

Nyungne 16 November 2013
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Good morning. This morning you are receiving Avalokiteshvara's thousand eyes initiation. This is especially for the preparation to practice nyungne retreat. Even if you are not performing this retreat it is fine to receive this initiation.

Generally Avalokiteshvara is known as love and compassion manifestation of all Buddhas. It has been praised in all sutras and tantras that Avalokiteshvara symbolizes great love and compassion of all Buddhas. In that regards, for us to generate love and compassion, the sole cause of liberation, it is important for us to remember and meditate and practice Avalokiteshvara. It is very important and essential for us for our progress in practice.

It is well known that you do not need to put in much effort in Avalokiteshvara's practice, yet one can accomplish Avalokiteshvara in the shortest of time.

It has special ability and blessing. The transmission of entire Buddha's blessing is within Avalokiteshvara. It is also said that practicing it, one accomplishes everything. It accomplished entire Buddhas and great Bodhisattvas' practices. Therefore the practice of Avalokiteshvara is very popular in Tibet regardless of gender or age. Even young children naturally learn how to recite the mantra of Avalokiteshvara 6 syllables mantra.

Due to the popularity in Tibet, whatever sutras and tantras existed in India in this teaching, it has been translated into Tibetan texts. It began from 7th century.

In the tantra, four tantra kriyatantra, surayata, annutarayoga and charyatantra, Avalokiteshvara practices in all different ways. It is also found in the earliest transmission in Nyingma. The later transmission is called Sarma; both have extension transmission of Avalokiteshvara. Guru Rinpoche spoke it and later it was hidden. This hidden treasure contains many practices of Avalokiteshvara. 1,000 arms and 1,000 eyes are under kiriyatantra which is the lower tantra where the person has to be very discipline and clean. This is the lotus family.

The dharani and sutras that are related to 100 arms and eyes is connected with that method. It is also in India the transmission comes from Nagarjuna a well-known India master. It was the tradition of the king Songsten Gampo's personal yidam practice. He accomplished Avalokiteshvara and thus he composed many Avalokiteshvara practices. So this is a king's tradition.

Right now you are receiving the essences of all these various traditions. It is practiced by one of the great Gelongpa Palmo, a bhikshuni. She was a princess. Her name was Palmo. Her entire lifetime, she practices Avalokiteshvara and fasted. She has vision of Avalokiteshvara. Based on the visions and teaching directly from Avalokiteshvara, she composed nyungne methods of practice.

So this transmission also came from her. So you are receiving 1,000 arms and 1,000 eyes initiation. To receive this initiation, first you need to body cleansing that you have already done. With good motivation, the first thing is to make offerings of mandala to the master and to the shrine of Avalokiteshvara. Then you make a request followed by 7-branch prayers. All these are preparation part of the initiation.

11 face Avalokiteshvara. All faces are peaceful. Above that is a wrathful Vajrapani face, black in colour, orange blazing hair standing. Above that is red Amitabha's face with a protuberance. Altogether is 11 heads.

Many hands.

First pair of hands in the paying homage mudra.

Second right hand is holding a rosary

Third right hand in giving posture-giving nectar to satisfy hungry ghosts

First left hand is holding Dharmachakra

Left second hand holds a lotus of 8 petals

Left third hand holds a Nectar vase

Left fourth hand holds a bow and arrow

Remaining 992 hands in giving realization posture. Every hand inside has an eye. Thus Avalokiteshvara has 1,000 arms and 1,000 eyes. Avalokiteshvara in standing posture, with divine clothing according to Sambhogakaya's attributes. His upper garment is a deerskin that covers his left shoulder.

Adorned with all jewel ornaments like earrings, bracelets, necklace, anklets, 13 peaceful attributes

Try to visualise this form

Forehead White Om

Red Ah at throat

Blue Hung at heart

In the same manner, the master of initiation has the same manner of Avalokiteshvara. With full confidence of the master as Avalokiteshvara. From there, the master's heart radiates light and goes to front mandala. It goes to all 10 directions B and B hearts. From there, all forms and sizes as big as mountains and as small as sesame seeds flowing like snow flow or rainfall and dissolve into yourself like rain dissolve into ocean. You become inseparable with Avalokiteshvara. You invoke the wisdom aspect of Avalokiteshvara into yourself.

Now again in the same manner, the 5 Buddhas are invoked and dissolve into us.

Now we are receiving vase empowerment. For that we need to make a request, a wish that you are the lord of compassion, your wisdom pervades everywhere, you are the liberators of all SBs, please bless us.

So your body is filled with nectar, purified of all defilements and obscurations, every contamination and karmic forces. The water over flow from your body and the 5 Buddhas are seated above you. That is vase or body empowerment.

