

*Commentary*  
*on Lama Chöpa Jorchö*

*By Lama Zopa Rinpoche*

FPMT Inc.  
1632 SE 11th Avenue  
Portland, OR 97214 USA  
[www.fpmt.org](http://www.fpmt.org)

© 2011 FPMT Inc.  
All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system or technologies now known or developed, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Set in Calibri 12.5./15, Century Gothic, Lydian BT, and Tibetan Machine Unicode.

Printed in the USA.

# *Contents*

The Importance of Practicing Guru Puja	5
The Purpose of Doing Guru Puja	13
The Meaning of Tsog	17



## *The Importance of Practicing Guru Puja*

I want to mention how Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo highly praised the importance of practicing Lama Chöpa, or Guru Puja. The great enlightened being, Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo, said:

If you are able to do the practice of Guru Puja in your daily life, it contains all the important points of sutra and tantra. It is a complete practice, and it shows the palm [which means the heart] of the instruction of the ear-lineage of Ganden.

Ganden refers to the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition. There are two terms: Gelug, which means the virtuous tradition, and Ganden, which means the joyful one. Lama Tsongkhapa's monastery, Ganden, was established before the other major monasteries of the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition, Sera and Drepung. Ganden means having joy or joyful one. I don't know how others translate Ganden, but *ga* means joy and *den* means having, so having joy or joyful one. *Nyen gyu* means the ear-lineage. It can be translated as whispered lineage, but *nyen* means ear and *gyu* means lineage, so ear-lineage. The translation could read, "It shows the palm of instruction of the text of manifestations of the ear-lineage of the Joyful One." I think it should be translated that way.

I think it means that Manjushri manifested in the form of a teaching, or text. Lama Tsongkhapa received sutra and tantra teachings from Manjushri in the manner of a disciple receiving teachings directly from their Guru. It didn't happen as some kind of vision or dream. Lama Tsongkhapa met and directly received teachings from Manjushri. This was definite, not like some kind of vision that you're not sure you can really trust.

I think *shows the palm* is expressing that this is a key secret instruction that gives enlightenment in the very brief lifetime of a degenerate time. The expression also means that it shows it very clearly.

### *The lineage of mahamudra of Drubchen Chökyi Dorje*

Drubchen Chökyi Dorje [the mahasiddha Dharmavajra] was a disciple of a disciple of Lama Tsongkhapa. Chökyi Dorje was a Tibetan lama who, like Milarepa, achieved full enlightenment in the brief lifetime of the degenerate time by practicing tantra on the basis of lam-rim. I think His Holiness the Dalai Lama also explained this in the mahamudra teaching during the first Enlightened Experience Celebration.<sup>1</sup> I don't remember whether we or some other people requested a tantric mahamudra commentary. There was a lam-rim commentary before it, I think. Alex Berzin translated the teachings, as those who were at the first EEC in Dharamsala will remember. At that time His Holiness explained that Drubchen Chökyi Dorje, this great yogi, this great enlightened being, is still living on Mount Everest, or Chumolhamo, in Tibetan.

There is also Gyälwa Ensapa. His Holiness Song Rinpoche used to mention quite often that Gyalwa Ensapa achieved enlightenment in the brief lifetime of the degenerate time very comfortably, eating delicious food. His Holiness Song Rinpoche used to say Gyalwa Ensapa achieved enlightenment in comfort, without having to bear hardships as Milarepa did. His Holiness Song Rinpoche said that this happened because Guru Puja involves integration of three deities: Guhyasamaja, Yamantaka, and Chakrasamvara. Generally, in the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition one practices tantra by integrating these three deities. One way to do this is by doing the sadhanas of the three deities each day. The general reason for practicing these three deities is in order to benefit sentient beings. In order to liberate sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and its cause and bring them to full enlightenment, you need to achieve the two kayas: the dharmakaya and the rupakaya. Once you have achieved the dharmakaya, while you are in that state, you then manifest in the rupakaya, as we recite in the second verse of the prayer of prostration from the seven-limb practice in the Guru Puja: "manifest

