

Six Session Guru Yoga

An Open Version

Based on a teaching by

Khen Rinpoche Geshe Lobsang Tarchin

Taught by

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Diamond Mountain, September 2010

Class 1, Part 1

(Mandala)

(Refuge)

Introduction

So I'm so happy you could make it. This teaching is just so important. I have received it from my Holy Lama, Khen Rinpoche¹. Every Gelukpa lama that offers tantric initiation then gives this teaching, and it is a required practice. And this is my Lama's book about this practice, and in the introduction to this book he says that “compared to all practices, including tantric practices, this is *the* most important practice”. That's what he says, in his book. He says, hundred times more. So by far, the most important practice.

So it is a tantric practice, but it has parts which can be shared. So the way I structured this teaching, is I separated the parts that can be shared from those that are unique to tantra. And what I have done is, I have taken the text - the English translation is by Geshe Michael, the Hebrew for those who speak Hebrew is mine - And I have extracted from the text the parts that are open, and arranged them in a way that people who are not initiated into Tantra can make it into their daily practice, and it will be a very very powerful practice.

Of course, if you get into tantra, which eventually you all will, if you haven't already, then you'll get the full-fledged power of the practice. But even as is, in the open version – it is extremely powerful, if you practice it daily.

So the Tibetan name for this practice, say:

ཐུན་དུག་

Tun Druk.

Tun – means **times** or **sessions**,

And ***druk*** - means **six**.

Six sessions.

¹ Khensur Rinpoche Geshe Lobsang Tarchin, 1921-2004. Former Abbot of Sera Mey Monastery in India and Rashi Gempil Ling in Howell, New Jersey.

So it's called Six Session Guru Yoga in English.

Six session means – you practice it six times a day.

Now, this should remind you something, right? The Book. So here's a secret – the book is completely based on this practice. So it's not like Geshe Michael didn't teach the practice, he just taught a different way to do the practice. He taught us to do the book where we follow up on our vows, because that's the most important part of our practice. I mean, one thing is to receive teachings and to receive the vows, a whole different level of practice is to follow up on them every day in your book, six times a day, that's a different thing.

So Geshe Michael in his wisdom and kindness evolved the practice beyond what the Tibetans traditionally do. Because they do six times, three times in the morning, and three times in the evening, and they do one full time, and then two abbreviated times, and the same they do in evening, whereas Geshe Michael had instructed people to do the book during the day, every two-three hours you open your book and you follow up on your vows.

It's done differently with the book, each time you open your book, you check one vow and how you acted with respect to the vow in the past two-three hours. In this practice, in the traditional way, they recite the vows in the morning and they recite them in the evening.

So it's a different way. They review: "Oh, this one, this one, this one" – but they recite all of them in the morning and all of them in the evening. So I'm very much convinced that working with the book is more powerful as far as the vows go, much more powerful actually.

However, there are parts in this practice that you don't do with the book, the practice has more than just following up on the vows, and those parts are also extremely important. So this practice is not to replace your book, it's to complement your practice with the book, Ok? It's not instead, it's in addition.

Often students hear so many beautiful teachings. In our lineage we have no shortage of teachings, and no shortage of practices, we have so many. And sometimes it's confusing – which one should I do? And I get lots of emails, which one should I do? So this one, even in the open version, has what you need to have a very powerful practice. Not to take away from the other practices, it's just a very concise and a very powerful form to do them.

I have received teachings on this, as I said, from Khen Rinpoche, my Holy Lama, who taught this very beautifully and many times, and I have received also teachings on this from other lamas, I can think of at least three other lamas that I have received teachings from on the Six Session Guru Yoga. And actually, with each Highest Yoga Tantra initiation, the lamas would require that you do this for the rest of your life - the tantric version, not the open version. Everything that's here² is included in the tantric version, the other one is just longer, [it] has more in it.

For today's class and next time, I will use – well, this is a tantric book so I'm not recommending to you to get it, but eventually you will be able to. I'm excerpting from it the parts that can be taught in the open. Those are class notes from my Lama Khen Rinpoche, it's called "**Six Session Guru Yoga**".

² In the open version.

