

# ***Beggar's Body Banquet (Kusāli Tshog Sog)***

Teaching by Drupon Rinchen Dorje Rinpoche



Compiled and transcribed by Adele Tomlin

Here is a transcript of teachings on Lord Jigten Sumgon(1143-1217)<sup>1</sup>'s *Beggar's Body Banquet (Kusāli Tshog Sog)* practice by Drupon Rinchen Dorje Rinpoche (given in 2016)<sup>2</sup> based on the oral translation by Ina Bieler. For more on the history and origin of the practice, and the first published translation of Jigten Sumgon's text *Instructions on the Beggar's Body Banquet*, see here<sup>3</sup>. Special thanks to Drupon Rinchen Dorje for the empowerment, transmission and instruction on this profound practice, and the stunning image of Vajravārāhi, which I used on the cover page.

Written and compiled by Adele Tomlin, November 2021.

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***Beggar's Body Banquet Teaching by Drupon Rinchen Dorje Rinpoche (2016)***



Drupon Rinchen Dorje Rinpoche

**The preliminary motivation**

To engage in this practice we have already cultivated the right motivation of love, compassion and bodhichitta. That is very important, whatever Dharma we practice, to really have a good intention for the practice. We have already completed that preliminary. The meaning of Chod is to cut/sever and the purpose of Chod is to sever self-grasping. According to the Sūtra system, we do that by training our mind in bodhichitta. In the secret mantra system, we are exchanging, or we are putting the happiness of others before our own happiness. According to the secret mantra system we practice, for instance, in the Kusāli Chod, here we are not giving any material object but are actually offering our own body. This term 'Kusāli' generally means like a 'beggar', so we are offering our own body<sup>4</sup>.

## **Self-visualization as Mother Prajñāpāramitā and calling the spirits and obstructers**



Coming to the Kusāli text by Je Jigten Sumgon, in the beginning there is first a self-visualization. We visualize ourselves as the nirmanakāya, the great mother Prajñāpāramitā, golden color with all the ornaments and so on, according to the description in your text. Visualize yourself with four hands; the first two hands are holding a vajra (dorje) and Dharma scriptures, and the lower two hands are in the gesture of meditative equipoise. At this point, before we blow the bone trumpet, then tap it three times on your palm. When doing that, think of all the spirits and obstructers and see it like a sign or message to them, saying, ‘do not do not be afraid to not be scared!’

Then, blow the trumpet three times. The first time you blow it, think that this is the natural sound of the unborn great mother; the unborn, natural sound of the dharmakāya is heard by all the sentient beings in the three realms of samsara. Then the second time, you think that you are calling all sentient beings from the peaks of existence: the highest peaks of the systems down to the lowest pits of hell. You call all sentient beings to listen. Then, when you when you blow it the third time you think that all the beings have now gathered; that all the demons and spirits have gathered.



Actually, there is one story from my homeland, about a practitioner who was always practicing at night when there were many demons wandering around. Once, he was in a cave practicing and towards the entrance of the cave there were nettles, like the food that Milarepa used to eat, and these were particularly long nettles, they were as tall as a person. So he was staying there in his cave practicing Chod and it was also very windy outside. The wind blew into the nettle grass and it swayed back and forth. He mistakenly thought that this swaying grass was actually a demon spirit. He shouted out a few PHETs but it did not stop the swaying grass. There was still this perceived demon and he thought 'oh nowadays the PHET is not powerful, it doesn't help anymore'. Then he was jumping up and down until he was exhausted and still it did not help. Then he saw at the entrance of the cave something that looked like a face. He wanted to hit the demon and so picked up a rock and threw it at the 'face' but instead of hitting a demon, the perceived face was his damaru drum. So, he broke his damaru drum by hitting it with the rock [Drupon laughs]. This is a story of what can happen, if you practice Chod with a scared or frightened mind.

### **The homage and 'emptiness' mantra**



The text begins with *Namo guru* , homage to the guru, and introduces the text as the profound dharma practice of Lord Jigten Sumgon (1143-1217)<sup>5</sup>. It is profound because it is a very unique practice written by Jigten Sumgon and it is called *Kusāli Tsog Sog*, the *Beggar's Accumulation of Merit* or Body Offering<sup>6</sup>. It is very profound and should be practiced because it is very powerful and necessary in helping us to accumulate merit. Actually, our biggest fixation is our fixation on, and identification with our body. Whatever we do we do, we do it for our body's comfort and pleasure. Therefore, it is of the greatest benefit, the greatest way to accumulate merit, if we make an offering of this body. Thus, this practice is very profound and important.

There are three sections, the preliminaries, the main part and the conclusion. First, for the preliminaries, is generation of the motivation of bodhichitta: think 'I am going to engage in this practice of offering my own body, so that I can bring to enlightenment all sentient beings as limitless space'.

Then one says 'OM SVABHAVA' and within the state of emptiness, one thinks 'my nature is the purity of all phenomena', that is my true nature. The greatest benefit of making this offering is because we grasp at our body the most. We cherish our own body, so to release this fixation; it is very beneficial to make an offering of our body.

In terms of quotes about this, in Patrul Rinpoche<sup>7</sup>'s text [*Words of My Perfect Teacher: Kunzang Lamey Zhelung*] it says that:

Offering your horse or elephant is worth hundreds of other offerings;  
Offering your child or spouse is worth thousands;  
Offering your own body is worth hundreds of thousands.

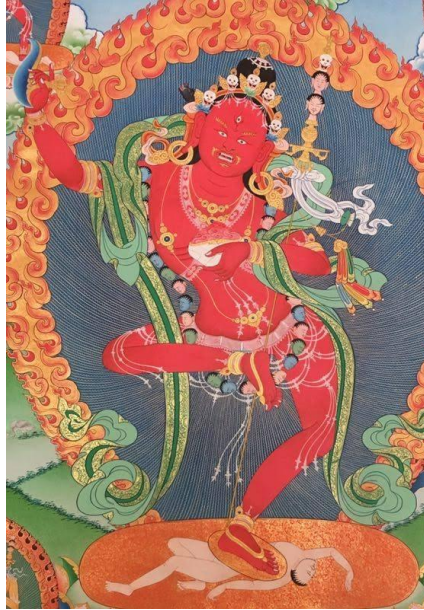
Machik Labdron says:

Not knowing that to give away my body without attachment  
Was to accumulate merit and wisdom,  
I have clung to this dear body<sup>8</sup> of mine.

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This I confess to the nirnanakāya of the Mother!"

### **Ejecting the consciousness and transforming into Vajravārāhi**



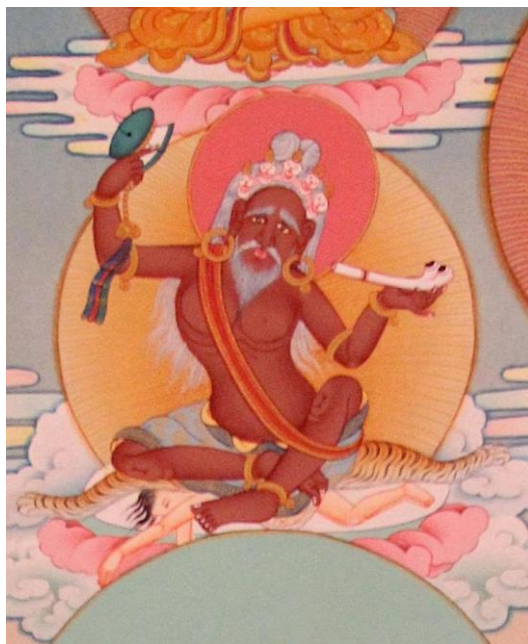
Then one says PHET, and we eject our consciousness upwards. Think your consciousness goes up through the Brahma opening at your crown, and then transforms into the form of Vajravārāhi, red with one face and two arms, in her right hand holding a curved knife, and in the left hand holding a skull-cup filled with blood. Her right leg is extended and the left one is drawn in is bent. So just visualize the normal form of Vajravārāhi and think that it is the nature of your consciousness.

Then one says PHET again, and visualizes the field towards whom one makes an offering. Also, we should not see our body as just an ordinary body, but as perfect and worthy of making an offering. See it as healthy and strong and think that the five sense pleasures are complete within your body and it becomes anything that those towards whom we make this offering desire, whatever they need.

Then with another PHET, think that, in front of you, appears a wind mandala and then a fire mandala. The wind mandala is half bow-shaped and the fire mandala is triangular shaped. Think that above that appears a hearth supported by three human heads.

Then with another PHET, you visualize your consciousness as Vajravārāhi, in her right hand she holds a curved knife, and think that with this knife she cuts off the top of your skull, of your dead body that you have visualized. Then you have a half skull-cup whose outside is white, representing emptiness, and inside is red, representing bliss. Together they represent the union of bliss and emptiness. Think of your corpse not as small, like an ordinary body because it must become an offering for all those many demons, rather think that the corpse and the skull-cup become very large, and spacious; it becomes vast and massive, pervading the entire billion-fold universe.

### **Je Milarepa meets Padampa Sangye**



Padampa Sangye

There is a story, that during the time of Je Milarepa, there was a yogini who gave Milarepa a prophecy that he should go to India to meet the master Padampa Sangye<sup>9</sup> [considered to be one of the founders of Zhije and Chod and teacher of Machig Labdron]. Milarepa then set out and in this area Yarnang Kongla, Tibet, he encountered Padampa Sangye. However, before Padampa Sangye could see him, Milarepa saw him first. So Milarepa thought to himself, I heard that Padampa Sangye has really unobstructed, flawless, clairvoyant powers, so I wonder if this is true or not, and he wanted to test him. Milarepa transformed into a flower but it seemed as



if Padampa Sangye couldn't see it, he didn't recognize that this flower is Milarepa, he just walked by the flower seemingly not noticing it. Then Milarepa thought 'oh he doesn't really have that flawless clairvoyance, he didn't recognize me, if he had clairvoyance he would have recognized that I am the flower'. The very moment Milarepa thought that, Padampa Sangye turned around and said to him 'why are you transforming yourself into a flower?' He then told Milarepa, that by doing that he had actually transgressed the instructions of that meaning and would be punished by the *ḍākinīs*. That last night as he had done an offering for them eating his flesh and blood and bones, tonight he would die. Padampa Sangye asked Milarepa: 'What is your assurance that you will not die?', and Milarepa replied 'I am not afraid of death because I have already realized immortality of the deathless nature, so I have no problem with dying tonight.' When saying this, Milarepa sang a song of realization of a certain dream of deathlessness.

Then Padampa Sangye said to Milarepa: 'it is truly difficult to find a dharma practitioner like you in the country of Tibet. It is very rare. In India, there might be just a few, but in Tibet there is hardly anyone like you'. Then he said, 'in the future, we will share disciples who will all follow our common view, meditation and conduct'. Basically, their lineage of disciples would be the same.

Then, Milarepa requested Chod instructions from Padampa Sangye, who said 'now we two yogis have met together and we must then depart, so to celebrate this encounter, we should first offer a Ganachakra feast offering. Since this is Tibet and you are from India, I am a visitor, you should really prepare the Tsog feast of substances and offerings'.

So Milarepa cut off his own skull cap and filled it with his own flesh, blood and bones by cutting them up. Then he caused a fire of tummo to blaze, which turned the substances inside the skull-cup into the five meat and five nectars. On doing that, Padampa Sangye then transformed his body into seven bodies and Milarepa transformed his body into eight bodies: the four gatekeepers of the directions of Chakrasamvara and the four the intermediary directions. There

are eight protectors of the directions of Chakrasamvara, so Milarepa manifested those eight manifestations. Padampa Sangye was in seven forms and together they performed a feast offering.

Each of their seven and eight emanations were sitting on grass stalks and Padampa Sangye's were sitting on the tip of the grass stalks, whereas Milarepa's grass stalks were a little bit bent. When Milarepa said 'why are your grass stalks completely straight and my grass stalks a little bit bent? Is it because your realizations are greater than mine?' Padampa Sangye replied 'it has nothing to do with the qualities of our realization, they are the same. The reason why your grass is bent and mine is straight has to do with the place where you were born. It is because you were born in Tibet and I was born in India. In India, people don't eat meat and that is why my grass is straight and yours is bent.'

### **Visualizing the transformation of the nectar**

Coming back to the text, we say PHET and we visualize our own skull-cup becomes very vast and spacious, and think that in this spacious skull-cup you are offering your own body. Then think that the wind blows and the kindled fire begins to burn, and it boils the substances and by boiling the substances in the skull-cup, think that all impurities and defilements and so on are purified and the contents of the skull-cup transform into the nature of nectar.

Again we say PHET and visualize that from this nectar, light rays radiate and they invite the primordial awareness beings with it. This attracts the essence, the elixir of bodhicitta of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas, which then descends down and merges with the nectar in the skull-cup. The white and red drops merge into non-duality and now it becomes a divine nectar. Think that whoever sees this pure, flawless nectar will naturally develop an experience of great bliss. Upon seeing, it has the power to engender great bliss; also upon tasting, no being will be born in the three lower realms. Upon being touched by this nectar, all beings will ultimately attain the state of liberation and omniscience. Thus, it transforms into this very powerful nectar.

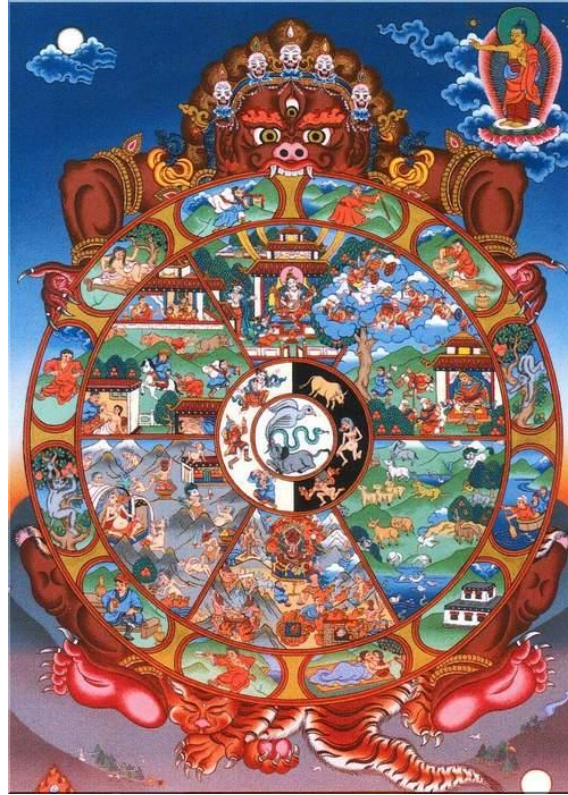
## **The benefits of the profound practice of offering the body**

What is the benefit of offering one's own body? Normally, we cherish our own body more than anything else and for this reason we experience a lot of suffering, illness and harm towards our body. However, if we make an offering of our body we will experience less illness, suffering and pain related to the body.

For example, there is a story about Milarepa when he first encountered a demoness in the cave. First, she displayed various miraculous apparitions to frighten him. Initially, Milarepa was in fact afraid and then she said to him 'actually it is not me alone, there are many more demons just like me, as long as there are thoughts in your mind. You still have too many thoughts in your mind.' Milarepa replied, 'this is really the greatest instruction I have ever received. I have met with so many lamas but I have never received an instruction like that. Do with me whatever you want, take my body, eat my body and so on'. By completely letting go of his own body he was able to overpower this demoness.

This story shows that due to being afraid we experience a lot of harm towards our body. We get pain, sickness, and there is even a danger we will get killed and so on. Actually, if we completely let go of our own body, none of this harm, suffering or danger will arise, all of these dangers will disappear. Je Jigten Sumgon said the best way to accumulate merit and to pacify all kinds of obstacles is to make an offering of one's own body. Thus, to offer this Kusāli feast practice is very deep.

## **Blessing the nectar and liberating all sentient beings with it**



Wheel of Life – depicting six kinds of beings in samsara

With DZA HUM BAM HOH, we invite the wisdom deities and then by saying OM AH HUM three times, we bless the substances. Saying PHET again, we think that from the nectar of the skull-cup held in Vajravārāhi's hand, a stream of nectar flows down and this stream first permeates all the hell realms. Think that all the hell realms transform into the pure land of Akaniṣṭha ('og min). Then again this stream of nectar flows and it purifies all the obscurations of all hell beings, and they all transform into Vajravārāhi. Think that all of the beings in the hot and the cold hells all transform into the nature of Vajravārāhi.

What follows is the same, the nectar streams to the hungry spirits and the hungry spirit realm transforms into Akaniṣṭha and then the suffering of hunger and thirst of all the hungry spirits is pacified, and they all attain the state of Vajravārāhi.

Then it pacifies the suffering of ignorance, and being used by others, of the animals and all the animals become Vajravārāhi. Then also it pacifies the suffering of humans, such as birth, old age, illness and death, and the humans all attain the state of Vajravārāhi. It pacifies the suffering of fighting and quarreling of the jealous gods and transforms the suffering of the gods, and they become Vajravārāhi. It is all the same like that.

At the end, again, you say PHET and in the space before you is the assembly of the gurus, yidam deities, dharma protectors and so on. Then also before you, below them, are all the sentient beings of the six realms, including yourself; especially all those who cause harm, such as enemies, obstructers, demons, evil spirits and so on, they all come and gather together like clouds.

Then think that there are four types (or levels) of guests, who have come to this place. The first guests are all the gurus, whom you visualize above you in space. Then, the guests of the yidam deities, whom you visualize in the space directly in front of you. Then, there are the guests of the various Dharma protectors, like Mahakala and so on. Then the fourth class of guests are all sentient beings, the guests of compassion, sentient beings of the six realms, which includes various karmic debtors, especially of the lower realms. For example, there are those karmic debtors one has killed in a past life, and so now as a result of having done that, they appear as someone who shortens one's lifespan, or a demon appears and causes illness and so on. Since we have wandered in samsara for so many lifetimes, there are all sorts of karmic debtors that might appear. Think that you have invited those four classes of guests who now all gather before you.

### **OM AH KĀRO MUKHAM mantra recitation blessing and offering to the guests**

Next is the 'OM AH KĀ RO MU KHAM...' mantra, which one recites three times. Then, we bless the nectar and visualize that all the guests invited, they all have some kind of vajra tongue straw, like a straw you use to drink cold beverages, and they all plant their vajra straws into the



nectar and begin to sup the nectar through the straw. In the end, think that they all have become satisfied.

The first offering is made to the gurus. By making this offering think that you accumulate merit and purify obscurations and attain the two siddhis. Next, you make an offering to the yidam deities. By making this offering think that all negative circumstances and obstacles, especially obstacles to practice, are purified and you accumulate the merit to perfect the practice and attain accomplishments. Then, by making the offering to the Dharma protectors, think that all the temporary obstacles to your practice are cleared away and the protectors are now on your side to protect you and help you persevere in practice. With the next offering, made to all the karmic debtors accumulated in many past lifetimes, think that since beginningless time in samsara up until this present life, we have we have made all sorts of karmic connections, and these have created karmic debtors. For example, we have created karmic debtors from having killed others, or we have caused some suffering for them, such as injuring, or stealing from them and so on. Think that all this karma is purified and you have repaid your karmic debts.

Thinking this way as you visualize their consumption of the nectar, the same offering is also made to all the other sentient beings in the six realms. Think that especially, first and foremost, you are making this offering to all those enemies and obstructers who cause harm, just like in our beginning prayers we say, 'may all those enemies and obstructers who harm me and so on, may they have happiness'. First, we want to help them and we do that with without any negative thoughts about them. We want to make an offering to them and by making this offering for them, think that all their evil intentions towards us are pacified and gradually they attain a state of enlightenment.

### **White and red offerings**

After that there are two sections of offerings: one is the white offering and the other, the red offering. The white offering refers to offering the nectar and the red offering is the offering of flesh, blood, bones. Machig Labdron says that practicing the white and the red offering is one hundred times more beneficial than any other offering.

There was another story from Tibet, which is a real story not just playing around. There is a tradition in Tibet that when somebody gets sick, somebody invites a Chod practitioner to do a puja for them. Once, there was a family whose daughter was sick, so they invited some practitioner. They also had a son who just couldn't sit still and always liked to play. So there was the sick girl and the Chod practitioner who came. Chod is usually practiced after dark, so he came after dusk, and when it got dark outside he started to practice. Generally, he was not a very stable practitioner apparently, and was a little bit afraid. That boy couldn't sit still and was playing a trick on him with a piece of tsampa dough and a rope. He bound the one end of the rope on the Chod practitioner's robe or his shirt, and then the other part with the Tsampa dough and he left it outside. The boy was outside the room and so then the practitioner started the Chod practice. He was already a little bit afraid, and then the little boy started pulling on the rope from the outside and then, suddenly he was too scared to do the Chod practice and couldn't continue it, so he just put a damaru drum on the girl's head and said 'may you be well soon'. He just prayed and then left [Drupon laughs]. That is a true story.

Then you read the red offering:

'Rays of light emanate from the heart of the Yidam visualized by you in the sky in front of you. By the touch of these rays of light the remaining part of Amrita is transformed into the mountain of flesh, ocean of blood, a pile of bones, filling the whole universe. This I offer to the Gods and the demons of the whole Samsara'....and so on.

Basically, think here that in front of you, from the gurus' and the yidams' hearts light radiates, and transforms the remainder of the nectar in the skull-cup, into a vast offering of flesh and bones. As there might be some guests who were not satisfied by the nectar, who instead want flesh, blood and bones, think that it transforms into that flesh, blood and bones and becomes whatever they desire, and is vast and inexhaustible.

## **The importance of love and compassion and creating joy and happiness**

When practicing, it is important that mentally, we engage in this practice based on love and compassion. For example, if you're doing something for a sick person, you do it with the intention to heal them. If we do it with these demons and evil spirits in mind, then it should also be based on a mind of love and compassion. Actually, Patrul Rinpoche said that we should not practice trying to appear very fierce and wrathful to tame those demons. Even if we did that, perhaps some of the more humble, or shy, spirits might be intimidated, but generally, most of the spirits will not be intimidated by some kind of wrathful appearance.

If we practice Chod displaying a really wrathful expression; we appear really fierce, wrathful and arrogant, and try to cut down those haughty ones and slay those evil demons and spirits, basically you appear just like a henchman of hell that slaughters all those mischievous ones. However, what actually happens is you are trying to cure sick beings, and you are trying to do that by hitting them. So if you are hitting someone who is already hurt, probably you will hurt them even more. You are causing injuries towards someone who is already injured. If we look really fierce with glaring, big and bulging eyes, and we bind them with our hands, and tear their clothes apart, really fierce and wrathful, it is not that useful. Patrul Rinpoche said that if you think you are taming evil spirits and demons in this way, you are probably wrong.

There is another story from Tibet, about something I actually saw myself at Tana monastery, my own monastery. I was actually there when it happened. There was this girl and she was sick and the people invited a Chod practitioner to heal her. Some people came together for this ritual and he brought a scripture. It was a small text but big in comparison to her head. The people held her down and the Chod practitioner hit her over the head with the text, and when he hit her he said 'take refuge to the lama to the Buddha, to the dharma, to the sangha' and so on. Every time he said that, he hit her really hard on the head and she was crying. She tried to get up to defend herself, but she couldn't because people were holding her down. Then, because she was crying and trying to free herself, the practitioner actually became even fiercer and

angrily hit her over the head even more. If you try and hit something to eliminate it, one actually ends up with the pain and sickness of being hurt even more from that.

Machig Labdron said that in this life we encounter all sorts of negative circumstances and all of these various types of hardships and suffering and pains that we encounter in this life are the various karmic debts we have accumulated since beginningless time in samsara. They arise in this life in the form of various illusory, confused perceptions inflicting harm on us. She said that if you do not cultivate compassion for them but rather perceive them as enemies, then you take birth in three lower realms. They must be tamed by cultivating love, compassion and bodhicitta. When you offer your body, for example, think that it turns into something very pleasing, into an offering of love and compassion. Actually, what we want to accomplish by doing that, is to create a sense of joy and happiness in the minds of those evil spirits and demons and so on. Actually, those evil spirits and demons must mainly be tamed through love and compassion. It's very difficult to tame them in an angry, wrathful way.

### **Taming the four demons**

The point of Chod practice is to tame the four māras [bdud], demons. There is *the demon of the lord of death* ['chi bdag gi bdud] by perfecting this taming practice we attain a state of immortality. Then there is the *demon of the aggregates* [phung po'i bdud], mainly referring to our attachment to the body. Then there is the *demon of the afflictive emotions*, [nyon mongs pa'i bdud], so we must also cut through our thoughts, our afflictive emotions. Then there is the *demon of the son of the gods* [lha'i bu'i bdud]. Nowadays, this is the most difficult one to tame. The *demon of the son of the gods* is basically our distractions by all sorts of entertainment in this life. That is the most difficult one to sever nowadays.

By cutting through all these demons, we become a true Chod practitioner. According to the Chod practice itself, there are other māras: there is the obstructed māra [thogs bcas kyi bdud] unobstructed māra [thogs med kyi bdud] then there's the māra of merriment and enjoying [dga' spro yi bdud]. Then there is the māra of arrogance/pride [snyems byed kyi bdud]. That is

the main one to tame. That is basically the māra of hedonism and self-grasping and is most difficult to tame.

It is because we hold on to the idea of there being an individually existing self that we experience all the suffering in samsara. This is why we wander in samsara in the first place, because we want something for this individual self. All of our experiences of joy and of sadness and so on, all come from this perception of a self. That is why we wander in samsara and that is what we need to sever and cut through; that is the main purpose of Chod practice.

### **The ultimate Chod - Milarepa and Patrul Rinpoche**



Je Milarepa

Jetsun Milarepa said:

To isolate yourself to a secluded, dangerous place is the outer Chod.

To make your aggregates an offering is the inner Chod,

To realize the actual nature of mind is the ultimate Chod<sup>10</sup>.

What needs to be severed is the root of suffering, which is the confused perception of the ignorant mind: ignorance and self-grasping. Milarepa said that is ultimate Chod, cutting through self-grasping, seeing the nature of the mind and reality. Until we have uprooted that, no



matter how much we try to suppress demons or scare them away, there is no end to them, they will always continue to appear. So until we have realized the nature of our own minds there is no end to scaring away demons. For example, until you have extinguished a fire there is no end to the smoke, or the appearance of smoke. The various confused perceptions of the various gods and the demons and so on will continue to appear until we have cut through this demon of self-deceit - our self-clinging, and are abiding in the ultimate nature of reality and mind. That is the ultimate Chod.

Milarepa said, 'if you perceive the demon as a demon, it will cause harm. However, if you understand the demon to be your own mind it will become liberated'. If you realize the demon to be empty you will finally cut through self-grasping.

Also, Milarepa said in a different song that 'when not realized, the appearance of demons and harm-doers are actual demons.' One's thoughts are the real demons. They are demonic and they are the basis from which all obstacles and so forth arise. However, when you realize their nature, all the demons are actually seen as the yidam deity and therefore they become the source from which all the siddhis arise.



Patrul Rinpoche

Patrul Rinpoche also said that, on the outer level temporarily, the appearance of evil demons and spirits and so on, seems to be true, it seems to be a reality. Nevertheless, although that is how it seems, he says there is still no need to reinforce this perception, by clinging to the reality of it. You should still know that ultimately they do not exist, and therefore should not reinforce this perception. Instead of grasping at it, he said 'train your mind in perceiving all appearances as an illusion, or like a dream, because in reality they are only confused perceptions. Although temporarily, there are gods, demons, obstructers, harm-doers and so on, ultimately they really are actually illusions and do not really exist. Therefore the, sick person and the harm-doer both actually arise from a confused perception. Therefore, you should not only perceive the sick person with compassion and the evil spirit with hatred and resentment. Actually, you should have compassion for both of them. In this way, it cuts through self-grasping by cultivating bodhichitta and with that as a basis, make your own body an offering to all the gods and demons.

Therefore, develop a pure motivation from the bottom of your heart, without any anger or resentment remaining within your mind stream. In this way, make a pure aspiration when you engage in this practice with the understanding that ultimately all these harm-doers, gods and spirits and so on, pleasure and pain attachment and aversion, all of these do not actually exist. Until that is realized, you should apply effort in mindfulness, you need to gain a certainty in the reality of things.

Je Milarepa said:

Realizing that gods, spirits or demons do not inherently exist is the view.

Sustaining a state of non-destruction and non-grasping is meditation.

Remaining free from adopting and rejecting is conduct.

Remaining free from hopes and fears is the result.

That is how we should engage in practice.

Ultimately, we should remain within a state of knowing of great equanimity that there is no difference between a demon and spirit to be slain or severed, and someone who is cutting through or severing them. Cutting through and completely uprooting the grasping at a Self is

the accomplishment of the Chod practice. While we engage in practice, we should meditate and think that ultimately those gods and demons lack inherent existence. In this way, you continue to train your awareness in the ultimate state of mahamudra. When awareness reaches full maturation and the mind becomes liberated, that is the ultimate Chod. To attain enlightenment by cutting through self-grasping, to accomplish that ultimate fulfillment of Chod, we must make an effort.

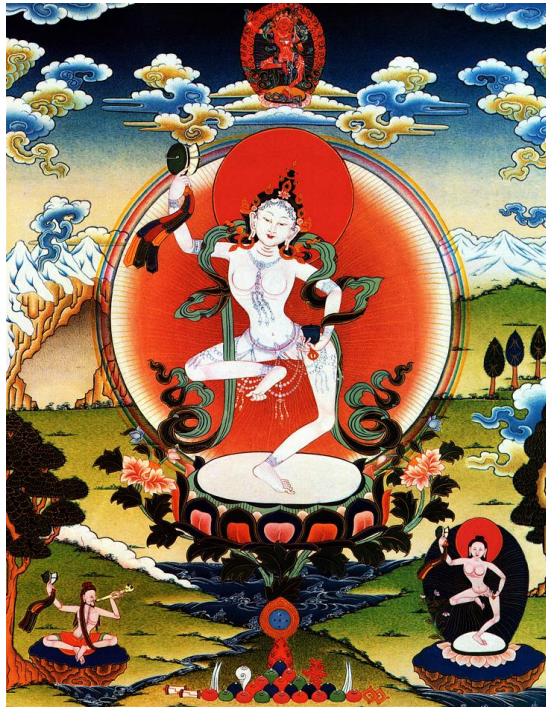
So after the white offering, there is the red offering. Then it says 'we should settle in a state of meditation resting in mahamudra'. At that time, practice resting within the natural state of the mind, that lacks any inherent existence, an unfabricated natural state. This unfabricated nature of mind is the nature of mahāmudrā, said Jigten Sumgon.

The Indian master, Thog-tsepa says that:

Sustaining an ongoing state of fresh, innate and naturally settled awareness is mahāmudrā.

'Fresh' here means the fresh moment of awareness, of consciousness, the present consciousness. Innate (nyug-ma) here means this present moment of consciousness that is the primordially existing consciousness. 'Settling in the natural state' means to rest within an unaltered, unfabricated, natural state. To sustain that state is to rest within a state of mahamudra. Then conclude the practice with dedication. That is the end of the text.

## Empowerment and lineage



Machig Labdron

The brief Chod empowerment is called a *Precious Garland*:

“Now you will receive the profound truth empowerment, this empowerment contains that ḍākinī's extraordinary and profound secret words. First, for the disciple to develop firm confidence in this teaching, a historical background of the Chod empowerment will be given:

" In the palace of the dharmadhatu's vast expanse in the pure sphere of Akaniṣṭha dwells the great mother Samanthabadri also known as Vajravarahi, Vajra Nairatmyaya, the selfless vajra goddess or the noble lady Tārā. From the tip of a light ray emanating from her heart, the boundless palace of the Akaniṣṭha pure land appeared together with a throne. At the center of this palace appeared the Dharmakāya great mother surrounded by limitless Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Bodhisattvis of the ten directions. From the heart of the Great Mother manifested that a black wrathful, mara-subduing goddess, together with a four-fold retinue who came to abide in the palace at the heart of the ḍākinī land of Oddiyana. From the heart of the mara-subduing wrathful goddess emanated the ḍākinī Serlingma, together with a four-fold retinue who proceeded to the palace of Gandola in Oddiyana. In order to benefit sentient beings, that ḍākinī,

Serlingma took 170 different lives in the god and human realms. In the last of these lives, she took birth as Machig Labdron. In Tibet, Machig Labdron, took two lives simultaneously as the Chinese and the Nepalese queens of King Songsten Gampo. These two later took birth as Yeshe Tsogyel. Four dākinīs emanated from Yeshe Tsogyal: Machig Sharma, Shelse Donemam, Shangchang Drochungma, and Labkyi Drolma.

In her outer aspect, she is noble lady Tārā, in her inner aspect she is the Great Mother in her secret aspect she is Vajravarahi, and in her innermost secret aspect she is the black wrathful dākinī. During the time of the Buddha Shakyamuni, Machig Labdron, manifested as the bodhisattvi called the goddess of the Ganges.

So what is the purpose of sharing a historical background? The sutra of *Distinguishing the Essence from the Residue* says: In the degenerate age, of the final 500 years, an emanation of the mother of all Buddha's named Drolma will appear in the north. In a place called love she will be a master of the generation and completion stages she will wander through towns, villages, valleys, charnel grounds and hermitages and her teachings will spread far. The root Tantra of Manjushri says 'in times of degeneration when my teachings will decline an emanation of the Great Mother, the perfection of wisdom named Drolma, will appear to teach the meaning of the unborn nature, whoever connects to her teachings will attain unsurpassed awakening. In the general prophecy of the teachings of Guru Padmasambhava it says an incarnation of Tsogyel, will appear at Dzangri, the copper-colored mountain, she will cut through beings concepts uprooting all discursiveness completely.

Thus her coming was foretold in many sutras and tantras. She had sixteen supreme disciples who attained liberation through her teachings and who actualized direct realization of emptiness. Furthermore, she established many gods, demons and humans on the path of ripening and liberation. The fame of her teachings was such that three, swift-footed Yogis were sent to Tibet from Bodh Gaya to bring back her teachings to India. Having tested her on her recollection of her previous lives, the three developed trust. Having given rise to faith they brought back Machig's teachings to India. Thus her renown of being an actual manifestation of the Great Mother illuminates the world like the Sun and Moon. Her teachings comprised the teachings of the sutric and tantric systems, and the union of both.



The lineage of the sutra system is as follows: from the Buddha Shakyamuni to Manjushri to Nagārjuna to Aryadeva to Padampa Sangye to Kyotön Sonam Lama and to Machig Labdron.

The lineage of the tantric system is as follows: from the Dharmakaya Great Mother, to the Sambhogakaya, Vajravārāhi, to the nirmanakāya noble lady Tārā who transmitted the teachings directly to Machig Labdron.

The lineage of the union of sutras and tantras is as follows: from Manjushri the Lion of speech, to noble lady Tārā, the ḍākinī Sukkhasiddhi, the Brahman Aryadeva, to Padampa Sangye to Kyoton Sonam lama who transmitted the teachings directly to Machig Labdron.

Machig passed down her teachings to three of her heart-sons: to her heart-son Gyalwa Dondrup, she transmitted the teachings of the sutric system; 2) to her second son, Tonyon Samdrup, she transmitted the Chod teachings from the tantric system; 3) and to her third son Kugom Chokyi Senge, she transmitted the teachings from the sutras and tantras combined.

There were many followers, as many as there are stars in the sky, who became learned and accomplished in the teachings of this lineage. The great Mahamudra Chod illuminates the world like the Sun and Moon. The specific lineage of this Samadhi empowerment that is conferred based on the Torma was transmitted from Kukham Chokyi Senge, Dogten Dulwa, Sangtar Siddha, Gyanak Chobum, Sangye Rab-ngon, Sangye Wanton, Rigompa Chenpo, Je Rangjung and so on.

These teachings of Chod are instructions borne from the heart of Machig Labdron<sup>11</sup>, they are the accomplishment of the ḍākinīs, one's best friend in the face of difficult circumstances. Through these profound teachings, one learns to see bad omens as auspicious fortune.

Machig said this:

Listen to your mother, sons. No obstacle will ever come. When you are sick offer yourself to the demons and you will attain well-being that is free from illness. Trust your matters and wealth to your enemy, and you will seize the throne of fearlessness. If you let go of everything you will be free of desire. See difficult circumstances as a friend. This is the instruction of your mother. Better than asking for protection and refuge a hundred times is it to let them eat what they

may, take what they may, just a single time. Giving away your body and life as food, is the greatest protection sphere. Offering a hundred Ghanachakras is no match to accumulating merit through the Kusali offering. Offering a hundred feasts is no match to performing the white and red distributions of Chod. A hundred prayer ceremonies are no match to giving away one's body flesh and blood. A hundred monasteries are no match to isolated, terrifying dwelling places. A hundred benefactors are no match to the patronage of gods and demons of the phenomenal world. A hundred teachings of the holy Dharma are no match to the view of boundless, primordial purity. A hundred pith instructions are no match to the holy Dharma of Chod, the severance of demons. By merely knowing of or hearing these oral instructions of developing awareness of the tricks of your mind the mind is playing on you will take birth as a child of the noble family in the Buddha fields. If you understand and realize these teachings you will become a Buddha, supreme among two-legged beings.

This lineage has been upheld in an unbroken continuity since the time of the Buddha up to the present day. The vital essence of pith instructions has not deteriorated, and the warmth of the blessings has not faded. These instructions of the oral lineage are practiced by those with all three levels of faculties lesser, middling and superior. It is like the single medicine that cures a hundred illnesses. Regarding my own lineage of having received the Chod empowerment, I have received this empowerment several times, most importantly, in Tibet, from Tulku Thogme Rinpoche.



Tulku Thogme Rinpoche

Dakini Publications (2021)

<sup>1</sup> For biography, see: <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Jigten-Gonpo-Rinchen-Pel/2899>.

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIJ1J5Lz72U>.

<sup>3</sup> The *Instructions on Kusali Tshog Sog by Jigten Sumgon* (Dakini Publications, 2021). See: <https://dakinitranslations.com/2021/11/11/beggar-s-body-offering-chod-with-mother-prajnaparamita-and-vajravarahi-instructions-on-drikungpa-kusali-tshog-sog-by-je-jigten-sumgon-and-commentary-by-drupon-rinchen-dorje-rinpoche/>.

<sup>4</sup> Regarding the meaning of the term Kusāli, please see my Introduction to the *Instructions on Kusali Tshog Sog by Jigten Sumgon* (Dakini Publications, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> For biography, see: <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Jigten-Gonpo-Rinchen-Pel/2899>.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the text, see Jigten Sumgon's Instructions, as in note 3 above.

<sup>7</sup> Patrul Rinpoche (rdza dpal sprul rin po che) aka Orgyen Jikmé Chökyi Wangpo (o rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po) (1808-1887). For bio, see here: <https://www.lionsroar.com/simple-man-extraordinary-yogi-the-life-of-patrul-rinpoche/>

<sup>8</sup> The Tibetan term used here for the body is *phung po*, referring also to the 'aggregates', i.e. the five psychophysical constituents which interdependently make up what one thinks of as oneself.

<sup>9</sup> For biography, see: <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Padampa-Sanggye-/2510>.

<sup>10</sup> གཉན་ས་རི་ཁྲོད་འགྲིམ་པ་དེ་ཕྱི་ལྷ་གཙོད། ། སྤང་པོ་གཟན་དུ་བསྐྱར་བ་དེ་ནང་གི་གཙོད། ། ཉག་ཅིག་ཚད་ནས་གཙོད་པ་དེ་དོན་གྱི་གཙོད། ། གཙོད་དེ་གསུམ་དང་ཐུན་པའི་ནལ་འཕྱོར་པ་ལགས་སོ། །

<sup>11</sup> For biography, see: <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Machik-Labdron/5644>.