ing in various forms to whomever it subdues."<sup>2</sup>

Achieving the two kayas, unification of the holy body and holy mind, depends on achieving the direct cause of that, the unification of no more learning. In order to achieve the unification of no more learning, the unification of the holy body and holy mind, you need to achieve the direct cause of that, the unification of learning, which involves the unification of the clear light and illusory body. In order to achieve the unification of those two, you first need to separately achieve the clear light, which is the direct cause to achieve dharmakaya, and the illusory body, which is the direct cause of rupakaya. You need to achieve those two separately. It is the Chakrasamvara teaching that gives detailed techniques for achieving the clear light. One has to practice mother tantra, which emphasizes clear light, and that practice is Chakrasamvara.

The tantric teaching that emphasizes the means to achieve the illusory body is father tantra, specifically the Guhyasamaja teaching. The Guhyasamaja teaching, particularly Lama Tsongkhapa's commentary on Guhyasamaja practice, shows clearly and in detail how to achieve the illusory body. Such a clear explanation didn't exist before Lama Tsongkhapa. Of course, there have been many Tibetans who achieved enlightenment in other traditions, but as far as commentaries go, there hadn't been such a clear explanation of the techniques before Lama Tsongkhapa. Anyway, this is why you need to practice Guhyasamaja.

Then, of course, for the success of those two practices, you need to practice Yamantaka, the wrathful aspect of Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom. While Manjushri is a peaceful aspect, Yamantaka is extremely wrathful. It's a most powerful deity in eliminating obstacles. By doing the practice of Yamantaka, you are able to eliminate obstacles and succeed in the other two practices. Of course, by practicing Yamantaka you are also able to develop wisdom, because Yamantaka is a manifestation of Manjushri. It fulfills these two purposes. That's why you need to practice these three deities.

Doing the sadhanas of the three deities each day is related more to the generation stage, I think. There is then a way of integrating the practice of the three deities according to the graduated completion

stage. You practice Yamantaka to dispel obstacles. Practicing the Six Yogas of Naropa, for example, is part of the Chakrasamvara practice. And there are Guhyasamaja completion stage techniques to open the heart chakra. The final instructions on how to release the knots at the heart chakra and open the heart chakra are from Guhyasamaja, I think. I don't remember exactly, but it is something like that.

One reason that Lama Chöpa is so special is that it integrates these three practices. You begin by generating yourself as Yamantaka. The second merit field is from the Guhyasamaja body mandala. You visualize the different parts of the guru's holy body as all the deities of the Guhyasamaja body mandala. The Chakrasamvara practice then comes in the section of offering. Visualizing extensive offerings, with the sixteen goddesses carrying the various offerings, is part of the Chakrasamvara practice.

Geshe Senge Rinpoche advised that another way of integrating practice of the three deities is by reciting the mantras of the three deities after the Guru enters your heart - by meditating on being oneness with them, I guess.

From Geshe Senge Rinpoche, a great yogi of Most Secret Hayagriva, I received almost all the oral transmissions of the teachings of Most Secret Hayagriva of a past incarnation of Kalka Damsig Dorje, a great yogi of Most Secret Hayagriva. I received the oral transmission of the three volumes that have the entire practice of Most Secret Hayagriva, as well as two volumes on that practice by the Fifth Dalai Lama. I received them in Dharamsala over about three months, along with some incarnate lamas in the lineage of that practice. Keut-sang Rinpoche, who in his past life was a great practitioner in the lineage of Most Secret Hayagriva, was there, as well as Jhado Rinpoche and Pari Rinpoche, another incarnate lama, who came from Tibet quite some time ago. Bakula Rinpoche was also there from time to time when initiations were given. Lama Gyüpa, the old lama who takes care of the altars at Tushita and Geshe Tsering, Lama's relative, were also there.

