

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

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Q: What are the most important points to focus on in one's practice after having received the Kalachakra initiation?

A: In general there are many things to practice after having received the Kalachakra empowerments, however the main thing is to train one's mind in the common path, so Rinpoche quotes a verse from the "Foundation of All Good Qualities", that was composed by Lama Tsong Khapa which says:

*Having trained well my mind in the common pathways,
please bless me to enter the Vajaryana,
the gateway of the fortunate ones.*

So in this particular verse it shows that one must have trained well one's mental continuum in the common pathways, the pathways that are common to the sutra path such as renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness. Having placed such imprints on one's mind stream, if then one trains in the generation and completion stages, one will have great success. And also if one has already established firmly these three principles of the path or the common pathways in one's mind stream, then when one receives the Kalachakra empowerments, one receives greater blessings. The difference between having had the training of the common pathways in one's mind stream before the Kalachakra empowerments and not having that, is like travelling to a destination in a plane or going there by bicycle - in terms of the speed there's a huge difference.

Generally we go for the higher and highest tantric initiations, we are taking so many higher and highest tantric initiations, yet we are unable to achieve the purpose or the mentioned results. The problem is not that the initiation can't be conducted properly, the problem is our lacking of the foundation for the tantric practice. Therefore Rinpoche mentioned that the common pathways and these foundations are extremely important for success and achievements in tantric practice.

If one practitioner has already trained well his or her mind stream in the common pathways and uses this as a foundation for tantric practice, then what would occur is for example as mentioned before, Manjushrikirti or Jampel Tragpa, one of the Kalki kings, gave the empowerment to Nyime Shinda, one of the great sages in the land of Shambala, along with 35 million other sages, on the 15th, the full moon day of the third Tibetan month. It is said that this entire assembly, headed by Nyime Shinda, had achieved the supreme siddhi on the 15th, the full moon day of the fourth Tibetan month, which means that after having received the empowerment, they merely cultivated the practice of Kalachakra for one month alone, they achieved the results within one month.

Why is this happening? The Kalachakra empowerment that was conferred by Manjushrikirti is exactly the same Kalachakra empowerment ritual that we may have received a dozen times before or will receive in the future. However, the difference is that these beings who had

received that empowerment were beings that have trained their mind streams well in the common pathways, therefore they achieved the results within a mere month of meditation.

Another example is the Hevajra, many people have received the Hevajra initiation millions of times, but Milarepa after having received the Hevajra empowerment only once from Marpa, went off to meditate and practice the deity and due to having established the training of the common pathways well on his mind stream, achieved the result, buddhahood. Obviously the difference between these people and ourselves is that these great practitioners have already trained their mind streams well in the common pathways. Whereas we, lacking in such foundations, create obstacles for our own tantric achievements. Hence Rinpoche would like to emphasize that the training of the common pathways is extremely important.

What Rinpoche is not saying here is to completely abandon the Kalachakra practice, or when having received the empowerment that we are unworthy of the Kalachakra practice, that we should forget about Kalachakra entirely and focus one-pointedly on training the common pathways. Rinpoche is not saying that we should give up on Kalachakra practice, but rather having received the empowerment of Kalachakra one has to maintain the commitments, such as recitation of mantras, tantric sadhanas, retreats and so forth. But on top of maintaining this minimal commitments one should focus mainly one's mental training on the common pathways, the lam rim.

Q: After having received the initiation, what are the important points to focus on for developing and deepening the six-session guru yoga?

A: Rinpoche says if you look at the Kalachakra six-session guru yoga, this text was composed by Ling Rinpoche upon the request of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. And while this text was being composed, it was based on a very extensive outline, presented to Ling Rinpoche by His Holiness. In that outline His Holiness had mentioned what are the most important points. So His Holiness, when he was requesting for this text to be composed, he had presented such an outline, and this can be seen in the colophon of this text. Rinpoche has met many people in the west who have received the Kalachakra empowerment and then attempted to perform the practice of this text, but found that this Kalachakra six-session guru yoga is too long, they complained to Rinpoche that it's too long.