Geshe Michael, before this term started, he had asked me if I would be willing to teach. I said of course, thank you for the honor! He said, what would you like to teach? And I said immediately, oh, this is what I want to teach. But I checked with him, is it ok with you that I teach this? Because normally they [Geshe Michael and Lama Christie] are the ones teaching us tantra. And he said that he was intending to teach one class on this during his teachings, to tantrikas only, but then he said: but please teach anyway, please teach the whole thing. So here I am, got myself in trouble 😊

If you haven't met Khen Rinpoche - this is his picture, my Holy Lama. He's not smiling in this one 😊. It so happened that the person who took those pictures, she's a professional photographer from DC and at some point she switched to a different lama, and she gave me all those originals, she said: "You'll be the keeper", so I'm the keeper 😊

So now I gave you a brief introduction.

Author of the Text

This practice that you have³, as I said, is maybe 50% of the whole thing. And it was written by a very prominent illustrious beautiful lama, called the first Panchen Lama, Lobsang Chukyi Gyeltsen. He lived 1570-1662, according to one version.

He was one of the greatest lamas produced by the Gelukpa lineage. He was considered an enlightened being. He was a trulku, actually he was a reincarnation of Lama Wensapa, I think his previous life, that was considered somebody who reached enlightenment in that life time. So he was an incarnation of an enlightened being. And maybe you have read his poetry, there's a book with his poetry that Geshe Michael translated into English, which is exquisite, beautiful. And we have also a translation into Hebrew which one day we will publish

So, he is the author of this text, and he opens the text - his commentary, with the verse

Namo Guru Manjugoshaya

Namo Guru Manjugoshaya, it means:

I bow – *namo*,

***Guru* – my Lama**

I bow to my Lama,

Manjugoshaya* – means, **who is one with Manjushri*

So he bows to his lama, and he considers his lama as an appearance of Manjushri.

Next verse says that this Six Session Guru Yoga practice is the best way – this is what it says – the best way to purify ourselves if we become stained by bad deeds or broken vows and pledges. And it also says that this practice, the Six Session, the *Tun druk*, was brought down by a pure lineage from the Buddhas. So it's a very pure lineage for this practice.

Let's just go directly into the practice, because our time is short.

³ Meaning, the open-version booklet

Taking Refuge

The very beginning is refuge. That's the very very beginning of your practice. And I did not include here the Tibetan but it's beautiful to read the Tibetan, I'll read it to you just for a blessing, ok? For the first verse:

།སངས་རྒྱལ་ཚེས་དང་ཚོགས་ཀྱི་མཚོག་རྣམས་ལ།
sangye chudang tsokyi choknam la,

།བྱང་ཆུབ་བར་དུ་བདག་ནི་སྐབས་སུ་མཚེས།
jangchub bardu dakni kyabsu chi,

།བདག་གིས་སྤྱོད་ཐོགས་བགྱིས་པའི་བསོད་ནམས་ཀྱིས།
dakki jinsok gyipay sunam ky,

།འགྲོ་ལ་པན་ཕྱིར་སངས་རྒྱལ་འགྲུབ་པར་ཤོག །།
drola penchir sangye druppar shok.

That's the very first verse. If you're interested I'll be so happy to give this to you in Tibetan, I have it, I have been practicing it for a long time. There are parts of it that I know by heart in Tibetan, and it's beautiful to say it in Tibetan if you can because then you get the blessing of the Lamas directly, through the words.

And let's read together the English:

***Until I reach Enlightenment
I go for refuge
To the Buddha, the Dharma,
And the highest Community.***

***Through the merit of giving
And other good things I do
May I become a Buddha
To help all living beings.***

And it says, as you do this practice, this part you repeat three times, Ok?

So let's talk a little bit about refuge.

Khen Rinpoche who is a great great logician, he brings his teaching by saying: Well, everything in the universe has its causes, every entity has its causes (almost every, right? Except very few, except for emptiness and [space]). So refuge also has its causes.

So he begins by asking the question: What are the causes of refuge, what creates refuge?

And you may have heard this teaching because we teach it openly a lot and it's in the ACI courses a lot. Probably everything that you will hear here, if you covered all the ACI courses, you have heard it in one way or another, because that's the open part, but still, it's organized nicely into a concise practice.

So what are the actual causes of taking refuge? There's two causes that create true refuge:

1. **Considering and thinking and reflecting on the suffering in samsara** – there is general suffering in Samsara, and there the particular sufferings of each of the six realms of existence.