When we generate special bodhicitta to practice tantra at the beginning of Guru Puja, there is the expression *nyur war nyur wa*, in Tibetan, which means "quicker and quicker." In the general defini-

tion, the first quicker means quicker than Mahayana sutra, where you have to collect merit for three countless great eons. In tantra you don't need to do that. Since you can achieve enlightenment within one life it is quicker. Of course the lower tantras are quicker to achieve enlightenment than sutra, but Highest Yoga Tantra is even quicker than the lower tantras. This is the meaning of the second quicker. Not only can you achieve enlightenment in one lifetime, but you can achieve enlightenment in the brief lifetime of a degenerate time, when life is very short.

Geshe Senge used to say that when we do Guru Puja we should also recite the mantras of the three deities. That practice is also the integration of the three deities. After the Guru has entered your heart, with that meditation you then recite the mantras of the three deities.

The reason His Holiness Song Rinpoche used to say that Gyälwa Ensapa, unlike Milarepa, achieved enlightenment very easily and comfortably, by eating delicious food and so forth and without bearing much hardship, is because of this special practice in the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition of doing Highest Yoga Tantra practice by integrating these three deities.

Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo says:

The great accomplished yogi Chökyi Dorje, Gyälwa Ensapa and so forth did this Guru Puja as their heart practice.

Why are those two names mentioned? Because they are examples of practitioners who, like Milarepa, achieved enlightenment in the brief lifetime of a degenerate time. *And so forth* refers to the others who practiced Guru Puja as their heart practice.

Having done this as their heart practice, the great accomplished yogi Chökyi Dorje, Gyälwa Ensapa and so forth found the state of unification in that life. All the previous holy beings [which means the lineage lamas] did this as their heart practice. Even though the words are few, this practice contains great meaning and brings great blessing. It has found the great vital points. This means it has profound importance.

There is a text in which many different people – incarnate lamas, practitioner nuns and sometimes people from other traditions, such as Nyingma ngagpas – ask Pabongkha questions by letter and Pabongkha then replies to them. Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo usually emphasizes that even if one can't do much else in daily life, Guru Puja is the essential practice. I guess you begin the day with Guru Puja and then on top of that do the sadhanas of Yamantaka, Vajrayogini, Chakrasamvara, and so forth. Because Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo himself was a great yogi of Chakrasamvara, he quite often emphasized Chakrasamvara practice.

You should do the daily practice of Guru Puja, even if you can't do the sadhanas of many other deities, such as Chakrasamvara.

This practice of Guru Puja is very profound, with many extra benefits, and is very quick to bring enlightenment. The lam-rim prayer, the prayer of the steps of the path to enlightenment, in Guru Puja has lam-rim and also lojong, or thought transformation. Generally, the whole of the lam-rim, from guru devotion up to enlightenment, is thought transformation. If your mind is not transformed into the path, how can you have realizations of the path? There's no way, without transforming your mind. All the lam-rim realizations – guru devotion, perfect human rebirth (its usefulness and the difficulty of finding it again), impermanence and death and so forth – are lojong, thought transformation. When you say "general lojong" it covers everything, but when you say "lam-rim lojong" it specifically covers the part of bodhichitta, such as the paths of integrating the lifetime practice into the five powers and the five powers to be practiced near the time of death. The lam-rim prayer in Guru Puja has lam-rim, thought transformation and, after the six perfections, the generation and completion stages of tantra. There are verses that show those paths.

The lam-rim prayer also contains phowa. Many lamas do phowa with Guru Puja. They do the whole Guru Puja, then when they come to the verse on phowa,<sup>3</sup> they do the "hic!" to shoot the consciousness of the person who has died to a pure land. They visualize Amitabha Buddha, Vajrayogini or another buddha on that person's crown, then shoot their consciousness to a pure land.