In reply to this question regarding the Kalachakra six-session guru yoga, the general outline for the main practice is that firstly one visualizes the guru as being the principal of the Kalachakra merit field and in front of the Kalachakra merit field one takes the bodhisattva vows and also makes the various offerings (outer, inner, secret and suchness offerings and also the common and uncommon offerings). These various sets of offerings are made in correspondence to the particular significance of the different stages of the graduated path of Kalachakra practice. For example the outer offerings are made in order to ripen the practices of the generation stage, the inner offerings are made in order to ripen the results of achieving the body of empty form, the secret offering is made in order to achieve the results of the supreme immutable great bliss and the ultimate or suchness offerings are made in order to ripen the results of achieving the inseparable union.

The outer offerings are divided into two categories, the common or general offerings and uncommon offerings. On top of this there is also the practice of mandala offering and reciting the name mantra of the vajra master from whom one has received the Kalachakra empowerment. In the process of reciting this mantra one is requesting blessings as one is

exerting efforts in cultivating the different stages of the Kalachakra. Such a form of guru yoga is not found in other six-session guru yoga texts. Reciting the name mantra is the first special characteristic of the Kalachakra six-session guru yoga.

At the end of this guru yoga text, usually it is said that after having received the empowerment it is very important to re-live every day the moment of receiving the empowerment, to mentally recreate the situation of the empowerment, so that we receive, stabilize and rejuvenate the blessings that one had implanted in one's mind stream during the empowerments. This is in order for the blessings to not be lost, for the continuity of these blessings to not be broken. So one performs a visualization similar to a self-initiation. For example in the Guru Puja text, there is a particular verse of taking the four empowerments, while visualizing the white, red and blue nectars flowing forth from the three centers of the Lama's body to the three centers of oneself. Similar in the Kalachakra there is this particular section in the Kalachakra six-session guru yoga where one visualizes the entire process of receiving the eleven empowerments, to rejuvenate the blessings and ensure their continuity on a daily basis.

Another characteristic of this text is that at the end of the guru yoga one generates oneself in the form of the deity Kalachakra, in a short ritual text of generating oneself as a deity, where all the points of the process of the generation stage are complete. When one generates as the deity, one generates not only as the principal deity lord and lady, but also as the entourage, the ten shaktis, and that makes twelve deities of the principal and entourage. If one recites the corresponding mantras of the principal and the retinue in a proper way, than it can almost be counted as the actual self-generation sadhana, a very brief self-generation sadhana. If one actually accumulates the numbers of mantras it can almost be counted as an actual form of the approximation retreat. This is another uncommon characteristic of this text, because in other guru yoga texts you don't have the complete points of the self generation text and you don't see features such as reciting mantras at that point of time, which could be counted as an approximation retreat. These are found exclusively in Kalachakra.

These are the special points of the Kalachakra six-session guru yoga.

All these major points in the Kalachakra actually make it extremely exclusive in the sense that it is extremely rare in other texts to find similar features to Kalachakra in this respect. There are other six-session guru yoga texts but there are very few that are similar to the Kalachakra in this respect.

Q: What would Rinpoche advise for focusing at the beginning and as one goes along with the practice (visualization, imagination, mantra recitation, divine pride...)?

A: Rinpoche expressed that this is his own personal view, and it is not necessarily accurate, Rinpoche's view is not the ultimate view of everything. But according to Rinpoche's view, on a daily basis he has to recite a very thick text like the one you can see in front of him. For example in a very long and extensive text like that it is very difficult to understand all the points, its complete entirety. Firstly what is most important when one begins practicing in relation to a text such as six-session guru yoga, one should firstly understand what are the main sections of the text. Firstly such and such a chapter, such and such a section, and what are the corresponding meanings, particular significances of those areas of practice.

