. In accordance with former aspirations, when Songtsen
took them as his wives, they brought the sublime forms that were just like the
real Buddha himself, the crowning jewels of all the beings in the world,
mainly the statue of Lord Śākyamuni called Jowo. The statues were placed
in Central Tibet and became the field for [the accumulation of] merit. The
river of elixir of eloquent explanations flowed from the scholars of India and
washed away the emotional stains of the beings in the snowy mountain
ranges. At that time they were all gathered there, and the teaching of Śākya-
muni flourished widely in Tibet.

“For a long time after that there came endless groups of scholars and mas-
ters, such as Padmakara, the emanation of Amitābha, and the Tibetan king
[Trisong Detsen], emanation of the victorious one [Mañjuśrī]. After they
were all gathered and the doctrine had flourished for a long time, at one
point a Chinese disciple of Mahāyāna⁵ came and taught a perverse dharma,
but it is said that Śri Kamalaśīla prevailed over him. Then a devil emanating
as a king of Tibet named Lang [Darma] caused the doctrine to decline for seventy years. After that it was rekindled and arose again with [a new influx] from India and China. The codes of discipline of the doctrine spread and flourished in Central Tibet. I myself occurred in the outer Lap region of Tibet, and all the auspicious connections were gathered for the present proliferation of the doctrine.

“A long time from now there will come a time when many obstacles obscure the doctrine. The perverse dharma of [people merely] displaying the trappings of mantrins will spread, and countless beings will be led astray. At that time, a monk in the tradition of Śākyamuni named Dipaṅkara,6 blessed of Tārā, the sublime, crowning jewel of learned ones from central India, will come to Tibet to remedy the situation. The sun of the Tripiṭaka will rise in the sky and banish the forces of darkness of perverse dharma. The doctrine will be clarified and the codes of discipline established. The religious law will spread, and the doctrine will flourish for a long time.

“When, at some point, there is a slight deterioration for a time, a Brāhmaṇ prince of the gods will hold sway on the side of white earth on the Plains of White.9 The countries of Zhang Zhung will establish temples and palaces containing the three supports, and the dharma protectors will dwell there. Four pairs of emanations of Mañjuśrī will guide sentient beings. Especially, a supreme emanation of Acala (mi g.yo), a great being bearing the name Pal, will arise and defeat the heretics, establishing the sovereignty of Śākyamuni’s doctrine. Deterioration in the treatises will be restored, and the flag of the doctrine will fly high. The doctrine will not decline, and the Buddhist victory banner will reign. This is how the holy regents of the Dharma will arise [in Tibet].

“After some time has passed, during the era of the proliferation of conflict and degeneration, the doctrine will deteriorate with the mixing-up of the codes of discipline. Religious law will be impure and come under the power of affective emotion and attachment. There will be innumerable people with perverse behavior and broken vows. That’s the time when the monk that you, girl, were asking about will come. The seventh Buddha of the future excellent eon is now a supreme, powerful bodhisattva. Through the force of his courageous aspirations, he will come to Tibet in the degenerate times when there is much perversion. He will maintain monastic vows and carry the name Drakpa.12 Proclaiming well the lion’s roar of scripture and reason, his brave eloquence will overwhelm those of depraved discipline. He will impose
the authentic discipline on the boundless erroneous discipline and will introduce the disciplinary codes equal to that of Śākyamuni himself, as evidenced in the [wearing of the proper] attire of our Teacher. In particular, that sublime monk who clarifies the superior doctrine will be a master of the classes of tantra. Extracting the essential intention from the ocean of tantras, he will clarify the dark ignorance of limitless people with immeasurable light rays of faultless speech. After he has extracted the actual meanings and clarified all the main scriptural traditions, such as the three trainings and the Tripiṭaka, all those with the good fortune to become disciples will be satiated. The coming of that monk is without parallel, unlike [even when] the Buddha came to the center of the world and first turned the wheel of Dharma. But the teacher will not last long, disappearing like a flash of lightning in the sky.

“When we reach the setting afternoon of the Buddha’s doctrine, perverse-minded devils will abound and conflict will increase. Then state law and religious law will be disrupted, and the five degenerations will proliferate. The signs of the corruption of religious law will be the arising of false dharma-preaching teachers, as follows.

“Some teachers will advocate the philosophical schools with many dry words strung together from the black letters they have read, but without any real understanding of the Mahāyāna view. Their own untamed gongpo spirit of ego-fixation will flourish. Of course they will preach to the large crowds that they have gathered around them, [but only] from their desire to gain worldly fame and reputation. Hiding their desires, they will become bloated with arrogance. They’ll usurp the true words of those wiser than themselves, but with such a painful secret in their hearts, their anger will rage. Though they see that those true words of the wise are indeed true, they will criticize them because of their own hidden faults. They’ll cling to perverse philosophies and exacerbate afflictive emotions. [Seeing that] others who have accumulated greater merit than they have are naturally attracting many people and possessions, they will feel the same powerful envy that causes the demigods to fight for the wealth of the gods, and will launch unfounded propaganda campaigns against them. Thus the Buddha’s doctrine will be split up into factions, and the holy Dharma will bear the seal of ego-fixation. The sugata’s body will be seized and discarded by sectarianism. Refutation of the Buddhist philosophy will be maintained as the basis of conflict.

“Ordained monks will become generals. Novice monks carrying weapons will pursue combat. The loud dharma talk of debated philosophies will be...
proclaimed. Disruptive debate will be seen as honoring the spiritual ancestors. They will advocate keeping the sacred pledges of attachment to bad sects. When they have associated with dry words many times, they will say that this is upholding the teaching, that it is the life tree of the teaching, and delight excessively in the words of analytical investigation. Then the bloated mind of much study will banish the inner mind of awakening far away. Devoid of faith, devotion, and tranquility, they will come under the power of envy, rivalry, and self-promotion. Within the saṅgha, the family of masters and disciples of the same doctrine, and especially the vajra siblings, including women, of the profound path [of Vajrayāna] who become disciples of whatever particular masters will become disharmonious, contentious, and murderous. Contradiction within the doctrine will throw the monasteries into chaos. Those irreligious people who damage the teaching will be commissioned into politics. They’ll renege on their oaths and damage their sacred pledge. The final word on whom they’ll befriend will be food and wealth, and they will cause disruption throughout the land. Everybody will become involved in disruptive, unvirtuous activity.

“That is how some teachers will act. Sublime speech like flawless chimes will ring from their mouths, but in their minds a bonfire of lust and craving blazes, while all along they wear the uniform of the discipline (vinaya) on their bodies. Sometimes they will become lay generals. Sometimes they will be monk generals. Sometimes they will make up the legions of lay officers. Sometimes they will be spiritual masters. Sometimes they will be the masters of ceremonies of a monastery. Sometimes they will be the executors of paternal heritage. Sometimes they will be guides of the dead. Sometimes they will do ceremonies for the sick. Sometimes they will be defendants of a lawsuit. Sometimes they will be spirit chasers in village rituals. Sometimes they will be supervisors of field workers. Sometimes they will be in charge of merchants’ goods. Sometimes they will be master thieves. Sometimes they will boast of their fraudulent dharma of miracles. Sometimes they will appear to be accomplished by quoting scripture. Sometimes the highest great vehicle of Mantra will be sold to lay men and women for food and wealth. They will want to donate food and wealth since they desire gain. Making some small attempt to recite mantras and make tormas, they will kill enemies with big magic. Thinking of defeating demonic spirits, they will be bloated with pride. These are signs of the declining religious laws, noble ones!

“At that time, the behavior of monastics will be like this: They will promise
before their abbot-masters to uphold the vows of discipline, such as those concerning attire and so on, and thus become ordained. And indeed they will bear the evidence of their renunciant status. If you check their bodies, they will have the form of renunciant (rab byung). But if you check their minds, they are like madmen. If you check their behavior, then they are ordinary lay people. If you check their deeds, they are just like bandits. Some of these imitations of yellow-robed monks will not be very monkish in their body, speech, and mind, even killing and so on, because of indulging in the intoxication of alcohol, the root of [all other] faults. Religious behavior of a virtuous nature will be abandoned, and they will vie for recognition and respect. They will exert themselves in worldly pursuits of hoarding wealth and livestock, taking on the work of plowing the fields and so on, or marketing, loan-sharking, and money changing. They will wear scarves and beautiful jewelry, sing and dance, and pursue all kinds of fun. They will fling the Three Jewels far behind their backs. Their hidden agenda will be their attachment to the commodities of food and wealth. They’ll use deceitful methods to cheat people. Their spiritual masters and friends will be left far behind. They won’t remain in the monastery for the prescribed retreat periods but slink around local towns like stray dogs. They will adore the householders about whom they harbor great expectations, and hasten to help the hordes of relatives. Rejecting their dharma friends who strive for virtue, they will feel that the solution is the connection with householders. Abandoning the care of their old parents, they will devote themselves to slaving away for their girlfriends. They’ll wear armor over their yellow robes, carry sharp weapons, and run with the army. They will become known as wild warrior monastics and be the basis of much disturbance. They won’t be able to forbear anything for the sake of the holy Dharma, but will have genuine tenacity when it comes to unwholesome actions. Feeling immortal, they’ll fling themselves into mundane pursuits without regard for life or limb, and they won’t recall for even a moment the thought that this life will end. Sure, they’ll be great at talking about the training discipline and brilliant at handling unconscientious behavior. In regard to the holy Dharma, their minds will be most fickle, but in regard to love and hate they’ll have a steadfast disposition. Lazily procrastinating the ten virtues, they’ll rush to be diligent in the sacrilegious. Bloated with the general wealth of the saṅgha, they’ll rob it to provide for lay men and women. They will be magnanimous indeed, giving away food and wealth, desiring connections and profit for the sake of repu-
tation. They’ll own yellow robes and shrine objects, but will sell them off as merchandise to collect and hoard [wealth]. The prescribed guidelines of the training will fade away and be abandoned. They will achieve wealth and food from the wrong livelihood [of selling] statues. They will suffer physical torture for food and clothing that will sustain outside, unrelated women. Intellectually, the afflictive emotions will be the lofty subject of discussion. Mentally, they will cogitate the five poisons continuously. They will wear householders’ clothes on their bodies. They’ll talk dirty when they see a woman. They’ll sidestep when they see a learned cleric. They’ll be happy when they see vows transgressed. They’ll get irritated when they see a mother or sister. They’ll smile and flirt when they see another beautiful woman.

“Such are those who are known as renunciants. They look like renunciants in the daytime but are really laypeople by moonlight. They look like renunciants in the monastery but are really laypeople in town. They look like renunciants while in the ranks of dharma activities but are really laypeople elsewhere. They look like renunciants in retreat but are in fact laypeople when they buy and sell. They look like renunciants to others but are actually laypeople when they examine themselves. They look like renunciants to the people but are really laypeople in the eyes of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. They look like renunciants to the laity but are laypeople before their spiritual masters. To embodied beings they have the bodies of renunciants. To unembodied beings they are seen as actual vow-breakers. If you examine their clothes, all the guardians of the teaching are pleased, as it is a definite dwelling place for the buddhadharma. [However], if you examine their bodies, the women are pleased. They have the three [physical] defects. If you examine their speech, they like babbling and also have the four defects. If you examine their minds, they like gongpo spirits and also have the three defects. If you wonder where those problems originate, they come from not following the Book of Discipline (vinaya) and other scriptures and from falling under the power of indolent sloth. When there is no understanding of how to recognize the discipline of vows, the benefits of the three trainings decline. When the three levels of vows are damaged, the three poisons increase.

“In the age when these yellow shapes cover the earth, the boundless sentient beings that are born there will have no refuge lords. Their fortune will be inferior. It will be difficult to suppress the increasing afflictive emotions. The result will be the unbearable suffering of the lower realms. It will be difficult to maintain the spread of the doctrine while the beings at time’s end
are tortured by karma. The power and strength of the buddhas of the three
times will be inadequate. The bodhisattvas will weep. The pratyekabuddhas
will lose reality. Śrāvakas will live in fear. Guardians of the teaching will lose
their powers. Protectors of the good side will lose status. Protectors of the
dark side will abound. The devils will all be restored and proliferate every-
where. When nonvirtue fills all the worlds, whoever practices religion that is
the opposite of the Sage’s doctrine and engages in antidharma will flourish
as devilish guardians of the doctrine. At that time, the Sage’s monastic disci-
pline will deteriorate. Even if there is one pure individual who can properly
keep the full monastic precepts, evil forces will interfere with virtue and noble
aspiration and will overpower him or her. With short life, little fortune, and
many conditions for disease, they will become miserable and tormented.
When such things come to be, it portends the deterioration of the Šākya’s
document. Such are the corrupt signs of the corruption of religious law.

“Alas! In that age and at that time, the Buddha’s teaching will fade like the
rays of the setting sun. The devil of perverse behavior will rise up like the mist
in summer. Pure discipline will be as rare as flowers in the dead of winter.
Depraved discipline will be more plentiful than insects in spring. Saints who
sincerely practice the holy Dharma will be even more rare than stars in the
daytime. People who sell the holy Dharma and cultivate commodities will be
more numerous than stars on a clear night. Holy bodhisattvas that can truly
give out [their own happiness] and take on [others’ suffering] will be as rare
as wish-fulfilling jewels in the borderlands. People who think of helping oth-
ers in order to benefit themselves will be more plentiful than the pebbles of
Gung Thang in Mang Yul. Mantrins participating in the practice of cre-
ation and completion who achieve maturation and liberation will be even
more extremely rare than the udumwara flower. Mantrins with damaged
vows who display, confuse, and obtain [merely] the words of Secret Mantra
will be more abundant than plants in the summertime. Great meditators
participating in the tradition of esoteric instructions who master the energy
currents and mind and see the truth will be more utterly scarce than the all-
victorious arura plant. Great meditators lacking esoteric instructions who
reject diligence and space out in sloth will be more numerous than the crops
of Draklung. Throwing out the root of the holy Dharma and chasing after
the minor branches, it is extremely difficult to uproot cyclic existence. Thus
all kinds of chaos occurs in the religious tradition. These are the corrupt
signs of corruption in the religious law, noble ones.
“Beyond that, corruption in the religious law will be as follows: As for individuals who contradict the Sage’s teaching, they will be of two very different [kinds]. They will not wear the evidence of the Śakya’s doctrine but wear a crest of matted hair and white clothes and will carry rosaries of mirror ornaments. One kind, although not [appearing] in accordance with the uniform of the doctrine, will be an individual who has entered into Avalokiteśvara’s grace and will benefit beings. One kind will be a hypocrite, and, though the styles are similar, the individuals will be different. That is the difference between these two, and it is a very important difference. This was told to Palden Gyen, in response to her question.\footnote{18}

“Dharma teachers called ‘yogins’ who have not given up wearing the outfit of householders, with the crest of matted hair and jeweled rosary, will dance and play music. They will drink beer, eat at the wrong times, and speak obscene language as though it were the Dharma. Through unconscientious behavior and perverse understanding, they will magnetize the lay people. They will say, ‘I teach the effortless liberation and sudden enlightenment of the short, profound dharma path of the supreme Vajrayāna.’ Some unfortunate people will be deceived and connect with this perverted approach. Those individuals will see the Sage’s [true] doctrine holders and discipline traditions as enemies to fear and avoid. When some individuals of perverse behavior like this occur, it is a special sign of corruption in the religious law, noble ones.

“There are certainly many more signs of corruption in the religious law, but there is no time to describe them extensively. Disciples, remember these few words that contain the meaning and are easy to understand. If you think about the signs of corruption in the religious law in the afternoon of the teaching, you will become as terrified as though your flesh were being separated from your bones. Tears of mental disturbance will burst forth from your face. This beggar woman can’t think of anything to do! Alas, all you disciples! Apply yourselves and practice the holy Dharma from your hearts, disciples. Now I have answered the questions of the girl Sönam Gyen.”

Sönam Gyen queried further: “Machik-la, your clear explanation for us, the dwellers in this land of snow, of the rise and fall of the doctrine in the past and in the future, from the initial time of the spread of the holy Dharma until the final corruption in the religious law, was indeed marvelous. At that time of the corruption in the religious law, there
was one monk named Drakpa who would clarify the doctrine. Is that the same monk who would clarify the doctrine whom you mentioned when you were speaking about the corruption of state law, or was that someone other than Drakpa? When religious law is corrupt, will there be holders of our dharma system? And if so, will it deteriorate from how it is now, or not? How will it happen?”

Machik smiled and said, “Girl, your questions are incredibly persistent! Especially your question about the monk who will be able to do something about the teaching during the degenerate times is very astute. This is good. Even better, your persistent questioning reveals your devotion to the Buddha’s teaching. So listen.

“That monk who will come and clarify the buddhadharma during the time of corruption of the state law is the very one named Drakpa of whom I was just speaking. Putting an end to all those monks who confound the teaching, he will introduce the authentic purpose and pure discipline of the doctrine. The introduction of the dharma tradition by this monk named Drakpa when he comes to Tibet in the degenerate times will be similar to when the Sage first turned the wheel of the Dharma on earth. However, as it will be the declining afternoon of the Buddha’s doctrine, evil will abound. Because of that, this flourishing of the teaching will be fleeting, no longer than a flash of lightning in the dark. But it won’t disappear entirely, because this doctrine is like the scarce gold that occurs in this world. The doctrine of the Sage will not be utterly annihilated. Something will remain. All the sentient beings who come in contact with monks will achieve a great purpose even though they are born in the final period of the doctrine in wild Tibet. Even though beings who are born in degenerate, gloomy Tibet, where the Sage himself never set foot, have exhausted all merit, still, the monk named Drakpa will come. Furthermore, a little bit before that, the regent of Maitrey, Dampa himself,20 came to Tibet. He and the one named Gyalwa are bodhisattvas, great beings. Those sentient beings who connect even a little with these two will have a great accumulation of merit despite being born in Tibet in the degenerate age. To describe the qualities of these two is difficult even if one tried endlessly. The monk named Drakpa will not take birth again in Tibet. The one named Gyalwa is in his first birth. After this life he will return as one carrying the name ‘Holder of Three Knowledges.’21 Then, taking some rebirths in the lineage with the same birth name, he will
become a most excellent field for the accumulation of merit in Tibet. From the time of this bodhisattva until the final destruction of the buddhadharma, there will not be another bodhisattva whose activity equals his, although occasionally there may be saints who can benefit different sentient beings.

“That’s enough of trying to give a single definitive answer with words. It was just some leading words about the great qualities and the special individuals in whom such qualities will arise. Based on the faith of the girl Sönam Gyen, all you disciples remember and bear this in mind.

The Future of Chöd

“Now I will explain how it is with our own dharma tradition, so pay attention. My dharma system does not have even one-hundredth of a hair’s worth of self-serving concern—it is not stained by any such idea. And though it does have the concern to serve others, it does not have even one-hundredth of a hair’s worth of partiality. Nevertheless, powerful, hostile (gdug pa can), frightening, savage spirits, both embodied and unembodied, can cause harm at some point to many sentient beings. [Not only that], the hostile spirits themselves have a very difficult time escaping the reaches of cyclic existence. I cannot bear to see their suffering. So I have made the powerful hostile spirits my particular focus. Sending out the messengers of love, compassion, and bodhicitta, I draw in those powerful spirits. Then I give the spirits and their retinues my own body, life, wealth, and whatever is in my domain, so that they are completely satisfied, and I lead them to the stages and paths of enlightenment. That is the dharma system of this beggar woman.

“From now until the fourth generation, there won’t be any deterioration of my teaching; it will remain as it is. Even if there is a little deterioration, up until the fourth [generation] it will occur just as it is now. Then at the eighth generation, from then for one [generation] up until and including the ninth, this dharma system of mine will be turned inside out by many people associating it with aggression who will say they are Chöd practitioners. They will be like butchers. In the times of corrupt religious law, they will destroy my teaching. Carrying all kinds of paraphernalia and shouting the sound of p’ê, these self-proclaimed Chöd practitioners will target nonhuman spirits and such, harming many sentient beings and becoming the basis of disaster, like poisonous tree trunks.

“My system, the profound dharma Secret Mantra creation and completion,
will develop as prophesied by Tārā. From you, Tönyön, the transmission will continue through four pairs of generations. At the eighth, there will be one named Namkha who will be the final one in the dharma system of Secret Mantra. After Namkha, there won’t be even a hair left of Secret Mantra creation and completion. Creation and completion will vanish into space! Tönyön and Gangpa, my sons, you two keep this sacred pledge of creation and completion without dispersing the lineage. The empowerments and feasts have auspicious connections for benefiting many beings, so do that. [This teaching] can continue to be supportive through worthy students from one to two just until three, as you know.

“This current dharma tradition will get all mixed up in the future with the behavior of the degenerate times. The separate, independent traditions of sūtra and mantra in union and sūtra pāramitā will become corrupted and mixed with each other. The meaning of the esoteric instruction will be discarded and you won’t find anything there to practice, any more than in dog vomit. Idiotic Chöd practitioners will be even dumber than people feeling around in the darkness for something lost. This current dharma tradition will be perverted into its opposite, and the achievements of boundless nonvirtue will occur. My customs will all change into their opposites.