The second incarnation of Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo, the author of *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, also does phowa with Lama Chöpa. Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo passed away a long time ago in Tibet, then reincarnated, escaped from Tibet and studied at Buxa in India, where I lived for eight years. He became a geshe then soon afterwards showed the aspect of cancer and passed away in a place called Kashang, near Darjeeling. That incarnation was just about to spread Dharma, having completed his study in the monastery and received all the lineages of the sutra and tantra teachings from His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, who had received them from the previous Pabongkha. He was just about to spread Dharma in the world like a flower opening or like the sun rising, but due to the lack of karma of sentient beings he took the aspect of cancer and passed away. There is now another incarnation, and we became close friends quite some time ago.

One time when we were talking about phowa, Pabongkha Rinpoche said that when somebody has died he just does Lama Chöpa. After the verse on the completion stage, with the clear light and illusory body, there's a verse on phowa. Of course, if you have achieved the clear light of the completion stage of Highest Yoga Tantra, you don't need to worry about phowa; you have overcome death and achieved the inner pure land. Such a practitioner can achieve enlightenment in the very brief lifetime of this degenerate time. However, if you didn't manage to actualize the completion stage realizations of clear light and illusory body, when you die you then do phowa and try to achieve the outer *khachö*, the Chakrasamvara and Vajrayogini pure land. If you are able to be reborn there, you will definitely become enlightened in that life. So, it's kind of the most profitable pure land. It's not so certain with Amitabha Buddha's pure land. When I asked my root Guru, His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, a question about this, Rinpoche said, "Yes, you can practice tantra there and achieve enlightenment." But Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche and some other lamas, including maybe Denma Lochö Rinpoche, don't accept that. They say that you have to reincarnate back in our world, this southern continent, then practice tantra here and achieve enlightenment.

That is the reason that verse on phowa comes after the verse on the completion stage. The lam-rim prayer in Guru Puja contains all the profound, vital points of the complete path of sutra and tantra.

Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo also mentions that when we do this practice we should think of the meaning of the words and meditate, not just recite the words blah, blah, blah, like an express train. As much as possible we should reflect on the profound meanings. Doing this definitely leaves an extraordinary imprint of the complete pure path to enlightenment. In this way it makes it definite that we will achieve the very essence of life, which means that we will definitely achieve the essence of the happiness beyond this life up to enlightenment, and especially enlightenment.

Doing the main practice of this Guru Puja is like hitting a target. When you shoot an arrow or gun or drop a bomb, your aim is to hit right on the target, your enemy or whatever you want to destroy. In the same way this practice hits the right point in an effective way. Therefore, you should attempt to integrate everything in this way. As Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo says, "One hundred waters are contained in Guru Puja." He probably means that just as all the many streams from the snow mountains and other places go into the ocean, all the important practices of sutra and tantra are condensed here in Guru Puja. If you do this practice every day, you don't miss anything.

Since this is the very heart of the scriptures of the manifestation of the Joyful One, the blessing is unequalled by any other practice. Therefore, it has great importance.

On the basis of this, you then meditate on lam-rim and the tantric path of the main deity that you are practicing. This also contains all the important preliminary practices, the main one of which is guru devotion. Guru devotion is the root that enables you to receive blessings, the cause to achieve realizations of the path to enlightenment.

*Notes:*

1. Published by Snow Lion in The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra.
2. Verse 19
3. Verse 112.

## *The Purpose of Doing Guru Puja*

The purpose of life is to free all sentient beings from suffering and lead them to peerless happiness, enlightenment, the cessation of all obscurations. The happiness of all sentient beings is our responsibility. But, in order to work perfectly for all sentient beings, first we ourselves must reach enlightenment, and in order to do this we need to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment, starting with guru devotion. All of this is contained in the practice of Lama Chöpa, the Guru Puja, by Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyältsen.

### *Purifying Obstacles*

First, we need to do the preliminary practice of purifying obstacles, obscurations, and negative karma. In the Guru Puja, there is purification when one takes refuge (LC 3). Then there is the seven-limbed practice, which contains confession in particular (LC 38). Also, one can practice Vajrasattva, [Samayavajra], and Confession to the Thirty-five Buddhas for purification [immediately before LC 38]; and one can also do the four initiations, both common and uncommon (LC 54). Practicing like this is unbelievably powerful purification. One can purify not only broken pratimoksha vows, but even broken bodhisattva vows, which are 100,000 times heavier. And not only that: one can also purify broken tantric vows, which are 100,000 times heavier than bodhisattva vows. All these can be purified in a very short time by doing these practices. Also, the vows can be revived and made pure by retaking them [immediately before LC 38]. So, within the Guru Puja there are many powerful means of purification.