At the beginning whether one has clear visualization or not, that is not the most important, one should not place the major emphasis on this at the beginning. Secondly, as mentioned before training one's mind stream on the common pathways is very important.

At the beginning of any ritual practice it is most important to meditate on refuge, to take refuge very strongly in the Three Jewels, to generate a very powerful feeling of refuge and then begin one's ritual practice. And also in the text it always says that from emptiness one generates in the deity - combining the understanding of emptiness with the experience of great bliss that arises in the form of the deity. Therefore one needs to constantly contemplate over and over again the meaning of emptiness. If one does not contemplate emptiness at least a few times on a daily basis, that almost constitutes the tantric downfall of abandoning emptiness. So from the wisdom understanding emptiness one generates the form of the deity.

When one generates in the form of the deity it is sufficient on a beginner's level to have a rough image of the deity, there is no necessity to force oneself to achieve clarity of the deity's appearance in the beginning, and it is not necessary to focus on the subtle aspects of the deity. Rather one should understand what is the particular significance of the various forms and colours related to the deity's holy body, for example why is the right leg red and why is the left leg white, why is the main body blue, what is the significance of this. When one generates in the form of the deity one brings to mind the symbolisms of the different colours, implements and so forth. When one generates in the form of the deity, one actually remembers the qualities of the deity, the obscurations abandoned by the deity, and which colour corresponds to what kind of abandonments and achievements. So arising in the form of the deity and bringing to mind these representations is very important.

Otherwise, if one just merely visualizes a deity form without the understanding of its significance and on top of that presumes clarity, then one can get very tired and eventually feels it is a waste of time. For example when one invites the deities of the merit field, and one presents various offerings of drinking water, perfume, flowers and incense, it's not because the Buddha is hungry, thirsty or smells bad. Definitely the Buddha doesn't have limitations as we do, but because in order to purify our impure, ordinary view of appearances of phenomena, by offering these external offerings one imagines the deity generating the experience of non-dual great bliss and emptiness. In this process then one creates the causes to purify one's ordinary appearances of phenomena. When one is making the offerings, one should bring to mind the various significances, which part of the Kalachakra graduated path does this particular offering correspond to.

If one is doing this on a daily basis, going to work, having family life and so forth, then one can do it on a very brief basis, thinking that such and such offering is being made and this is the significance, just that alone is sufficient. The lifestyle of general western Buddhists is that we take some time off each year, either a few weeks or a month, to have a religious holiday, retreat, attending courses or we do a short one-week retreat and we focus on enhancing our spiritual practice during that period of time, maybe you go to a forest hermitage and you stay away from your usual places. If you're in retreat you could spend the whole day meditating on Kalachakra, then you can go down to the very fine details. Like what is the significance of this particular offering, how do they look like, to what extent is it being emanated, where is it being emanated from, where it is being dissolved back to, why is it being emanated from your heart, why is it being dissolved back again to the heart, and how do the offering goddesses look like, how many hands, faces and so forth they have, try to imagine different offerings of flowers and drinking water and so forth.

The significance is that by dissolving these ordinary substances into the nature of emptiness, by purifying them in the nature of emptiness, and then one generates all these various offerings and presents them to the deities, and then imagines these offerings pervading all space. Rinpoche was reciting verses from the Kalachakra guru yoga text, where it mentions all these various offerings. We can do it very extensively and be very creative in our visualizations if we got the time and even though it is just two verses, they can be recited either in the rush or we can take it very slow and easy, and it can be very interesting, we can go into all the details of emanating light and so forth.

Why do we emanate these things from our heart and dissolve them back into this region? Because all phenomena are not only in the nature of suchness, but they are also in the nature of clear light. By emanating all these offering goddesses and lights from our heart and dissolving them back to this region is actually a reminder of the presence of clear light which can be originated from the region of our heart chakra.

