

# A Sadhana for Recognising the Natural Way of Abiding Through the Grace of Chenrezi

by Tarchin Hearn

*The words of this text were inspired by the teachings of many masters of Mahamudra and Dzogchen and by a sadhana composed by Karma Chagmé Rinpoché (1613 - 1678) and published in the book "Naked Awareness" – by Snow Lion, 2000. They were assembled into this present form by Tarchin Hearn while in retreat at the beautiful Wangapeka Study and Retreat Centre in June 2007. They were refined in July 2008 while teaching in western Canada and again in 2009 at Wangapeka. May they help all beings to recognise the natural way of abiding and thus come to manifest the grace of Chenrezi.*



## **INTUITIVE UNDERSTANDING**

From a place of pristine simplicity,  
in faith and trust and wonderment, we give ourselves to this suchness;  
this seamless mystery of living and dying.

Spacious, loving, with feet solid in the earth, we nurture the hints at blessedness;  
the myriad faces and masks of god.

Moving in this flow of compassion and deepening enquiry;  
we engage with all beings in ways that support the integrity,  
stability and beauty of the entire biotic community.

### **ESSENTIAL PRACTICE**

Within the flow of whatever is occurring, cultivate a continuity of profoundly nourishing ease, suffused with vivid alertness and clear discernment. Whether sitting, standing, lying down, or walking, let everything relax in its own place.

### **CLARIFYING THE BASIC STATE OF AFFAIRS**

Consider the living world; a seamless web of natural process, a multilayered ecology of being, a continuity of communicating and relating. Contemplate how physical and mental phenomena are dynamic embodiments of responsive knowing with no clearly discernable beginning or end.

If we try to narrowly define what is going on, the situation appears ineffable and impossible to pin down, yet myriad experiences; knowing, languaging and responding, from micro to macro, are co-operatively weaving together this vibrancy of now.

Like patterns drawn on the surface of water or drops of morning dew exposed to the sun, every living being, in fact, every identifiable thing, is impermanent, ephemeral and fleeting; a temporary coalescing of situations and circumstances.

Investigate this living body of experience;  
a fabric of synergy,  
a seamless cloak of compassion and mutually supporting  
autopoietic processes,  
an unbroken wholeness of totality.  
Allow your deepening understanding to draw you  
into a flow of profound contemplation.

Now, consider the immense amount of conflict that is happening in the world; physical, verbal and mental; both individually and collectively.

Contemplate further how, so much suffering and dissatisfaction arises through compulsive efforts to hold onto things and situations. Along with grasping, comes a sense of dualism, a solidifying impression of self and other. Marching in step with this are an entourage of possessiveness, pride, jealousy, defensiveness, stupidity, guilt, fear, anger, and violence, in fact, a whole concatenation of misery and conflicting situations.

Constantly controlling,  
attempting to dam myriad rivers of living process;  
more stuck, less flowing;  
more awkward and contrived, less natural;  
suffering and dissatisfaction spreading widely.  
Really look into this state of affairs  
and come to some fresh understanding.

Shift back and forth between the vast amounts of suffering, both collective and personal, and the extraordinary mystery of life and consciousness in all its multi-dimensional glory. This is the story of everyone. Gradually allow the aspiration to emerge, naturally and powerfully from your heart, to do whatever is needed to bring forth the best in yourself and each being you encounter and, in all of us together as a living community.

Strengthen this motivation by thinking; "For the sake of each and every sentient being, and all of us together, I am determined to realise the natural way of abiding – the harmonious union of deep understanding and compassionate engagement. In order to do so, I shall actively practise the profound yogas of skilful fabrication (*generation*) and effortless naturalness (*completion*)."

### **SKILFUL FABRICATION**

With this aspiration, clearly visualise your body in the form of Chenrezi, the Great Compassionate One. The colour of your body is white like an autumn moon. Your one face is calm and smiling. You are adorned with a precious crown of jewels and your spiritual mentor, or root guru, in the form of Buddha Amitabha, is present on the top of your head. You have four hands, the first two are pressed together at your heart holding a wish fulfilling gem, while your lower right hand holds a crystal rosary, and your lower left hand holds a beautiful white lotus blossom. You wear a shawl, lower garment, and skirt of various silks. Imagine that you are seated upon a moon-disk in the centre of a multicoloured lotus, with your legs in vajrasana. Your entire body of experience feels spacious, and luminous throughout.

A radiant white HRIH letter stands upright in the centre of a full-moon disk at your heart. On the periphery of this disk, white letters; OM MA NI PAD ME HUM, circle in a clockwise direction. From these letters, rays of light of various colours are emanating rainbow-like, in all directions. This luminosity reveals and invites all dharma teachers, spiritual mentors, kaliyanamitta, yidams, buddhas, and bodhisattvas, dwelling throughout space and time. They gather here and swirl in space around you like snowflakes in a blizzard.

### **THE MANY IN ONE PRACTICE**

Then, all your personal teachers, root and lineage, dissolve into the Buddha Amitabha above your head, thereby merging your various spiritual mentors into one form.