“The threefold life force of my dharma tradition is love, compassion, and the awakening mind. The opposite of that will be to constantly be accompanied by ill will and hatred. The primary focus of my altruism is nonhuman, hostile beings. The opposite of my cherishing and taming of them will be to target them for exorcism and oppression. Now in my system, we abandon human busyness and stay in a palatial power place where nonhumans gather in empty valleys or charnel grounds as sacred places that enhance the practice of virtue. The opposite of that will be to stay among the nomad camps and crowded villages where there is great human commotion, or in places of epidemic and disease, in order to harm others. Now we give up self-fixation and give away our body and life without attachment. The opposite of that will be bondage to self-fixation and a fixation with cherishing and adorning one’s body and life. Now we wear cotton and felt coats and felt boots. The opposite of that will be to wear predator skins, and especially dog-skin coats, leather shoes, and black yak-hair. Now we carry begging bowls of quintessential cow’s horn and unimpaired thighbones for instruments. The opposite of that will be begging bowls of human heads and thighbones made of black yak horn to blow. Hurting others with all kinds of paraphernalia along
with their body, speech, and mind, some will believe themselves to be Chöd practitioners. Not only will they lack even a whiff of my dharma system, their ears won’t ever have even heard the teachings of Mahāyāna.

“Moreover, the sound of the syllable p’è [that we use] in my dharma system will be adulterated, and uttering the sound of p’è at the wrong times will cause ordinary spirits to be hurt. Thus even the sound of p’è will become flawed. Those people who call themselves Chöd practitioners and accumulate only that kind of bad karma are the enemies of my doctrine. At that time, individuals who are able to adhere to my dharma system as it is now will be like daytime stars, or even more rare. And even if one in a hundred does occur, it will be like the sun in the dead of winter coming through a skylight, with no power to warm. At that time there will be just a few who produce the aspiration for virtue. But since the subject of practice, the system of dharma itself, will be corrupt, they will be bereft of practice, and no matter how much they endeavor with the thought of virtue, it will be difficult to transcend cyclic existence. In this manner, the perverted misuse of my dharma system and the corruption of the religious law will occur at the same time. Keep it in mind, noble ones.” Thus she spoke.

Judging that Sōnam Gyenema still had more questions and unable to resist, Machik encouraged her.

Gyenema asked, “Machik-la, I understand what you have said about the sinful individuals who will pervert and oppose the dharma system that we now uphold in the time when the religious law is corrupt. But what special styles will those sinful Chöd practitioners have, and how will they behave? What exactly are the signs that their behavior is perverse? I appeal to your heart, please tell us.”

Again Machik spoke: “Faithful, smart, diligent disciples, listen intently with concentration and devotion. I will tearfully explain a little about how my dharma system will be held in a perverse manner.

“Verging on the end of the Buddha’s doctrine and approaching the final ruin of my doctrine, there will arise a few destructive practitioners. Though it is true that my doctrine will once be clarified, activity in the meantime will be perverse in these ways. From now until the ninth generation, the arena of holy Dharma in the perverse behavior of individuals will be as follows.
Remember this: Renunciant shapes in monastic garb will blaze with bonfires of lust inside. Outwardly wearing the banner of saffron, they will hold human heads and legs in their hands, tie predator pelts to their backs, and twitter \( p'e \) from their mouths. They will pretend to be Chöd practitioners. They will target gods and demons of apparent existence with bad visualizations and various magical articles, endangering all sentient beings. The Three Jewels will be cast far away. They will practice through te’urang spirits and speak with clairvoyance, produce the powers of the gyalpo Pekar, do healing rites, subjugate demon slaves, and cause disaster in order to collect a bit of food or money. They will be bloated with the arrogance of powerful magic. Inciting desire with black female sinmos, they will feel neurotic lust boil up like water. Their bodies and minds will be unbearably distracted, recklessly risking food, wealth, health, and life for the sake of women. They’ll wander around towns, villages, ravines; outside charnel grounds, crossroads, markets; in trees and empty caves; and in some towns and villages, creeping around with covetous minds. Of course they claim to practice the Mahâyâna holy Dharma and be my followers, but mine [is the way of] catching with compassion’s hook the human and nonhuman spirits and holding them more dearly than my own children. Those great Chöd practitioners will exorcise and torture those beings with wrathful visualizations, magical substances, bad mantras, and various and sundry methods. How could they practice Mahâyâna teachings? How could they be followers of mine? They’ll talk about Mahâyâna love from their mouths, but hold bad and hateful thoughts in their minds. This kind of fool accompanied by such a mind will put on orange and act with depraved discipline, sporting the articles of the cemetery and signs of captains. Even if they don’t keep that stuff, they’ll have all kinds of things. The sound of \( p'e \) will fill more than just the mountains.

“That is how they will come to destroy my teaching. And that is the best-case scenario. Alas!

“Again, their styles will be like this: weapons of the five poisons clutched inside, black clothes of the düd spirits worn on their backs, the yellow garb of doctrine holders wrapped around their middles, long pointed hats of mu spirits perched on their heads, animal-fur bandannas tied around their foreheads, and bodies bound with graveyard garb. They will steal the minds of women and children with the sweet sounds of lutes and flutes. Menmo goddesses and zi demons will gather automatically. They will make little coy songs with their voices, while emitting an occasional \( p'e \) from their mouths.
And they’ll claim to be Chöd practitioners! In order to obtain their temporal desires, they’ll beat and torture invisible demons with toxic magic, wrathful visualizations, and bad mantras. Catching the gods and demons of apparent existence, they’ll challenge everyone and show off how much they know. By burning foul substances in great burned offering ceremonies, they’ll weaken the benevolent gods and nāgas and various vices will emerge in that area. Once the negative düüs flourish, they will align themselves with those big Chöd practitioners. The powers of the Chöd practitioner will be created by those düüs. Led around by men, za, and gab demons (sman bza’ gab ’dre), they will engage in this kind of perverse path.

“[With the help of these negative forces] they will hunt women; chase spirits in village rituals; do healing rites, subjugation, and fertility rites; guard [against] blights, frost, hail, and cattle diseases; perform severance rites to free deceased humans (dur gcod) and suppress misfortune; carry corpses, and welcome brides [i.e., perform funerals and marriages]. With these and other boundless bad activities they will officiate unimaginable, endless practices. Such Chöd people are shameless and unconscientious. Their desires and cravings know no satisfaction. In summers they’ll go to outside nomad camps, in autumn they’ll trot out to local towns, in winter they’ll move around empty caves and ravines, and in spring they’ll enjoy the donations at monasteries. Their attire and accessories will be all kinds of inappropriate things, not of one type but changing over and over. They won’t experience the awakening mind of Mahāyāna for even a moment, and they won’t ever experience separation from their unvirtuous mind. They will continuously hold to the idea of a fixed, solid reality. When there are Chöd practitioners such as these, it will be a sign of subversion in my dharma system. This is certain, so bear it in mind, noble ones.

“In the degeneration of the [last] five-hundred-year period, due to the deception of düdü and gongpo spirits, people will wear bad clothes like dog coats, eat various unclean food, and practice various unvirtuous, bad actions. Going all around the far reaches of the land uttering p’è, they’ll claim to be Chöd practitioners. They might as well be butchers. These are the devils who will murder my doctrine, O noble disciples.

“Once again, this is their style: These tough Chöd practitioners will be crippled with the broken bones of morality, blind without the eyes of spiritual guides, deaf without the sound of the holy Dharma, and like dumb people without the recitation of the heart [mantra]. When being thus crip-
pled, blind, deaf, and dumb coincide, these people will call themselves Chöd practitioners. They will leave behind the ten virtues of the sacred Dharma and take up the ten nonvirtues. They will wear the clothes of dualistic delusion wrapped firmly with the belt of subject-object dualism, tied tightly with the knot of greed. They'll carry the sharp banner of hatred in their hands and resound the drum of pride slung on their arms. Wearing the boots of desire on their feet, they'll stick the human thighbones of jealousy in their belts. They'll throw the dog pelt of emotional obscuration on their backs, tie the bearskin of stupidity on their torsos, carry criss-crossed nets of five poisons, use human skull cups as the begging bowl of afflictive emotions, carry the noose of craving on their backs, and wear human flayed skins with limbs, head, and hair still attached. Crazy nonsensical songs will issue out of their mouths while they emit the sounds of p’ê with their speech. In their minds the darkness of wrong views will thicken. If you look at their attire, it is the style of sinpo cannibals. If you look at their bodies, they are human bodies. If you look at their behavior, it is that of heretics. If you look at their minds, they are like animals. No matter how you look at them, in whatever they do they are the same as actual psychotics.

“Chöd practitioners with such a doctrine of solid self-fixation ride on long-eared black donkeys saddled with ignorant delusion, held by the straps and cruppers of solidified fixation on true existence, cinched with the tight girth of fixated attachment and wearing the bridle of snobbish contempt. Black sinmo demonesses lead the donkeys by the nose, and the gyalpo Pekar is the trail guide. Hosts of death lords head up the front, and armies of devils bring up the rear. Wild, cavorting tsem spirits run on the right, and nine-headed za devils flank the left. Mu devil kings swarm above and black naga devils push up below. With those hordes of eight classes, they are surrounded by a retinue of dark protectors. Ordinary nonhumans will tremble and panic.

“With such an entourage of the eight classes [of gods and demons] they will destroy my doctrine in the degenerate times. Such Chöd practitioners will have a hostile attitude and then become conceited about successfully subduing demons and spirits. All those proliferating big-time Chöd practitioners and their retinues will be the sweepers of the holy Dharma of ten virtues. They will be the fuel of the turbulent ten nonvirtues. They will be the butchers of the life force of freedom. They will be the keys to open the padlocks of the lower realms. They will be the source of compassion for bodhisattvas. They will be the place of reproach of holy spiritual masters.
They will be the objects of offering by negative people. They will be the conduits for gathering women. They will be playmates of children. They will be murderers of stray dogs. They will be permanent residents of local villages. They will be the rejects of isolated retreat places. In the degenerate times of corruption of the religious law, they will be the exact opposite of my dharma system. Disciples, such is the future Chöd practitioner.

“Again, what’s called the Chöd practitioners of ninefold negativity will be like this: They will always roam around dark, haunted towns. They will join with dark friends. They will do practices that beat up on dark demons. They will eat dark food donated from wrong livelihood. They will visualize giving toxic, black banquets. They will wear dark dog skins on their bodies. They will put dark bearskins on their heads. They will blow human thighbones with black cow horn. They will scare dark dogs with the twittering sound of p’ê. Wouldn’t anyone who sees them be terrified? They are like the poisonous tree trunk of all ruin. These foes of my doctrine will cover the land in the degenerate age.

“Again, this is their style: those body aggregates of five poisons that are so cherished will be wrapped in old corpse shrouds from cemeteries. They will wave human-skin banners pegged on poles, decorate their bodies with corpse cloth and dead hair, and carry human heads, legs, and hands. They will wear their hair loose without hats on their heads, and go barefoot without boots on their feet. They will declare themselves adepts. They will engage in vice and nonvirtue with their bodies and eat various unclean food. Proposing to practice equalizing all tastes, they’ll eat human flesh, drink leprous brains, and suck diseased blood, pus, and urine. Male gyalpo spirits will enter their hearts. Spurious jungpo spirits (byung po gdon) will definitely subdue them. Female ‘black line’ spirits will enter their energy.32 Neurotic desire will distract their bodies and minds. They will be bereft of inhibiting shame and will risk their lives if they see a woman. They will roar with loud, reckless laughter. Sometimes they’ll utter boisterous nonsense, sometimes sing little vain songs, sometimes utter the sounds of p’ê, sometimes dance, and sometimes strip and run around naked. They will claim to subdue the gods and demons with such crazy, nonsensical activity, but their ears have never heard the sacred Mahāyāna Dharma. They are always accompanied by their covetous and malicious minds. They will ascertain the crossroads of local villages and the enclosures of outside nomad camps to be the “haunted places” of one life. When they see a holy spiritual master, they’ll somehow flee, but if they see
a vulgar woman they’ll display a radiant smile. Engaging in that kind of behavior, they’ll say, ‘I am a yogin who has attained the signs of heat on the paths and stages. I will teach you the Mahāyāna mahāmudrā.’ They will fool the naive lay men and women and hook them up with a perverse path. Relying on the wrong livelihood of unvirtuous food and drink, they’ll be totally invested in deceit and lies, claiming to be Chöd practitioners. Such will be the annihilators of my doctrine.

“Again, those so-called Chöd practitioners who will destroy my teaching will gather in the end and create these styles, arising in manifold ways: They will have human bodies with minds of death lords. They will live in cemetery corpse parks eating the flesh of dogs, horses, and humans and even drinking their blood. They will wrap themselves in human and dog skins and wear the head skins of savage predators on their heads to frighten others. They will exhibit a terrifying spectacle by wearing hairy human scalps on their feet. They will hang pieces of human feet and heads on their bodies and wear garlands made of human hearts around their necks. With horse hides erected above them as tents, they’ll sit upon seats of various corpse clothes, rejecting the food and clothing of worldly people, and living always on the outskirts of no-one’s land. When they see monastics and other kinds of people, they’ll shrink away and stay in the shadows. When they see carnivorous birds and other charnel ground animals, they’ll be delighted and play with them. In their attire they will look like the messengers of death, with human bodies and cannibal minds. Like carnivorous jackals, they will constantly have malicious intent, hoping for the death of humans, horses, and dogs. They’ll love eating flesh, drinking blood, and wearing skins. They’ll engender the powers of death’s executioners. They’ll be surrounded by an entourage of smell-eating death lords. They will gather ordinary spirits automatically. They will resound with great bellows the sound of ba. Sometimes they will make the howl of predators. Sometimes they will make the yelp of foxes. Sometimes they will sing little ditties about breaking vows. Sometimes they will make whistling sounds. Sometimes they will erupt with the sound of p’e. Sometimes they will utter long, cascading hungs. Once in a while they will run to the country, and all the people will gather to see the sight. Dogs will gather and clamor around while women and cats will panic in terror. Then they’ll talk on about the great renunciation of cutting through craving for worldly, human food and wealth and suppressing the eight worldly concerns. They will say that their apparel is the sign of an adept. They will claim to be great
Chöd practitioners who are definitely my followers and practitioners of the sacred Mahāyāna Dharma. Disciples, those are the kinds of Chöd practitioners who will come in the final days of my doctrine.

“Alas! There is no time to explain in this way and go on about the behaviors and styles of those future Chöd practitioners in my dharma system. If I say any more you’ll get depressed or have a heart attack. Those Chöd practitioners who create unimaginably limitless bad karma and manifest dharma perversely practice the exact opposite of my dharma system. Desiring to obtain the little materialistic things of this life, they will become deranged with anger and muster all their strength and ferocity. Then they’ll conquer the nyen of the mountains, annihilate the nyen of the cliffs, disrupt the nyen of the waters, cut down the nyen of the trees, dig up the nyen of the ground, and crush the nyen of the rocks. They will conquer the citadel of the gods who protect the doctrine. They will hold a bad attitude toward the great power places and elevate their attention to the minor power places. That kind of bad attitude will instantly cause innumerable unembodied sentient beings to engage in deeds of unbearable suffering. They will continuously create immeasurable danger through actions of immediate [retribution], such as discrediting the significance of the three supports, and various negative actions, such as accusing the innocent. Those mighty Chöd practitioners aren’t fit to be included as insiders (Buddhists). They are outsiders, heretics. They are a class of Bön shamans, or just ordinary lay people. Falling into the cut-off family from among the races of humans, their companions above them are the chieftains of hungry ghosts and death lords. Among Buddhists, Chöd practitioners such as these are like shang shang birds among birds. These three are similar because they are cut off from their own species but are not of any other. Again, because these three have sinister bodies, they can afflict whoever encounters them with problems and defects. If you think about the karma of those kinds of Chöd practitioners, even if they became horrible, pitiless death lords, tears of blood will gush from your eyes.

“Alas! There is nothing more fitting to cry over. At that time when signs of the corruption of religious law in the degenerate age have occurred, my dharma system will be like the seven-horse [sun] king arising in the sky [and then being] turned back into the land of darkness, causing everything to sink into thick, dark obscurity. Alas, disciples, I have described here the Chöd practitioners that are to come.
Gyen Chenma asked, “Machik-la, I do somewhat comprehend how the culmination of our dharma system will occur, how it will become perverse after the ninth generation and the characteristics of the individuals who will perpetrate that perverse behavior as you have described. But on top of the culmination [brought on by] those perverse people, [when we] reach the decline of the doctrine, you said there would be a clarification of our dharma system. You mentioned a particular individual who would clarify the dharma system. Will that person who will clarify the doctrine be an incarnated aspect of you yourself, Machik? Or will it be someone else? Please tell us.”

Machik said, “Listen, disciples. In the end, when those people pervert our dharma system, it will be as frightening as encountering charnel ground cannibals. At the very same time that my teaching is coming to a close, there will be just one person who clarifies the doctrine. He won’t be able to do more than a flash of lightning does in the dark, but he will be able to hinder those who pervert the teaching. Especially, there will be those who possess the capability [to practice] excellent Chöd. Those people will [uphold] dharma practices of the unerring dharma system that equals our current system. They will thoroughly differentiate between the customs of pure and perverted dharma systems. Rejecting the perverted system, they will enter into the customs of the pure Dharma, reveal the Dharma of the treasures, and teach secretly. An individual who can practice my dharma system as it is practiced now will bear the name Senge. That person will not be my incarnation, but he will be the great meditator Chökyi Senge who has received my blessing. Also, in the degenerate age, at the ultimate perversion of my dharma system, when the most extreme perversion is about to increase, this Chökyi Senge will turn his attention to my doctrine. He will come and reveal the mysteries of my dharma system. The practices of my dharma system will have become mixed up, and individual practices will be combined and difficult to separate, like a concoction of milk and blood. Once the pollutants are separated out of the perverted dharma system, the perversion will be terminated, and the genuine dharma systems will be individually introduced. For example, with the dawn of the first light in the sky, the darkness grad-
ually recedes until the full light of day when the sun rises. Likewise, in the degenerate age, Chökyi Senge will introduce the pure practices, and even the sound of perverse dharma will not be heard for fifty years. My dharma system as it is now will rise like the sun and moon in the pure sky and remain for 577 human years. You should know this and keep it in your minds, all you disciples.”

Again Gyenema asked: “Machik-la, so in the degenerate age, at the end of the perversion of our dharma, Chökyi Senge will come, eliminate the perverse dharma, and reestablish the genuine dharma, and for 577 years our teachings will flourish. But what is the special distinction of the dharma system that you, Machik, have taught and that of others?”

Machik said: “Listen, girls. This dharma system of mine is not essentially different from others. There is nothing from the sūtras and tantras of the Buddha’s own precepts, or the pure treatises and esoteric instructions of the learned, that I do not understand. So there is no dharma that is inconsistent with me, on an outer or inner level of meaning. But there are special words that are different than in my dharma system. Thus, since I did not rely on the words of any historical dharma of precepts and treatises, and because there is also no preaching of source texts, whatever I explain in my dharma system is uncorrupted. It is not the essence of the words of the historical dharma of precepts and treatises. Taking the authentic words of sūtra and mantra that come from the historical sūtras and tantras and both the precepts and treatises as proof, and quoting those words, [one could] come up with a dharma system that is consistent with mine. But it wouldn’t actually be the dharma system that I have taught. Future scholars will quote from the passages in sūtra and mantra and create composed teachings that compare with my dharma system, but if they were definitely consistent with my pure dharma system, then there would be many benefits for my doctrine as well. Thus, there will be a Chöd system of meditation from the sūtra and mantra scriptures that has come from the classical precepts and treatises. But it won’t be the dharma that I have actually taught. The dharma system that I have actually taught does not contain even one actual word of classical precepts and treatises. Yet there is not even one-hundredth of one hair’s worth of it that is inconsistent with the pure meaning of precept and treatise. Therefore, the system that I have actually taught is not a meditation on scripture. That
is how to understand the special distinction of my dharma system from others, boys and girls.”

This was the tenth chapter on the prophecies of the future corruption of the religious law and the extensive, authentic teachings in response to the questions of both Sönam Gyen and Gyen Chenma.

**Colophon**

This Complete Explanation containing a mere mention of Machik’s liberation story, and especially her way of offering and giving away the body, together with a summary of her predictions concerning the future, has been arranged in ten chapters for the benefit of future generations. By this virtue may my parents and all sentient beings prevail over the four devils of affective emotion and easily attain this very citadel of the Sovereign Mother.