Whatever tantric practices we do, ultimately they point us to the goal of the completion stage, which is to dissolve all our psychic energy winds into the central psychic channel, and then into the indestructible drop in our heart. Due to that one can experience the clear light. Due to this significance we emanate deities and we dissolve them back into our heart. If one is leading a very rushed lifestyle, and one doesn't have the time, there is no absolute necessity to go into such details, one merely will emanate offerings coming out and dissolving back into our heart, and the deity generating uncontaminated great bliss. Just to remember that is sufficient. Even though we may even not have the time to start imagining how uncontaminated great bliss is like, one should not worry because whatever offerings are made to the Buddha, the Buddha definitely experiences uncontaminated great bliss. Don't worry that if you have a poor meditation, and you don't really have a picture of how uncontaminated great bliss is like, the Buddha will not experience that, you should have no worry at all, you should just have a brief glance of that.

Whether you can actually make extensive offerings, or be very creative in visualizations of offerings is actually secondary, the most important is when you are reciting the name mantra of the vajra master, of one's guru, and also reciting mantras of the deity, at that point of time you should mentally focus on the common path, such as the practices of refuge or the teachings related to impermanence or karma. You may not be able to cover the entire lam rim, the common path, in an extensive way but at least you could divide the lam rim into different parts and each day focus on different sections of the lam rim. Take out specific sections and cover them extensively in mental reflection while you are reciting the mantra verbally. The purpose of reciting mantras while meditating on lam rim is to request blessings from the guru-deity, in order to inspire us to achieve realizations of the particular part of the lam rim path. One can meditate on bodhicitta and also on emptiness and so forth, while one is reciting these mantras, one is requesting the guru-deity: "Please, bless me to generate the complete realizations in relation to this particular part of the path".

Usually we find our spiritual practice very fickle, it fluctuates all the time, one day we are really good and the next day we lost it all together. One day you make the complete decision to make your life meaningful and the next day you are on the streets, on the boulevard window-shopping. Hence our practice is extremely fickle, we're not always together in our practice, so in order to not lose this precious opportunity of spiritual practice, one should always meditate on the path and request blessings to complete one's spiritual practice. While one is reciting the mantra, requesting in such a way and reflecting on the lam rim path, one also does the visualization of light rays and nectars descending from the merit field, filling up

oneself in the entirety of one's being, purifying oneself and granting the blessings of the realizations on the path. One does not visualize this happening only to oneself, one also visualizes this happening to all other sentient beings in the six realms, in this process one is also doing this out of compassion, out of the bodhicitta motivation to benefit oneself and others.

The previous point that Rinpoche mentioned is that meditating on lam rim is one of the most important points in the Kalachakra practice. The second thing is that when one is generating in the form of a deity than one does this on the basis of meditation on emptiness, the particular meditation here is what we call the four doors of liberation. Generally there are the three doors of liberation, but here in the Kalachakra text it mentions the four doors of liberation. It says - the emptiness of a truly established cause, the emptiness of the truly established nature, the emptiness of a truly established result and the emptiness of a truly established action. These are what we call the four doors of emptiness, with which one meditates on emptiness and generates into the form of the deity. One is visualizing that the deity arises out of the meditation on emptiness, this is one of the most important points.

As mentioned before in previous talks, in the introduction to Kalachakra, what makes tantra interesting is that in tantric practice, on the basis of one mind stream, in the same mind stream one can simultaneously accomplish the method and wisdom non-dually. One can accomplish the form body as well as the truth body (what is called in Kalachakra the primordial wisdom body) together. The form body and the primordial wisdom body, these two can be accomplished simultaneously on the basis of one mind stream. This is a special feature of tantra that is uncommon to sutra practice. Here in tantra you meditate on emptiness and imagine that emptiness is arising in the form of the deity, the wisdom of emptiness is generating in the form of the deity. Therefore, these two are accomplished simultaneously.