All the yidams, buddhas and bodhisattvas dissolve into yourself as the Great Compassionate One, thereby uniting all the chosen deities or yidams into one body.

Their root mantras, seed syllables and secondary syllables all dissolve into the six syllables at your heart, thereby distilling all mantras into one essence.

Meditate on this with great earnestness until it becomes effortless. This is practical advice for accomplishing everything with one spiritual mentor, one deity and one mantra.

### **TRANSFORMING APPEARANCE INTO THE RADIANT BODY OF EXPERIENCE**

The seed syllables are circling the HRIH, emitting rays of light, revealing the entire external universe to be a multidimensional dance of inter-becoming. This is the actual realm of *Sukhavati, Devachen, Amitabha's pure land*. Here, all sentient beings are seen as myriad diverse forms of the Great Compassionate One.

Gloriously visualise everyone you see as being in the form of the Chenrezi. Even if you cannot maintain a clear visualisation, imagine or have confidence, that all sentient beings are, in fact, Chenrezi – great continuum seeing, the unity of wisdom and compassion, a seamless play of emptiness and skilful means. This is the transformation of appearances into the radiant body of experience.

If you do this well, with great strength and conviction, it is alright even if you do not complete your retreat, for all beings that you meet are radiant embodiments of Chenrezi and all environments you move through are the pure land.

### **TRANSFORMING ORDINARY SOUNDS INTO RADIANT COMMUNICATION**

When reciting the six syllables, if your voice is too loud, you are likely to lose touch with the subtle qualities of awareness and it will take a long time to accomplish anything. If your voice is too soft and the syllables are indistinct, their power and clarity will not emerge. Recite the mantra so that internally, you can mentally discern each syllable. Outwardly, the overall sound may be like a burbling stream or the humming of many bees. Feel your entire body/mind sounding this heart song of wisdom/compassion and imagine all sentient beings in every dimension of existence are singing it with you; an immense choir of living beings all blending together in this ineffable symphony of now.

As your understanding deepens, you will come to a confidence that all sounds of the natural environment, river, wind and so forth, together with the voices of myriad living beings, are the mantra of compassion, the conversations of symbiosis and co-operation. This is the way to recognise ordinary sounds as radiant communication.

If this experience is clear then, in retreat, it is alright even if you are not able to maintain silence, for all speech is the mantra.

### **TRANSFORMING THOUGHTS INTO MEDITATION**

If your practice is good and you can meditate on the above points while correctly recognising the essential nature of your mind; (recognising that everything you are experiencing, including your present arising sense of self, is a natural dancing of myriad moments of knowing), this is called the supreme union of the stages of skilful fabrication (generation) and effortless naturalness (completion.) This union will be revealed once thinking (mind door process) arises as meditation. (*In this context, thinking is the mental process of visualising while, at the same time, contemplating the meaning and implications of the visualised symbols*) Appearances arising in the stage of generation are thought forms. Thought forms are inseparably part of that which knows. That which knows is mind. Mind

is sunyata. Sunyata is spontaneous presence and spontaneous presence is naturally self-liberating. The mind (that which knows) and mental process (thinking; the play of thoughts and thinker) are like water and waves, so when the inseparability of mind and thinking arises as meditation, that is the union.

If you are a novice practitioner and this union seems beyond your capacity, you should first meditate single-pointedly on the visualisations of the stage of skilful fabrication up to the transforming of sound into radiant communication.

### **PURE SAMATHA/VIPASSANA**

As you become increasingly quiet and settled, you may feel an artificiality in these contrived visualisations at the same time feeling a growing reverence and appreciation for ordinariness. When this occurs, set aside any effort to visualise and carefully, with exquisite detail, observe/study whatever is arising, just as it is. This quiet, settled, awakens; this stillness of the mind in the midst of experience; this profoundly nourishing ease, is quiescence, *samatha* (Sanskrit) or *Shi-ne* (Tibetan).

By vividly observing your own quiescent mind, your own inherently settled process of knowing, you will have a rich experience of sunyata that is ungrounded in any particular thing. This vivid observation, this vivid alertness and clear discrimination, is *vipassana*, (Sanskrit) or *La-tong* (Tibetan).

Evenly and stably as possible, settle your mind in a state of serene presence and vivid cognisance. If thinking occurs, observe its essential nature and allow the thoughts to self-liberate. This calm analysis and careful observation is the technique for experienced novices.

### **DEEPENING**

Once you are thoroughly accustomed to the above practice, there is no need to continually analyse the essential nature of thoughts. Similar to the way you might enjoy gazing at a sparkling clear lake in the springtime, restfully observe the essential nature of mind; simply and without distraction.

Just as the waves emerge from the surface of the lake without harming the lake, when the mental activity of cognisance and discernment appears to emerge from the state of stillness, it does not harm the stillness. In fact, it is not fundamentally separate from the stillness. Thus, no matter how many thoughts occur, they do not impair the stillness; but, like snowflakes drifting down upon a lake, they merge into the experience of stillness. By acquainting yourself with this mode of experience, thoughts will appear as meditation. When mental processes arise as meditation, that is the union of the stages of generation and completion.