*Om svasti*

This complete explanation of how to offer and give the body
And the liberation story of Machik Lapkyi Drönma,
The Great Mother in person, the dharma-kaya, perfection of wisdom,
Was formed with pure and noble intention.
By this virtue may the doctrine of Chöd spread in all directions
Like the sun arising in the sky,
And may every single being who comes into contact with me
Quickly attain the citadel of the Great Mother, Machik.

*Sarwa mangalam*

Virtue!
Abbreviations Used in Notes


DHA — *Gso ba rig pa’i tshig mdzod gyu thog dgongs rgyan* (“Ornament of Yutok’s Mind, A Dictionary of Healing Arts”) by Dbang ’dus. (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1982).

GP — *Lus kyi sred sbyin gyi zin bris mdor bs dus kun dga’i skyed tshal* (“Grove of Pleasures”) by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye.

LTD — Lama Tashi Dondup

RH — *Zhi byed dang good yul gyi chos ‘byung rin po che i phreng ba thar pa’i rgyen.* (“The Precious Garland Ornament of Liberation; the Religious History of Pacification (Chöd) and Severance (Zhije)”) by Khams smyon dharma seng ge, alias ’Jig ’bral chos kyi seng ge, in *Gcod kyi chos skor,* 411–597. (Delhi: Tibet House, 1974).

RT — Ringu Tulku Rinpoche

SKT — Surmang Khenpo Tsering

Text 1 — *Phung po gzan skyur gyi rnam bs had good kyi don bsal byed* (“Clarifying the Meaning of Chöd, A Complete Explanation of Casting Out the Body As Food”), ed. Nam mkha’i rgyal mtshan/Gang bdag. Copy of handwritten text.


TOK — *Shes bya kun khyab* (theg pa’i sgo kun las btus pa gsung rab rin po che’i mdzod bslab pa gsun legs par ston pa’i bstan bcos shes bya kun khyab) (“Treasury of Knowledge”) by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye. 3 vols. (Lhasa: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1982).

TR — Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche
Notes

Notes to the Preface


2. *Gcod kyi tshogs las yon tan kun ‘byung gsungs rgyun ’khrul med ltar bkod pa* and the commentary *Gcod kyi tshogs las yon tan kun ldan gyi dmigs rim bla ma’i gsung rgyun gyi zin bris shel kar me long* ("White Crystal Mirror") by Bengen Tenzin Namdak (Ban rgyan bstan ’dzin rnam dag).

3. For instance, Tsultrim Allione’s *Women of Wisdom* (1984), Karenina Kollmar-Paulenz’s *’Der Schmuck der Befreiung’: Die Geschichte der Z’i byed- und gCod-Schule des tibetischen Buddhismus* (1993), Jérôme Edou’s *Machig Labdrön and the Foundations of Chöd* (1996), and articles such as Janet Gyatso’s “The Development of the gCod Tradition” (1985), Kollmar-Paulenz’s “Mystic between Adaptation and Rebellion” (1998), Giacomella Orofino’s “The Great Wisdom Mother and the Gcod Tradition” (2000), and a number of theses and dissertations.

4. There are several available translations of the daily practice, *Rgyun khyer gyi lus sbyin bsdus pa*, and I am aware of three translations of Jamgon Kongtrul’s commentary on it (*Lus kyis mchod sbyin gyi zin bris mdor bsdus kun dga’i skyed tshal*): Anila Rinchen Palmo’s *Cutting Through Ego-Clinging* (1987), Peter Roberts’s “A Grove of Pleasures” (1987), and Lama Lodo’s *The Garden of All Joy* (1994). Karmapa Rangjung Dorje’s *Tshogs las rin chen phreng ba* was translated by David Molk as “The Precious Garland of Activities of the Chöd Feast Gathering” (1998). There are several translations of “Laughter of the Däkinis” (*Gcod yul mkha’ ’gro’i gdad rgyangs* in the *Klong chen snying thig* cycle, a number of translations of *kusali Chöd* within preliminary practices (*sgon ’gro’), and my own translation of the Tröma Nagmo Chöd terma texts of Dudjom Lingpa (Harding 1990). No doubt there are many more.

5. For example, Judith Simmer-Brown’s *Däkinis Warm Breath* (2001), Anne Klein’s *Meeting the Great Bliss Queen* (1995), and Rita Gross’s *Buddhism after Patriarchy* (1993). Also Janice Willis *Feminine Ground* (1989); José Cabezón, *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender* (1992); Karma Lekshe Tsomo, *Buddhist Women Across*
“Marvelous Life” is the title Jérôme Edou gives to his translation of these two chapters in Machig Labdrön and the Foundations of Chöd (1996).

7 Thod smyon bsam grub is also called Yang grub in Zhi byed dang good yul gyi chos ‘byung rin po che’i phreng ba thar pa’i rgyan (“The Precious Garland, Ornament of Liberation; the Religious History of Pacification and Severance,” henceforth RH) by Khams smyon ’jig ’bralchos kyi seng ge (477-78). He is listed as Machik’s third son and the same story of his sickness, recovery, and renaming is told as in chapter 2 of this biography. In both these texts he is mentioned many times as Machik’s son. However, in The Blue Annals (Roerich 1976, 986) a person by this name is said to be a grandson of Machik’s first son, Drupche (Grub che), and a different story is told about him. (He is also called Grub be or Snying po grub in Roerich 1976, 983, and in RH: aka Grub pe or Thod pa don grub, later known as Gyalwa Döndrup, 477.) Thus Gyatso (1985, 333-34) says he was “probably her [Machik’s] great-grandson who was the progenitor of the special ‘Son’s Lineage.’” She further cites Thu’u bkwan (114) as observing that there are differences of opinion as to whether he was Machik’s son, grandson, or great-grandson. Kollmar-Paulenz (1993) mentions second son or grandson (90) and, finally, Madrong (1997) calls him “Machik’s great-nephew.” It seems possible to me that he could have been her son and that a grandson was named after him. In any case, the present text names him clearly as Machik’s son throughout, as well as mentioning a grandson of Gyalwa Döndrup with the same name.

8 Gangpa Muksang (Gangs pa rmug sang or, in Roerich 1976, Rmug seng), although called Machik’s son in this text, is always mentioned as the direct heir of Tönyön Samdrup (see chapter 2, also in the printer’s colophon in Text 2). In RH (482) he is called Gangpa’s (i.e., Tönyön’s) son (Gangs pa i sku’i sras po Gangs pa rmug seng). Roerich 1976, (986) mentions a certain Gangs pa dmu yan as the best of the spiritual daughters (!) of Tönyön, and one wonders if this is the same person. In any case, it is clear that he is also an important spiritual disciple of Machik as well as of Tönyön. If he was indeed Tönyön’s disciple or even son, it is even more unlikely that Tönyön would be Machik’s great-grandson (see note 7), since that would mean she was teaching her grown great-great-grandson—a stretch even if she did live for ninety-nine years.

9 “Thod smyon bsamgrub . . . was known as the ‘Snowman (Gangs pa) residing on Sham po Gangs.’” And “The fashion of the black hat of Gangs pas originated with him.” (Roerich 1976, 986).

10 Edou (1996, 108) identifies Jampa Sönam as the editor. I can confirm nowhere in
Jampa Sönam’s colophon Edou’s statement that it “states that the editor, Jampa Sönam, took the first two chapters . . . from Namkhai Gyaltsen’s Grand Exposition in full together with their colophon [and that] the remaining eight chapters he may have combined and edited with other sources he received.” Jampa Sönam mentions himself in the last place of the hearing transmission (lung) of “The Ten Chapters of Clarifying the Meaning of Chöd, A Great Complete Explanation of Casting Out the Body As Food (and?) Extensive Biography of Machik” (Phung po gzan skyur gyi rnam bshad chen mo gcod kyi don ga’i le’u bcu pa ma cig gi rnam thar rgyas pa), surely the same Phung po gzan skyur that he has here printed. There is considerable confusion on this point. Dzogchen Pönlop Rinpoche, in an oral communication, concurs that “Gang” refers to the author/compiler, although unsure of his identity. Gyatso (1985, 329 n.34) names Lho-pa sprul-sku, who is mentioned later in this particular colophon and who must be the compiler of the whole collection (Gcod kyi chos skor) in which this edition is found. Allione (1984, 149) attributes authorship to Jamgön Kongtrul, but without citing the source of this information, though it is probably Kongtrul’s aspiration prayer added to some versions. Finally, Kollmar-Paulenz lists Namkhai Gyaltsen (1993, 21) although she admits an unknown author later on (92).

Notes to the Introduction

1 “Grove of Pleasures” (GP) fol. 1b.

2 Her birth date is most commonly 1055, though in some sources it is 1031. She lived either ninety-five or ninety-nine years.

3 Luk 1972, 78-79.

4 Tāranātha 1981, 11-12. Janet Gyatso comments: “The Tārā story places at its center the possibility of female enlightenment, as a counter to the view prevalent for several centuries in many sectors of the Buddhist world that buddhahood was limited to males.” In Chönam and Khandro 1998, 7.

5 See especially Diana Paul’s investigation of the theme of women in Mahāyāna literature, Women in Buddhism (1979); also I. B. Horner (1930) and Klein (1985).


7 Kun tu bzang mo (Samantabhadri), Rdo rje dbyings phyug ma (Vajradhātvari), Bdag med ma (Nairatmyā), Sna shogs yum (Viśvamātr).
8 From RH, fols. 421-22. This passage was first translated by Harding in 1988. The whole text has been translated into German by Kollmar-Paulenz (1993).

9 shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa, (Skt. prajñапaramита). I have conformed with the translation of the title of these texts—made popular by Edward Conze in his many studies—as Perfection of Wisdom. However, in other places I have used “transcendent knowledge” or sometimes “intelligence” to translate shes rab when it is not part of a title. Also, most translators agree that “perfection” is not adequate for pha rol tu phyin pa, literally, “to arrive at the other side,” but I haven’t found a good alternative.


11 Conze 1967, 125.

12 Ibid., 125.


14 For something of a counterargument to this view that prajñà alone engenders enlightenment, see Cabezón (1992a). Here you will find the delightfully welcome statement: “much more dangerous than Greeks bearing gifts is the patriarchy bearing female symbols” (189).

15 Kongtrul 1996, 47.

16 Conze 1967, 243-68, including an inventory of images. Also in Conze 1960, 22-23.

17 Conze 1967, 125.

18 Simmer-Brown 2001, 84.

19 From Dgongs gter sgrol ma’i zab tig las: man dal cho ga tshogs guyis snying po, fol. 3, from a blockprint printed in Dvags he mi rgod tshang sgrub sde.


24 See Williams 1989, 20-33: “reference to worshipping the sūtras themselves, an extremely reverential attitude to the Mahāyāna sūtras, indicates that early Mahāyāna was centered on a number of book cults, groups of followers who studied and worshipped particular sūtras. In the sūtras themselves worshipping the text is specifically contrasted with the stūpa cult, to the detriment of the latter” (22).
25 Paul 1979, 60.
26 Klein 1985, 111.
28 *The Blue Annals* (Roerich 1976, 983) identifies the problem of her societal rejection as a case of broken nun’s vows: “People used to abuse her by calling her Jo mo bka’ log ma” (“Lady gone back on her word”) and, referring to the social rejection indicated in RH, fol. 27a: “Unable to stand it, they went to Kongpo.” In an extremely unusual biographical sketch by Michael Lewis in “The Sword That Cuts Delusion’s Root” (n.d.), a transcript based on teachings by Thrangu Rinpoche, we find that Dampa tells Machik that her troubles come from breaking vows with her guru and consort, Ma Lotsawa. (1-5.) This must be a case of mistaken identity that goes back to *The Blue Annals*, conflating Machik Lapdrön with Machik Zhama, who was a disciple of Ma Lotsawa. See Edou (1996, 111) for a discussion of this confusion.

29 Kamnyön (Khams smyon) says: “In the hagiography arranged by Namkhai Gyaltsen [the one translated here], the father Töpa Bhadra is said to be an emanation of a buddha and a great adept of Cakrasaśvara who came from India to Tibet. Karma Pakshi, Rangjung Dorje, Yungtön, and Chakme Rinpoche have followed suit. However, there are many hagiographies, and they don’t all necessarily agree” (RH, fol. 464).

30 Kollmar-Paulenz (1998, n. 52) notes that the only historiographical text that considers Machik as a consort of Dampa is *bsTan ’dzin gyi skyes bu’i ming gi grangs* of Klong rdol bla ma. She notes that many Western scholars continue the misassignment, citing A. Ferrari 1958, 153 n. 543 and G. Tucci 1949, 1, 92. I might add Willis 1987, 98 and Samuel 1993, 477.

31 Kollmar-Paulenz 1998, 15. Gyatso also agrees: “It is also summarily stated that he [Dampa] transmitted Gcod to the Tibetan yogini Ma-gcig Lab-sgron, although in fact the histories of Gcod do not really support this. It is Ma gcig Lab-kyi sgron ma who is universally credited with the codification of Gcod.” (1985, 328-29). See also Edou 1996, 37 and Orofino 1987, 408.

32 From Chakme’s *Rgyun khyer gyi lus sbyin bs dus pa*. Madrong 1997, 82 notes that when not portrayed thus as a ǧākini, she is “adorned and attired in the gTsang pa costumes and ornaments.”

33 Translated from the “Introduction to the Jataka (i,58)” by Henry Clarke Warren 1896, 64.

35 Or, if you prefer, his assimilation of shadow material and subsequent full individuation. Although the language of Jungian psychology is very convenient in discussing some Buddhist concepts, there are many subtle and not-so-subtle mistakes that could be made if it is done without careful study, such as conflating individuation and enlightenment. It is a fascinating subject.

36 RH, fol. 414.

37 Cited in Roerich 1976, 981, but I use the translation found in Orofino 1987, 401.

38 Nāṇamoli 1956, 207. Pāli: *kilesamāra, khandamāra, abhisankharamāra, devaputrāmāra, maccumāra*.

39 In Sanskrit and Tibetan, respectively, these are (1) *skandhamāra, phung po’i bdud*; (2) *klesamāra, nyon mongs pa’i bdud*; (3) *devaputrāmāra, lha’i bu yi bdud*; and (4) *mṛtyumāra, ’chi bdag gi bdud*. This list can be found in, for example, the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* and elucidated in Asaṅga’s *Śrāvakabhumī*.


42 The word in Tibetan is *snyems byed kyi bdud* (pronounced nyemjey kyi dud). The verb *snyem(s) pa* in dictionaries means “to create pride” and “to be inflated or puffed up by pride” (*nga rgyal byed pa; nga rgyal gyis snyems pa*), as in the example “to be inflated with having [good] qualities although without [those good] qualities.” *Snyems pa* as a noun is “pride or arrogance” and the active verb form of *byed* adds the sense of creating or causing this pride, of inflating. Machik herself gives as a synonym “fixation on self” (*bdag ’dzin*) or “ego-clinging”, and *snyems byed* is most often translated as that. See BD, 1013 and Thumi, 104.

43 For an interesting look at god-demons of Bön, the old religious tradition of Tibet, see Norbu (1995), and Trungpa (1978).
44 David-Neel 1967, 105-106.

45 Khenpo Tsultrim 1995, 65.


47 See an extensive discussion of this idea in Abram (1996), especially 93-135.

48 For a “medical” description of gods and demons, see Clifford (1984), especially 147-70.


50 GP, fol. 13.

51 Patrul Rinpoche 1994, 302. I have changed the rendering of gcod from “Chö” to “Chöd” for consistency. (Tibetan text: Rdzogs pa chen po klong chen snying tig gi sngon ‘gro’i khrid yig kun bzang bla ma’i zhal lung, fol. 256b).

52 Lopez 1997, 511.

53 Khenpo Tsultrim (1995). Also, in an oral communication, Khenpo Tsultrim asserted that using Chöd for healing oneself or one’s patients is certainly contradictory to Machik’s intention: “You feed the patient to the demons!” (October 30, 2002, Boulder Colorado)

54 In Chakme’s Tshogs las these are Āryadeva’s Tshigs bcad (poem), Nāropa’s Ro snyoms; Orgyan’s ‘Khrul gcod, and Dampa’s Zhi Byed. In TOK, instead of Āryadeva’s there is Bka’ brgyud don gcod, mentioned often in the present text. Cited in Gyatso 1985, 325-26.


56 See Edou 1996, 31-37, for discussion of this. Also discussed in Gyatso 1985, 328.

57 For example, in TOK, Zhije and Chöd together constitute one of the eight separate “Chariots of the Practice Lineage,” 3:275-76.

58 Quoted in RH, fol. 415, and found in Āryadeva, Gdams ngag mdzod, vol. 14, fol. 3 with one difference: In RH, Kannyaṅ has sgom pa’i ’gyu byed (which I have rendered as “disturbed meditation”) where Āryadeva has sgom pa’i ’du byed.
59 See the section added at the end of chapter 2. I have tried to make it more transparent by imposing a kind of outline on it. The classification of all of the transmissions and teachings of Machik’s Chöd is extremely confusing and conflicting, and it is not the subject of this introduction. See Edou (1996), Kollmar-Paulenz (1993) and (1998), Gyatso (1985), and Orofino (1987).

60 TOK, 3:422.

61 Most often cited are the self-dismemberment and spirit-offering rituals of Siberian shamans described by Mircea Eliade (1964, 215-58) and the use made of that material in comparing that and Eskimo rituals to Milarepa’s demon encounters by Charles Van Tuyl (1979). There are some flaws in these analyses, however.


63 Conze (1973).

64 See Ray 1994; his whole study is built around this theme.

65 From Phyag chen zla ba'i 'od zer (“Moonbeams of Mahāmudrā”), fol. 624, using my translation for consistency. It may be found translated by Lobsang Lhalungpa (Namgyal 1986, 333), along with the classification of different types of conduct.


67 Madrong states: “In ancient Tibet, the bodies of the deceased were traditionally cremated or buried. However, after the spread of the gCod tradition of Zhi byed sect during the mid-11th century, it became a popular practice to feed the corpse to the vultures” (1997, 87).


69 TOK, 3:425.

70 GP, fols. 6b-7a.

71 Kalu Rinpoche 1995, 156.

72 This bears a very close resemblance to the dzogchen practice of refining away the potentials for the six classes of being.

73 GP, fol. 7a.

74 Harding 1990, 279

75 Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche 1985, 2.

76 From Machik’s Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa’i man ngag yang tshom zhu len ma, (abbreviated as Yang tshom or the “Further Collection”) in Gdams ngag mdzod,
14:101-15. Partially quoted in TOK, 3:421, where it is attributed to the Tshom (“Collection”), probably referring to the Yang tshom.

Notes to Chapter 1

1 Đākinīs (mkha’ ’gro ma, literally, “sky-goer”), are female deities who clear away obstacles and help bring about wisdom. They are embodiments of transcendent intelligence, the feminine principle. Like buddhas, there are đākinīs of the five different buddha families: vajra, buddha, ratna, padma, and karma.

2 Ser skya (’i grong), Kapila or Kapilavastu, a city-state west of Lumbini in present-day Nepal. The king’s name in Tibetan is Pal Wangchuk Pakpa (Dpal dbang phyug ’phags pa).


5 Pāramitā (pha rol tu phyin pa) refers here to all six perfections as explained in the Abhisamaya Alamkara (Mngon rtags rgyan) Ornament of Realization by Maitreya.

6 rgyud sde bzhi (Skt. catvāri tantrapiñśaks): The four classes of tantra: Action (bya rgyud; Skt. kriyātantra), Performance (spyod rgyud; ubhayatantra or caryātantra), Yoga (rnal 'byor rgyud; yogatantra), and Highest Yoga Tantra (rnal byor bla med rgyud; anuttarayogatantra.) See, for instance, Dudjom Rinpoche 1991, 32-34, 268-74.

7 sde snod rnam la gus shags legs por byas. The collections of scripture or “baskets” (Skt. pīṭakas) usually refers to the Three Collections (sde snod gsum; Skt. Tripiṭaka) that comprise the Buddhist canon: the Vinaya Piṭaka, the books of discipline or rules; the Śūtra Piṭaka, books of the Buddha’s sermons; and the Abhidharma Piṭaka, the teachings on all phenomena (dharmas). Sometimes tantras are called a fourth basket. In general the term refers to the basic, canonical Buddhist teachings.

8 Khorlo Demchok (’Khor lo bde mchog, Skt. Cakrasaṃvara), literally, “wheel of bliss,” a male tantric deity and cycle of tantras and practices associated with it, particularly associated with bliss. It is very important in many schools of Vajrayāna Buddhism.

9 gsang sngags bla na med pa. “Secret Mantra” is the most commonly used term in Tibetan texts for Vajrayāna, or the kind of Buddhism based on the tantras, and references the widespread use of mantras in this approach. In this text, it seems
that Highest Secret Mantra is synonymous with Highest Yoga Tantra, the fourth class of tantra (see note 6 above).