Second empowerment is speech empowerment. 3 things

1. You are receiving transmission of mantra. You visualize that from guru's heart center is a moon disc with a white hri syllable. Chains of the mantra appears and enter into your mouth and arrange in your heart center with a moon disc and white Hri syllable. All Buddhas of 10 directions, their compassion and wisdom and abilities are attracted by the rosary of the mantra that radiates the light, compassion, wisdom and knowledge of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. It enters into your mouth and dissolves into the seed syllable of Hri. It is a long dharani of Avalokiteshvara. Recite thrice. First is to bless, second is to become inseparable, third is to stabilize.
2. Blessing transmission – first you need to request for it.
3. Third transmission of commitment. That is Avalokiteshvara I will behold Avalokiteshvara until I attain enlightenment. Please don't leave me. This is the connection that you are making.

Now the third empowerment is mind emp. This is symbolized by his hand symbols. You radiate strong devotion to Avalokiteshvara. You long for his blessings. Within that moment, from Avalokiteshvara heart, the wisdom representing the rosary and white lotus radiates many. They dissolve into your heart and become inseparable. So you receive Avalokiteshvara mind empowerment and Avalokiteshvara blesses your mind from now til enlightenment.

The last part is thanks giving mandala. With this completes the initiation of Avalokiteshvara. Ending we do dedicate prayer together. Now you can leave but I have to do some conclusion prayers.

Now we have a short text then later I will give oral transmission of the nyungne text.

There are many different texts for nyungne. Some are long and others are short. This text is by the first Jamgon Kongtrul.

Q&A

Q: During Nyungne, sometimes, we make mistakes like eating and talking unmindfully. What should we do to atone these mistakes?

A: You simply stand up and make prostration thrice. You go to nyunge master and request him to give blessing water and you continue with your practice. You need not talk to the nyungne master. By going to him, he will know what to do.

When I was 11 years old, everyone went for Nyunge. I was very excited and felt like going. It was not because I knew the power of Nyunge. It was because I knew there was lots of food. The first day, I enjoyed the feast. Second day, without any water or food, I thought I was going to die. I wrote a letter stating that I will die if I don't eat and showed it to my teacher. My teacher said to bear with it and I cried. He brought me to a room and gave me three bananas, dhal and water. I felt so relieved. I was

quite innocent as a small child thinking that I would die from hunger and thirst and the teacher knew. So don't have this thought.

Whatever is in the text, I have given oral transmission including root text by Jamgong Kongtrul.

We will have a pilgrimage to Gelongma Palmo's temple in the afternoon.

I am suppose to give you some instructions on Nyungne practice from 3pm-5pm. Due to our journey to the temple, it took up quite some time. Nonetheless, I will still give you some instructions now. Tomorrow morning I am heading to Pokhara to give teachings and empowerment to a few groups of people. After that I will come back. And perhaps I will continue to give you some explanation after I come back.

As I have told you, Nyungne is not an easy practice. There are very strict disciplines that one needs to observe.

Nyung means tied up or place into discipline cage.

Body, speech and mind discipline. It is not so easy yet it is profound. If you can do a pair of nyunge perfectly, Avalokiteshvara has vowed that one will never fall into the lower realms. That was his promise. If one is able to complete 8 pairs of nyunge continuously, then it is even better. It is said this practitioner can accomplish Avalokiteshvara. In next rebirth one is able to be reborn in Avalokiteshvara pure land. In sutra and tantra, it is said no matter how difficult it is, it is worth doing it.

Sometimes difficulty is our own concept. If you have joy doing it, nothing is difficult. On one hand nyunge is hardship. On the other hand, if nyunge can overcome suffering of next rebirth, and myself why not bear with it? So in that way, to those people who really make full use of precious human body for the right course, then I think it is a very great practice. Even if one can just sit for a pair, it already makes life more meaningful.

That is why this practice of nyungne is very popular in the whole of Tibet regardless of tradition. Each has their version of texts. We are following Jamgon Kongtrul's version of the text that is not too long or short, just nice.

Most of the nyungne method is accordingly to Gelongma Palmo's method of practice. Whenever we mentioned nyungne, Gelongma Palmo's name appears.

She is a princess of Oddinaya. She has a tamed mind and inspired by dharma. Due to her karmic force ripening, she acquired leprosy. She could not reside in the palace. They placed her in a hut. She felt miserable and start to see the suffering of samsara.

She paid homage to Avalokiteshvara frequently. Eventually, one night she had a vision of King Indrabhuti. He was a source of tantra and a great practitioner. During Buddha's time, when Buddha was giving teaching, this intelligent King Indrabhuti gave many offerings to the Buddha. He requested the Buddha for teachings that he need not give up his palace.