If the mind still has something 'external' to observe, it is not seeing its essential nature. In that case, unify the person who is observing and that which is being observed. You will then gain confident knowledge of a brilliant, serenely joyful, spacious, openness in which there

will no longer be anything to grasp. There is no thing of which you can say, "This is it," and there is no thing of which you can say, "This is the meditation." This union of clear knowing and spacious openness is the natural way of abiding and initially, it will be unlike anything you have experienced before. If doubts arise, be quiet, stop trying, and simply abide undistractedly, without having anything in particular to do. When that happens, the essential nature of ordinary consciousness will be seen.

At any point in these contemplations, if the presence of mindfulness is lost, you will wander off in the grip of unconscious tendencies. Hence it is important to not depart from a continuity of undistracted mindfulness.

### **GURU YOGA**

The best way to counteract obstructive forces, avoid difficulties, and enhance your practice is to cultivate a profound experience of guruyoga. Whilst in the form of the Great Compassionate One, visualise the Buddha Amitabha on the crown of your head, an ever present reminder of love, clear seeing and ongoing mindfulness. Amitabha's body is red in colour like coral, and has all the signs and symbols of enlightenment. Amitabha's hands are in the mudra of meditative equipoise, holding an alms bowl filled with ambrosia. Imagine this figure upon a lotus and moon seat, with legs in the vajrasana. Invite all your primary and lineage teachers, and experience them dissolving into and becoming one with Amitabha.

Make whatever supplications you know. One could recite the six syllables as a way of supplication, or recite a rosary of the vajraguru mantra, for this is the essence of supplications, or recite the following prayer again and again:

*Namo Dharmakaya Amitabha.*

*Namo Sambhogakaya Chenrezi.*

*Namo Nirmanakaya Padmasambhava.*

*Namo glorious root gurus and holders of the mahamudra and dzogchen teachings.*

*May your blessings fall as rain upon me and all beings.*

Regardless the form you use, let these prayers or mantras flow from the depths of your heart. Sometimes you may be so moved by reverence and devotion that your hairs stand on end and your tears begin to flow.

Whatever experiences occur due to the power of blessings from praying in this way, nourish and sustain them. Thus there will not be a single obstructing force or pitfall.

Gradually you will realise the essence of guru yoga, the state of utter union — the natural way of abiding. When your experience of form is empty yet apparent. When your experience of communication is languaging manifest. When all concepts and understandings are experienced as the display of your own mind functioning beautifully in the midst of any situation and circumstance. When these three arise without obstruction in the vast ocean of evenness and utter devotion — this is true guruyoga. Scattered, outer

directed thoughts will swirl away, and inner thoughts will nakedly arise as empty luminosity.

*Since pure awareness of nowness is the real Buddha,  
In openness and contentment I find the Lama in my heart.  
When we realise this unending natural mind is the very nature of the Lama,  
Then there is no need for attached grasping, or weeping prayers, or artificial complaints,  
By simply relaxing in this uncontrived, open natural state,  
We obtain the blessing of spontaneous self-liberation of whatever arises.*

### **LIBERATING ACTIVITY**

While relying upon *bodhicitta*, which is essentially love and compassion along with a profound experience of *sunyata*, a way of enhancing your practice is through cultivating *tonglen*, the yoga of sending and receiving.

The lives of countless sentient beings have contributed, and are contributing to, the ground of becoming that you are, just as your own body, speech and mind is, at this very moment, supporting or contributing to the existence of countless other beings. While recognising the life struggles and suffering of these beings who wittingly or unwittingly have supported your existence in so many ways, allow a feeling of immense compassion to permeate your entire being. Then, appreciating the vast mandala of unfolding co-operation and intelligence that is the very substance of each of these beings, allow a sense of great joy and wonderment to arise. As you exhale through your nostrils, imagine that a radiance of wholesome life nourishing energy is flowing out on your breath and gently dissolving into all sentient beings. Imagine them finding profound joy and happiness and incalculable well being. Mentally recite: "May all sentient beings be endowed with joy and the causes of joy."

Each time you inhale, imagine that the pain, negativity, and blindness of all living beings is converging and dissolving into your heart, the heart of loving kindness and clear understanding. Your own form, as *Chenrezi*, blazes with greater splendour, like a fire with wood added to it. Imagine that all beings are liberated from whatever forms of suffering are afflicting them. Mentally recite: "May all sentient beings be freed from suffering and the causes of suffering."

This practice is the cultivation of compassion. If, in the process, you are moved to tears due to love and compassion, that is great love and great compassion. If you have a sense of equality, without bias, towards all sentient beings, that is immeasurable love and immeasurable compassion. Moreover, if you can meditate while in a state of undistracted recognition of the essential nature of mind, that is the natural way of abiding, the innate *samadhi* of great love and emptiness. This is the root of *dharma* of the *sutra* tradition of the *Mahayana*.

### **SHARING THE MERIT**

Conclude the meditation by sharing the merit thinking that through this practice all beings will be liberated from suffering and realize their true nature.

SARVA MANGALAM