And among the particular causes of sufferings, those of the three lower realms are especially heavy and very long lasting. Beings that fall into the lower realms, their suffering is extremely hard and painful and lasts a very long time. You know, you can imagine, when you're in pain, then even one moment of pain seems to you like it lasts an eon, because it's just [that] the suffering is great.

– Khen Rinpoche used to say that the greatest suffering in our human realm is not even remotely comparable to the suffering of hell. Or, he also said it the other way: The lightest hell is infinitely more suffering than the toughest situation in this world.

So therefore, beings that fall into those realms, in their experience, they are there forever. For them time goes very very slow.

So there are the general sufferings that we are reflecting on, including those of the lower realms. And then there are sufferings that are specific to us, as humans, that we need to reflect on, and you've all heard about the kinds of sufferings, right? That's one way to describe our suffering, which is:

- a. The **suffering of suffering** – suffering of suffering relates to, things that we normally call suffering: pain, broken legs, wars. Things that nobody will dispute is suffering; Scarcity, loneliness, misfortune, disease, like that. So those are examples of suffering of suffering.
- b. Then, there is the **suffering of change** – the second kind of suffering. And that one relates to the change in our life, the constant change. An example would be: We eat a good meal, and we're happy, and within a few hours we're hungry again. So there's this constant change that's driving and causing suffering. And so no matter how good it is at this moment, we'll have to lose it, it will change. You'll have to go search for another meal again, or we will lose partners, or we lose jobs, or we'll lose health. This kind of constant change.

And not all change we may describe directly as suffering, but some of it we do. Things are changing, and then some changes are surprising us, and we say: "What happened, why? Why is this happening to me?" But change is part of our being in samsara. So this is the suffering of change.

- c. And the third kind is the suffering which is called **Pervasive Suffering** – in Tibetan:

ཐུབ་པ་འདུ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་སྐྱུག་བསྐྱེལ།

kyappa duje kyi dukngel

And this is the worst kind of suffering. It is the worst, the most terrible, and it is also the most difficult to recognize. Most people don't even recognize that they're deep into that suffering.

Our very condition of our life as humans is that we have to get old, we have to get disease, we have to die - the very famous three. Sometimes they add even: We have to be born. So sometimes they count them as three or four. All of those are sufferings, the very famous ones.

[The] story goes about the Buddha? He was born as a prince and there was this foretelling that he might become a big spiritual teacher, but his father the king didn't want him to leave the palace, so the fortune teller said: Then so you keep him from witnessing disease and old age and death. And of course the moment he *did* witness those - because how long can you keep those hidden - He indeed left the palace in search of, in the inquiry of the answers to those questions.

So this is really, a pervasive suffering, it's in us all the time, we are pervaded by this, and it pervades everything.

So these are specific sufferings.

So this is the one cause for refuge – suffering. The reflection on suffering, the understanding of suffering.

Because if you realize the truth of suffering, it can be very depressing, and it is very depressing. It *is* true that we are on our route to death, each one of us. So people who recognize that truth and don't go any further – often commit suicide. It's like, "what's the point then? I have to get old, sick, and die. What's the point, why get old age also?"

Of course, if you don't recognize suffering, you don't feel like you need refuge, right? Everything seems to be Ok. "We're Ok. [The] kids are going to school finally, I can rest a little bit. Things are Ok, and we have our tickets to go to our next cruise, and we're fine, you know? And then we'll have the next one, and then..."

I have a neighbor like this, beautiful person, he's helping us all the time, but his life is from one cruise to the next. It's like, you cruise, cruise - where are you cruising? But even today, he's cleaning up our house. Can you believe that? So maybe one day he'll come here.

Actually he is always asking to drive me to the airport because then I give him Dharma teachings as he's driving.

So that's the first leg, the first cause.

2. The second cause [for refuge, is] of course – if you do realize that, if you have reflected sufficiently and in depth about suffering – and that's a whole teaching, right? It's not a five minute teaching – then you say: "Ok then, what now, what's next"?

So the other side of refuge, is: "Well, who can help? who can help? And who can I trust that can help?"

And if we look at our lives, we are constantly going for refuge, because we want to be happy and we're looking for ways to relieve our suffering and our misery: We're going to refuge to restaurants, we're going to refuge to cruises, to spas, to shopping, to police people, to lawyers, life insurance agents. We're going to refuge to all of those, all the time.

