

Chimed Sok Tig Teachings

Saga Dawa Retreat at Tashi Choling, 2020

Commentary on

The Sadhana called the Vital Essence of Immortality

given by Sangye Khandro

Day 1

June 6, 2020

It is just starting to rain right this minute here at Tashi Choling, which is an auspicious sign for the beginning of our short, profound two-day practice of the *Vital Essence of Immortality*.

This is a terma revelation that was revealed in 1904 by Zilnon Namkha'i Dorje, who was a reincarnation of Nanam Dorje Dudjom, one of the twenty-five disciples, and also of Berotsana. This terma comes from Guru Padmasambhava and directly passed to his heart disciples. Later, Nanam Dorje Dudjom reincarnated as Zilnon Namkha'i Dorje, and this tertön revealed the terma, which was called a *trom ter*, or a public revelation. I do not remember the exact details aside from knowing that the revelation was witnessed by a large gathering of fortunate disciples. Then, he kept it secret and did not share it with anyone.

Simultaneously with the revelation of the terma on that day in 1904, Dudjom Rinpoche Jigdral Yeshe Dorje was born. Jigdral Yeshe Dorje later went to the Mindroling Monastery to study. He trained there until he was twenty-one years old, at which time he left and went to meet tertön Zilnon Namkha'i Dorje, who was overjoyed to finally meet him because his name, Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, was written in the yellow scroll in the dakini script of the terma. He showed this to Dudjom Rinpoche and said, "Today, the real owner of this wealth has arrived." He also went on to tell the young Dudjom Rinpoche that he was an old man and would not be living for long; but in order to benefit disciples in the future, this terma was given over to Dudjom Rinpoche, as well as other termas that this tertön had revealed or was to reveal.

Then, Dudjom Rinpoche asked him if he would reveal a *Phurba Yangsang*, a quintessential, secret aspect of Vajrakilaya. Somehow, Dudjom Rinpoche knew that this terma belonged to him, and Zilnon Namkha'i Dorje said, "I will think about that. But never mind, because whatever was meant to be my termas are now yours." Curiously, it came to pass that Dudjom Rinpoche revealed the *Yangsang Phurba* in the *Pudri Reg Pung*, and he placed this Chimed Sok Tig practice as a branch of that sadhana in the same volume.

While Zilnon Namkha'i Dorje was bestowing the empowerment of the secret accomplishment for Dorje Drollod, when he got to the point when he shouted *phet* very loudly, Dudjom Rinpoche recalled to Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal that his ordinary mind and the phenomena of ordinary body vanished at that point. He was able to remain in pristine awareness indefinitely. While he was abiding there, the tertön spoke to him, "That is the actual, genuine wisdom empowerment" and threw rice on him saying, "*Om sutra tishta benzar ye soha*" to seal the stability of that wisdom blessing. As Dudjom Rinpoche said, from that time onward, he was different. Ordinary phenomena, most concepts, and plans all went

away. All he wanted to do was be in retreat for months and years. That empowerment had completely changed his phenomena.

Due to that connection made when the young Jigdral Yeshe Dorje was twenty-one and the tertön was old but had waited to meet him to give his transmissions to him, our Dudjom Rinpoche was able to begin his enlightened deeds of benefiting others in an inconceivable way. Although many people heard him say who his root gurus were [i.e., specifically Phungtrul Gyurmed, Ngedon Wangpo, and Jedrung Rinpoche Trinley Jampa Jungney], it was actually Zilnon Namkha'i Dorje who was his genuine root guru, because this is the guru who allowed him to make that shift in awareness. This was the guru that he had been connected to for many countless lifetimes before that moment when they reconnected.

In 1983 when the now much older Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, Dudjom Rinpoche, was invited to Santa Monica, California, by Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche, he gave many empowerments and graced us with his presence for over a month. We were incredibly fortunate. One of those empowerments was the *Chimed Sok Tig*. At first, he was quite reluctant to give this empowerment. Gyatrul Rinpoche and other disciples kept literally begging him to give it. Finally, he said, "This is not an easy empowerment to give or to receive because it involves very strict samaya. So all of you will have to do this practice every day from that day onward once you receive the empowerment. You have to take that commitment." All of us said that we would, and he did, in fact, bestow the empowerment.