For example if we look at the sutra practices, firstly the practitioner has to meditate on calm abiding and after that the practitioner meditates on special insight. Whereas in tantra one does all these visualizations of deities and if one perfects the visualization, it is equivalent to the accomplishment of calm abiding and by remembering that the deity has arisen from emptiness and maintaining mindfulness on the empty nature of that form body, then one accomplishes the special insight. This is calm abiding and special insight are cultivated simultaneously, so this is one special feature of tantra. In tantric practice one meditates on emptiness of phenomena and this emptiness generates in the form of the deity, so one simultaneously meditates on suchness of the form of the deity. This is a very important point in deity yoga.

When one generates in the form of Kalachakra lord and lady, there are also the ten shaktis generated simultaneously. These deities are placed in the centre and in the four directions and the intermediate directions. So on top visualizing the form of these deities one should particularly remember the significance, such as the ten shaktis signify the complete training in the ten perfections. When one is actually practicing Kalachakra, then on top of generating these deities, one should remember as much as possible that this is to plant imprints of the practices of generation and completion stages in one's mind stream.

On top of practicing the Kalachakra six-session guru yoga one can go ahead to read other relevant information that is related to the Kalachakra practice. For example reading books composed by His Holiness or by other scholars and so forth. When one is reading, one can arrive to two conclusions, either you understand or you don't. Those portions that you understand, you should apply them to your practice and use them to enhance your practice.

And for those portions that you do not understand, you can do further investigation and study of those related portions.

Q: How to develop our sense of feeling divine pride at relevant points of the practice?

A: In order to enhance our divine pride, when one is doing mental visualization of the form of these deities, it is very important to firstly strengthen one's practice of calm abiding.

According to Rinpoche's personal view, even though one tries to generate the divine pride of the deity and one sees great importance in this practice, however as mentioned before, one has to have the basis, a good foundation of refuge and compassion. On top of that, one cultivates other practices. If one does not have refuge, bodhicitta and emptiness as a foundation, even though one may have a very clear visualization of the deity, one may be completely confident in oneself as being the deity, yet this practice itself does not even become Buddhist, let alone becoming Mahayana. If one's practices of refuge, bodhicitta and emptiness are lacking in the path of deity yoga, the deity yoga itself doesn't even become a Buddhist practice, let alone Mahayana or tantric practice.

Therefore, one should put great emphasis on these three - refuge, bodhicitta and emptiness, and on top of that, if these three have become very stable, then one can go ahead to cultivate the rest. Even if one does not arrive at the stage of perfect realization of refuge, bodhicitta and emptiness, at least one should have a very stable feeling, and one should have a reasonable amount of experience in these three areas before moving on to the other sections of the path, such as deity yoga.

If you have a particular dish, first emphasis you will have is on how the dish would taste when it comes out, that's the primary factor, and the secondary factor is how it looks, how you arrange the dish, how you garnish it with all the ingredients. Likewise, if you have a very good foundation of refuge, bodhicitta and emptiness and on top of that you have a very poor visualization, poor concentration and so forth, at least that practice becomes a Buddhist, a Mahayana practice, because the foundations are there, because refuge, bodhicitta and emptiness are there. On the contrary if these three are not there, but you have very clear visions, they are not counted as a Buddhist practice. Even if you have very poor visualizations and concentration but your foundations are stable, then there is absolutely no doubt, it is definitely a Buddhist and a Mahayana practice.

Q: Prior to self-generation as Kalachakra one should manifest clearly whatever attainment of emptiness one has, could Rinpoche give some advice on this point?

A: Regarding this point, one must understand that the emptiness means emptiness of the object of refutation. When we talk about the word empty one must understand what is the object that has to be refuted, for example in one of his writings Nagarjuna describes that a person, a being, an individual is not found in the various elements, such as earth, water, wind, fire, space and so forth, and in this case where can the individual, the being be found? Here is a refutation by means of refuting the parts, firstly by taking apart the being, the different portions that constitute the being and refuting the emptiness of the being by its parts. When we look at the writings of Chandrakirti, like "Entry in the Middle Way", Chandrakirti does not directly talk about emptiness, but goes on by refuting the being through the analogy of the

parts of a chariot - if there's seven parts of the chariot, likewise he divides the being into seven parts, and then shows refutation in this gradual process.