### *Creating Merit*

To create the necessary conditions for great merit one needs to do mandala offerings; this is what is normally advised. There are two places to do this within the Guru Puja (LC 32; and after LC 42); one can offer many mandalas at each of these places. Then, there are the four different offering practices to the Guru (LC 33–LC 37): this creates the most extensive merit because the offering is done to the object with whom one has Dharma connection. The Guru is the most powerful object for creating merit, whether that person is actually enlightened or not.

### *Guru Devotion*

Guru devotion is the cause of receiving blessings in your heart. The blessings you receive in your heart are the cause of your realizations of the path to enlightenment, due to which you are able to bring temporary and ultimate happiness, liberation, and the peerless happiness of enlightenment to numberless sentient beings. The main places that you find guru devotion are as follows: First, at the beginning, during the refuge visualization, the recitation of NAMO GURUBHYA, and so forth (LC 3), you meditate on seeing the Guru as Buddha, whether that person is enlightened or not. Then, when you do the second visualization of the merit field (LC 9–LC 14), when doing the prostrations (LC 18–LC 22), when offering mandalas (LC 32 and LC 42), seven-limbed practice (LC 18–LC 42) and so forth – all of these contain guru devotion, with the body mandala on each of the gurus' bodies. One can also visualize the holy body decorated with Guhyasamaja's body mandala: this is another extremely profound meditation. The prostration prayer (LC 18–LC 22) contains the very profound meditation of looking at the Guru as Buddha and reflecting on the deep extensive kindness. And then, there is the section on the Guru's qualities (LC 43–LC 53), before the Guru enters your heart (LC 54): this is another extremely important way of reflecting on the various qualities according to the Lesser, Mahayana and Tantra vehicles. The first stanza in the section on the lam-rim meditation is a meditation on guru devotion as well (LC 84).

## *The Special Qualities of This Practice*

We recite the prayer of the steps of the path, the lam-rim (LC 84-LC 114), in order to leave an imprint on our mind of the entire path to enlightenment; and we meditate on the meaning in order to train the mind in the path. The imprint is the fundamental cause of the realizations of the path, and contemplating the meaning is the actual way of transforming the mind in the way of the path.

Practiced in this way, the Guru Puja becomes extremely important. It has all the aspects that create enlightenment – just as a car has all the parts that make it function. It enables one to fulfill all of one's own wishes and the wishes of others. All the ancient yogis like Naropa, Tilopa, and Saraha; the Tibetan yogis like Milarepa and Gyalwa Ensapa; and yogis of other countries like China and Nepal achieved enlightenment in one short lifetime, in a matter of years. They were able to do this because of the strongest practice of Guru Puja – devoting to the Guru and cherishing the Guru more than one's life. The arrangement of the words does not necessarily have to be exactly the same as in the Guru Puja, but the meaning will be the same; and it is the strongest practice of the meaning that brings the result. There are many different guru yoga texts in the four Tibetan Mahayana traditions. This particular text, composed by Panchen Chökyi Gyältsen, one of the lineage lamas of the Panchen Rinpoches, is very special. Why? First, it is special because it has the prayer of the stages of the path to enlightenment. Going through the prayer mindfully leaves, within minutes, the imprint on the mind of the entire path to enlightenment, including highest yoga tantra. Since this imprint is the fundamental cause of realizations of the path to enlightenment, Guru Puja is a very rich practice.