10 *mu stegs pa*, Skt. *tirthika*. Usually defined as “those who hold extreme (*mu*) views,” it can refer to any non-Buddhist religion but tends to indicate Hinduism, since that was Buddhism’s main competitor at the time.

11 *gri gug*, Skt. *kartari*, a hooked knife or cleaver, like a small scythe; and *rse gsum*, Skt. *trisståla*, a trident. These are ritual instruments that are attributes of many wrathful deities.

12 Daknema (Bdag med ma), “non-existence of self,” a goddess personifying the selflessness of individuals and phenomena, usually portrayed as blue or black, alone or with Hevajra.

13 *Sgyu ’phrul chen mo* (*i rgyud*), from the tantra of Mahåmåyå, one of the “yoginå tantras” (*rnal byor ma* *i rgyud*). Normally, however, the principal deity is male, a heruka, but in chapter 2, (fol. 41) we have *lha mo sgyu ’phrul*. This may be because it is from the yogini or mother tantras.

14 Here spelled *bha ta*’*na*, it is the same as Bhadra.

15 *Thugs sgrub nag mo lha lnga*, Heart Practice of the Five Deities of Kålikå, “black female.”

16 *rkang mgyogs*, the special ability to move over land unusually fast, said to be achieved by rubbing a special substance on the feet and listed as one of the eight common spiritual powers (*thun mong ba*’*i dngos grub brgyad*) (BD, 1:88). Described in David-Neel 1966, 146. See also Chang 1962, 606. An interesting parallel is described in Carlos Castaneda’s books.

17 Rje btsun ma lha lnga. *fetsunma* (Skt. *bhåttåraka*) is a generic term for any revered woman or goddess. Chagdud Rinpoche and Ringu Tulku (RT) maintain that it refers to Tåra. Edou (1996) has Kålikå here and Vårahå later (136); and Allione (1984, 152) gives Mahåmåyå. Kålikå would be consistent with the foregoing instructions that he received. The biography in RH mentions only the Five Dåkini Classes (*mkha*’*gro sde lnga*), 450.

18 *rjes su gnang ba* or *rjes gnang*, sometimes called “permission blessing,” it is an abbreviated kind of empowerment.

19 One of the names of Guru Rinpoche, Padmasånbhava, or Padmakara.

20 There are commentarial notes such as these scattered throughout the text, presumably added by the compiler. They are distinguished by being written in very small letters (*yig chung*). For the most part, I have included them in the text, also distinguishing them in a smaller font.
21 E'i gang(s) ba, the highlands or snow mountains of Ei.

22 The Horse year is most probably the Wood Horse, 1054, since Wood Sheep (1055) is the most commonly accepted date for Machik’s birth, the alternative being Iron Horse and Iron Sheep (1030 and 1031), given as her birth date in BD (3215), and Norbu 1995, 233.

23 In southern Tibet near the Nepalese border above Khumbu, northeast of Kathmandu (Dudjom 1991, maps; Dorjé 1999, 303). Variations of her birthplace are in Gyatso 1985, 330: “Her birthplace in E-dam-sod in Smad” (citing Patrul, etc.) or gYe’i-labs in the town of Tshe-mer-mo (citing Dpa’-bo). The Blue Annals has her native place as Khe’u gang (Roerich 1976, 983). Kollmar-Paulenz (1998) has “mTsho mer in the region of E’i lab, east of the Yar klungs valley,” 14.

24 Approximately May 1055, if this indicates the Wood Sheep year. See note 22 above. One other possibility is the Earth Ox year, 1049, in Bstan rtsis kun las btus pa (179), cited in Madron 1997, 81.

25 mchod gnas, literally, “abides with offerings,” according to Thrangu Rinpoche (TR), this is a cleric who has an ongoing relationship with a family, advising them on what ceremonies to do and leading the necessary rituals or, as in Machik’s case, the recitation of sūtras.

26 shog thog phab pa. BD: yi ge sbyang shing gi steng du sbyangs tshar nas shog bu’i thog tu ’bris ba, “Having finished studying with a chalk-board, writing directly on paper.” RT says that the first stages of writing lessons were either on a black board smeared with oil and then ash and using a dry pen, or else on a white board smeared with red mud, using burned grain as a charcoal pen. Only after that would valuable paper be used.

27 Sgron tse. RH has it as Drön Tsering (Sgron tshe ring), “Long-life Light” (453).

28 Tibetan retains the Indian term paṇḍita for the scholars and wise men of that country. Geshe (dge bsbes: short for dge ba’i bsbes gnyen; Skt. kalyāṇamitra) is something like a theologian. A general definition is in BD: “A virtuous spiritual friend who shows what to do and not do” (blang dor gyi gnas ston pa’i dge ba’i bsbes gnyen), but it most often refers to monks who have actually earned a degree after many years of religious studies.

29 ‘Phags pa bsdud pa, Skt. Sancaya-gatha-prajñāpāramitā sūtra. See note 32 for an explanation of voice modulation.

30 This would be The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Verses, in Twenty-Five Thousand Verses, and in One Hundred Thousand Verses, called the three “mother texts” (yum gum).
31 Dge bshes a ston. Alternative name is Dbon ston (RH, 22).

32 skad ’gyur. BD: to use modulating waves (’gyur khang) in song. Sometimes interpreted simply as “eight times as fast.” TR comments that skad ’gyur is a kind of siddhi (spiritual power) whereby one can read many texts at once out loud. It is said that there exists a person in Tibet capable of this now and that while he reads, one person follows along in each text to check his accuracy.

33 rdob ’phrang. Text 1 has rdo ba ’phrang.

34 Drva pa mngon shes can, “Clairvoyant Monk” (1012-1090). See The Blue Annals (Roerich 1976, 94-97), where it mentions that Machik Lapdrön became his “house-priestess” for the purpose of reciting the prajñāpāramitā. This tertön is well known for discovering the Four Medical Tantras. See RH, fols. 14b-15b and Clifford (1984).

35 Mkha’ spyod (kyi zhing khams) Skt. Kecara, a buddha pure land or celestial realm, particularly associated with dākinis. In fact, mkha’ spyod, literally, “engaging in space/sky,” is a synonym for dākini or mkha’ ’gro, “space/sky-goer.”

36 Mdo mang. There are thirty-two volumes of sūtra in the Kangyur, the most important of which are often collected into one volume for recitation called the Many Sūtras. (RT)

37 Yi ge gcig ma (Ekākñāri). The shortest “sūtra” of the prajñāpāramitā is a single syllable: ah.

38 jo mo, a term of great respect for women, the feminine rendering of jo bo, “lord,” but not well translated by the variations of the English “lady,” so I have kept the Tibetan. The term was usually applied early on to Yeshe Tsogyel. Madrong names twenty-four great Jomos during the later diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet (1997, 72).

39 pönmo (dpon mo), an honorific title indicating something like a leadership position (Madrong 1997, 75); the feminine version of dpon po.

40 a tsa ra, a Tibetan spelling of the Sanskrit ācārya, indicating a religious master or preceptor, usually translated into Tibetan as loppön (slob dpon). It has the connotation of a teacher-preceptor, someone who performs the traditional ceremonies and ordinations. Since the text retains the Sanskrit as his title, I do the same throughout. For a traditional explanation, the Monier-Williams Sanskrit dictionary has, among other things, that ācārya means “knowing or teaching the ācāra, or rules. It is a spiritual guide or teacher (especially one who invests the student with the sacrificial thread, and instructs him in the Vedas, in the law of sacrifice and religious mysteries).”
41 gnyan khrod, or gnyan sa: “haunted place.” Definition by Jamgön Kongtrul in TOK, 3:424: zab don las: dur khrod lung stong bha khang shing geig khang stong sogs/ rang sens gar ’jigs nyam nga bag tsha’ü gnas su nyall zhes nyams su len pa’i gnas “From the Profound Inner Meaning: ‘a charnel ground, empty valley, shrine room, lone tree, empty house, etc., rest wherever your own mind is afraid and terrified’ — that is a practice place.”

42 dkar gsum mngar gsum: milk, curd, butter, honey, molasses, sugar.

43 Kollmar-Paulenz (1998) mentions that “She formulated her famous doctrine of the ‘five non-partialities’ (phyogs med lnga)” (15). In RH (242) they are mentioned in the specific order of impartiality to: (1) food (zas); (2) clothes (gro); (3) place (gnas); (4) company (grogs); and (5) country (yul). Here not only are they mentioned in a different order, and not particularly in list fashion, but there seems to be a sixth or final impartiality, that of indifference toward happiness or suffering.

44 chos dbang sms la bskur ba, as opposed to “deity empowerment conferred on the body.” See TOK, 3:424, quoting Machik: “It is not deity empowerment conferred on the body, it is Dharma empowerment conferred on the mind.” (bha dbang lus la bskur ma yin/chos dbang sms la bskur ba yin.)

45 ye shes dbab pa. During visualization practice or empowerment, the actual presence of the deities, called the wisdom beings (ye shes sms dpa’; Skt. jñanasattva), is invited to merge with the visualized deities that are called the oath beings (dam tshig sms dpa’; Skt. samayasattva). This is called the descent of the wisdom.

46 rdo rje lta bu ting nge ’dzin (Skt. vajropama-samādhi), the final meditative absorption before enlightenment, described in the nirvāṇa of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

47 Thugs bcud ma rig mun sel rgyud, one of the three major tantras that Machik receives directly from Tārā, together constituting the Vajrayāna Chöd tradition (Edou 1996, 201 n.37).

48 phyir mi ’ong ba; Skt. anagamin, a stage of realization where there is no longer any chance of falling back into cyclic existence.

49 mched grogs, a Vajrayāna term meaning fellow disciples that have taken empowerment together. I added it here from RH, since no subject was given in this text.

50 This episode of the empowerment is one of the most famous in Machik’s life, recounted in the same detail in every telling of her life story. For a brief analysis of the elements involved, see Orofino 2000, 409.

51 His full name is Dge bshes shung bu zhva dmar can in RH (459), where he bestows on Machik empowerments and a cycle of mind meditations. This could not be the well-known tulku lineage in the Kagyu school, as they had not yet appeared.
52 Bla ma sbas ston, but RH has Dbon ston here, which it also had previously for Geshe Atön, so there is some confusion.

53 drod tshad, literally, “measure of warmth,” refers specifically to one of the levels on the bodhisattva path of application (sbyor lam) and may also be a general term to describe reaching a level of realization.

54 Phyag rgya.chen po brda chos skor. This probably refers to Dampa Sangye’s three-part teachings (relating to Body, Speech, and Mind) on the symbols of mahāmudrā (Dam pa sangs rgyas kyi phyag rgya chen po brda’i skor gsum) now included in a volume of his teachings printed by the Royal Bhutanese Library under the title Phyag chen brda’i skor (Cycle of Mahāmudrā Symbol).

55 Na’ ro chos drug skor, the famed set of yogic practices taught by the Indian master Nāropa and upheld in the Kagyu lineage of Tibet. They are the yoga of heat (gtum mo’i rnal ’byor), clear light (’od gsal), illusory body (sgyu lus), intermediate state (bar do), transference [of consciousness] (’pho ba), and dream (rmi lam).

56 Dus kyi ’kor lo’i sbyor ba yan lag drug, “Jordruk” (Six Unions) for short, is one of the Eight Great Chariots of Practice Lineages based upon the Kālacakra Tantra. Kongtrul describes it in TOK, 3:429–457.

57 shes rab bzhi, possibly the same as “the four features of transcendent knowledge”: [transcendent knowledge that] diminishes errors in understanding and other nonconducive conditions, realizes the nonself of phenomena nonconceptually, completes all desires, and ripens the three families.

58 rnam thar sgo gsum: emptiness (stong pa nyid), wishlessness (smon pa med pa), and signlessness (mtshan nyid med pa).

59 pha rol tu phyin pa bka’ mdo rgyud don gyi man ngag gi sgo nas/chos dbang sems la bskur ba’i rgya ming nge ’dzin gyi dbang bzhi zab pa’i don gyi gdams pa drod tshad zhal shes nam mkha’ sgo ’byed kyi ngo spro d’pho ba’i gdams ngag.

60 gcod tshogs drug, see Edou 1996, 181 n.29, and 203 n.52. Probably the same as tsho drug, “six pieces.”

61 dmar kbrid, red guide or red instructions, a type of teaching that is especially pithy or explicit, often concerning the absolute nature. Red symbolizes that which is exposed, naked, or stripped of skin.

62 jo mo zhal gnyis ma, Vajravārahī, who has both a human and a pig’s head (RT).

63 ’pho ba grong ’jug gi gdams pa rlung sems ’dren pa’i gnad kyi lhag pa’i lam zhugs ma. Drongjuk Powa is the kind of transference whereby the consciousness leaves the old body and enters and animates another’s corpse.
Illusory body, dream yoga, and bardo or in-between (death and rebirth) practices are three of the practices found in the famous Six Yogas of Nāropa listed in note 55 above.

Rdo rje bdud ‘dul ma, Tamer of Māra, or devils, the appropriate name for the tantric deity of which Machik is an emanation, according to the vision of Tārā described later in this chapter.

Although the first text (Kongtrul edition) has sngag ’byed as the name of this source, the second text has mdo dangs snyigs ’byed, which seems more correct, according to Edou (1996, 203 n.61), who cites his own “The Concise Life Story” (not available to me) as having mdo sde dangs snyigs ’gyed.

‘Jam dpal rtsa ba’i rgyud kyi rgyal po, Skt. Mañjuśrī-mūla-tantra-rāja.

Here, Don ’grub rin chen (Skt. Arthasiddhi Ratna), though above his ordination name was given as Don grub bzang po (Döndrup Zangpo).

lam ’bras, path and fruition, name of the principal system of practice in the Sakya lineage. Separate mention of this dakini here is significant, since she has often been confused with Machik Lapdrön, apparently beginning with The Blue Annals.

Notes to Chapter 2

1 snyoms par ’jugs, Skt. samāpatti, literally, “entering evenness,” commonly this means meditative equilibrium, but in the Vajrayāna it refers to sexual union as a spiritual practice and way to achieve realization. Thus it has a dual connotation.

2 sa bcu, Skt. daśa bhūmi, the ten stages or levels of the path to enlightenment according to the Mahāyāna.

3 In Töpa Bhadra’s name, Töpa (Thod pa) is the Tibetan word for skull, and the name of Buddha Kāpāla (“Buddha Skull”) is also translated here into the Tibetan (Sangs rgyas thod pa). Bhadra or Bhadraya remains as his original Indian name. Buddha Kāpāla is an emanation of Buddha Akṣobhya, and as a tantric deity is similar to Heruka (Bunce 1994, 74-75), from a mother tantra of Anuttara Yoga.

4 Kamnyön casts some doubt on this illustrious description of Töpa Bhadra in RH (464). He mentions that many chroniclers, such as Karma Pakshi, Karmapa Rangjung Dorje, Yongtön, and Karma Chakme follow this account by Namkhai Gyaltsen, but that it is not unanimous.
5. *Rten 'brel yan lag bcu gnyis*, the twelve links (Skt. *nidāna*) of interdependent origination (*Rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba*, Skt. *pratityasamutpāda*), also translated as "mutual causality," "contingency," etc. It is the Buddha’s primary teaching on the nature of all things, elucidated in dozens of sūtras, such as the *Mahānidāna Sūtra*. It demonstrates that all things arise from many causes and conditions and are interrelated in infinite ways, and that therefore nothing is independent or self-existent. The forward and reverse orders are ways of explaining the links according to the following formula: “This being, that becomes; from the arising of this, that arises. This being absent, that does not become; on the cessation of this, that ceases.”

6. The self-empowerment is part of any deity sādhanas, whereby one visualizes receiving the four empowerments from the deity. But in RH (460) there is a more comprehensible version of this story: Tōpa Bhadra was supposed to be doing the practice, but the patroness found him staring straight ahead, in a blissful state. When he refused her food, she asked what was wrong and he said, “Oh nothing, it’s just that Jomo has some blessing. The light rays of that blessing have struck us.”

7. This is almost the exact wording as in RH (463), where it follows a statement that all the people called her a “precept perverter” (*jo mo bka‘ log ma*, also in Roerich 1976, 983). It would make sense if she had been a nun, as some accounts affirm, but in this text it is not the case. Kalu Rinpoche (1995, 150) explained that people were offended because Machik and Tōpa Bhadra were religious people acting like ordinary people.

8. *Rdo rje dbyings (kyi dbang) phyug ma*, Dorje Yingchukma, Skt. Vajradhatvīśvari, Queen or Mighty Lady of Vajradhātu, a feminine buddha described in the maṇḍala of yoga tantra *rdo rje dbyings*. Often coupled with Guhyasamāja, etc. Sometimes Ye shes dbyings phyug lha mo, or Nam mkha’ dbyings kyi dbang phyug ma.

9. *Dge bsnyen gyi sdom pa*, Skt. *upāsaka*, the vows of a lay devotee, usually five: (1) *srog gcod pa song ba*, to give up killing; (2) *ma byin par len spong ba*, to give up stealing; (3) *'dod pas log par g.yem pa spong pa*, to give up sexual misconduct; (4) *brdzun du smra ba spong ba*, to give up lying; and (5) *myos par 'gyur ba'i btung ba spong ba*, to give up intoxication.

10. *Pha rol tu phyin pa*, Skt. *pāramitā*, “perfection.” Although this most likely refers to the prajñāpāramitā, the teachings on the perfection of wisdom or transcendent knowledge, since this was Machik’s famous realization and teaching, it is still possible that it includes instruction on all six or ten perfections. Therefore, wherever the text has only *pha rol tu phyin pa*, as opposed to *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa* (prajñāpāramitā), I have left it as *pāramitā*. 


11 This prayer appears again in slightly longer version in chapter 5. It is included in many Chöd liturgies, such as the common abridged daily practice, *Rgyun khyer gyi las shyin bdus pa*.

12 *Bka’ brgyud bla ma’i byin rlabs kyi dbang*, refers to the precept lineage of the meaning of the prajñāpāramitā (*Bka’ brgyud don gyi brgyud pa*), corresponding to the sutra tradition (Edou 1996, 205 n.11).

13 *gnyan*: haunted, volatile, power places. The phrase here, *gang gnyan pa*, RT interprets as “whatever (gang) volatile places” rather than “mountain (gang) places.” *Gnyan po* refers to powerful beings of those places, “Lords of Intermediate Space between earth and sky, symbolized by trees” (Norbu 1995, 253 n.16). Or in BD: *gnyan nad skyel ba’i sa bdag cig— sa gnyan, chu gyan, shing gnyan, reo gnyan: “An earth lord (sadak) that causes nyen disease—earth nyen, water nyen, tree nyen, rock nyen.” But I have interpreted it here to mean the places, including, of course, the spirits inhabiting them. I can’t explain why the number 128 appears here, whereas just above the lama prophesied 108 places.

14 Lho mon is the old Tibetan name for the southern territory, including some of present-day Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. Zangri is the still-current name of the county that lies downstream from the Tsetang on both banks of the Brahmaputra, and also the name of the county capital. Khang dmar, “red house,” and its alternate name mKhar dmar, “red palace or fortress,” is the name of the monastery established by Machik. Gyurme Dorje (1999) describes: “about eight kilometres east of [Zangri] town, on a 50 metres red rock promontory above the Zangri-Olka road, there is the reconstructed temple and cave hermitage of Zangri Kharmar” (218).

15 *gzhi bdag zangs ri ’khyil*, Local Spirit Copper Mountain Swirl. *Shidak* (*gzhi bdag*) can be a general term for local spirits, though Edou (1996) identifies this as a nāga (149) See chapter 5 for a detailed description of *gzhi bdag* and *klu* (nāga).

16 *ma rgyud mkha’ gro gnas ’gyur gyi dbang dang tshogs brgya*, belonging to *Thugs bcud ma rig mun sel*, the third tantra that Machik received from Tārā (Edou 1996, 86, 190 n.28, 205 n.14). Kongtrul, in TOK (3:424), quoting from the *Greater Testament* (*Gzhung chen po*), names three empowerment cycles: the hundred empowerments of the transforming lama, of the buddhas, and of the dākinī, i.e., three hundred Chöd empowerments. But he also mentions “a hundred feasts a hundred empowerments” as another empowerment possibility. It is mentioned again at the end of this chapter.

17 *brtan ma bcu gnyis*, twelve sister earth goddesses or (*bstan ma bcu gnyis*) doctrine protectors. See Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, 181-98.

18 *zhing skyong gi mkha’ gro ma bdun*: “Shing kyong” is the translation of the
Sanskrit *kñetrapāla*, “guardian of the (cemetery) realm,” or local protector of the country or mountains, a class of *yakṣa*. Sometimes twenty-one are mentioned or, more usually, eight protector ḍākinīs. (Seven is rather unusual.) Shing kyong are also found in the entourage of Mahākāla. (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, 39-42) For a classification of types of ḍākinīs, see Simmer-Brown 2001, 43-80. The cemetery is the original ḍākinī territory.

19 Pham mthing pa, a Nepali mahāsiddha who was a great scholar in the Guhyasamāja system and also held the doctrines of Nāropa (Roerich 1976, 227).

20 phyag rgya chen po snyan rgyud dri med me long skor gsum.

21 There are 101 kinds of diseases of the wind energy, 101 of the bile, 101 of the phlegm, and 101 of all three together (Khenpo Tülkül 1995, 24).

22 Here spelled Udumbara and Udumwara. The udumbara lotus, “especially eminent” or “supremely exalted,” is said to appear and bloom only accompanying the appearance of a fully enlightened buddha. It is one of the three tantras transmitted to Machik by Tārā.

23 *dug lnga zhi zhing klu lnga ’dus nas*, though not a title here, probably refers to another empowerment called *Dug lnga klu ’dul ba*, “Taming the five poisons (and) nāgas” (Edou 1996, 206), assuming that ’dus (in both my texts) is a mistake for ’dul.

24 Thugs bcud ma rig mun sel, see note 16 above.

25 rigs [b]rgyud cung po grol bar gyis. Cung po perhaps for gcung po, younger male relatives?

26 sngags gsum, three kinds of mantras: knowledge mantras (*rigs sngags*, Skt. *vidyāmantra*), dhāraṇī mantras (*gsung sngags*), and secret mantras (*gsang sngags*, Skt. *guhyamantra*). Knowledge mantras are the essence of skillful means, dhāraṇīs are the essence of discriminative awareness, and secret mantras are the nondual pristine wisdom.

27 brtul zhugs, “vanquishing conduct,” has also been translated as yogic discipline, tantric deportment, uncontrived conduct, etc. It refers to various kinds of unconventional behavior in which tantric practitioners might engage at a certain, advanced stage of training in order to further their spiritual development and to “train” awareness. For etymology, BD has: “Vanquishing one’s ordinary, regular behavior, one enters into the area of uncommon behavior” (*tha mal rang ga ba’i spyod pa brtul nas thun min gyi spyod pa’i gnas la zhugs pa’o*).

28 An Indian ḍākinī, disciple of Virūpa, and one of the sources for the Shangpa Kagyu lineage. Machik Lapdrön is considered one of her emanations.
29 Rdo rje rnam par ’joms ma, (usually Dorje Namjom, “Vajra Total Conqueror”) Skt. Vajravidārāṇī or Vajravidāraṇā, a goddess emanation of the Buddha Akṣobhya, wrathful or peaceful.

30 gezhung ’grel (mistakenly written grol) tshogs drug.

31 See note 16 above concerning Kongtrul’s (alternate) classification of these empowerments.

32 Sham po gangs, or Yar lha sham po, one of the four great snow mountains of Tibet, in the Yarlung Valley of Central Tibet, where the first king of Tibet is said to have descended from the sky. It is a place of important dharma protectors of Tibet, especially for the Chöd teachings, and Machik’s lineage became associated with this place.

33 bka’ brgyud kyi byin rlabs dbang mo che, mentioned previously as bka’ brgyud bla ma’i byin rlabs kyi dbang.

34 phung khams skye mched (Skt. skandha, dhātu, āyatana), aggregates, constituents, and sense bases, or sources of perception. Changing them to the palace of the deities is part of the Vajrayāna practice of sacred outlook, realizing that all components of one’s being even now are part of the manifestation of enlightenment.

35 Being a support or benefactor for a yogin’s meditation practice is one of the classical roles of the ākārā in Tibetan Buddhism, and this may be understood metaphorically as well as literally. Of the two general types of ākārā, wisdom and worldly, these ākārās are usually worldly ākārās that have been converted to serve the Dharma. See Simmer-Brown 2001, 54-65.

36 rdo rje gdan, vajra seat, refers to the place where Buddha Śākyamuni attained enlightenment, now Bodhgaya in Bihar, India. It is also called the Vajra Seat because it is considered the axis of the world and will not be destroyed with the rest of the world.

37 rgyal bsen, actually a combination of rgyal po, male “king” spirits (see chapter 8), and bsen mo, female demonesses, often found together and symbolizing attraction and aversion.

38 a skyang, probably a mistake for a cang yang che.

39 bka’, Skt. vacana, precept, word, command, speech. A very significant word meaning literally the Buddha’s “Word,” all teachings that were spoken directly by the Buddha Śākyamuni and are contained in the Buddhist canon. The repeated use of that word in this context emphasizes the validity of Machik’s teachings as being rooted in the actual spoken teachings of the Buddha, emphasized also in her choice of that word in the name of her treatise (see note 40.
below). Here she may specifically mean the collections of long, middle-length, and short sūtras.


41 Here man mkhal, but ch. 6, fol.185b, man kha, probably both mistakes for ma mgal.

42 en chen dang po, “the first large en” Both Edou (1996) and Allione (1984) skip this one, although it is in both my editions. Zimpa (1975) has collarbone. It could correspond to an stong tshigs pa dang po. As explained in DHA (697), there are two ways of classifying this first vertebra, either individually or together with the one beneath it. That is the first cervical vertebra or atlas (the second being “axis”). Ringu Tulku’s uncle believes en chen is the collarbone but can’t explain dang po, “the first.”

43 rigs gsum mgon po, lords of the three families (tathāgata, vajra, and padma) according to the kriyā tantra tradition, they are Mañjuśrī, Vajrapāṇi, and Avalokiteśvara. For sked tshigs I have translated lumbar vertebrae, thinking it is a misspelling for rked tshigs (Drungtso 1999). Edou (1996) has “waist,” Allione (1984) has “pelvic bone,” and Zimpa (1975) has “waist bone.”

44 dpal kha, I have not been able to positively identify this. Zimpa (1975) has “palm-bones;” Allione (1984) has “hip bones.”

45 gdung sha ri ram, a kind of relic left after the cremation of a saint’s body. RT believes gdung sha ri ram is synonymous with ring bsrel. Ringsel are usually small, round pills that are found in the ashes of cremated saints.

46 (1) bka’ rtsom (or tshoms) chen mo (see note 40 above); (2) yang rtsom: Short for shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa’i man ngag yang tshoms zhu len ma, in Gdams ngag mdzod, 14:101-15. (3) nyid rtsom: short for and/or mistake for: shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa’i man ngag bdud kyi gcod yul las snying tshoms (chen mo). In Gdams ngag mdzod, 14:116-64; (4) le’u lag: thun mong gi le lag bryad, thun min gyi le lag bryad, khyad par gyi le lag bryad. (RT: “The ordinary, extraordinary, and specific Appendices”); (5) gnad them; (6) khong rgok (7) gshang pa brda chos; (8) la bzlas skor gsum; (9) gebi lam du slong ba; and (10) khyad par gyi man ngag.
According to a note on fol. 63b added by Namkhai Gyaltse (see also note 52 below), this next section did not belong to the original text, and that starting with the next line, “the lineage of the Dharma of Machik’s personal experience” until “many lineages thus spread” was added by him.

There is an added note here saying, “Until this ‘snake-stroke’ was added by Sheparbum” (sbrul shad kyis bar ’di shes par ‘bum gyis sbyar ba yin). The snake stroke is a special sentence division mark, the usual line (shad) with a wavy line on top. There was one before “The tradition of esoteric instruction of the ultimate meaning of the precept lineage (bka’ brgyud don gyi man ngag)” on fol. 59b, (81 of Text 2) and one immediately after this note. I believe this is the section added by Sheparbum.

bla ma’i rnal ’byor zab lam ma. But Text 2 has zab las ma, “Profound Activity,” translated as such in Edou (1996, 91), but then on 87 he has “profound path of guru yoga.” Page 48 of Text 1 has bla ma’i rnal ’byor zab chos.

Kha’thor, quoted often by Jamgön Kongtrul in TOK (423, for example).

Khenpo Tulsitrim (1995, 19) tells the story of Gyalwa Döndrup’s sickness from eating the meat of a cow that had become sick when he was butchering it. Instead of offering her sympathy, Machik apparently went around the country spreading his reputation as a thief and butcher. The resulting sadness drove him to the Dharma.

This added note placed right after the end of chapter 2 indicates Namkhai Gyaltse’s authorship. There is an alternate spelling of the last line in Text 2, which changes the meaning considerably: it reads “and the unbroken explanation of the meaning of the view” (ma chad pa in place of ma tshang ba).

Notes to Chapter 3

1 thud is a concoction consisting of powdered hard cheese, butter, and brown sugar, according to Lama Tashi Dondup (LTD). It is also described as soft creamy cheese, the residue on the side of a milking bucket. Thubten Norbu (1960, 95) calls it “cheesecake.” Tsam pa is roasted barley flour. Both are staple foods in Tibet.

2 These four are known as the four Gyens, or four “Ornaments,” with Gyen as part of each of their names. (Gyen can be a contraction of Gyaltse.) These were not counted in chapter 2 among Machik’s biological children; they should be seen as her spiritual daughters. bzhis mig byas pa’i btsun ma (in both texts) is probably a mistake for bzhis mig byas pa’i btsun ma.

3 Nor bu phun sum tshogs pa’i gling, or Norbuling(pa), another area of Uḍḍiyāna (LTD).
4. *Iba skal ba dang ldan pa rnams grol bar mdzad cing*. Another interpretation could be “Those with fortunate connection with the deities were liberated.”

5. *rgyal po chen po bzhi* (or *rgyal chen sde bzhi*, four orders of the great kings). They are the royal guardians of the four directions: (1) *Yul 'khor brsungs*, king Dharāśtra of the east; (2) *'Phags skyes po*, king Virūḍhaka of the south; (3) *Spyan mi bzang*, king Virūpakṣa of the west; and (4) *Rnam thos sras*, king Vaiśravana of the north.

6. *Brgyud pa rin chen spungs pa* (should be *rgyud pa*), also translated as *The Mound of Gemstones*, *The Tantra of the Jewel Mound*, and *The Tantra of Piled Gems*. This scripture explains how all the manifest qualities are all the essence of space and awareness.

7. *dmar ljang*, “red-green.” No one is sure of this color.

8. *Gsang ba chen mo* (Mahāguhya?) or possibly *Gsang ba ye shes*, Guhyajñāna.


10. *grub chen brgyad*, eight great adepts: syn. *dpal gyi rig ’dzin brgyad*: (1) Hūṅkāra; (2) Nāgārjuna; (3) Mañjuśrimitra; (4) Dhanasmṛti; (5) Prabhāhasti; (6) Vimalamitra; (7) Śiṅṭaṅgarbha; and (8) Guhyatsandra.

11. *god kyis nges don tshig gsal*.

12. *sngags kyi yin lugs kyi rnams par bshad pa rdo rje’i rdzong brgyad gsal gcron bya ba*.

13. The calculations here don’t match up with Western dates.

14. *rgas pa bas phyogs re la dar cig drags pa*. LTD adds the interpretation that it means the qualities of youth combined with those of the old man.

15. Here *bstan chos*, literally, “doctrine dharma,” same as *bstan bcos*, doctrinal treatises or commentaries (Skt. śāstra) composed in India after the Buddha.

16. These statements, up until this last one, reflect a traditional Buddhist and societal hierarchy of values. It seems to set up the next section, which, by contrast, sets forth the more unconventional values of Chöd.

17. *'gong po*, a type of evil spirit symbolizing ego-clinging, sometimes counted among the eight classes of gods and demons. Also, an enchanter, sorcerer; bewitching demon, craving spirit; evil spirit, a demon who causes disease.

18. *gdon*, bad spirits or forces, includes many kinds of spirits. Norbu translates as “provocations of energy” (1995, 87), and one wonders about a connection to the word *’don*, to erupt or cause eruption, perhaps akin to a psychological eruption.

19. *dmus long gi gto mkhan bya ba’i bon po zhes pa*. No one I questioned had an ade-
quate explanation for this phrase. One suggestion is that it is a derogatory name for Bön-like priests, “blind” indicating their ignorance. Another was that it may have actually been someone’s name. I am grateful to the Bön lama Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche for pointing out that the phrase, “so-called Bön po,” probably indicated a common wandering shaman who performs rituals not clearly rooted in either Bön or Buddhist doctrine. gto mkhan (here translated as “exorcist”) is one who performs the gto ceremony. “gTo is a general name designating various types of rites in which the officiant relies on the power of his protective deity, after having satisfied the deity with offerings, to eliminate disturbances and subjugate negative forces” (Norbu 1995, 264 n.1). For a short description of gto and other Bön healing ceremonies, see also Trungpa (1978).

20 brda sprad, literally, “gives a sign,” makes some kind of communication with the spirits or gives a ritual explanation or prediction.

21 yas stag/ya stag. BD: ya stags: bon po'i mdom glud dam gto mdom kyi rdzas. “The articles of the Bönpo’s mdom glud (ransom) or gto mdom ceremonies.” (mdos glud, thread-cross rituals to dispel obstacles and misfortune; mdom gto, cross-thread ceremony.) Norbu (1995, 80): yas stags, “requisite ritual objects.” May be objects, such as hair or clothes, that belonged to the patient.

22 rtsa rlung thig le; Skt. nadi, prâna, bindu, the three components that describe the subtle energetic body, used in all yogic practices. The vital-essence drop is conceived of as a tiny sphere or drop of energy essence; the energy currents are the movement of those drops; and the channels are the pathways along which they move.

23 rig ldan gyi shes rab ma, a reference to tantric sexual practices (karma mudrā) that require a consort. Literature on this subject has almost always been written from the male perspective, so the consort is female (ma) and hence associated with wisdom and knowledge. Note that it clearly states that this is a practice for those who have mastered the yogic practices utilizing the subtle energetic body, as well as having the realization of emptiness.

24 RT comments that not being attached to the bliss, due to the realization of emptiness, is like turning up the heat (creating steam) even more on the experience of bliss.

25 These four are usually termed the four mudrās, or “hand seals” (phyag rgya bzhi), with only the last one called mahāmudrā. There are various lists, usually some combination of the following: action mudrā (las rgya, Skt. karmamudrā), wisdom mudrā (ye rgya, Skt. jñānamudrā), phenomena mudrā (chos rgya, Skt. dharma-mudrā), pledge mudrā (dam rgya, Skt. samayamudrā), and great mudrā (phyag rgya chen po, Skt. mahāmudrā). For a brief description, Jamgön Kongtrul has:
“Action mudrā is a woman, phenomena mudrā is all appearance, commitment mudrā is tummo, wisdom mudrā is the meditated deity, nonduality is the great mudrā.”

26 hrig hrig po sgrim sgrim po.

27 sa dkar log gis nol thad du, a place name, literally, “criss-crossed white ground.”

28 zla ’od mun sel.

Notes to Chapter 4

1 thogs bcas bdud. thogs pa, from the verb ’thog pa, “to be stuck or blocked,” thus as a noun refers to an object that is tangible, that the senses get stuck in. It is difficult to use one word for both cases, so “caught” or “stuck” is used for the verb here, and “material” for the noun.

2 RT comments: “Whatever thoughts arise, don’t rely on mental activity and don’t hold thoughts.”

3 rmi lam sgyu ma lta bur lam du ’khyer na. This line is missing from Text 1.

4 snyem byed kyi bdud. More precisely, “the devil causing inflation.” See the introduction (page 37) and the following note for discussion of this term.

5 snyems bya and snyems byed, translated in the parentheses, are added respectively to yul and yul can by the annotator. Using these grammatical parts here is supposed to clarify the meaning, but translated into English they seem to do the opposite. Here is a felicitous example from LTD: In thinking, “I am smart,” that which is inflated is “smart”; that which inflates, or the inflation itself, is “I.”

6 This verse, with its experiential, poetic, onomatopoeic wording, is difficult to capture precisely. In Tibetan it is: blo btags pa can ma yin pa’i bun ne bal ngar ’dzin zhin pa’i blo’ bul le zhin ge bal nyon mongs pa’i rkyen gyis g’yol nus pa’i seng nge bal phyi nang gnyis kyi ’dzin pa dang bral shes pa sa le bal gang la yang chags pa med pa’i rig pa brig ge bal.

7 blo’i steng du sbyang. That is, first train mentally, thinking “all devils are unreal,” etc. (LTD).

8 rang rig snyems byed pa’i ye shes, that is, the subject, the “I” who does the inflating, is actually reflexive awareness (TR).

9 ’jig rten pa’i kun btags kyi lha ’dre.

10 ngo bor gnas tshul gyi lha ’dre.
11 Ogmin Tukpö (’og min stug po dkod, Skt. Akaniṣṭha Ghanavṛṣṇa). This refers to pure realms and enlightened manifestations.

12 mi mjad ’jig rten kyi kham (Skt. saha-lokadhātu). In the complex system of Indic cosmology, Endurance represents one level of the vast array of galaxies and universes. Our world is in the center of Endurance. For a detailed description, see Jamgön Kongtrul 1995, 107-45.

13 bdud, this is the same word as used for the Four Devils. I have chosen to keep the Tibetan term when it is being used for a specific subclass of negative spirits, consistent with the other names of spirits. See page 38 of the introduction.

14 [lha srin] sde brgyad, eight categories of gods and demons or srin spirits that vary widely from list to list. The apparitions and appearances of most of these are described in chapter 8.

15 mthong sgang sgro btags kyi lha ’dre. Edou (1996): “supernatural or extraordinary gods and demons.”

16 sa bla’i sman btsun, an alternate name or a subclass of the sman mo, goddesses who dwell in the sky. (Bunce 1994, 1:1058).

17 smra ru bcol. This refers to the predictions of mediums, oracles, and fortune-tellers who are “possessed” by gods or spirits.

18 pir chen, BD has “a creature living in the water shaped like a gong with a mouth attached.”

19 rang bezin lhan skyes kyi lha ’dre.

20 bslu med las dbang gi lha ’dre.

21 ’jug sgo so sor spyod pa. The dictionary definition for ’jug sgo might be useful here. BD: 1. ’gro sa’i lam gyi thog ma, “the beginning of the journey,” or 2. las sam bya ba gang yang rung ba’i ’go, “the head or start of whatever applicable deed or action.”

22 ’go bar byed pa’i lha lnga (written here as go bar), the five patron or guardian deities of each person: (1) female god (mo lha); (2) male god (pho lha); (3) life-force god (srog lha); (4) local god (yul lha); and (5) enemy god (dgra lha). Another version has: male god, enemy god, life-force god, body god (sku or lus lha), and female god. There are several other lists. See Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, 264, 327-28. RT describes these as the five gods that stick with one like a scent (’go).

23 Ye shes mgon po, a name for Mahākāla, or it can refer to any of the wrathful protectors.

24 mthar thug don gyi lha ’dre.
25 *chod tshad*, “evidence of severance.” See chapter 7 for an extensive explanation of this and the following “evidence of success” (*tshar tshad*) in the context of the four kinds of challenging experiences and their resolution in Chöd practice.


27 *Gsal byed mtha' gnyis zil gnon.*

28 *Zla 'od mun sel la btugs* (for *btugs*, reach; or *gtogs*, appertain to) *nas zla zer ma mdzad* (*zla 'od mun sel* also in chapter 3, fol. 82b).

29 *Rin po che'i rgya mdud.*

30 *nang rig pa'i dmar khri.*

31 *Zhib po Hur thon.* *Zhib po* could be “high commissioner,” or perhaps a mistake for *zhig po*, yogin.

**Notes to Chapter 5**

1 *byam sems* (“love mind”) in both texts, a synonym for *byangs sems* (*bodhicitta*), a term borrowed from the Mahāyāna idea of the altruistic resolve to become enlightened, and used in Vajrayāna to refer to the male and female seminal essences.

2 There is no clear explanation for this reference. Perhaps it refers to a subdivision of the topics.

3 *sa dmigs pa non par byas.* *sa dmigs* is described by LTD as the center or vortex of the peculiar power possessed by certain locations (*gnyan sa*, haunted places). Synonyms are given as *sa'i 'gag mdo* or *sa gnad*, “the ground’s vital point or axis.” Such a place is ideal for the practice of Chöd.

4 *mgo mjig gi tshig mgo gnyis.* This apparently means that one should have a complete thighbone before one cuts it below the upper joint at the hip.

5 *li li po.* According to Surmang Khenpo Tsering (SKT), this word describes a deformed person with a very small head.

6 SKT interprets this to mean the instruments that invoke heroes and heroines, respectively.

7 *ro de'i 'og tu ma song zhing steng du gang du gug pa de 'brog par bya' bo.* This passage is extremely obscure and could not be clarified by any of my informants, none of whom had dug up his own bone!
8 gdong, “front” or “face,” what we would call the back, here speaking of the small indentation on the back between the two knobs of the joint.

9 bsnyon, which means accused or making false claims, seems to be a misspelling for myon, according to RT.

10 rgyan du mthong. RT comments that they see suffering as good and wear it as an ornament, a sort of victim mentality.

11 gtong, “to do, to send,” here translated as “perform.” In past and future it is btang, which makes up the first part of the word here translated as “equanimity” (btang snyoms). Maybe a literal translation would be “to have been sent to equalness.” The description presented here is thus somewhat an etymological explanation of the parts of the word that was impossible to capture in a readable translation.