Therefore there are many different ways of ascertaining or approaching emptiness, such as dependent arising and so forth. If you have the opportunity to study the section on special insight in Lamrim Chenmo, the great exposition on the stages on the graduated path to enlightenment, there Lama Tsong Khapa mentions different ways of ascertaining emptiness.

Therefore you can see that emptiness is not something very simple, emptiness can be very difficult, because one firstly has to identify correctly what is the object that one is refuting. If you do not know the object of refutation, you are not really meditating on emptiness, no matter how much space and void you encounter. The understanding of emptiness is a very delicate matter, because you're either on emptiness or you're not, so emptiness is like a very fine line and if you are not careful, you might fall into either of the two abysses. There are two abysses on the side, so either you fall into the right or into the left one. These two abysses are the views of eternalism and of nihilism, so you either fall into these two abysses or you are standing on the very fine and delicate point of emptiness. Therefore emptiness is not a simple thing, but once you are able to identify correctly the object of refutation, then approaching emptiness becomes much easier. So firstly one needs to correctly identify the object of refutation, this is one uncommon characteristic of the Madhyamika view.

His Holiness often mentions regarding the view of emptiness, citing the verse that Rinpoche has recited from the Nagarjuna's writings, that the individual is not the earth, is not the water and so forth. But you don't leave it there simply because the being cannot be found in its components, therefore a being does not exist. Rather, a being is a compounded factor of these six elements. Therefore on dependence of this aggregation of the six elements, the being is being labelled on these six elements, the being arises in dependence to these six elements, the logic is being used in both ways. Firstly you cannot find the individually existent entity, and then secondly the entity itself exists in dependence on labelling on this aggregation of factors. Therefore in this process, when one ascertains emptiness, ascertains that the being doesn't have an individual identity. So one needs to find the object of refutation before one can arrive at the true understanding of emptiness. Rinpoche says this is actually a lot to explain, and it is actually interesting for us to know.

Q: Could Rinpoche name the object of refutation in the context of the Kalachakra sadhana?

A: Normally we talk about the emptiness of the being, of the cup, of external things, but in the case of Rinpoche's personal experience, the first experience that he had in this life was when His Holiness started mentioning that the objects of our refuge themselves are not ultimately established, there are merely labelled phenomena as well. This really caused Rinpoche to freak out! You devoted your entire life to the objects of your refuge, all your hopes, aspirations and expectations depend on these objects of refuge, and suddenly you are told that they don't exist inherently. And this was like a shock in Rinpoche's heart, a feeling of loss, and some sort of emptiness, the feeling of having lost something really precious.

And this is really shocking because normally we would think that we sort of loved emptiness, because it refutes all the negative things that we know, such as our attachment, the objects of anger, delusions, the negative karma and so forth, because we can purify them by the means of meditating on emptiness. So we really take great joy in doing that, but suddenly we are told

that even the good things in life, such as the Three Jewels, the teachers of emptiness, who attained realized states themselves, they are also empty of inherent existence, they are merely labelled, they are not existing on the ultimate level, this really causes us great worry and fear. In this case the object of refutation in relation with this text would be the inherent existence that we project in a fantasized way upon the objects of refuge and devotion.

This investigation or analysis, search for objects of refutation can be done in various points of guru yoga. For example, in the guru yoga text when we meditate on ourselves as the Kalachakra deity, you have to constantly remind yourself of the empty nature of these visualizations and the objects of devotion and veneration. Otherwise there's a tendency to cling onto these objects as being inherently existent. For example when we visualize light rays and nectars descending upon ourselves, if we do not meditate on emptiness of these things, then it appears to us as big inherently existent blobs of light and nectar drops falling on us. Most of us, 90% of people most likely at this point of spiritual ecstasy tend to forget to meditate on the emptiness of these visualizations and experiences. For example when you are meditating on yourself as Kalachakra, you feel very strong, "I look like Kalachakra, I am Kalachakra", but if there's no understanding of how this actually happens, on the basis of emptiness, then there's a tendency to see this self-generated Kalachakra as being a solid and existing entity.