But can they really help us? Well, of course, all of these are fallible; they cannot really really help us. I mean, buy life insurance, and then if you find yourself in a situation when you actually need them, you're going to meet their lawyers. And maybe they'll give you some money, who knows? But in the meantime you've lost your life the money goes to your heirs.

So are you actually insured with life insurance? Is your life actually insured with life insurance? It's such a funny oxymoron. You only get the money when you no longer need it, *if* you get it.

So, who *can* we trust?

So we say

It's only the Three Jewels that are an infallible source of trust, infallible refuge. Why? Because they have the power, the skill and the knowledge to help us.

So then is a beautiful section on how should we go for refuge, and we'll talk a little bit more about the Three Jewels.

What I want to say, as an aside, is - when you first meet that concept of refuge, to me at least, it looked a little abstract. "I never met the Buddha, how can a Dharma book protect me, I'm not sure? I don't know the Sanghas, they look beautiful but what does that have to do with my misery? with my suffering at home or whatever? And how can I verify that this is Infallible, how do I know?"

It takes some inquiry and study and questioning to discover the Three Jewels for yourself, to create the Three Jewels in your own mind.

And it takes a little bit of study and inquiry, actually more than a little bit.

And I think Kedrup Je said: "Buddhists go for refuge three times a day, they recite this verse. Do they know the objects of refuge? Do they know what the Buddha is? What the Dharma Jewel is, what the Sangha Jewel is? They're going to the Three Jewels, but they have no understanding of the Jewels."

You're going to refuge to something that you have no idea what it is. So is this actually refuge?

So it takes study and it takes practice actually to discover the refuge in you. And I found that the longer I stay in the dharma and study the dharma and teach the dharma and practice the dharma, the concept of refuge evolves, and grows. And the importance of refuge becomes bigger and bigger and sometimes I think it's the whole thing. There are times when I think that's all you need to do. The more you understand it.

One of my Holy Lamas, Lama Art, in New Jersey, has been teaching on refuge for a year now, for a whole year, and he's barely scratching the surface. That's how important [this is]. And this is after many years that he had taught all the high topics, and he just goes back to the basics, and he just goes in depth into refuge, it's so important.

The Buddha Jewel

- So it says: "**When you go to refuge to the Buddha, you should view the Buddha as a parent – mother or a father. You're like a child, who's in trouble;**

We are in trouble, right? We have death sitting inside of us; we have diseases brewing inside of us, the moment we are born. So we *are* in trouble.

And like a child who feels they're in trouble, and they're running to their parents to rescue them, that's how we should view the Buddha: "Please help me, because you're big, you know, you have the skills, you have the wisdom, please help me." So view the Buddha like that.

The Dharma Jewel

- How to go to refuge to the dharma? **The metaphor they are using, is like a person who is about to die from thirst or from hunger.** They're so thirsty and so hungry, they thirst for the dharma. It's like their lifeline is the dharma.

Why? Because we don't know anything, we have no idea how to get ourselves out of this situation that we were born into. So dharma is like food and drink, that's dharma knowledge, and that's the Dharma Jewel.

So

It's not the book that's the Dharma Jewel, it's the knowledge that will actually help me, and I'm thirsty for that knowledge,

once I recognize how deeply in trouble I am. Then I'm busy searching for the cure. So that's the Dharma Jewel.

And it's far more than any ordinary food or drink that I could get for my ordinary thirst and hunger.

The Dharma Jewel includes realizations, spiritual realizations, that once you gain them - they are your cure.

They will cure you of your disease, of this samsaric disease. **Those you only gain once you've reached on the path of seeing.**

Realizations on the path of seeing, on the path of habituation – are you familiar with those? It's actually only once we reach those, that we are saved. Until then we still have to work. So that's one aspect of the Dharma Jewel.

The other aspects of the Dharma Jewel are cessations

and cessations are based on our realizations.

Having realized for example, emptiness, mental afflictions begin to cease in us, wrong perceptions cease in us, so that's the other part of the Dharma Jewel, those cessations. When we lose those mental afflictions, we lose those wrong views.