12 dam tshig pa or dam tshig sens dpa’ (Skt. samayasattva). In the process of deity visualization, one first creates the deity or ma˚˜ala of deities in one’s imagination. Those visualized deities are called the beings of sacred pledge or commitment. Then the actual presence of the deity is invoked and becomes inseparable from the created visualization. That invoked presence is called the wisdom being (ye shes pa or ye shes sens dpa’, Skt. jñ›nasattva). For an extensive discussion, see my introduction in Kongtrul (1996).

13 ma chags mi chags chags pa med par mi ’gyur ro.

14 shes bzbin gyis skyon, but I am taking skyon in the text as a mistake for skyong.

15 rig p’ai ngar gyis lam ma nor ba’i dbyings su ’dren. Basic space here refers to the central channel, or avadhûti.

16 A bird’s first egg is supposedly smaller than subsequent eggs. See Khenpo Tsultrim 1995, 50-51.

17 chos ’byung, a figure shaped like a three-sided inverted pyramid or tetrahedron, reminiscent of the human womb.

18 byol bu lcog chung. Research leads to inconclusive suggestions for this bird: Das (1969) has swallow or lark for lcog ga, and finch for ’jol mo. BD gives lcog as a small round shape or mound, and lcog chung as a small (rounded) house, also turret or arch.

19 phru ma pus gtab or btab: to blow up an organ membrane, such as the bladder or appendix (phru ma), like a balloon.

20 zha skya, a name descriptive of the shape of the adjoining channels that branch out from the cakra. Actually, a cakra is just the juncture of many channels. In BD, zha skya is palmate, radial, palmlike, fan-shaped, arranged around a hub or nave; fronded (bot.).
21 khong sing, mistake for khong seng or gseng.

22 rgyu mo gang gnyis in the Tibetan probably refers to rgyu rtsa, the channels or meridians going down to the arch of the soles of the feet that are used in medicine as acupuncture points or for bloodletting. In any case, the location of these two bindus or drops of vital-essence is generally on the soles.

23 Sometimes oral instructions specify using the syllable bik instead of p’e in this practice (Khenpo Tsultrim 1995, 51).

24 las byed. This means that it is visualized as the preliminary to offering the body as food, the instruction that follows.

25 The main body of the text has the following interlinear note inserted at this point:

“Yellow Ratna Daññini with a wish-fulfilling jewel in her left hand, or . . . .”

Presumably this represents an alternative instruction where the blue daññini is replaced by the yellow or other daññinis as the central figure.

26 nying lag is literally “more hand” or “the hand of the hand” and is usually defined as the ten digits. But for the sake of the visualization, it seems better interpreted here as the limb segments, since there are eight.

27 rgyal srid sna bdun, seven royal emblems or attributes of a universal monarch: the precious wheel, jewel, minister, horse, elephant, queen, and general.

28 chad, to be cut off or “dividing off,” but Text 2 has mchad, extending (off from), amounting to the basically the same visualization.

29 dpag tshad lnga brgyad. Text 2 has lnga brgya, five hundred leagues, perhaps more consistent with the further explanation to be found in chapter 6, but less logical here in this list of decreasing sizes. One dpag tshad (Skt. yojana) is approximately eight kilometers.

30 thod zhal ma, “skull-face,” and bdud rtsi bum ’gyed ma, “elixir vase banquet.”

These are the names of two of the white feasts or banquets that are described in other sources of the Chöd practice. Here ’gyed is translated as “banquet” to distinguish it from the more common “feast” (tshogs kyi ’khor lo; Skt. ganacakra). ’gyed can mean money, food, and so on, offered to a person as charity, and, as a verb, to send forth or distribute, as explained by Machik in the next section. In the Chöd tradition it invariably means this visualization of transforming the body into a donation or feast. Lama Lodo (1994) has “pleasing” throughout, perhaps mistaking it for dgyes pa.

31 don snod lnga. Actually, there are five solid (don) and six hollow (snod) viscera in the Tibetan system, together comprising the inner organs (khog pa’i nang khrol don lnga dang/ snod drug). Here it refers to the first set, the five solid or
vital organs, which are usually the heart, liver, kidney, spleen, and lungs. See chapter 6.

32 Torma (gtor ma) are ritual offerings made of dough and decorated with butter. They are incredibly intricate, and each ritual requires different, specific kinds. Though no torma was specifically mentioned here, it is appropriate to think of any offering as torma. In many practices of Chöd, use of actual torma is very common.

33 The first five realms manifest as five colors and five emblems or implements of the five buddha families, the refraction of the fundamental timeless wisdom on the saṁbhogakāya level.

34 dmyal ba’i las mkhan dang las bkol nas mar mnar geö byed pa’i sens can. This translation is based on SKT’s interpretation and rendering of bkol (bind into service) as a mistake for bshol (delay).

35 Shidak (gzhi bdag) are “ground lords” or owners, local spirits; masters of locality. Nāga is the Sanskrit term corresponding to the Tibetan lu (klu), subterranean spirits like serpents that have played an important role in both Indian and Tibetan Buddhism. I have used the more familiar Sanskrit term only in this case.

36 These indigenous Tibetan hoofed animals, or ungulates (ri dvags), are sha (deer), rgo (Tibetan gazelle; TMP: dgo ba, Procpra picticaudata Hodgsoni (2:213)); gnyan or sometimes gnyen (TMP: wild sheep, Ovis Ammon Hodgsoni Blyth, but Das (1969) has “not the Ovis Ammon but the Ovis Hodgsoni”) and brtsod or bsod, a mistake for gtsod, (antelope).

37 ltags tshig for ltag tshig, cervical vertebrae or possibly occipital bones.

38 nam mkha’ and rgyang bu’ designs of yarn interwoven on crossed sticks, similar in appearance to our “god’s eyes,” used in various ceremonies.

39 so khri dkar dang stong nag zhes pa. This is supposedly a phrase used in describing roasted grains, where a portion remains uncooked and a portion cooks or pops (Tulku Sangak).

40 I was unable to obtain definitive descriptions of all these hat styles, but if you are interested in Tibetan hats, see drawings in Tucci 1980, 124-41. Also, a text entitled Zhva gos kyi de nyid gsal ba thar pa’i ’phrul skas 1981. Do not underestimate the importance of hats!

41 These wild animals or carnivorous predators (gcan gzan) may not all be identified correctly. They are stag (tiger), geiz (leopard), dom (Himalayan black bear, sele-marctos thibetanus/Ursus thibetanus), dreed (brown bear, Ursus arctos/lagonyarius), dbyi (lynx, or misspelling for ’phyi ba, marmot, or something like a coyote, accord-
ing to SKT), *gsa*’ (snow leopard), *spyang ki* (wolf), *ce spyang* (jackal), *gong* (mistake for *gung*, a species of big feline), *wa* (fox), *'phar (ba)* (wild dog, *Cuon alpinus Pallas*), and *seng ge* (lion).

42 *glag mo*. Das 1969, 254, “a bird described as resembling an eagle, but smaller than the vulture and larger than the hawk, of blackish chocolate color; carries away kids and lambs. This bird is numerous in Mongolia, Central Tibet and Kham. Probably the lammergayer.”

43 *re 'byams*. I was unable to identify this animal, although there is a medicinal herb called *re 'byams nag po: thar nu'i ming gi rman grangs shig.*

44 *stag shar*, perhaps a kind of flower or herb, such as rhododendron (*stag ma*), saltwort (*stag tsher*), or white or black crazy weed (*thag sha dkar pol/nag po*).

45 *bkru shing, yos bal, slad* (or *slang*), *rten, phyag ma, sbud shan, thag shing, the gu, 'bren gu*. SKT provided these identifications.

46 *yan lag brgyad ldan gyi chu*, eight qualities of excellent water: (1) *bsil ba*, coolness; (2) *zhim pa*, sweetness; (3) *yang pa*, lightness; (4) *'jam pa*, softness; (5) *dwangs pa*, clearness; (6) *dri ma med pa*, freedom from impurities; (7) *'thung na lto par 'jam pa*, when drunk, soothing to the stomach; and (8) *mgrin pa sang sang bde ba*, clearing and soothing to the throat.

47 *gdong*, for *gdong 'dre*, a kind of ghost demon.

48 The four castes of India are usually: (1) *rgyal rigs*, Skt. *kṣatriya*, royal caste; (2) *rje'u rigs* (here *rje rigs*), Skt. *vaiśya*, merchant class; (3) *bram ze'i rigs*, Skt. *brāmaṇa*, priestly caste; and (4) *dmangs rigs*, Skt. *śūdra*, commoner class. In this case, “low caste” is translating *gdol pa* or *gdol po*, which is equated with *dmangs rigs* in some sources but in others is said to be even lower.

49 See note 48 above. Lists of the classical Eight Great Nāga Kings (*klu chen brgyad*) vary somewhat. Here it is as follows: (1) Nor rgyas, Vāsuki; (2) Dung skyong, Śaṅkhapāla; (3) Dga’ bo, Nanda; (4) ’Jog po, Takñaka; (5) Pad ma, Padma; (6) Chu lha, Vārṇa; (7) Stobs rgyu (or Stobs ldan), Karkoṭaka; and (8) Rigs ldan, Kulika. Sometimes there are nine or ten great nāga kings.

50 *tshsig gis brda sprad*. See chapter 3.

51 *rgyal po, bsen mo, the'u*. These are described in chapter 8.

52 *sa bdag*, earth or ground spirits (literally, owners or lords). These are described in chapter 7.

53 *gnyan rigs*, “fierce types,” one class of spirits usually included in the eight classes (*sde brgyad*). Described as “a god of Tibetan culture and the patron of rulers and
all patriots. He is associated with the mountains.” (Trungpa 1978). In BD it is defined as a sa bdag who brings epidemic.

54 dam sri; the sri spirit of vow breakage. For the ten sri spirits, see Norbu 1995, 168-70, and Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956).

55 Serak (bse rag), a type of mischievous spirit who consumes the potent essences of food and wealth. It personifies ultimate envy and miserliness and is usually exorcised during rituals to promote wealth and prosperity.

56 See a very similar speech by Milarepa in Chang 1962, 301.

57 The list of spirits mentioned here is: pho bdud; mo bdud; rgyal bsen sde brgyad; dmu bdud btsan gsum; klu gdon; gza’ bdud; gsbin rje; ma mo; gnod sbyin; grul bum; gnyan rigs; lto’ phye; ma bdud sring bzhi; lan chags bgegs rigs; nad rigs yams bdag; gong rigs the’u rang; gri bo (and?) shi’ dre; dri za (and?) rbad’ dre; yi dvags; ’byung po; dam sri; bse rag; byad ma; gnod byed; las gdon; lus gdon; gnas po; yul bdag (fol. 171).

Notes to Chapter 6

1 tha mal pa rang ga ba ‘chi ba’i lugs su. This is an interlinear note.

2 From Kalu Rinpoche: “The different colors which the mind in the bardo state perceives are the natural expression, the radiance, of the fundamental, intrinsic qualities of mind. . . . These colors are simply the natural expression of the elemental qualities in the mind when the first glimmer of consciousness begins to appear.” (1986, 59)

3 ’Og min bde ba chen; Akanišṭa sukhavati.

4 Compare this with Kalu Rinpoche (1997, 63) on the reversal of the four energy currents causing: “the impression of being buried under a gigantic mountain or under a house . . . losing one’s footing and sinking in the ocean . . . being grilled in an immense fire . . . being swept away, as if carried off by a tornado.”

5 An added interlinear note in both texts, appended to the word blocked (’gag), suggesting that one sees these instead, or that the ordinary perception of the senses is blocked by these visions.

6 zhor ’byung gi rtsa la ni shel sbug na (rtsa la possible mistake for rtsal). The crystal tube (shel sbug) is also called the light nádi kati crystal tube (’od rtsa ka ti shel kyi sbu gu can), the channel of awareness consisting of the heart center and the wisdom channels leading to the eyes, found in dzogchen practice instructions.

7 pho mo gnyis ka’i g.yas su yod pa. According to the description immediately preceding, this should be on the left in both females and males.
Both texts actually say “five parts each” (re la lnga lnga), but this does not add up correctly.

srog rus. BD: phrag tshigs nas ske stong gi thad bar srog pa (trap/button) ltar ’dzin pa’i rus pa stel gezhan du nam tshong gi rus pa zhes kyung ’byung!. The collarbone or clavicle is indicated in diagram 13 of DHA and in Drungtsos 1999, 63.

TMP, 1:29: rkang mgo’i rus pa: foot bones, tarsi, metatarsi, and phalanges. lag mgo’i rus pa: hand, including carpi, metacarpi, and phalanges. But I think that rkang mgo and lag mgo refer to the top three tarsal bones and the top three carpal bones only, since phalanges, etc., would be a repetition.

dvangs snyigs pbye, also the name of one of the five principal energy currents of the body (dvangs snyigs ’byed pa’i rlung).

rmen gyi bu. TMP: rmen bu, adipose glands; Dash (1994) and Drungtsos (1999): rmen bu, lymph nodes; rnen bu rnam bzhag, endocrine system.

The word used here is snyil pa, which I was unable to find. In lists of the six hollow viscera it usually appears as bsam bse’u (BD 1:1601). But just above, the esophagus was listed as the sixth, and sometimes the six are the stomach, small intestine, large intestine, gallbladder, urinary bladder, and reservoir for reproductive fluid. (TMP 1:29)

lhu chen bcu gnyis, here femur (rkang pa’i brla); tibia and fibula (byin pa); ilium (dkyil); radius and ulna (lag ngar); humerus (dpung pa); and scapula (sog pa). DHA has brla rkang, rje ngar, rkang mgo; rje ngar, dpung rkang, lag mgo. These are basically the same, with different terms, except for scapula (sog pa) instead of DHA’s carpal bone (lag mgo), and I can’t find dkyil, so I am assuming it is dpyi, hip bone (ilium) instead of rkang mgo (tarsals).

tshig(s) chen brgyad, usually twelve, see BD and TMP, 1:29: shoulders, elbows, wrist, hips, knees, ankles.

ltag pa’i ’khor mo’i tsig bdud sgo. Actually, in TMP, 2:191 and DHA it is ltag pa’i sdud sgo, that is “aperture, cleft” rather than “devil.” Is this an example of getting carried away with devils?

’dom(s) pa rgyang pa. An arm span (’dom pa) is defined as either from palm to palm (sbar mo nas sbar mo’i bar) or from fingertip to fingertip (sor tse nas sor tse’i bar) of the outstretched arms. In English, this measurement is called a fathom.

bcur bsgos pa’i cha. I am unsure of this phrase.

gru mo, elbow, or the distance from the elbow to the knuckles of a closed fist, equal to two cha chen. This must be a mistake.
20 phy'i rlung: (1) snyoms pa'i rlung; (2) gcod byed kyi rlung; (3) gshig byed kyi rlung; (4) brdeg par byed pa'i rlung; (5) phung po ’jig(s) par byed pa'i rlung; (6) phung po brten par byed pa'i rlung; (7) las thams cad byed pa'i rlung; and (8) kun tu khyab par byed pa'i rlung.

21 nang gi rlung: (1) gyen du rgyu ba mgrin pa'i rlung; (2) dran pa thams cad bskyed pa snying gi rlung; (3) dwangs snyigs phye ba 'pho ba'i rlung; (4) thur du rgyu ba gsang ba'i rlung; (5) bkrag bdangs bskyed pa stobs kyi rlung; (6) las la byung ba snying rje med pa nyan mong; kyi rlung; (7) las la byung ba snying rje chen po btang snyoms kyi rlung; and (8) shes rab bskyed pa chos nyid ye shes chen po'i rlung.

22 mngon shes lnga, five superknowledges or clairvoyances: the capacities for performing miracles, divine sight, divine hearing, recollection of former lives, and cognition of the minds of others.

23 spyan lnga, the five eyes or levels of vision/clairvoyance: the physical eye, divine eye, the eye of knowledge, the dharma eye, and the buddha eye (sha'i spyan, lha'i spyan, shes rab kyi spyan, chos kyi spyan, sangs rgyas kyi spyan).

24 The first part of this phrase is rlung gi byed las la ’byung (pres./fut.), and the second part is rlung gi byed las las ’byung (past). I am unclear as to the exact meaning.

25 This is very reminiscent of the thirty-two parts of the body in the practice known as “mindfulness of the body,” one of the four kinds of mindfulness described in early sūtras and abhidharma texts. The list in the Visuddhimagga (Ñanamoli 1956, 236) varies only by six elements that involve mostly different ways of counting (such as counting the brain and spinal cord as bone marrow!). There, it is also called “this filthy body.”

26 e or i gong or gong po, maybe a mistake for i khung, “hole.”

27 lus po. This is an etymological explanation of the word that has all along been translated simply as “body,” which derives from the word for “left behind.” It is to be noted that the other words under consideration here are also often translated simply as “body,” for instance, phung po (aggregate), gzugs (form), and gdos bcas (corporeal).

28 ma brjed blo la ’jag par gyis shig. But in Text 2 it is ma brjod, which would give the sense of “Don’t speak of it, [but] keep it in [your own] mind.”

Notes to Chapter 7

1 gtor ma brgya dang lhag ma dang bcas pa, “hundred tormas with leftovers.” RT suggests that this might mean offering something like 108 tormas.
This section mentions the number three and then proceeds to list five. The division here into three with options is more or less arbitrary, following the educated guess of RT.

3 rten gsum, three supports or representations of enlightened Body, Speech, and Mind, usually statues or pictures, sacred books, and stupas or crystals, respectively.

4 sha dag pa can, for rnam gsum dag pa’i sha, “meat free of the three things”: that you knew or heard or suspected that it was killed specifically for your own use (rang gi ched du bsad par mthong thos dogs gsum med pa’i sha).

5 dkar gsum, yogurt, milk, and butter.

6 Both texts have mi rung mi skrad mi gzir, but RT felt that rdung (“to beat,” the same word that comes again soon after) is grammatically better than rung (“appropriate”).

7 khams rag sha: BD, 2640: rag sha, legs sbyar skad dr’aksha zhes pa’i zur chag ste shing ter ma can zhig gi ’bras bu, “Corrupted form of the Sanskrit dr›k˝a, the fruit of a thorny tree.” RT: rudra-raksha.

8 La stod kyi yang stod ’phan drug, apparently in Ladakh.

9 bal gyi li khri. I cannot identify this item. Usually li khri is vermilion, but that doesn’t make sense here.

10 A ka ru nag po, black eaglewood (TMP) or teak (RT).

11 Interlinear note: smyon pa rang snang yang zer, appended to khams ’dus pa ye shes rang snang, whose third name is then bal po ye shes seng ge.

12 This added linear note has the preferable Pha smyon seng ge, “Father Crazy Lion,” whereas above it was actually Pho smyon seng ge, “Male Crazy Lion.”

13 An added note here explains this to mean when it is “the skin of a well-qualified girl between eight and twelve years old and a youth killed by a knife.”

14 byang lug. RT says “northern sheep’s felt,” but Text 2 has byed lug, “fashions,” as I have preferred here.

15 Khu sgom chen chos kyi seng ge, usually called Khugom Chôkyi Senge, or Khugom Chösen from Snye mo khu, one of Machik’s lineage holders. There is a brief history of him in Roerich (1976, 988-89), where it is said he received the transmission of the Meaning of the Lineage of the Teaching and was supposed to pass it on to Machik’s son Döndrup, but the latter did not want it. Khu would be a clan name, and Gomchen (sgom chen) literally means “great meditator,” a descriptive title for a yogin practitioner.
16 *rtsi bcud*, plant elixir. RT says this just means plants.

17 There are various and sundry lists and descriptions of these categories both in Tibetan sources and Western scholarship. This is Machik’s. For further discussion, see, for instance, Samten G. Karmay, “The Cult of Mountain Deities and Its Political Significance” in Karmay (1980).

18 *zug dor*, mistake for *zo dor*. BD: *yul ’khor skyong ba’i yul lha gzhi bdag gi gtso bo’am grags che shos*, “the chief or most famous area god land owner that protects a certain territory.” Norbu (1995, 6) has “local guardian.”


20 *Klo*, mispelled for *glo*.

21 Mang ge, possibly the same as Mang yul, near the Nepal border.

22 *bstan ma* or *bstan ma bcu guyis*, twelve ancient goddess protectors and *skyong ma*, general protectors, but often synonymous with the *bstan ma*.

23 *’dom pa*, “fathom,” or arm span, defined in Tibetan as either from palm to palm (*sbar mo nas sbar mo’i bar*) or from fingertip to fingertip (*sor tse nas sor tse’i bar*) of the outstretched arms (see chapter 6).