Buddha said there is such a teaching and gave him tantric teaching. Within his lifetime, King Indrabhuti attained enlightenment. He is one of the 84 saints.

One night, Gelongma Palmo had a vision of Indrabhuti. The latter gave her empowerment and blessings and instructed her to practice Avalokiteshvara in order to attain Avalokiteshvara. Her pain disappeared. During the daytime, she recited the 6 syllables. At nighttime, she recited the long dharani.

Her pain and sickness diminished. One time, Manjushree prophesied that she would attain the same level as Tara if she went to the natural stupa Swayambuth.

She placed a seat and committed that if she did not attain supreme siddhi, she would not move from her seat. She would fast for a day and ate meals for another day. She continued this and within a year, she completely recovered and attained many realisations. All maras' disturbances and negative forces were subdued by her and converted by her as protectors of Avalokiteshvara teachings.

When she was 27 years old in the month of Vesak, she had the vision of Tara. She attained first Bhumi. Tara prophesied that she will be the activity holder of all Taras. On the eighth of the same month, she will attain Kriyatantra and attained the 8th bhumi. Through Avalokiteshvara practice, she was prophesied to liberate countless sentient beings.

On the 15th day, she had the vision of 1,000 arms and 1,000 eyes Avalokiteshvara. She saw the four tantras and various yidams. Eventually, she saw Avalokiteshvara and various Buddhas' fields.

With all these things happened within 12 years. When she saw Avalokiteshvara, she was a bit unhappy. She said why she took so long to see her? Avalokiteshvara said the moment you started practicing Avalokiteshvara, I am always with you. You had so many karmic obscurations so you could not see me.

She then achieved the 10th bhumi from there. She attained the same state as Avalokiteshvara and her body became golden in colour.

Subsequently she gave this practice to her disciple. She continued the method of teachings to Tibet and flowed to Karma Kagyud lineage. There are a few texts written by Karma and other masters. By Jamgon Kongtrul's text is easier for most to practice.

Nyungne and Nyemne are two things.

Nyungne comprised of Nyung and Nyem.

Nyungne means totally prohibition – of food, drinking, talking, and thinking
Nyemne – concentration towards good things.

For nyungne, the first day is taking of 8 precepts or nyenne. That is preparation. The next day is nyungne where food, drink, talking except chanting and prayers and thinking are prohibited. Including medication is prohibited.

From the moment you sleep and from the moment you get up, that is nyungne. When sunlight starts to come in, that is the end of nyungne. The next day is another nyenne or 8 precepts. This continues. Some do 8 pairs and others do 4 pairs.

Now what you need to observe is 8 branches. Basically when a person is this kind of practice. You need to observe 10 wholesome thoughts and actions and avoid all 10 unwholesome thoughts and actions.

1. Intentional killing
2. Stealing
3. Sexual misconduct – both nyungne and nyenne, you have to avoid all sexual activities
4. Lying – especially dharma related lies such as bluffing others that you have some sort of realizations when in fact you do not.
5. Intoxication
6. No solid food after noon. Untimely food – fluids are acceptable
7. No dance or sing or any form of entertainment. No ornaments – simple chains for blessing ornaments are acceptable. No fragrances, colours on faces are prohibited.
8. No sitting on high thrones. Exceptional for the master giving the teaching as a respect for dharma. One should keep a low profile. In your room there is a bed and that is acceptable. There is no need to go to the extreme of sleeping on the floor. Decorated high thrones and beds with high brocade are to be avoided.

Ten wholesome actions:

1. Abstaining from killing living beings
2. Abstaining from stealing
3. Abstaining from sexual misconduct
4. Abstaining from false speech
5. Abstaining from malicious speech
6. Abstaining from harsh speech
7. Abstaining from gossip
8. Abstaining from coveting
9. Abstaining from ill-will
10. Possessing Right Understanding of the Dharma

If you break a branch vow in any case, such as you unmindfully spoke, if that happened you could confess. During the puja time, you can approach the puja master

and he will give you purification water. There is no need to speak to the puja master. He will know what to do.

During puja time, if you release gas, you must do prostration thrice and go to the puja master and seek for purification water. This is during puja time.

If you are observing for a day, the merits are so much. You can prolong and sustain a healthy life. There are many benefits mentioned by Buddha himself.

If a person is generous for his whole life, and another person remains in the 8-branch nyemne, the latter will have more benefits. If one observed the 8 precepts for a day, it cannot be compared to more than a 1,000 times of merits in terms of vastness of merits.