Second, it is even more special because it contains the specific Mahayana thought transformation instructions (LC 90-LC 99). When we practice this specific Mahayana thought transformation in daily life, we utilize whatever suffering or happiness we experience, and it thus becomes the cause of happiness of all the numberless sentient beings, who equal the sky. This practice of thought transformation itself becomes the path for achieving the peerless happiness, enlightenment. When we practice thought transformation, life becomes very

fulfilling, and nothing can disturb us. Whether enjoying happiness or meeting undesirable conditions, the mind is stable and happy and continuously develops peace. Life becomes satisfying and fruitful for numberless other sentient beings. By utilizing in the path to enlightenment all the appearances in one's life, all obstacles and enemies become the support of one's happiness, the support of one's development of the Mahayana path.

Third, this Guru Puja is most special because it integrates the three deities of highest yoga tantra. Guhyasamaja's main point of explanation is how to achieve the illusory body; Chakrasamvara's main point of explanation is the path of the clear light; and Yamantaka pacifies all obstacles, making it possible to actualize the illusory body and clear light, which makes it possible, in turn, to actualize the unification of dharmakaya and rupakaya, the path of no-more-learning. Doing this guru yoga practice of integrating the three deities is very special. Other traditions, as well as Gelug, have practices of highest yoga tantra deities that don't integrate these three, which can still enable one to achieve enlightenment in a brief life of degenerated time. But practicing this Guru Puja, which is an integration of the three deities, makes it much easier to achieve enlightenment in a brief life of degenerated time. Doing this practice every day, with purification and many infinite skies of merit, brings the mind closer to the path to enlightenment and closer to enlightenment itself, and so much closer to freeing all sentient beings from obscurations and suffering and leading them to enlightenment. Putting the meaning of this into practice in one's life makes each day extremely rich and worthwhile. The meaning can be practiced twenty-four hours a day, during one's whole life, daily. Not only while you are doing prayers, but day and night, whatever you do can be Guru Puja – whether you are eating, drinking, working or going to the toilet. This is a brief explanation of the benefits.

## *The Meaning of Tsog*

Tsog does not just mean offering a torma and food. There is a more extensive explanation of what tsog is and of the importance and benefits of offering tsog.

When only male yogis gather together, that is called a feast of heroes. When only female yoginis gather together, that is called a feast of heroines. When both yogis and yoginis gather, that is called a feast of heroes and heroines. That is what is called tsog.

It is said by Pandit Ratna Raksherita:

Those doing the activities of yogis, it is called the feast of heroes;  
Similarly, those doing the activities of yoginis, it is called the feast of heroines.

Those whose mind is enriched with control of the circle  
Of integrated method and wisdom, that is called the circle of unification.

The real meaning of tsog is experiencing transcendental wisdom, the unification of non-dual great bliss with the wisdom of emptiness. The very essence of tsog is the offering of that experience, the male and female heroes and heroines who in essence are the Guru-Deity, and the oneself experiencing all of this as the Guru-Deity.

The real meaning of tsog is integrating method and wisdom, the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness. This is the secret meaning.

The reason we need the actual tsog substances is so we can develop the very heart of the Mahayana and tantric path, which brings enlightenment in just one brief life during these times of degeneration. The tantric path quickly ceases the defilements, including the actual negative imprints left on the mental continuum by the delusions. It is the

quickest way to collect extensive merit. Otherwise, on the paramita path, it takes three countless great eons to collect enough merit to achieve enlightenment. Therefore, we need to use the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness to increase this during this brief life during these times of degeneration. For that reason, we need to enjoy these tsog substances.

This is the principal method of the circle of tsog – to gain general attainments, restore samaya and tantric vows, and pacify obstacles. This is the main cause to achieve the Heruka and Vajrayogini pure land,<sup>1</sup> to be born there. Therefore, we should perform the tsog offering practice.

### *When to Do Tsog*

It is best to offer tsog every day. If that is not possible, then we should do it twice a month. As it is explained in the *Heruka Root Tantra*:

Quickly attempt to make offerings.

Every waxing and waning of each month offer tsog.