The Sangha Jewel

Then **Sangha Jewel** is the third jewel. They are people who are Arya Bodhisattvas who have actually achieved the real Dharma Jewel. And **because they have achieved it, they have wisdom, so they're able to guide us and show us the way out.**

So it's important to realize, when we talk about Buddha Jewel here, we are not talking about the historic Buddha in India 2500 years ago. The scriptures talk about one thousand Buddhas that will show up in this eon. But there are actually many many many more. There are trillions of Buddhas, beings who have achieved enlightenment, each one of them is Buddha Jewel.

Enlightened Beings

A Buddha Jewel has the four bodies of the Buddha. And there's a quote from a text which says:

"All the buddhas are alike in their accumulations, wisdom body, and actions done for the benefit of beings".

So in those aspects, their accumulations of wisdom and merit, their wisdom body, their actions that they do for beings – all buddhas, exactly the same.

But they do differ in their life span, and in their lineage, or their body size. So they can come in different bodies, they can stay with us longer periods or shorter periods, they can come from different lineages. So there's an outward difference. But in what they know and how they act towards beings, it's exactly the same. So in that sense, it's the same mind, really. Same mind.

All the knowledge and spiritual qualities that the buddhas have, are exactly the same.

Now, the Buddha has

- an emanation body among one the bodies, right? It's the **Nirmanakaya**,
- and they have the enjoyment body, which is the **Sambogakaya**, the body with which they enjoy themselves in their own paradises.

The emanation body of a Buddha can appear in so many different forms – sometimes as a deity, sometimes as an animal, sometimes as an ordinary human being, or even an object, a tree or a bridge.

But most often, the Buddhas appear in the form of a teacher, such as a monk who would come and teach us, or a lama who would come and teach us.

And a Buddha emanates those manifestations to help the beings in whatever way is suitable for them.

The enjoyment body – is a deity body, normally we cannot see that body. Until we are very very highly realized, we cannot directly see that body. Because of that, and because of the buddha's great compassion wanting to help us, their great compassion compels them to emanate to us in forms that we can see, and it would be in ordinary forms like a human teacher appearing to us.

The enjoyment body, the Sambogakaya is a very very subtle kind of form, and its essence is really wisdom. It's really a form derived from mind.

The wisdom body, Jñyana Dharmakaya, is buddha's wisdom. It really refers to buddha's omniscience, their knowledge.

And then they have **the essence body**. The essence body relates to the emptiness of all the other bodies. And it means that all the other bodies have no self existence whatsoever, they're projections.

- ✓ So one aspect of the essence body, or Svabhavakaya – that's Sanskrit, is the emptiness of the other bodies.
- ✓ The other aspect of the Svabhavakaya is the ultimate cessation, the irreversible abandonment of all the mental obscurations. The buddha has no obscurations what so ever, and that's an aspect of the essence body, or the Svabhavakaya.

Audience: [Can you repeat the Sanskrit names of the four bodies of the Buddha]?

Teacher: Repeat what they are in Sanskrit?

Nirmanakaya – is the emanation body

Then, **Sambogakaya** – is the enjoyment body

Then, **Jñyana Dharmakaya** – is the wisdom body

And the last one is **Svabhavakaya** – it's the essence body

The Visualization for Going for Refuge

So we read the verse about going for refuge, and it said we should do it three times.

So, how do we go for refuge?

There's beautiful visualizations as you recite this, to make it powerful and strong. And it relates to what we call **The Merit Field**. Have you ever heard a teaching about the merit field? Oh, we have it⁴ right above me, beautiful.

Your Lama

So, in the center – that's your lama. It's your lama appearing in the form of a buddha, in your visualization. And you can see here in this picture there's a vertical line above

⁴ A picture of the Merit Field.

him which are all the lineage lamas, so your lama's lamas, and their lamas and their lamas, and they go up like that, so the highest ones are the oldest ones.

So your lama is in the center, their lamas above them, their lamas above them, so it's like this whole wisdom descends into the lama and then comes to you. So that's the first part.

[The lineage of bodhichita] - Then, you see, there's a left side and right side. On the right side of the lama, which is our left, is Maitreya, surrounded [by the lineage of bodhichita]. This is the lineage of bodhichita, it's called also "the lineage of wide-spread activities" - those are the teachings on bodhichita, on love, on acting on behalf of beings, on helping beings.