24 *dpag tshad*; Skt. *yojana*, a league. According to the abhidharma, this is a distance of eight “earshots” or furlongs (*rgyang grags*), or four thousand bow lengths (*gzhu ’dom*), fathoms, or arm spans (*’dom gang*), approximately four and a half miles. According to the Kālacakra system, twenty-four finger widths equal one cubit (*khru gang*). Four cubits equal a bow length, two thousand bow lengths equal one earshot, and four earshots equal one league, or *paktse*, (about nine miles). (Drungtso 1999, 158). For details of measurements according to Jamgön Kongtrul, see *Myriad Worlds* (1995, 167-68).

25 *lhong, cho ’phrul, tshar tshad, chod tshad*. These are four types or levels of experience that occur during the course of Chöd practice.

26 *sa gnyan mig*, “haunted vortex,” or literally, “eye.” See note 3 from chapter 5: *sa dmigs* is described (LTD) as the center or vortex of the peculiar power possessed by certain locations (*gnyan sa*, haunted places). Synonyms are given as *sa'i ’gag mdo* or *sa gnad*, the ground’s vital point or crux. The same sense for *gnad mig*, “power spot.”

27 *ban bun zeng zeng*. *Ban bun* is given as “hazy, vague, insubstantial, evanescent, ephemeral,” etc. *Zeng zeng* might be like *za zi* (“vague and vacillating, vanishing”) or for *zang ngi zing ngi*, “disturbed.” RT: “hair-raising.”

28 *ngar zhi*, the feeling left after anger subsides (SKT).

29 *mi ’chams*, mistake for *mi ’tsham* (RT).
30 snyems bya yul, that which is inflated, or the object over which the subject, or self, develops inflation. See chapter 4, especially note 5.

31 In this list, expelling disease was number four and expelling bad spirits was number five, but they were reversed in the following explanation, so I have changed the order here to be consistent.

32 ba dan can, literally, “with banners.” RT suggests that this may be the name of a bdud. I find ba dan ser po can (“with yellow banners”) listed as one of the dregs pa (fierce spirits or “worldly gods”) who are a class of minor protective deities (Bunce 1994, 1:40).

33 bla rtags. Norbu (1995, 93) has “emblems of the la,” but perhaps in a different context.

34 rang nyid kyi dmigs pa’i ’od zer gyi thag gi bzung na, that is, your own concentration (RT).

35 rtul bya leb, probably some kind of bird.

36 “Venerable priests” is ban dhe, also spelled ban de (perhaps derived from the same root as present-day Bhanti). A term used for monks or priests, equivalent of btsun pa, said to be the common term during the times of the Dharma kings of Tibet. “Shaman priests” here was bon chen.

Notes to Chapter 8

1 Rje btsun zil g.non. This name was given in an interlinear note in chapter 7 as an alias for Gyalwa Rinchen, aka Pa Nyön Senge. I found no identification of him other than as one of the three “unfashionable” yogins.

2 [lha srin] sde brgyad. There are seemingly endless versions of the eight god-demon categories. Although prefaced here as a description of the specific apparitions of these eight, there are actually eleven specific categories mentioned. The first eight of these constitute one very common list of the eight: rgyal po, ma mo, bdud, btsan, gdon, lha gdon, bza’ (r›hula), and bzhin rje (y›ma). However gnod byin and the’u rang are often included also. An example of another list that includes eight sets is: (1) eight gods (lha brgyad); (2) eight great nãgas (klu chen brgyad); (3) eight great planet [demons] (gza’ chen brgyad); (4) twenty-six constellation [spirits] (rgyu skar nyi shu tsa drug); (5) ten direction protectors such as Indra (rgya sbyin la sogs phyogs skyong bcu); (6) four great kings (rgyal chen bzhû); (7) twelve armies of nöchin (gnod sbyin gi sde dpon bcu gnyi); and (8) eight great nyen spirits (gnyan chen brgyad). Later in chapter 10 there is still another list: srin mo, pe dkar rgyal po, gshin rje, bdud, btsan, gza’ bdud, dmu bdud, and klu bdud.
rgyal po, literally “king,” because they are said to impersonate leaders. Norbu (1995, 253 n.9): “rgyal po are fierce natured beings and can cause nervous disturbances and epilepsy.” Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956, 128): “The rgyalpo are illness-bringing deities who are supposed to cause insanity.” There are 360 types.

This list uses the division of the day into twelve times: daybreak (nam langs), sunrise (nyi shar), midmorning (nyi dros), midday (nyi phyed) or noon (nyi gung), afternoon (phyed yol), late afternoon (nyi myur), sunset (nyi nub or nyi thal), evening (sa srod), night (srod ’khor), midnight (nam phyed), after midnight (phyed yol), and predawn (tho rangs), each associated with one of the zodiac animals.

rgya phibs. This is illustrated in an appendix to BD.

bya ’dab or, as in BD, bya ’debs, same as mda’ yab: balustrade; parapet, balcony under the dome of a temple made in Chinese style, railing, covered gallery on the top of a house cave, cave motif, door balustrade. 1) khang thog gi gyang rtshig pu shu’am nya skyor . . . 2) gser zangs sogs kyi bya ’dab.

gser ’phru. BD: khang pa’i rtse thog gi gser rgyan, “The golden decoration on the roof of the house.”

chu srin, (literally, water carnivore), Skt. makara. Apparently a mythical sea monster, although RT equates them with crocodiles, and SKT with sharks and whales, following BD. By definition, they live in the ocean and are fierce and carnivorous. They are portrayed with a long upper palate, almost like a trunk, and a short, receded lower palate; they often adorn the corners of buildings.

zha theb or zhva theb. See Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956, 11) for hats using the term theb. According to RT, zhva theb are golden hats that look like cymbals (sil nyan).

bad kyi skyor. bad ka: khang thog pu shu’i ’dabs sne. (pu shu’: balustrades, railings, fence, upper story of building; coping of mansion).

brtse ba’i rang du ’dug pa. Both texts have brtse ba, “to love,” but RT advises that it is a mistake for rtse ba, “to play.”

bla gnas. bla, sometimes translated as “soul,” is similar to srog (according to RT), meaning a kind of energy or life force. gnas means “to dwell” or “the dwelling place.” The “soul place” is an external object or place that is associated with the internal bla and through which it can be harmed. For further discussion of the “residence of the soul,” see Stein (1972, 226-28), and for bla and lha see Samuel (1993, 186-87).

The word iti is inserted here (Text 1, fol. 246), usually an indication of esoteric instructions in the treasure tradition, meaning “this is it.”

bdud. In previous chapters where it had a broader meaning, this was translated as “devil.” Here it seems best to keep the Tibetan for consistency with the local names of these various spirits, since the list is meant for specific identification.


skyung ka, red-billed chough, Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax (TMP, 213).

tob ti or hob ti, text unclear, and species unknown.

rtag pa can ni ma yin la, could be interpreted either as not rtag pa can, “permanent,” or rtags can “significant.”

btsan. One of the original groups of early Tibetan spirits originating from the nine “masang brothers” (Beyer 1973, 292-301); possibly associated with the Tsen dynasty of early kings (Stein 1972, 51). Norbu (1995, 237) has “wrathful beings that together with the gnyan dominate intermediate space.” See Trungpa (1978, 301): “Tsen is the god of fire and has the power of instant destruction.” See also Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956, 166-76). A thorough study is being made by Todd Gibson in “The Btsanpo and the Btsan: Religious Evolution of the Tibetan Sacral Kingship.”

sbre: TMP (333) has “Vulpos corsak: corsak fox/weasel,” Das (1969) has stone fox, and BD describes a nocturnal carnivore (also spelled dbre) with yellow fur on its back and white on the stomach. In Text 2 it appears as spre, “monkey,” but fox here is consistent with the list of canines.


rdzas dmar kbra bas se ba or dmar kbro bas se ba in Text 2, but RT says it should be dmar khrab sre ba, “glowing red like coal or red-hot things.”

‘og gdon, “below spirits,” another name for klu or the more commonly known Sanskrit word nāga, subterranean serpentlike spirits who guard treasures and can cause many diseases when their watery abodes are disturbed.

mdzo, a cross between a yak bull and a common cow.

lha gdon or lha’i gdon, bad spirits called gods or arising as gods. They are white in color and beautiful, perhaps associated with the ancient gnas (Trungpa 1978, 300).

leb rgan, mistake for le brag, the color of dye made from red earth and used as a wash on the lower parts of outside walls.
Here the Sanskrit name Rahu is transliterated in the text. In Tibetan it is usually bza’ bdud, “planet devil” (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, 259-62) or khyab ’jug chen po or sgra gcen ’dzin. They are associated with the planet Rahu, one of nine deified planets, and held responsible for eclipses. Rahu is also a dharma protector. “The god of psychological energy, lightning, hailstorms, and, more recently, electricity.” (Trungpa 1978, 302)

“mouth eye.” Since Rahu is almost always portrayed with nine heads topped by a raven, I have interpreted this expression to mean “face” made up of eyes and mouth.

Descriptions of rahu spirits vary with regard to the number of arms, from two to four to six, and this account of various possibilities for their implements may reflect these variations.

drang srong, rṣi, sage or saint, is here another name or title for Rahu, or that class of beings. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956, 262): “Rahu, apart from being the leader of the gza’, is also supposed to be the typical representative of a class of deities bearing the name—or perhaps only the title—drang srong.” Norbu (1995, 269): “semi divine beings endowed with magic powers.” Rahu often has Rṣi as his title.

gza’, or often gza’ gdon, “planet spirit,” another name for Rahu and that species of spirit. See note 31.

Yama is the better-known Sanskrit term for Shinje (gshin rje), the lord of death, or in this case, a group of spirits that are like the henchmen of death.

.gter bdag gnod sbyin, treasure-lord harm-bringer. Terdak are guardians of treasure. Nöchin (literally, “harm-givers,” Skt: yakṣa or yakṣas), an ancient name of good and bad spirits from India and Southeast Asia. See, for example, Sutherland (1991).

the’u rang, the’u brang or the brang. BD has “a type of hungry ghost (preta)” (yi dvags kyi rigs shig) and “a spirit who moves in the sky” (mkha’ la rgyu ba’i ’byung po). In Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956, 282-83) they are described as “deities of an evil nature, who are said to cause disunity and quarrel and to make children ill. They are also believed to influence the weather, and especially to send hailstorms.” One of the original nine brothers is sometimes said to be an ancestor of the king Nyatri Tsenpo (Gnya’ khri btsan po). (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, 283; Norbu 1995, 20; Trungpa 1978, 301).

According to one Tibetan informant, this is a good description of Westerners.

Te’urang is “thought to be embodied in boulders and ashes, as well as in dice. He brings success in games, particularly dice, but also any board games.” (Trungpa 1978, 310).
38 hhama 'gab. I have been unable to find any reference to hhama 'gab, though there is a dictionary definition of 'gab 'dre as follows: “Demons who follow after human wealth (mi nor rjes 'brangs kyi 'dre).” Hhama is obviously of Indian origin.

39 spen ma, a kind of wood, used for house borders. Potentilla fruticosa (TMP, 229). SKT says they are quite small, almost shrubs.

40 This list of sensations, mostly associated with skin diseases, is: rtsub cing bcad pa dang/ sha ro/ sha 'phrig (or mistakenly as sha 'khrig)/ sha 'gul dang/ snyom khol dang/ skrang 'bur dang/ klo shu/ ba lta/ shu 'thor/ me dbal/ tsha btsag rnam. Admittedly most of my translations are guesses, except for the following definite information. Sha ro “numb flesh (disease)” described in DHA (612) as: “the flesh and skin changes color and splits and becomes numb.” (sha) 'phrig pa (“quivering flesh”): “a name for movement of various body flesh.” (DHA, 348) And, for me dbal, literally, “blade tips of fire”: “The name for a contagious skin disease named after its similarity (of sensation)” (427). Identified in Drungtso (1999, 212) as erysipelas. Ba lta was left out for lack of any clue whatsoever.

41 snying rlung. BD: “A particular disease of the energy currents indicated by symptoms such as unwarranted depression.”

Notes to Chapter 9

1 Maitreya (Byams pa) and Amitāyus (Tshe dpag med) are buddhas; Avalokiteśvara (Spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug) and Mañjuśrī (‘Jam dpal) are bodhisattvas. Kukkuripa (Gu gu ri pa) is apparently the Indian mahāsiddha of Kapilavastu, renowned for his love of a (ḍākini posing as a) dog. Said to be one of Dampa Sangye’s masters, but the relationship here is unclear.

2 'chug in Text 2; but Text 1 has 'khyug, “crooked.”

3 Text 1 has dbang po, “power,” and Text 2 has dpang po, “judge” or “witness,” an easy mistake and giving basically the same meaning in this context.

4 mgo mang, literally, split into “many heads” (democratic?), that is, without a clear leader.

5 bse rag 'dre, a kind of hungry ghost (yi dvags; preta) who is afflicted with stinginess. The example here is equivalent to yelling “fire” in a dark theater.

6 dud 'gro'i tshogs rnams good cing ston shing byed do skad. I was unable to get adequate clarification on this sentence.
Notes to Chapter 10

1 sbyangs pa’i las sad rigs ldan. This is an elaboration of the very common appellation *rigs ldan*, which literally means “possessing family” and which I have translated in various ways throughout the book, such as “noble one,” “good people,” “well-born,” and so on, to relieve the monotony. The meaning indicated here is that the karma from the previous life’s training or realization has been reawakened in the present life, and therefore the person is of “good family” by birth, that is born with the propensity and capacity for these teachings. In the Mahāyāna sūtras it indicated being born in the Mahāyāna family as a bodhisattva, and in Buddhist circles it supplanted the Indian emphasis on good birth according to caste.

2 *dmu rgyud*. “Mu lineage,” and later in this chapter perhaps misspelled as *dmu rgyun*, “Mu continuum,” refer to the old Tibetan origin myth of an ancient class of celestial deities called the Mu who descended from the heavens on a cord or ladder called a *dmu thag* (Norbu 1995, 75-76). Bön was the widespread religion of Tibet before the advent of Buddhism and is therefore associated with this ancient divine lineage. It is also the name of an ancient clan of Tibet.

3 Nyan btsan. This would be Lha Thotori Nyentsen (Lha tho tho ri gnyan btsan), the twenty-eighth hereditary king descended from the first king, Nyathri Tsenpo (Gnya’ khri btsan po), who came from the sky. According to Dudjom Rinpoche (1991, 1:508), he was an emanation of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra. According to legend, a casket containing some Buddhist texts and figures fell from the sky onto his palace, and this was considered as the first arrival of the Dharma in Tibet.

4 ’Jig rten dbang phyug, Lokiteṣvara, Mighty One of the World, a name for Avalokiteṣvara, or Chenrezig (Spyan ras gzigs).

5 *rgya nag ma ha’ ya na’i slob ma eig*. This particular wording may be a kind of pun on the word *Mahāyāna*, since it is well known that the person mentioned here was the Chinese monk usually called Hashang Mahāyāna. Legend has it that he participated in a debate against Kamalaśīla at the monastery of Samyeling over the question of instant enlightenment versus the gradual path extolled by Indian Buddhism. Tibetans like to record that he was defeated, ending any influence China might have had on the development of Tibetan Buddhism. For some interesting analysis of the issues at stake, see Samuel 1993, 452-55.

6 bstan pa’i me ro *rgya nag phyogs nas yar ldang ba*. Considering the story in note 5 above, it is surprising that the text mentions China here. It’s possible that Rgya nag can be taken as *Rgya dkar* (India) and *Rgya nag* (China), or as simply a mistake for India, since most Tibetan histories acknowledge only India after this point. In any case, I have added India in the translation because it was clearly the
strongest influence in this second dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet and is invariably considered so by Tibetan historians.

7 di nas phyis 'byung. Although the language here is in the future tense, TR believes this is still part of the history. This would make sense, since the dates for Atiśa, who is mentioned next, precede those of Machik. However, I have kept the sense of prophecy here by retaining the future tense as indicated by the Tibetan. Also I would like to note that translating prophecies and presuming to know whom they refer to is a risky business.

8 Mar me mdzad, for Mar me mdzad dpal ye shes, a name for Dipanṭkara, Śrī Jñāna, or Atiśa, (982-1054). He would have been contemporary with or just previous to Machik, whose dates vary between 1031-1129 and 1055-1150.

9 sa kar log gis nol thang skya mo. Probably a reference to the land of Sakya (white earth), where the lineage by that name first established itself. It was mentioned before as a place that Machik visited with her disciples.

10 'jam dpal rnam 'phrul zung bzhi'i 'gro ba 'dren. The great Sakya lamas are usually considered emanations of Mañjuśrī.

11 Dpal gyi mtshan can could indicate Sakya Paṇḍita.

12 Grags pa'i mtshan thogs. Probably Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa (Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa), 1357-1419. This couldn’t be the Sakya patriarch Grags pa rgyal mtshan because he was not a monk.

13 The idea expressed here includes fighting over who is whose teacher and who is whose disciple (TR).

14 nyes pa gsum or bzhi. The defects here are the ten nonvirtues (mi dge ba bcu): three of the body (killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct), four of speech (lying, slander, gossip, and harsh language) and three of mind (envy, ill-will, and wrong views).

15 Mang yul gung thang, a region in southwestern Tibet along the Nepali border.

16 rnam rgyal a ru ra. Terminalia chebula; chelubic Myrobalan (TMP, 17, etc.)

17 Sgrag lung for Sgrags (Drak or Dra), west of Zurkar in Central Tibet.

18 Palden Gyen is one of the four Gyens. This must refer to a previous dialogue not included in this text, since the questions being answered in this section were posed by Sönam Gyen.


20 Pha Dam pa sangs rgyas, whose last visit was in 1098, died in maybe 1117, according to Thondup 1987, 68. See introduction and chapter 2.
21. Mkhyen pa gsum dang ldan pa’i mtshan thogs pa, no doubt a reference to Dusum Khyenpa (Dus gsum mkhyen pa, “Knower of the Three Times,” 1110-1193), the first Gyalwa Karmapa.

22. Nam mkha’i rgyal mtshan (b.1370), the eighth generation after Machik’s son Tönyön Samdrup, and the compiler of at least the first two chapters of this text. See chapter 2, where the lineages and teachings were listed, and especially the note added at the end by Namkha (or Namkhai) himself about being the last in the creation and completion lineage.

23. dbangs tshogs for dbang brgya tshogs brgya. See chapter 2. Although it states here that there are auspicious connections to benefit beings, Machik is recommending that these teachings be transmitted only to a few disciples at a time (RT).

24. mdo sngags zung ’jug dang mdo pha rol tu phyin pa. These are the other two traditions, aside from the tantra tradition mentioned above, that are attributed to Machik.

25. That is, a regurgitated mixture of all the stomach’s contents.

26. Dpe dkar, same as Pehar, a principal worldly protector bound under oath by Padmasambhava, chief of the gyalpo spirits and also once considered a te’urang spirit, he is also regarded in some cases as a wisdom dharma protector. He is often invoked by spirit mediums, most famously the Nechung oracle. (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, 94-133)

27. sri’u gso, healing rites (for children?). According to RT, this is a kind of ceremony to change the pattern or tendency of bad things that are supposed to happen. Perhaps connected with sri’ spirits. (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, 300-03; Norbu 1995, 252). BD lists sri’u as mi’i phru gu, “human children.”

28. dur kbrod chas ’dzin bru bo rtag. No one has been able to clarify this strange statement.

29. zhva rna ring; BD: “A hat with a long nose (point), like the hat of Lord Tsongkhapa.”

30. sman mo, ancient Tibetan female spirits of the countryside, often lakes. May be associated with medicinal herbs (sman) (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, 198-202).

31. thab gezhob. According to Rangjung Yeshe online dictionary (www.rangjung.com): “the foul smell from the burning of an impure object (e.g., a leper’s corpse) which will confuse and anger local gods.” BD: “to put substances that are not for burnt offering into the fire.”

32. mo gdon thig nag rtsal la zhugs. Black line (possibly “black drop” if it is short for thig le) is apparently the name of a kind of demoness (RT), but I find no reference
on it. *Thig nag* is the name for one of the hells. The demoness may enter into the channel, if *rtsal* is a mistake for *rtṣa* (RT).

33 *'dab skyes shang shang* or *shang shang te’u*: a mythological winged creature whose upper half is human and lower half fowl.

34 *rgyan chen ma*. In chapter 3, the often mentioned “four Gyens” are listed as Gyaltsen Nay, Palden Gyen, Bumtso Rinchen Gyen, and Sōnam Gyaltsen (aka Sōnam Gyen). In this chapter Gyenema also seems to be a contraction or nickname for Sōnam Gyaltsen, although it would make more sense for Gyaltsen Nay. The Gyen Chenma mentioned here might be a fifth, or it might be one of the other four, since it could mean “Gyen the elder.”

35 *gter chos*. This must be a reference to the many treasure texts (*gter ma*) on Chöd that have been revealed over the years since Machik’s time, many of which are still practiced today.