Waning refers to the 10th of the Tibetan month; waxing refers to the 25th of the Tibetan month. The great tantric master Abayakaya says:

Every day [offer tsog] as much as possible;<sup>2</sup>

It is especially admired in the nighttime.

[Offer tsog] at least once a month, or if that is not possible, at least once a year.

If one transgresses this circle, then your samaya is degenerated.

According the *Heruka Root Tantra*, the best time to offer tsog is the night time. From the *Heruka Root Tantra*:

Offering extensive food and drink –

Always do this at night time. Why?

Because it is admired to do it at nighttime.

Always wander at nighttime and always gather at night time.

This means the dakas and dakinis always wander at night time and gather at night time.

The eleventh month of the Tibetan calendar is a special time of the mother. It is a special time of Vajrayogini and a special month to offer tsog to Vajrayogini. The twelfth month of the Tibetan calendar is a special time of the father. It is a special time of Chakrasamvara and a special month to do Chamrasamvara tsog. It is especially important to offer tsog during these months.

Heruka appeared to Khedrup Je and spoke:

If good tsog is offered [during]  
The waxing and waning of each month,  
Then one has no hardships, no difficulties,  
And one goes to the pure land of Tharpo Kachö.

This is in the biography of Khedrup Je,<sup>3</sup> who was Lama Tsongkhapa's heart disciple.

Regarding the actual offering substances, even if you don't have any other substances, you must have bala (meat) and madana (alcohol). These two are of utmost importance. From the tantra *Do Jung*:

Without torma intoxicating  
You won't have quick attainments.

"Intoxicating" refers to alcohol; it does not refer to other drugs. From the *Heruka Root Tantra*:

Vajra goddess – intoxicating and meat –  
If the capable being offers these with devotion and respect  
Then Heruka will be actually pleased.  
Therefore, make offerings with a very satisfied mind;  
Then sublimeness<sup>4</sup> will be granted.

This means that for those who do this practice, because it pleases Heruka, sublimeness will be given to you. It will be very easy to achieve full enlightenment.<sup>5</sup> If you practice correctly, liberation is not far away and will not be difficult to achieve. It will be easy and it won't take long. It is completely in your hands.

When you offer tsog, the tsog substance of bala should be on the right side and madana on the left side.

The tantric text *Nyingpo Gyen (Heart Ornament)* mentions that we should use these special expressions for alcohol, “madana,” and for meat, “bala.”

What happens when you use these two terms is psychological. If you just use the terms alcohol and meat, then it is ordinary and one experiences an ordinary appearance. Also, when taste it, you only taste meat and alcohol. When the practice is done like this, it does not become part of tsog practice.

Because you have purified and blessed the substances into nectar, you taste it with pure thought and pure appearance. The real meaning of tsog is transcendental wisdom, non-dual bliss and emptiness. Therefore, when you take the tsog, you should experience it like that. Even if you are not actually able to experience it in this way, at least visualize that you are experiencing that. Take it with recognition, with the pure transcendent mind.

### *Cheese and Juice*

This is very important advice. Cheese is not qualified for tsog. It needs to be meat, as I have explained in these quotations from pure tantric texts.

I remember on one particular occasion in Bodhgaya, there were some Chinese Sangha. As I understand it, they would be totally shocked to see a Buddhist eating meat. According to their view, it is like killing a human being. This is because they are not familiar with tantric practice. Therefore, this is how they feel when they see Buddhists eating meat.

Once there were one or two Theravadan monks (the leaders of the temple in Bodh Gaya), at a tsog offering. At that time, the monks of His Holiness the Dalai Lama were passing out the meat and they

offered it to them. His Holiness just smiled a little at the idea of offering meat to somebody who wouldn't understand. But Theravadans eat meat; they eat whatever people offer to them. Normally, they don't eat in the evening. For them, offering tsog substances or food in the afternoon or evening is strange.

One may use cheese on such occasions when there are people from other traditions who would be shocked and lose faith to see Buddhists eating meat. But it seems even some monks and other people who think it's a big deal use fruit juice for alcohol.