So there's Maitreya, and he's surrounded by Lineage lamas, lamas whose main teaching is the teaching of love and of bodhicitta.

[The lineage of wisdom] - Then, on the right side, to my side as I look at it, is the wisdom lineage, the profound wisdom lineage, which includes Manjushri and other lamas from whom we have received the wisdom teachings, many of them. Some lamas appear on both sides because they combine beautifully both lineages, like Lama Atisha, for example, Je Tsongkapa - so they could be here or there.

So you picture those on both sides. Then, in front of the lama are buddhas and arahats. First there's Tantric buddhas and then there are sutra buddhas. There are buddhas from the listener lineage, buddhas from the self-made-buddha lineage, bodhisattvas that come with them.

Then, there's a front row, if you look very closely you'll see very strange looking beings - they are dharma protectors, that used to be bad spirits but were tamed by the Buddhas and they are now protectors, and they protect dharma, they protect dharma practitioners, like that.

So this is called the **Merit Field**, and as we go for refuge, first we create this visualization in front of us, of the merit field.

Now, it's a very detailed visualization, which for most people including myself is very hard to do. For most people it's hard, but some people can. Some people like to have all those details. [For] some students you need to give a lot of details, because they need to occupy their minds ☺.

If it's hard, they say

<p style="text-align: center;">You can visualize your lama, and imagine that they are representing this whole field.</p>

Then, **you're not going to refuge alone.**

You want your refuge to be very powerful. So the tradition says you picture your mother on your left, and your father on your right, and you're holding their hands. And then the female members of your family – are also to the left, the male members of your family are to the right.

And then behind them are *all* the beings. **That includes all kinds of beings, but they appear in the visualization as people** and there's an endless number of them, they stretch behind you as far as space reaches, Ok? All the way.

The whole space is filled with those beings, and you are leading them. So you are chanting the verse, and you are leading all those beings to refuge, you are their savior. As you repeat the verse, in your imagination they all say it with you, and their mouths are moving,. It's very very beautiful. You are like helping them, you are their voice. And then it becomes very powerful if you can do it that way.

It's also very beautiful to **repeat it after your lama**. So your lama is leading you to refuge. So in your visualization [your] Lama is saying the line, and you are repeating it, Ok? **So you imagine you're hearing it from the Lama, and repeating it to the Lama.**

Question: You do it while you're standing or while you're sitting?

Teacher: No, you sit. After you finish prostrations to the images and what they represent, you sit down, and this whole visualization is happening in your mind. It's like a meditation, it's a text that really guides your meditation.

One word I need to mention about the visualization: Where should we put that visualization? You put that in front of you. Not too high, because then they say you may get agitated. Because it's quite a long practice, if you do it properly, with all the the visualizations. So to not get agitated. Not too low, so you won't have a dull sinking mind.

So they say at the level of your eyebrows, you put it kind of against the center of your ajnya chakra.

How far? They say don't put them too far away – because that's a bad omen – it's like, you're enlightenment is very far, your lama is very far. They can't help you from far away.

Also not too close, because you need to leave enough room to prostrate to them and give them offerings ☺. So they say – body length. They're there, and then as you prostrate you can touch their Lotus Feet. So it's very beautiful.

Question: When we visualize the Lama, she's in front of us. But then we picture all the other beings...

Teacher: ☺ Oh, well, they become smaller and smaller. You keep the main image, the central figure at body length in front of you. Whatever makes sense to you. If she stands there or sits there then you can't see everything else...

Mind is so flexible. You know, it's like looking through a key hole and you can see everything out there even though the key hole is tiny. You can do with your mind what you want.

How long should we go for refuge?

So how long do we need to go for refuge? Well, it says here in the verse:

Until I reach Enlightenment

☺. You can't stop before. You constantly go for refuge` until you yourself are a buddha, you have to rely on the buddha. You're helpless without them, you're completely helpless without them.

It says:

**Through the merit of giving
And other good things I do**

It refers to the six perfections – the merit of giving, and the other six perfections. By performing those good deeds we're collecting a huge mountain of virtue.

The virtues of giving are of four different kinds:

- a. The giving of material objects,
- b. The giving of protection from fear,
- c. The giving of love
- d. And the giving of Dharma.

So actually even in the bodhisattva vows we have those listed as our commitments, right? So it says:

**Through the merit of giving
And other good things I do
May I become a Buddha
To help all living beings.**

So as we are doing the refuge, reciting the refuge lines, we are keeping in mind the good things we have done. So at the same time, you're kind of recalling your goodness, you're using up your goodness.

And you're not just remembering the good things you have done, **you come with an attitude of offering them.** You remember: "Oh, I did all those good things, I'm going to offer them to the buddhas and objects of refuge, as they're represented here with my lama. I'm going to offer them to my lama".

**So with this virtuous attitude where you remember your merit,
and with a mind of offering, you go for refuge.**

And it's like begging them: "Please, use my virtue, take my virtue, and help me". You're bribing them with your virtue.

And it's actually how things work. The more virtue you're able to collect, the more the buddhas can help you.

**It seems the lama is helping you, but the only help that you're
actually getting is your own, comes from your own goodness.
There's nothing they can do if you don't have the virtue. On the
other hand, if you do, it will appear as if they're helping you.**

Last thing here, not in our lineage, [but] there are lineages - since we're getting ready to go to three year retreat - they have lists of preliminaries you do before you go to a three year retreat. And one of them would be [to] say a 100,000 times this refuge with the visualization of the field. You create it, you say the refuge three times, you dissolve it - there's a whole Sadhana doing the refuge.

Doing a 100,000 of this, and there's a 100,000 of mandalas, a 100,000 prostrations, a 100,000 water bowls, and they have a list of preliminaries. It takes quite a while to accomplish all of that, in the meantime you are getting purified. It's very beautiful and some people love that.

Our Lamas don't require that. They say that if you study and understand emptiness, for example, and practice bodhisattva vows, etc. and study the Lam Rim, develop the attitudes of renunciation, and bodhichitta, and correct view – this is a much more powerful preparation.

But it's very beautiful, if you can and you have an opportunity to do the other 100 thousands of each, that's very beautiful. And you meet people who are doing them and they appear very pure, they're very beautiful.

So Rinpoche says: **You have to do this practice of refuge regularly, it means every day.** And you know that – you have refuge vows, three times in the morning, and three times in the evening. If you do it with this visualization it's very powerful and it's included in this practice, and it's the very first part

Question: You say this prayer three times, two times a day?

Teacher: I will describe to you how to do that. When you say this part, going for refuge, the very first part, you do the visualization like I taught you; you reflect on the meaning of the Three Jewels, you see all your mothers and fathers behind you. You repeat it three times in the morning, and three times in the evening.

But, there's all the rest also. So the way it is done, in the Six Session – you will do the whole practice three times. So you do this whole thing three times in the morning, and this whole thing three times in the evening.

So, in the morning, you wake up, you're ready to do this. First time you go through this thing, this part you say three times. Then there's another part that you repeat three times. Second time you go through it, you don't have to repeat three times, only once. So you accumulate quite a lot, right?

First time three times, then you just go through the thing without repeating. So three of those in morning, three of those in the evening. It will take you some time to do that, if you do it well.

Question: what priority should this particular visualization be given, in priority to other visualizations of taking refuge?

Teacher: He said, "this is a hundred times more⁵..." It's very important, it's very important to do it that way.

Question: So what you recommend is when we need to take refuge, we take refuge like this?

Teacher: Yeah, this is the teaching.

Once people enter into tantra, this gets a little more detailed. Not the wording, the wording remains the same, the visualization is different. So this part is common, I did not change the wording, I took it from the tantric practice, actually. The story of what you see is a little different [the explanations]. But really you have the essence here, you can do it this way, and it's as powerful, really.

⁵ Quoting Khen Rinpoche's words, from the introduction of his book.

Question: You mentioned in the beginning of class that there are two main causes for taking refuge, one of them was thinking about the sufferings in samsara, what is the second one?

Teacher: Well, the second one is the thought that there's somebody that can help, and that you can trust. Because otherwise, just the first one it too bad, then you're hopeless. So the first one is seeing the disaster, the second one is seeing the opportunity, and you need both.

Can you just go with the Three Jewels and think about the opportunity and just skip the thinking about the suffering? Some people don't like to think about suffering and say: "why are you constantly coming back to suffering?" The lamas say that your refuge will not be as powerful. You need to understand where you're coming from, and where you're going, and you need both for it to be powerful.

(Mandala)