For example Rinpoche recalls as a child when he went to receive all these tantric empowerments, to a child they wouldn't tell too much about emptiness, the Lamas would say, now meditate on emptiness and from emptiness arises the White Tara and so forth. Rinpoche's way of visualizing then was firstly to imagine the body sort of fragmenting into tiny particles and then out of this vanishing of the physical body, then there's this blob of light that pops up out of nowhere and then this blob of light slowly forms into the body of the deity. So that was Rinpoche's initial understanding of generating oneself as a deity from emptiness, and Rinpoche firmly believes that this is how most of us do it right now.

Obviously this isn't the most perfect situation, firstly because one needs to meditate on this self as not being truly established, truly existent, and upon the understanding of emptiness, having ascertained the meaning of emptiness, then arises in the form of the deity. Not dematerialising the body, and then materialising a blob of light and forming it into the aspect of the deity, that itself is not perfect. One needs to meditate on the object of refutation, the lack of object of refutation at various points of the path. For example if you are doing prostrations, making offerings, paying homage, at these various points of the text there's always plenty of opportunities for you to search for these objects of refutation. Even when you generate into the deity and recite mantras, every moment there is an opportunity to be on the look for the object of refutation and meditate on emptiness.

Q: Can the recitation of the name mantra of the Lama together with the visualization of the descending of ambrosia and purification be done in four sets at four places (OM, AH, HUNG, HO) in connection with the four initiations, or is it better to do this visualization at the point in the text where the initiation deities bestow the initiations?

A: These two portions in the text are equal; both of them can be performed. The difference between these two ways of doing it is that the first way is the brief way of receiving the four empowerments, and the other is an extensive way. The brief way is when you recite the name mantra, the nectars and light rays of different colours descend and you receive the corresponding empowerments.

The extensive way in the second portion where you visualize from the heart of the Lama, the principal deity, emanating the entire mandala along with its residents, and then performing the entirety of the four empowerments, in order to confer the blessings or visualizing the principal deity in front as being non-dual with the principal deity of the mandala, and then performing these empowerments, emanating the empowering goddesses and things like that – this is the extensive way of doing that. So both ways are possible.

Q: How to sustain the divine pride for a long time in the post-meditation periods? It is extremely difficult.

A: The main antidote to this is applying effort to maintain constant divine pride. To remind ourselves to generate in the aspect, as well as maintaining divine pride of being the simple form of the deity, while one is going about one's daily actions one requires to remind oneself over and over again.

It is not possible for beginners to be a deity on duty for the whole day, because it would be great if you could be a deity on duty for the whole day, being constantly aware of yourself being the deity in its aspect and nature. What you could do is to divide the day into significant events - for example, at the end of the meditation session for a few moments to remember the aspect and the nature of the deity. And for example, when we get up or before eating again to remember the form of the deity and to make offerings to the form of the deity, and as one is walking, and when one is going to do prostrations at the altar, and at significant events like that, to remember again the form of the deity, to bring the deity into mind.

If you are able to recall the form and nature of the deity at those times, the virtue accumulated with these actions becomes more powerful, so it's very beneficial. Generating this form of the deity in this way during significant events of the day is easier than to be on duty for 24 hours. There's this instance in the past when one guy was always meditating on himself being a deity holding vajra and bell, and there's this pot in front of him and his teacher told him to pick up the pot and he was contemplating: "This hand or that hand, which hand?" He had so much divine pride of himself as the deity with the vajra and bell, so he had no hands to pick up the pot. So he asked his Lama "Not this hand, not that hand, which hand?" And the Lama said "With your solid hands!"

Rinpoche hopes that this discussion had been beneficial for everybody.