36 *bka’ bstans chos*; abbr. of *bka’ gyur dang bstans ‘gyur*, the Kangyur, collection of Buddha’s words, and the Tengyur, collection of commentarial treatises, that together constitute the Buddhist canon in Tibet.
Glossary
(by Tharpa Lowry)

Abhidharma (Skt.)—The portion of Buddhist scriptures concerned with detailed teachings on cosmology and psychology.

Ācārya (Skt.)—A religious master or preceptor, usually translated into Tibetan as lopön. It has the connotation of a teacher-preceptor, someone who performs the traditional ceremonies and ordinations.

Afflictive emotions (Skt. kleśa)—States of mind that are experienced as or lead to confusion and suffering. The three root afflictive emotions are passion, aggression, and ignorance.

Aggregates (Skt. skandha)—The constituent parts of a sentient being: form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. Sometimes the word aggregate is used to refer to the entire body.

Akanistha (Skt.)—The highest of all the pure lands.

Amitābha (Skt.; Tib. Ōpame, ’Od dpag med)—The celestial Buddha of compassion who through his enlightened aspiration created the western pure land, Sukhavati, in which beings can take rebirth to avoid further suffering in cyclic existence.

Amitāyus (Skt.; Tib. Tsepame, Tshe dpag med)—A yidam deity traditionally associated with practices of longevity and good health.

Avalokiteśvara (Skt.; Tib. Chenrezi, Spyan ras gzigs)—Also, the Great Compassionate One. One of the most important yidams of Tibetan Buddhism, the bodhisattva who represents the compassion of the buddhas.

Bardo (Tib. bar do)—The transitional state between different types of consciousness, generally referring to the transition between death and rebirth.

Bodhicitta (Skt.)—On the relative level, this is the wish to attain buddhahood for the sake of sentient beings, together with the practice necessary to accomplish this. On an absolute level, it is nondual wisdom, the ultimate nature of mind and the true status of phenomena. In certain tantric contexts, bodhicitta refers to the essential physical substance, a fluid found in the heart center, which is the support of mind.
**Bodhisattva** (Skt.)—The ideal of the Mahāyāna Buddhist practitioner, beings who, having given rise to bodhicitta, dedicate themselves to developing wisdom and compassion for the benefit of others in this and all future lives through taking the bodhisattva’s vow.

**Bön** (Tib. bon)—The indigenous shamanistic religion of Tibet, preceding the arrival of Buddhism. Bön has continued to thrive and integrate various Buddhist ideas while retaining its own separate identity.

**Cakra** (Skt.)—Literally, “wheel,” a central point in the body where psychophysical energy tends to concentrate and from which it is dispersed to the rest of the body.

**Cakrasaṃvara** (Skt.; Tib. Korlo Demchok, ’Khor lo bde mchog)—Literally, “wheel of bliss,” a male yidam and a cycle of tantras and practices associated with him, particularly associated with bliss. Cakrasaṃvara is very important in many schools of Vajrayāna Buddhism, especially the Kagyu school.

**Channels, inner and central**—The structures of the subtle body, emanating out from the cakras and through which prāṇa, or life-force energy, flows. The central channel, which directly connects the cakras, is of particular importance. It is said that realization occurs when the prāṇa enters the central channel, and hence it is the object of yogic practice.

**Chaplain** (Tib. chönay, mchod gnas)—Also, recitation monk. According to Thrangu Rinpoche, this is a cleric who has an ongoing relationship with a family, advising them on what ceremonies to do and leading the necessary rituals, or, as in Machik’s case, the recitation of sutras.

**Completion phase**—The second phase of yidam practice, in which one dissolves the visualization of oneself as the yidam deity and rests directly in the nature of mind. The yogic practices such as tummo are also counted as completion phase.

**Creation phase**—The first phase of yidam practice, in which one visualizes oneself as the yidam deity. First one visualizes the form deity (the pledge being) and then joins it with the wisdom of the actual deity (the wisdom being). For more information on these two phases, see Kongtrul (1996).

**Cyclic existence** (Skt. saṃsāra)—The state of confusion experienced as reality by ordinary beings in which afflctive emotions and karma create states of suffering that are experienced as the existences of the hell realm, hungry ghost realm, animal realm, human realm, demigod realm, and god realms.

**Ḍākini** (Skt.; Tib. khandro, mkha’ ‘gro)—Literally, “sky-goers,” female deities who, along with the protectors, clear away obstacles and help bring
about wisdom. Also sometimes used for female practitioners of the Vajrayāna. They are known as the root of activity because through clearing away obstacles they create the conditions for practice and realization. They are divided into wisdom dākinis, who are representations of enlightenment, and worldly dākinis, who manifest in many ways.

Damsi (Tib. dam sri)—A type of fearsome demon originating from those who break their religious vows and sacred pledges.

Demons (Tib. ’dre)—Malevolent or obstructing spirits.

Drongdak (Tib. drong bdag)—A spirit that dwells in a town, either temporarily or as the permanent spirit of that area.

Düd (Tib. bdud)—A powerful malevolent or hostile spirit or demon, the embodiment of obstacles on the path to liberation.

Dzogchen (Tib. rdzogs chen)—Literally, “Great Completion,” the fruitional teachings of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism.

Emptiness—The central teaching of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the quality of a lack of abiding essence in any phenomena; connected to the teachings on impermanence and interdependence.

Energy-mind (Tib. rlung sems)—The mind and the subtle energy currents or winds are very intimately connected, like a rider on a mount.

Five buddha energies—Five different “families” or categories of buddhas and their respective energies, or styles of manifestation: padma (lotus), vajra (diamond), karma (action), ratna (jewel), and buddha.

Five Dharmas of Maitreya—Five important commentarial teachings given by the bodhisattva Maitreya to the great Indian teacher Asaṅga.

Five paths—In Mahāyāna Buddhism the path is described in terms of a gradual journey consisting of the five paths of Accumulation, Application, Seeing, Meditation, and No More Learning.

Four classes of tantras—The four different types or levels of tantra, the kriyātantra, ubhayatantra or caryātantra, yogatantra, and unsurpassed yogatantra. See also Tantras.

Four empowerments—Empowerment is an important practice of Vajrayāna Buddhism in which students are symbolically invested with the ability to do particular practices by a qualified lama. The four empowerments are (1) the vase empowerment, the empowerment of body; (2) the secret empowerment, the empowerment of speech; (3) the
wisdom empowerment, the empowerment of mind; and (4) the word empowerment, the nonconceptual empowerment.

**Four Gyens**—Machik’s four spiritual daughters, who each have the word *gyen*, or “ornament,” as part of their name. They are present throughout the text, asking questions and participating in the action.

**Four immeasurables**—Four subjects of meditation and important virtues that one cultivates for others on the bodhisattva path. The four are love, compassion, joy, and equanimity.

**Geshe** (Tib. dge bshes)—Something like a theologian; literally, “A virtuous spiritual friend.” Most often the term refers to monks who have earned a degree after many years of religious studies.

**Gods** (Tib. lha)—Beneficent or neutral spirits that protect the practitioner on the path. They may also be bad spirits arising as or appearing to be gods, as in the case of *lha dön*.

**Gongpo** (Tib. ’gong po)—A type of evil spirit symbolizing ego-clinging. An enchanter, sorcerer; bewitching demon, craving spirit; an evil spirit, a demon who causes disease.

**Great Mother**—See Prajñāpāramitā.

**Guru yoga**—An important Vajrayāna practice common to all traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, in which one requests and symbolically receives the blessings of one’s root lama.

**Gyalgong** (Tib. rgyal [po] and ’gong [po])—A combined term for *gyalpo* and *gongpo* spirits.

**Gyalpo** (Tib. rgyal po)—Literally, “kings,” gyalpos are spirits that impersonate leaders, bring illness, and supposedly cause insanity.

**Hayagriva** (Skt.)—The “Supreme Horse,” a horse-headed yidam of the Mahāyoga class.

**Heavenly realm**—A realm of existence free of suffering and obstacles, created by the aspiration of a buddha, such as Amitābha.

**Interdependent origination**—A central concept of all schools of Buddhism, the teaching that all things arise on the basis of causes and conditions. The twelve links of interdependent origination, also known as the twelve *nidānas* (Skt.), are a particular pedagogical tool for seeing the forces of karma in action in creating future rebirth.

**Intrinsic awareness** (Tib. rig pa)—The nature of mind itself, pure of igno-
rance and afflictive emotions. From a Tibetan Buddhist viewpoint, this is the basic nature of mind which is concealed by ignorance.

**Karma** (Skt.)—Literally “action,” karma is the action and reaction of causes and conditions, both physical and psychological, in creating new situations. Karma is said to be meritorious (beneficial) or negative (detrimental).

**Kukkuripa**—An Indian teacher from the city of Kapilavastu, one of the teachers of Dampa Sangye.

**Lama** (Tib. bla ma)—Often translated as “teacher” or “guru.” The lama corresponds to the Buddha among Three Roots of Vajrayāna practice. Because lamas can work directly with the mind of the student, they are said to be the most important being for the student’s development. Thus they are called the root of blessings.

**Mādhyamaka (Great Middle Way)** (Skt.)—The philosophic traditions of the teaching on emptiness, the middle way between the extremes of eternalist and nihilistic ideas about reality.

**Mahākāla** (Skt.)—A common type of dharma protector deity.

**Mahāmāyā** (Skt.)—Literally, “Great Illusion,” an important tantric yidam deity.

**Mahāmudrā** (Great Hand Seal) (Skt.)—The fruitional teachings of the Kagyu and Gelugpa schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

**Mahāyāna** (Skt.)—Literally, “the Great Vehicle.” Originally propagated in India and currently practiced in Tibet, China, Mongolia, Japan, and Korea, the Mahāyāna teachings emphasize the idea of emptiness and universal compassion, and in particular the practices of the bodhisattva.

**Maitreya** (Skt.; Tib. Jampa, Byams pa)—The buddha of the future, currently manifesting as a high-level bodhisattva. According to legend, Maitreya gave many important teachings. See Five Dharmas of Maitreya.

**Mamo** (Tib. ma mo)—A particularly dreadful female demon, among the most feared of the spirits in Tibetan Buddhism. Mamos are associated with warfare and disease.

**Mañjuśrī** (Skt.; Tib. Jampelyang, 'Jam dpal dbyangs)—The great bodhisattva and yidam deity associated with perfect wisdom. He carries a flaming sword, which cuts through ignorance, and a text signifying learning.

**Mantra** (Skt.)—Sacred sounds, or formulations of seed syllables that protect the mind of the practitioner. They are regarded as the speech aspect of yidam practice.
Māra (devil) (Skt.)—The Sanskrit form of düd, referring to the force of evil in the world, the tempter of the Buddha.

Mount Meru—The mythical mountain at the center of the universe, according to Indo-Tibetan cosmology.

Nāga (Skt.)—A powerful being in Indo-Tibetan mythology, the nāga is commonly represented as a being with a human torso and head and with a serpent’s body. Nāgas are commonly associated with water and with wealth and dwell in subterranean areas.

Nairātmyā (Skt.; Tib. Damema, Bdag med ma)—”Nonself,” a goddess personifying the selflessness of individuals and phenomena, usually portrayed as blue or black, alone or with Hevajra.

Naydak (Tib. gnas bdag)—Guardians of power spots or sacred places.

Nöchin (Tib; Skt. yakṣa)—A kind of spirit who causes mischief and brings harm.

Nyen (Tib. gnyan)—Spirits associated with the natural environment.

Padmasaṁbhava—Also known as Padmakara or Guru Rinpoche, the founder of the Nyingma lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, Padmasaṁbhava was one of the major figures in the arrival of Buddhism in Tibet in approximately the eighth century C.E.

Pāṇḍita (Skt.)—A learned or skilled person; a scholar; teacher, or philosopher, usually of Indian origin.

Path and fruition—The esoteric instructions of Virūpa within the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism.

Piṭaka (Skt.)—See Tripiṭaka.

Powa (Tib. ’pho ba)—Transference, usually refers to the practice of purposefully transferring the consciousness right at the moment of death to a pure land or desirable state. The practitioner trains in doing this during his or her lifetime. It is an integral aspect of the Chöd practice.

Prajñāpāramitā (Skt.)—The “Perfection of Wisdom,” the sixth perfection or pāramitā, (see Six pāramitās), or the goddess associated with transcendent intelligence, the Great Mother, Yum Chenmo. It also refers to the Mahāyāna sutras and teachings expounding the doctrine of śūnyatā, the emptiness of phenomena. These include The Heart Sutra, the Eight Thousand, the Twenty-Five Thousand, and the One Hundred Thousand Verse sutras, among others.
Prāna (Skt; Tib. rlung)—The life-force energy current, literally, “wind,” the psychophysical energy present in the body which gives vitality and life, moving through the inner channels and cakras.

Protectors—Beings or spirits who act to protect a given place or person. Dharma protectors are beings that have been tamed by a great dharma teacher like Padmasambhava and actually serve the best interests of the Dharma.

Pure Land—See Heavenly realm.

Pure vital essence drop (Skt. bindu; Tib. thig le)—Formed from the red and white vital essences, this is the seat in which the innermost nature of mind is said to abide. It rests in the heart until the moment of death, when it either is transferred to a pure realm (See Powa) or dissolves, releasing the consciousness into the bardo between birth and death (See Bardo).

Rāhula (Skt.)—A demon associated with eclipses, and with one of the nine planets in Indo-Tibetan cosmology. Also regarded as a dharma protector.

Realms—In the Buddhist cosmological systems, there are several ways of dividing the universe. The three realms are the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm. Within the desire realm, a further categorization is made into six realms: the hell realms, the hungry ghost realms, the animal realm, the human realm, the demigod realm, and the god realms.

Red guide—Teachings that are especially pithy or explicit, often concerning the absolute nature. Red can mean exposed or naked or essential.

Reflexive awareness (Tib. rang rig)—Intrinsic nondual awareness.

Sacred pledge (Skt. samaya)—The level of vowed moral conduct corresponding to Vajrayāna practice, primarily involving regarding one’s teacher and all beings and phenomena as pure in nature.

Sadak (Tib. sa bdag)—Spirits that are attached to a particular area, such as a forest or a valley.

Seed syllables (Skt. bija)—A single syllable conceived as one expression of enlightened mind. It represents a primal vibration and corresponds to the seminal source of being. Each deity springs from a single seed syllable.

Senmo (Tib. bsen mo)—A type of demoness often found in company with the gyalpo class and together are the male and female spirits symbolizing desire and anger.
Serak (Tib. bse rag)—A spirit or hungry ghost who consumes the potent essences of food and wealth. It personifies ultimate envy and miserliness and is usually exorcised during rituals to promote food and wealth.

Seven-point posture of Vairocana—The seven points of posture recommended for sitting meditation, involving proper positioning of the legs, spine, neck, head, arms, chin, and eyes.

Śāriputra (Skt.)—One of the foremost students of the historical Buddha, embodying wisdom.

Shidak (Tib. gzhi bdag)—A naturally occurring spirit abiding in mountains, cliffs, and patches of earth, often a kind of earth goddess.

Sinpo or sinmo (Tib. srin po/mo)—Ancient Tibetan spirits, sometimes called cannibal spirits. The female sinmo is often associated with the original demoness of the land of Tibet.

Six pāramitās—The transcendent perfections, the development of which constitutes the practice of the bodhisattva path. The six are: generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, concentration, and wisdom.

Six Yogas of Nāropa—Advanced Vajrayāna practices for work with the subtle body: inner heat, illusory body, dream yoga, clear light, bardo practice, and powa.

Songtsen Gampo (Tib. Srong btsan sgam po, 617?-650)—The first of the great dharma kings of Tibet, ruling in the seventh century c.e. He made Buddhism the official religion of Tibet and encouraged the development of the written form of the Tibetan language.

Spiritual powers (Skt. siddhi)—Spiritual powers are traditionally divided into supreme and common. Included in the common are magical powers such as telepathy, the ability to fly, clairvoyance, and so on. The supreme spiritual powers refer to the development of perfect wisdom, enlightenment itself.

Śrāvaka (Skt.)—Literally, “hearer.” The śrāvaka vehicle of practice is connected to hearing the Buddha’s teaching. From a Mahāyāna perspective, śrāvakas lack the compassionate intention of the bodhisattva to remain in cyclic existence and to work for the benefit of beings, but rather seek to gain the bliss of enlightenment for themselves.

Tantras (Skt.)—The texts of Vajrayāna Buddhism, generally regarded as secret and difficult to understand without interpretation.

Tārā (Skt.; Tib. Drolma, Sdrol ma)—One of the most important wisdom
beings in Tibetan Buddhism, a bodhisattva or goddess who serves as a yidam and a protector and an inspiration to practitioners.

**Ten stages**—Also called the ten bhūmis or ten grounds. The ten levels of advanced realization of one following the path of a bodhisattva.

**Terdak Nöchin** (Tib. gter bdag gnod sbyin)—”Treasure-lord harm-bringer,” class of spirits who guard treasure or wealth and can be treacherous. See Nöchin.

**Teu’rang** (Tib. the’u rang)—A type of malicious spirit, associated with hungry ghosts, which is said to influence the weather and send hailstorms.

**Three Jewels**—or the Triple Refuge, are the most basic sources of spiritual inspiration in Buddhism. They are the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha.

**Toche** (Tib. lto ’phye)—A type of sadak. A spirit attached to a particular path of ground, taking that ground to be a self.

**Torma** (Tib. gtor ma)—Ceremonial offering cakes.

**Tripiṭaka** (Skt.)—The collections of scripture or “baskets” (Skt. piṭaka), refers to the three collections which constitute the Buddhist canon: the vinaya piṭaka, the books of discipline or rules; the sutra piṭaka, books of the Buddha’s sermons; and the abhidharma piṭaka, the teachings on all phenomena (dharmas). Sometimes the tantras are called the fourth basket. In general the term refers to the basic Buddhist teachings.

**Trisong Detsen** (Tib. Khri srong de’u btsan, 790-844)—The second of the great dharma kings of Tibet. Trisong Detsen invited Padmasambhava to help subdue the spirits of Tibet and also organized the great debate at Samye Monastery, which was a pivotal point in the development of Tibetan Buddhism.

**Tsa-tsa** (Tib. tshva tshva)—Small images of stūpas used as reliquaries. Often tsa-tsas are made as a way to accumulate merit.

**Tsen** (Tib. btsan)—An indigenous spirit associated with fire and destruction.

**Uḍḍiyāna** (Skt.; Tib. Orgyen, O rgyan)—Sometimes called the land of the dākinis, historically it was a kingdom in the northwest of India from which Padmasambhava and other great masters came. Figuratively, it is the location of a pure land.

**Vairocana**—A central buddha in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and the head of the buddha family in the five-family system.

**Vajra** (Skt.; Tib. dorje, rdo rje)—Literal referents of vajra are “thunderbolt”
and “diamond.” The sense is of something invincible or indestructible. Sometimes also used as a generic superlative. Also refers to a common Tibetan ritual implement.

**Vajradhara** (Skt.; Tib. Dorje Chang, Rdo rje ’chang)—A buddha considered the head of all the buddha families, regarded as a dharmakāya buddha in the new schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

**Vajravārahī** (Skt.; Tib. Dorje Pakmo, Rdo rje phag mo)—The main yidam of the Kagyu lineage. She appears as a red dākinī in the charnel ground, wielding a hooked knife and wearing a garland of fresh human heads. She has a human head and a sow’s head. Also called Vārahī or Vajrayogini.

**Vajrayāṇa** (Skt.)—The third vehicle of Tibetan Buddhism, sometimes also called the path of skillful means. The Vajrayāṇa path, associated with the tantras, involves doing special practices, including deity visualization practice, as the means to speedily attain enlightenment. Also called Secret Mantra or Mantrayāṇa or Tantrayāṇa.

**Vinaya** (Skt.)—The Buddhist scriptures on monastic discipline and moral conduct and the code of conduct they teach.

**Vital essences (red and white)**—The male (white) and female (red) substances which, together with the consciousness, are the causes of the conception of human life.

**Voice modulations**—A kind of spiritual power whereby one can read many texts at once out loud.

**Wheel of Time** (Skt. Kālacakra; Tib. Dükor, Dus kyi ’khor lo)—A tantra and associated deity that became one of the major practice lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. It is known for its unique system of cosmology and association with the hidden realm of Šambhala and its lineage of kings.

**Yama** (Skt.; Tib. Shinje, Gshin rje)—The lord of death, or a class of demons who serve as his minions (death lords).

**Yidam** (Tib. yi dam)—Meditational deity or “chosen” deity. The second of the Three Roots, yidams are the central figures in the elaborate visualization practices of Vajrayāṇa Buddhism. These practices are done only with the blessing and guidance of a qualified lama. The yidam is called the root of accomplishment, as it is through doing these practices that realization is accomplished.

**Yuldak** (Tib. yul bdag)—Spirits that are the local guardians of a country or general area, such as Tibet or Bhutan.
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