After that, Gyatrul Rinpoche, of course, practiced it every day. At that time, his health was not very good; in fact, it had not been good for most of his life. One day in 1984, Dudjom Rinpoche's consort Sangyum Kusho called to say, "You and Sangye should go to Maratika Cave in Nepal and practice *Chimed Sok Tig* for at least two weeks. Do a retreat and you will see the benefits; the obstacles will vanish." So, that is what we did.

On that same trip to Nepal, Rinpoche and I went to request Khetsun Sangpo in Nepal for extensive teachings on the inner *Chimed Sok Tig* practices. Then, when Rinpoche was able to do retreat after that, he had everything that he needed. It was a very difficult journey to Maratika Cave in those days. There were no roads leading there, and we certainly could not afford a helicopter. We trekked there and did a two-week retreat. During that time, I would record Gyatrul Rinpoche's dreams as he would tell them to me. Each night, he had incredible dreams. Later, after we left, he was able to make contact with Sangyum Kusho again, and she said, "I know about your dreams, and I know all of your obstacles are now dispelled." From that time onward, Rinpoche's health completely shifted. Rinpoche persisted and did another three or four months of *Chimed Sok Tig* retreat after returning the following year and has continued until the present. Now Rinpoche is 95, so this practice is something that has been very potent and powerful for Rinpoche in his long life. It is the same for anyone who practices.

Today, we begin very auspiciously to make a connection. Of course, for many of you, it is the first time to make this connection. We are not connecting with the concise version, but with the longer sadhana. It may seem a little overwhelming, but please just read the meaning the best you can and receive the blessings of being able to connect with this practice, which is something incredibly special. The practice that we are doing today is going to establish the

entire mandala as an external mandala of many deities. When you do the concise practice for this, then that entire mandala is imagined to be present within your body. In a way, it is an inner practice. You focus on the three principal wisdom channels in your body: the central channel, avadhuti, and roma and kyangma, or rasana and lalana, to the right and the left for males and the left and right for females. Then, there are the five chakras where the five buddhas and their consorts reside in the crown, throat, heart, navel, and secret place.

Tomorrow, I will spend more time introducing the visualization and discussing what we should think of when we recite the mantra. However, for today, please just keep in mind that this is a practice that, of course, purifies impure outer perceptions. It also works on purifying the inner body of channels, winds, and bindus. The bindu that is the essential essence, essential fluid, is where the mind is associated. Then, it is a way of actually biologically and physically purifying our constitution, which is another reason why the longevity blessings actually occur. Not only are we purifying ordinary mind with wisdom awareness, we are actually purifying the ordinary aggregates and elements in the body and restoring their vital essence in terms of restoring our life essence, life expectancy, life force, and breath, these four things.

Please take the time to read the translation, of course, today in the practice, or this evening, and tomorrow that will be very beneficial for understanding more about what I've taught. Then, tomorrow I will go over a little bit more about how blessings actually occur.

Day 2

June 7, 2020

I will briefly review the Chimed Sok Tig practice now and touch on the important points. This would be using the concise sadhana, but you can certainly apply this to the longer sadhana, which you now have. Usually, on a daily basis, you do what is called *gyun khyer*, or the concise version. However, the best way to practice this sadhana is for you to decide to do a little retreat, where you can follow what you have been learning yesterday and today. I received many teachings on this practice from Dudjom Rinpoche, from Shenphen Dawa Rinpoche, and from Gyatrul Rinpoche, so I am just sharing some of that information with you.

You must have an empowerment before you begin this practice. Even though you may be here at this time without an empowerment, joining us for auspiciousness, you really must receive the empowerment first and then do the practice. For doing this practice, the best is to begin in the morning and face to the east. You can insert this into your guru-yoga ngondro practice right before you receive the four empowerments and after reciting the mantra. Or you can do it on its own. The most important thing is to do a longevity practice every day if you can. As a dharma practitioner, we need to have a long life. We have what is referred to as a true, authentic precious human rebirth. We need maximum time to be able to make use of this, in terms of these amazing methods that bring us to enlightenment. We need to achieve freedom from death, confidence, and rainbow body. If we wish for those things, then we should practice. Mind never dies; mind just becomes free from physical existence, as mind's nature is wisdom awareness.

You begin with the lineage supplication, refuge, and bodhicitta. Those are similar to what we find here in the seven-branch offering prayer. Then, instantly, there is the generation stage, where all phenomena are understood to be the nature of emptiness. Within that, you enter into the awareness of the clear light presence, spontaneously present wisdom appearances as a lotus, sun, and moon seat with a red *hri* (ཨྵེ) standing on top of that as the essence of your pristine consciousness. Light radiates from the *hri* into the buddha fields, returning and bringing all blessings back into the *hri*, radiating out again and touching all the sentient beings of the six classes, relieving them of all of their suffering. Then, the light comes back again and transforms into self-nature as Buddha Amitayus. You are red in color, with two arms, with hands in the mudra of meditation, holding a longevity vase, in union with consort Mandarava, who is holding a long-life arrow and a longevity vase. Both are wearing silken garments. The visualization continues as described here, “Above them are the longevity buddhas, including the dharmakaya Amitabha, the sambhogakaya Pema Garwang, and hosts of wisdom deities.”

Then, you begin to visualize the five chakras inside your body, which begins with thinking of the three channels. First, the central energy channel goes from the crown down to four fingerbreadths below your navel. Visualize that it is very straight, luminous white on the outside, blue in between, and red on the inside. You imagine that there are five chakras connected to the central channel in the crown, throat, heart, navel, and secret place. Then, you imagine the right and left channels *rasana* and *lalana*. You sit straight in the seven-point posture when you do this practice.

You imagine that all the long life deities are within your body and that they are protecting your body by retaining and restoring your life force, longevity, life essence, and breath, as well as the five elements that compose who you are from an inner point of view: your flesh, blood, bones, warmth, breath, and consciousness. In your crown chakra is the dharmakaya buddha in union with consort, right in the middle of the central channel. You visualize the sambhogakaya buddha Amitayus directly above you.

When you visualize for the concise sadhana, the sambhogakaya buddha is in the *rasana* channel, and in the *lalana* channel, there is the female buddha, Sangwa'i Yeshe. Then, in your throat you visualize Buddha Amitayus male-female. Then, on the spokes of the chakra, sometimes referred to as lotus petals, there are the eight offering goddesses; all of them are in the throat. In your heart, you visualize Vajra Amitayus male-female, and on the petals of the chakra are the six offering goddesses, who present the six offerings of the sense sources. In the navel is Ratna Amitayus male-female and on the petals in that chakra are the dharmapalas and guardians who are bound to the oath by pure aspiration and compassion. In the secret chakra, you visualize Karma Amitayus in union with consort.

Dudjom Rinpoche compiled this concise sadhana and wrote many additional practices himself for the terma that we see in this longer version we are practicing today. He says that there is no need to count deities or worry about too many details for this level of practice. Just imagine the presence is there, which is the main point for this practice.

Then, if we look at the actual meditation, the heart essence of the practice, which focuses on the visualization in your heart, in the center of a variegated crossed vajra in your heart, the hub is joined. In that hub, there is what looks like an amulet made of the sun and moon. The sun is on the bottom, the moon on top. Inside of that amulet is the nature of your own life and mind as a red *hri*, very clear, just in front of one's spinal cord inside of the central channel, which is unmoving and straight. The Tibetan syllable *hri* has the syllable *ha* (ཧ), and where it comes back, it has a hook and a space. Inside of that space is where you visualize a green syllable *nri* (མྱི), which is the life force syllable in the circle of the *ha*. In the circle of the *nri*, you visualize a clear white *ah* (ཨ), which is the essence of life itself.

Then, the mantra is lined up, beginning with *om* in front. That is right in front of the *hri*. It lines up counterclockwise because it is going to circle in a clockwise position. When one first starts saying the mantra, it is motionless. When that becomes difficult to visualize, then you allow it to begin to spin in a clockwise direction. It is swirling and looks like a ring of fire or a sparkler in the night, a continuity of sound and syllables swirling. From these syllables, inconceivable light rays go out and fill the myriads of universes. Penetrating all gods and spirits of the eight classes who are negative, ill-intended, and may have stolen one's spirit or life force, even in past lifetimes up until now, who suddenly grabbed one's energy, who are magicians, who are exorcists, who have harmed one with mantra or in samadhi, or who have ill intentions, whatever the case, the light rays radiating out reabsorb all of one's life force, expectancy, and essence back in, just like a magnet.

Then, the light rays penetrate the five elements and this can be done in a very extensive way. There are more teachings to be given on this topic in terms of imagining the golden earth, Mt. Meru, and the entire Buddhist cosmology of the universe. Here, it is sufficient to say that the light rays go out and permeate the earth element; the water element, oceans, lakes, rivers, and all moisture, including the moon, water crystal; and the mandala of the fire element, all types of fire, like the sun and the moon, and the essence of the fire element as the color of ruby red. Then the wind maṇḍala is visualized, the winds, buoyant wind, karmic and wisdom wind in bodies, and the wind element outside of ourselves. The corresponding color for wind is sapphire.

Then, the essence of spacelike, lapis-lazuli light is retracted back in the form of bindus and energy reabsorbed again back into the *hri*, *nri*, and *ah* in the amulet in the core of your heart as Amitayus and Mandarava in union. Then, these light rays penetrate out to the six realms again and restore the life, merit, karma, and wisdom of all sentient beings. At the same time, the light rays again magnetize and gather up the accomplishment of gods, rishis, vidyadharas, enlightened beings, their glory, power, merit, the knowledge of panditas, the power of vidyadharas, and the power and potential of chakravartin rulers. All these pure qualities in abundance are gathered as light rays in the aspect of *ah*, *nri*, and *hri* and reabsorbed back in.

Particularly, the wisdom blessings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas and the spiritual attainments come in as five colors of light with *om* (ཨྌ), *ah* (ཨ), and *hung* (ཧྲཱི) all at once into your body and the seed syllables there. That is what you imagine when you are reciting the root mantra. When you begin to recite *hri*, which is actually the main recitation for this

practice, then, sometimes you can think that countless *hris* will emanate out from the *hri* in your heart, like rays of the sun, filling up all of space. The natural sound from the *hris* radiates out like swarming bees that have just been disturbed. Light rays of the five colors pervade throughout the universe and all of the inhabitants, gathering up once again the pure essence of the five elements as five lights and the inner essence of the three realms of sentient beings, their life, merit, glory, endowments.

All of the *ah*, *nri*, and *hri* syllables come back in bringing with them the enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, activities, siddhis, and blessings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas as *om ah hung so ha*. Like a magnet, everything is extracted and reabsorbed into the *hris*, which blaze with brilliant light. These *hris* begin pouring gently back into your body and restoring your life force, life expectancy, breath, and life essence. That which already exists and was never diminished increases. You become a youthful sixteen year old with perfect health and vitality. You achieve undefiled merit and firm and perfect youthfulness, which is another way of saying deathlessness. All essence goes into your sun and moon amulet, giving you the blessing of vajra life or vajra longevity.

When it is time to conclude the mantra recitation and the session, the amulet closes up. Because it is on the variegated vajra, the horns of the vajra fold up as the colors melt and join into the amulet, sealing it off. A ruby-colored five-pointed vajra drops down to seal it. Another way to visualize is that you can imagine that a red Hayagriva appears, pressing upon it to seal it closed. Either way, fire sparks radiate from its horns; and in this way, those blessings are consecrated and permanently there within the core of your mind's essence. When we say *the core of the mind's essence*, it means the essence of the bindus, the essential fluids. The essence of our fluid becomes our blood, which becomes our marrow, which becomes the actual bindu essence. Since mind and bindu are associated, this restores the vitality, so that you can remain in the indestructible vajra state of original purity, forever in a state of deathlessness.

That is the way of actually practicing the outer aspect of *Chimed Sok Tig*. There are also inner, secret, and extremely secret cycles. This is a path that includes highest Vajrayana methods to accomplish the state of deathlessness or wisdom exaltation.

Hopefully, this has been helpful and that you can apply it to this longer practice. They are the same practices. There is no difference at all. Please remember that you do need empowerment to really engage in this practice on a regular basis. Hopefully, that opportunity will afford itself in the very near future, particularly from someone such as Dudjom Yangsi Rinpoche, when he returns to grant us his blessings and empowerments. Thank you!