Those who do the work of passing out the tsog should be aware of what to do. Tell them not to pass meat and alcohol to those who do not practice highest yoga tantra, such as Chinese Buddhists, or Theravadans who do not eat in the evening or afternoon. There are two things: the first big mistake is offering food in the afternoon, and the second mistake is offering alcohol to them. Those who are passing out the tsog need to have a little awareness about this, like having a sign about a dangerous dog - Beware of Dog! Strictly speaking, tsog should only be served to those who practice highest yoga tantra.

### *Offering the Tsog*

Also, you can't put tsog on the ground. Sometimes at Kopan, they offer the tsog and just throw it on the ground. It is always better to use a paper plate or paper bag. If you put it straight on the ground, the people who serve the tsog as well as those who receive it actually receive a tantric vice (bompo). This is very heavy. It is better to use a paper bag to protect the tsog, like they do at Namgyäl monastery.

When you offer tsog, first offer it to the vajra master. When you collect the remaining tsog, start from the bottom of each row and work up to the top, collecting from the vajra master last.

To collect more merit, in addition to having the bala and madana, you may also offer other substances. Offer them as extensively as possible. On certain specific occasions, if you have the substances, you can make actual torma tsog using tsampa (or oats or other kinds of flour that can be shaped). Make the shape of the torma into a heart of a man, or a breast. The torma should have decorations; it should have a dharma wheel with flower petals around it, and it must have

the sun, moon, and nada<sup>6</sup> at the top. This is according to the tradition of Lama Tsongkhapa and Pabongkha Rinpoche.

*Notes:*

1. Tharpo Kachö (pure sky enjoyment).
2. This means if one can not do every day then do as many times as possible.
3. Of Lama Tsongkhapa's two main disciples, Khedrup Je is the one whose eyes are in a more wrathful aspect.
4. Enlightenment.
5. This is similar to saying that you will achieve liberation in the palm of your hand, very easily.
6. Three curves.

*Colophons:*

*The Importance of Doing Guru Puja:*

Lama Zopa Rinpoche gave this teaching at Land of Medicine Buddha, California, in 2001. It has been excerpted from *Teachings at the Medicine Buddha Retreat*, edited by Ailsa Cameron and reprinted here with permission.

*The Purpose of Doing Guru Puja:*

Dictated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche to Ven. Roger Kunsang in London, England, July 1995 in response to a question by the director of Shakyamuni Centre in Taiwan. Lightly edited by Trisha Donnelly and Ven. Robina Courtin. Further edited by Kendall Magnussen, FPMT Education Services, June 2004. Words in “[ ]” have been added by the editors.

*The Meaning of Tsog:*

From letters to Merry Colony dictated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche to Ven. Holly Ansett and Ven. Tsen-la, Kachoe Dechen Ling, November 2006. Compiled and edited by Ven. Holly Ansett and Venerable Gyalten Mindrol, FPMT Education Services, December 2006.

# *Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition*



The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) is a dynamic worldwide organization devoted to education and public service. Established by Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, FPMT touches the lives of beings all over the world. In the early 1970s, young Westerners inspired by the intelligence and practicality of the Buddhist approach made contact with these lamas in Nepal and the organization was born. Now encompassing over 150 Dharma centers, projects, social services and publishing houses in thirty-three countries, we continue to bring the enlightened message of compassion, wisdom, and peace to the world.

We invite you to join us in our work to develop compassion around the world! Visit our web site at [www.fpmt.org](http://www.fpmt.org) to find a center near you, a study program suited to your needs, practice materials, meditation supplies, sacred art, and online teachings. We offer a membership program with benefits such as Mandala magazine and discounts at the online Foundation Store. And check out some of the vast projects Lama Zopa Rinpoche has developed to preserve the Mahayana tradition and help end suffering in the world today. Lastly, never hesitate to contact us if we can be of service to you.

Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition  
1632 SE 11th Avenue  
Portland, OR 97214 USA  
(503) 808-1588

[www.fpmt.org](http://www.fpmt.org)



*Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition*