

Notes from ‘Healing with Form, Energy and Light; The Five Elements in Tibetan Shamanism, Tantra, and Dzogchen’,
by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Preface

I’ve selected the following notes for study and practice purposes, mainly from the first third of the book, *Healing with Form, Energy and Light*. In it, Geshe Wangyal describes in some detail each of the five elements, and specific practices that can be done to promote balance.

I’ve focused here in particular on the Shamanic aspects taught in this book: the advice and practices based on the idea that this whole world is alive, and that we can interact with it in ways that are helpful to us.

Healing with Form, Energy, and Light, also includes a section on getting in touch with the elements in nature and in our daily lives. For more on information on those subjects, readers are encouraged to study this fine text.

One more note: in the book, in the section on the Five Elements practice, Geshe Wangyal uses the element of earth as an example for how to guide the mind during these meditations. He follows this with a description of the Five Elements, and says when practicing with the other elements we are to substitute the appropriate forms, mantras and attributes, etc.

In these notes, I’ve taken the liberty of using the words of the earth element practice as a model, and inserting the different words for practice with each of the other elements.

I've also added a very few other words or phrases on the elements where it seemed like they belong.

An outline of these notes follows.

May all beings benefit.

Jason Espada, San Francisco, April 7th, 2010

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Introduction – Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Most of the practices in this book are supportive practices. They enhance the quality of life, promote healing, and offer some protection from harm and illness. They can keep us alert rather than dull, relaxed rather than agitated. They can contribute to our health, vigor, and pleasure in life. This is good and worthwhile. However, the practices are most importantly used to develop spiritually. They change our perspectives about our relationships to the natural world and to our own experiences; they open and expand our views. And they support our meditation practices.

When the elements are out of balance, it's difficult to do meditative practice and we are more likely to be forced to work with illness, agitation, dullness, or distraction. The practices presented here help us to overcome external obstacles as well as disturbances in the mind and energy by balancing the elements in the dimension of the individual. When the elements are balanced, it's easier to abide in the nature of mind, in the buddha-nature, which is the final method and goal of the spiritual journey.

There is a great deal of information in this book. When you feel full, stop reading.

If we do not actually do practice, but only read about practice, it's analogous to owning medicine and talking about it rather than taking it and being cured.

Take time to digest, to match what you are reading to your experience. This is how to make the teaching part of your life.

The metaphoric use of the elements is common in Western languages: a person can be earthy or spacy, fluid or fiery. Anger is hot, sadness is watery. Attitudes can be airy or grounded.

In the Tibetan traditions the elements are not only understood metaphorically. Rather, the elements in nature concretely represent a subtler and more fundamental discrimination of five aspects of the primordial energy of existence.

Externally, the elements are not only the raw elements of our sensual experience – the earth we live on, the water we drink, the fire that warms us, the air we breathe, and the space through which we move – they are also the spirits connected with the elements. These include goddesses, elemental spirits, and other beings.

The internal elements are the elemental energies rather than their forms. In our bodies these are the physical energies that pump our blood, digest our food, fire our neurons, and also the more subtle energies upon which our health and capacities are based and depend.

Relating to the sacred

Ask yourself what ‘sacred’ means to you. What in your life do you truly believe to be sacred?

Without a sense of the sacred, it is difficult to have faith in religious instruction. In Tibet it is said that if one treats one’s master like a dog, the teachings are as worthless as rotten food. If one treats one’s master like a friend, the teachings nourish like fresh food. If one treats one’s teacher like a deity, the teachings are divine nectar.

Similarly, if we relate to the natural world as a collection of lifeless mechanical processes, it is lifeless for us. If we relate to our bodies as machines, they are machines to us. If we relate to religion as a fantasy, it is a fantasy to us. But if we relate to the natural world as alive, full of spirits and elemental beings, the natural world speaks to us.

If, as in tantra, the body is regarded as a divine palace and the result of great good fortune, as the best possible vehicle for reaching enlightenment, it becomes a vehicle that can carry us beyond death. If we relate to the *dharma*, the spiritual teachings, as to sacred teachings that will lead us on the path to truth, the dharma in fact leads to truth.

Relating to the elements – to the natural world and our bodies and minds – as sacred, they become sacred. This is not just a psychological trick. It's a recognition of our real situation.

Elemental Spirits

Many cultures that live close to the earth develop an appreciation for the spiritual dimension of the natural elements. They recognize that the elements are not only raw materials – they are also an environment in which deities and higher and lower spirits abide. There are sentient beings living in each element.

The forces of nature are alive; spirits abide in the rivers, trees, rocks, mountains, waterfalls, fires, planets, sky, valleys, caves, and so on. These spirits are related to the five external elements in the way that our internal experience is related to our bodies. Whatever our philosophy, we normally experience ourselves as residing 'in' our bodies. Similarly, lakes, trees, and rocks are bodies in which spirits reside.

In shamanism, these entities are not thought to be mental projections or of questionable reality. They are autonomous and self-directed. Those non-physical beings with whom we have contact can be neutral toward us or they can obstruct us or support us.

Imagine a being from another dimension encountering us and seeing only flesh. Imagine this being not realizing that we are alive, that we have intelligence and imagination, that our lives are the insubstantial aspect and the flesh is the substantial aspect. And instead seeing only flesh, only meat. That's what it's like when we look at the elements and see only dead physical processes; we miss the sacred and alive aspect of the elements, the spirits that live in them and are of them.

When our bodies get sick, we suffer in our insubstantial mind, not just in our flesh. In the same way, the raw elements are important for the beings who abide in them. For them, the destruction or degradation of the natural environment is like an illness in the body and they suffer on insubstantial levels, just as we do.

It's easy to discount invisible spirits, but doing so is damaging. When we ignore these beings, there are negative provocations from the spirit side. Diseases arise that, we believe, come from disturbed spirits. We call these diseases 'time diseases'. In the West the same diseases may be thought of as the results of negative environmental factors – pollution and chemicals and so on.

Some of the non-physical beings are aware of us, many are not. Some are harmful, some are beneficial. They can become our allies or our enemies depending on what kind of relationship we build with them.

About the Elements

Understanding Through the Elements

Thinking in terms of the elements does not mean giving up our understanding of modern chemistry, physics, medicine, and psychology. The elements give us a more fundamental metaphor that helps to explain the dynamics that lie beneath these different disciplines. Through an understanding of the elements we can see that apparently different dimensions of experience are really only subtler and grosser levels of the elements. An excess of fire, for example, manifests in physical, energetic, mental, and spiritual dimensions.

These dimensions are not actually distinct but increasingly refined (or grosser) presentations of the same fundamentals. So, fire is the life-giving energy of the sun as well as the life-destroying forest fire. It's the heat of the digestive system, the creativity of the mind, the red light of the rainbow, the phenomenon of temperature, the emotions of hatred and desire, the warmth of compassion, the wisdom of discrimination, and one of the five most subtle and most fundamental aspects of being.

When we understand the inclusiveness of the five elements, we see that everything arises together, nothing is completely separate from anything else, and everything is affected by everything else. Anxiety can be calmed through ritual, drugs, exercise, meditation, love, massage, or a hot bath because anxiety is an excess of fire or air, or an insufficiency of earth or water. Anything that addresses this imbalance on any level will have an effect on every level. Of course at any one time one method may be more suitable than another. If you're bleeding badly, it's better to place a bandage or tie a tourniquet than to do yoga. Or if you're stuck in a bad mood,

it's better to be able to work with the energy in your body than to go for surgery.

This view is accepted in the West, too, though not formulated this way. It has come to be common knowledge that illness in the body affects the mood and the mind, and the mind affects the emotions and the body. This seems obvious now, yet only recently has mainstream Western medicine begun to prescribe relaxation practices, exercise, meditation, and yoga to reverse heart disease and help with mood disorders.

Applying an understanding of the elements to our experience, we can usefully describe and examine any situation in any dimension. When we experience grosser or subtler levels of the elements, we are actually experiencing grosser or subtler levels of ourselves.

Relating Oneself to the Elements

As I wrote earlier, the elements are associated with emotions, personality types, cognitive styles, and with other aspects of experience, including visionary and meditative experience. The elements in these dimensions can be recognized directly once there is an understanding of what the elements are.

The following descriptions of the elements are not meant to be exhaustive but instead focus on the elements which are most directly accessible in experience. They do not include the medical aspects of the elements, which strongly affect experience but which are beyond the scope of this book. They point to emotional, energetic, and cognitive experiences you already have, and to patterns of behavior easily recognized in yourself or people you know. The descriptions emphasize the negative aspects of the

elements because this is a book about healing and spiritual growth and the positive aspects need neither to be healed nor overcome.

The descriptions are general in order to make them widely applicable. It's more helpful to have a broad understanding of the elements in experience than to amass details of elemental correspondence, but it's also good to remember, while reading these simplifications, that the interactions of the elements are complex enough to give rise to everything. Each element contains the others and they also work with and against each other in diverse interactions. For example, if a fire is big, air supports it to grow greater; if a fire is small, the wind blows it out. Similarly, in our experience the elements support and destroy each other, and what happens depends on the particular situation.

The balance of the elements is always dynamic and changes to lesser and greater extent in different situations and conditions. It's also true that individuals can be particularly dominant or deficient in one or more of the elements. Look for consistent qualities of experience and habitual behaviors to recognize which of the elements are dominant or deficient in yourself.

Notes on the Elements

Study of and practice with the elements is meant to positively affect our well-being by giving us the tools to bring the elements into the balance that underlies health and wholeness in any dimension of experience. It does not take great intuition to know when we are in or out of balance. We all know these experiences. They fall along a continuum from the most disturbed imbalance- psychosis or serious illness-to perfect balance, which occurs only when we can abide in the nature of mind, the buddha-nature. In our daily lives we are somewhere in between, moving from being more in balance to being more out of balance, and back again.

The idea of balancing elemental energies can be usefully applied to any human function, quality, or activity: health, relationship, spiritual practice, psychological make-up, emotional state, physical environment, and so on. Using imbalance of the elements as a primary metaphor, we can understand illness and unhappiness as well as obstructions on all levels of spiritual practice. Balancing the elements then becomes a metaphor for healing, for the development of positive qualities and capacities, and for the elimination of negative qualities.

If one element dominates, we need to cultivate its opposite. If we are dominated by fire, for example, then we try to activate water or earth, and vice versa. If earth is dominant - we are dull, sleepy, heavy - then we activate air or fire. And if air dominates us - we are flighty, nervous, with a short attention span - then we activate earth or water. There are many obvious examples of balancing in everyday life: if a fever becomes life-threatening, we may be told to soak in cold water; if we become too cold, we apply warmth; and if we're dehydrated, we drink water.

By nature, all conceptualizations are symbolic and the five elements are symbols of great depth and long tradition. Beyond metaphor, however, the five elements are energies that can be worked with directly by the practitioner through physical actions, energetic movement, and the flow of awareness

How the elements become unbalanced

Each of us begins life as a unique manifestation of the elements. We carry very specific karmic determinants that make one individual distinct from another. If we were perfectly balanced at birth, we would be born as fully realized buddhas. However we are born as ordinary beings, which means the elements are imbalanced to some extent. If the imbalance at birth is great, it may be obvious.

For example, on the gross physical level, being born with a metabolic problem that makes it impossible to digest food properly is quickly recognized. We would call this a lack of fire. Even small differences in the strengths and combinations of elemental energies create the different characteristics of the individual, the variations in temperament and mental faculties as well as the physical differences.

After birth, the environment and the individual's responses to the environment further affect the dynamics of the elements. Accidents and crises - situations that evoke a strong reaction or a shutting down-have consequences, as do even the smallest decisions and gestures.

Each action that we take, on any level, is an expression of the elemental qualities in some combination or interplay, and a reinforcement of the conditions that generated it. Anger, for an easy example, is usually a fiery re- sponse. If we habitually react

with anger, we cultivate the fire in ourselves, though in this instance it's a negative attribute of fire.

In the same way, because creativity is connected to the luminous fire nature, when we respond creatively we are also developing the fire element in ourselves, in this case its positive aspects. Over time our habitual actions and reactions favor the development of certain elements and often leave others less cultivated or weaker.

This process is further strengthened by cultural norms that favor some elemental qualities over others. To continue with the fire example, growing up in a social group that favors aggressive, fiery reactions, we will tend to develop those qualities to the detriment of softer, more watery responses to the world.

Elemental imbalance can be either temporary or life-long. For example, a person may be easy with other people and confident in general but be extremely anxious in a particular situation such as public speaking or taking a test. A chronically shy individual can sometimes become outgoing and self-confident after drinking alcohol. A happy person can become depressed after the loss of a relationship. A person of great faith can become insecure and nihilistic when faced with the death of a loved one. These are all temporary shifts in elemental balance due to external events.

Such shifts happen from moment to moment. After a heavy lunch we become drowsy and dominated by earth. If we are called in to talk to the boss, we may lose our connection to earth and become dominated by air and worry. An exhausting meeting when we're tired may result in a loss of the creativity of fire which later can be stimulated in a good conversation with friends.

Almost anything can imbalance the elements: diet, thoughts, emotions, movies, friends, culture, illness, and so forth. But that does not make our situation as fragile as it sounds. We can also balance the elements through diet, thoughts, emotions, movies, and so on. For example, if we are too airy, something as simple as spending time with grounded, earthy friends can help us.

Certain imbalances can be more fixed, such as long-standing character traits or habitual tendencies that tend to keep reinforcing themselves. The way we speak, the colors we like, and the way we walk and move our hands are expressions of the elements and in all these we can, if we know what we are looking at, see which element or elements dominate us. In the West, people tend to think about such things in psychological terms, but the interactions of the elements are more basic than the level of psychological manifestation.

Some people can be relatively balanced naturally. They may have enough space, enough comfort, groundedness, creativity, and flexibility. The higher qualities may be present: compassion, love, generosity, patience, and so on. And the physical being may be equally balanced. We've all met people like this. They tend to be healthy and happy, capable and confident. They work on the situations of their lives and make them supportive: their jobs and relationships are good.

But then one of life's inevitable tragedies occurs. They fall ill or a loved one dies. They may be cheated in business or have a car accident. Perhaps there is a natural recovery or perhaps the balance is lost. We hear these stories all the time: the man who doesn't recover from the loss of his wife, the woman who can't cope with her cancer. Everything is turned upside down. The meaning of life becomes questionable and elusive. Faith wavers or is lost. The elements have gone out of balance. Perhaps the stability is gone, or

the joy, or the creativity. Such people come to be dominated by one element-angry all the time or depressed or distracted or spaced-out or sad.

People can stay lost for the remainder of their lives or can begin to try to address the disharmony. They may go to a doctor or change their diets or start exercise plans or go to therapists. Religious affiliation may be renewed or begun. If they have not already intentionally started the spiritual journey, beginning in response to suffering is the best response.

In all of these different attempts at healing, something is either cultivated or eliminated. Stop eating this, start eating that; stop thinking that way, think this way; let go of sedentary habits, start new activity habits. When something feels wrong in our lives, we want something to change; we want to have more of something that we feel is lacking, or get rid of something that we feel is disturbing.

There is a natural impulse in us toward balance just as there is a natural pull toward increased awareness and spiritual growth. Both can be perverted or denied, but the wisdom that can lead us toward balance is inherent in our being.

The arising of problems

A disturbance in life can show up in any dimension of experience. It can be physical, such as a disease manifested in the body. A doctor may be consulted, x-rays made, blood tests performed. The disease is named. It has a form: it is a bacteria or virus or cancer-something substantial. And the disease is treated with something substantial: a pill or injection, a chemical or herb. Or the problem

may be primarily mental. It's a problem in the mind, though the health of the body may suffer. Then, perhaps, the person goes to a psychotherapist, tries to understand the problem intellectually, tries to understand the emotions, tries to find the meaning in what is occurring, or tries to change the way he or she is thinking about the situation or him - or herself.

Tibetan culture also recognizes a third area in which problems manifest: the energetic dimension. Traditionally the disturbances here are those that cannot be medically diagnosed. They are believed to be the result of negative interference by non-physical beings. Then the diagnosis must be made through less substantial means such as inquiry, divination, intuition, dreams, or astrology. The treatment methods are also insubstantial: exorcism through contact with sacred texts and other objects, purification through smoke and water, soul retrieval and life-force enhancement through rituals, yogic exercise of the prana, meditation practices, contemplation, and prayers.

When we have a problem, it's important to find the appropriate tools and methods to work with it. Even better is to find the solution to all problems, which is to recognize the nature of mind and to abide in it. But if we don't know the nature of the mind or can't abide in it, then we need to know other practices to do. If we apply the wrong practice to a situation, it will not be effective. If we have energetic problems, intellectual analysis is unlikely to help. On the other hand, if we have a wrong intellectual view or a wrong attitude, burning incense and waving feathers probably won't do much.

In the previous discussion of the five pure lights, the process through which the insubstantial is experienced as substantial through mistaken dualistic vision was described. When we understand this process, we also understand how problems, obstacles, and disturbances arise. They begin in the subtle levels

and move toward more substantial manifestations. A disease for example, may show up in dreams before being felt physically. Then it may manifest as an energetic change, fatigue, or restlessness. Finally it will reveal itself as noticeable symptoms in the physical body.

If the problem is recognized on a subtler level, let's say in a dream, it may be resolved through subtle means: a ritual, practices done in a lucid dream, prayers, or directing energies in the body. But if the disease does not enter awareness until it manifests physically, then physical medicine or surgery may be required, or it may be beyond stopping and death results.