Buddha himself mentioned that in every special day, one could obtain even more merits. This nyungne will end on a very special day. If one is able to keep very clean nyemne one time, one will attain the levels of the 4 guardian kings. If one observes nyungne two times, one will be able to attain the 33 realms of gods. And if dedicated for reborn into heaven, it goes to the highest tip of heaven. And if dedicated for enlightenment, one can attain enlightenment also.

Anyone can observe such vows be it sangha or laymen. From morning you take the vow, the precepts will remain with you until the next morning. Naturally it will disappear until you receive the vows again. It is unlike a monks' vows where once taken it is for the entire life. It is very practical in that sense.

Mantra is very good for cleansing of negative influence. This is often recited in monastery before any puja.

The Buddha gave this to one king who had an incurable disease to relieve the suffering of the king.

Page 19 – Ushnisha Vijaya to prolong the life.

White Tara, Amitayus and Ushnisha Vijaya for the extension of longevity. Any obscuration to the life force, this mantra will assist.

Next are the prayers on the 35 Buddhas. This is a very powerful prayer as it contains the following 3 heaps: -

1. First heap is accumulation of merits. Homage to 35 Buddhas. Each prayer and mentioned to each of the Buddha has special ability to eliminate karmic force.
2. Confession is the second heap that starts from page 37. Whatever bad deeds that causes us to suffer and fall into the lower realms.
3. Sharing and dedication of merits to the cause of enlightenment.

Page 52-55 is not transliterated into English. You can just confess from your heart.

Page 56 is common confession prayer. It is a Mahayana's way of confession. We recite this daily in the monastery. Whatever bad intentions or thoughts are damaged, we confess in front of Avalokiteshvara and Guru.

Next is taking of Bodhisattva vows under Bodhicharyatantra. This is in page 61-63. This is recited thrice. Restoration of vows daily to restore them into the perfect state.

Next is rejoicing for others and oneself.

Complete at page 67. In the last sentence, it is paying homage and making praise to Buddha Shakyamuni.

Sometimes when sangha read in Tibetan, you can read in English to have a better understanding of what you are doing. Otherwise, you can follow the sangha to chant in Tibetan.

Page 76, the longer version of the Buddha's 12 deeds.

After that, there is the sutra of recollecting sublime qualities of Triple Gem. This ends at page 95.

Next are 37 mandala offerings. After all this finish, now it is time to take the 8 precepts. Before you take the precepts, you need to make 3 prostrations and visualize the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and whole assembly are in front of you. Then you kneel down and with very humble gesture, you recite the taking of precepts. Recite thrice. In the first time, you are telling all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Second time, all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas granted your request. 3rd time, the precepts are completely transmitted to you.

Then you recall from now on, I will not kill, lie, indulge in sexual activities, and abstain from dancing and singing in the manner of the arhats. Then you stand up and do three prostrations. Now your personality is totally changed. You are now a precepts holder.

This part of the precepts taking is most important as you must be aware of what precepts you are taking.

Then it is ritual part followed by mandala offering. In between, you need to do 108 prostrations. You do within your capacity. You won't be punished if you cannot do 108 prostrations. You can recite the praise to Avalokiteshvara. Gelongma Palmo herself composed this. It is very poetic and beautiful verses in page 222 of the text.

Self-visualization as Chenrezig is in page 155.

Q&A session:

You need to keep a clean body during nyungne. You can either take a bath or keep your five parts of the body including the limbs clean.

During free sessions, you can recite 6 syllables mantra. But you may be very tired so you can rest. Most of the time, you will be in the shrine hall.

If we only want to receive one pair of the nyungne, what should we do? Do we have to come to the shrine and do the puja? First morning and second morning you take the vow. Third morning, you skip the vow. Nonetheless, you try to complete the morning session's puja. Then you are free. That skipping of vow is important because if you take them again, you need to complete the pair.

You can drink tea, coffee, milk, milo, honey water or boiled rock sugar to sustain energy for the body.

I hope you have a wonderful nyungne with little hunger or thirst. If weather is cold, you won't feel the thirst as much. In summer, it is quite easy to become thirsty.

Another time when I doing nyungne, I was very hungry and thirsty. I could hear the river sound and it was summertime in Pokhara. I could not sleep and wished to drink the entire river water.

During nyungne, the practitioners must complete their meals before 12noon.

Q&A:

Q: I heard one is not able to have eye contact. Is it true?

A: You can use body language and written notes to communicate to others during nyungne.

Q: Can we touch people?

A: Yes.

Q: Can we laugh?

A: You cannot make big laughters. You can smile. On nyungne day, you cannot even laugh with sound.

You need to perform a puja to cleanse yourself.

The end