Similarly a disturbance between friends, if noticed in a dream or daydream or picked up as a sensation in the body when the friends are together, can often be healed with only a change of heart. But as it moves into increasingly substantial manifestation, it requires more work, more talking, more process, and more effort to correct.

Conceptually dividing experience into levels or dimensions allows us to work more skillfully with particular situations in our lives, but of course experience is really seamless and all-at-once. Because the division of experience into different dimensions is only conceptual, causes, results, and antidotes have effects on all levels. Even in diseases that are well advanced physically, subtle treatment like rituals may be of benefit. For example, science has documented many cases of strong faith resulting in the spontaneous remission of advanced disease processes even though this is baffling in a materialistic world view.

Similarly, grosser forms of treatment can effect subtle levels, as when the seeds of a disease are positively affected or negated by physical yogas or medicines.

In a certain sense, problems do not only start on the subtle level and move to the grosser—they can also apparently start on the more substantial levels and affect the subtle. Physical trauma often results in emotional problems. Accidents and disease can confuse the mind and mood. However, in the Tibetan view, even these apparently accidental or external causes of imbalance are thought to begin as insubstantial karmic traces that finally manifest on the external level.

Purification and Cultivation

There are tools to interrupt or transform negative aspects of experience moving toward manifestation. Purification practices can be effective. On the physical level such practices can include dietary restrictions, austerities, and rules of behavior. On the emotional level certain attitudes and negative emotions are renounced. In tantra there are many visualizations practices that purify oneself, other beings, and all existence.

We can also cultivate positive aspects of experience. No one had to train us to cultivate negative qualities: when we have a problem, we ruminate on it endlessly. Instead, we can train ourselves to think positive thoughts. When we catch ourselves in the middle of angry fantasies, we can generate compassionate ones. We can cultivate love and joy, creativity and stability, the positive qualities of the pure elements.

For example, in the sutric teachings of both Bon and Buddhism there is the teaching of the cultivation of the four immeasurables: love, compassion, joy, and equanimity. These four qualities are considered particularly supportive of the spiritual path. If we are trying to cultivate joy, for example, we first find the experience of joy in ourselves. In those times when we are naturally feeling joy-

perhaps when we are with people we love, or in natural beauty, or listening to music-we can bring that experience into awareness. The joy is not dependent on those things, it is a capacity that we have that is activated when it meets an external object or situation that supports it.

When we know what joy feels like, we can clear a space in experience - which is purification - and then feel joy directly. Once we know the experience, we cultivate it by supporting it. When we wake in the morning, we can start the day by thinking about our great fortune in being human, having enough to eat, living in freedom, and having encountered the spiritual path. We can recite a mantra connected to the experience of joy, offer prayers, wear something that reminds us to cultivate joy. We can cultivate fire and water, both connected to joy.

We can cultivate any quality in this way: love, compassion, courage, stability, comfort in ourselves, gratitude, and so on. What we connect with externally can support our internal experiences. Look to see what is in the center of your life. What do you surround yourself with, what books are on your shelves, what images on your walls, what certificates of accomplishment do you keep around?

Thinking in terms of purification and cultivation is one of the many ways we can help balance the elements.

Knowing which element to work with

The practices in this book are helpful for anyone who seriously practices them whether or not there is an understanding of the elements. But with such an understanding comes the ability to

determine what is lacking or dominating and how to bring about an increasing balance.

The previous descriptions of the elements should provide enough information and direction for you to start observing elemental traits. With continued observation, intuition will begin to use the idea of the elements as a tool for understanding experience and a new way of looking into ourselves and our lives will arise. My concern in this book is not with the intricate kinds of diagnoses of elemental imbalances that are found in Tibetan and Chinese medical systems, but with a general understanding that will help individuals on the spiritual path.

One way to think about long term imbalance is to think about what you've wanted to change about yourself and how you act and react in life. This inquiry usually leads to particular traits or capacities you want to develop or diminish. What do you want to change in how you feel physically, emotionally, energetically, mentally? Where do you run into problems? Are you always late? Do you talk too much? Too little? Are you generally alert or dull? Agitated or calm? Are you creative? Comfortable in yourself? Are you grounded? Do you worry too much? Are you responsible? Are you accomplishing what you want? How is your meditation practice? Is there progress or do you simply spend time in a trance every day? Is your meditation the same as it was years ago or has there been progress? Do you have more insight? Is your mind quieter and calmer? Are you more peaceful? Is your practice joyful or is it a burden?

The answers to these questions can be translated into elemental terms.

For each area that you would like to change, think of the elemental quality that needs to be cultivated or diminished. You will most

likely, but not necessarily, come up with one or two elements that seem to dominate your experience or one or two elements that seem lacking.

Another way to find out about your dominant traits is to ask your friends what element they think dominates you. Even if they don't know anything about the elements, you might find that you get surprisingly consistent responses.

The important thing is to understand yourself. Bring your intelligence to bear on the questions of your own life and apply your insights to improving the quality of your life and the effectiveness of your spiritual practice. You can change even very ingrained habitual tendencies, but you must apply your understanding and effort, and you must do so intelligently. Life is too short to waste doing inappropriate or ineffective spiritual practices, and too short not to engage in appropriate and effective spiritual practices.

Choose the appropriate practices described later in this book. If you are too scattered, develop strength of mind by developing earth. If you are too dull, develop air with the practices focusing on prana. If you worry too much, diminish the air quality, and cultivate earth and water. If you are too angry, diminish fire and cultivate water. If you are irresponsible, diminish water or space and cultivate earth and fire. And so on.

Understanding how to work with the elements also provides tools to use in situations in which you are unbalanced. If you become nervous when meeting strangers, develop your connection to earth so that you can call on it and change your experience in the moment. Connect to earth, ground yourself. On the other hand, if you are dull when with other people, develop your ability to

connect to the qualities of fire and air, and call on those when needed.

This kind of work develops the quality of life, and that is good. More importantly, it is a tool to support spiritual practice. When you sit to meditate, if you are dull, connect to the pervasive qualities of air, to the inspiration of fire. If you are scattered, ground through the earth element. If you are agitated, connect to the comfort of water, and so on.

A description of the Five Elements

Earth

Earth is the ground in our ordinary life. In the shamanic world view, it is usually the center of everything and is placed in the center of the mandala, both in graphic representations and in experience. (In tantra and Dzogchen, space is considered the ground and center.)

Most of the elemental qualities of earth can be grasped intuitively: heavy, solid, connected, secure. Earth has gravity. It can be rich and fertile when in harmony with the other elements - when there is enough heat, moisture, and good air. It can also be cold and unbearable without enough heat, arid and harsh without enough water, and stale and lifeless without enough air.

When earth is balanced in us, we feel stable, grounded, confident. We are neither too heavy nor too airy. We are rooted in our experience. We are not easily knocked off balance nor do we lose touch with what is important. When we know something, we do not lose that knowledge. Our faith is steady. Our intentions do not easily get swept aside by impulse and our efforts are consistent. We are responsible and can stand on our own. The higher dimension of this quality is to be grounded in pure being.

If there is too much earth, we are plodding, dull, lazy, and dim. Too solid. Unable to move. Our thinking is heavy, literal, and lacking creativity. Too much earth can result in depression or being stuck or resigned - in our careers or relationships or spiritual practices. Then it becomes difficult to bring about change; we

identify with problems and they seem very solid. We like to sleep. We try to meditate but nod off. And after we sleep, it can be hard to recall dreams in their entirety or at all. An excess of earth can make us insensitive and uninspired. Too much earth may mean being quiet all the time or, once having started talking, being unable to stop. Being late for every appointment or punctual to the minute can both be expressions of earth. Traditionally, the negative aspect of earth is ignorance.

If we have too little earth we are without anchor. We are flighty, spacy, or agitated. Unable to complete what we begin, we are ungrounded and dissatisfied. We're not at home anywhere; we're always looking for what will ground us and make us secure. If we are deficient in earth, there are different ways to get grounded.

Besides doing the exercises described later in this book, we can use additional approaches. For example, a secure home, a healthy relationship, or a solid job may help generate the sense of groundedness. Such corrections of the external situation can be appropriate in certain situations. Once security is developed externally, the sense of stability can serve as a base upon which to develop positive internal qualities. Usually it's best to find the positive quality inside oneself and manifest it outwardly, but sometimes reversing the sequence is helpful.

When we identify ourselves as substantial, physical entities, we will naturally try to ground ourselves in substantial, external conditions. When we identify as energetic beings, we will try to ground in our feelings. When we identify with pure awareness, we will find the ground in the nature of mind. The gross mind feels stability in solid earth; the more subtle, impersonal awareness grounds in space.

In terms of meditation practice, balanced earth is a great and necessary support. Even in the highest practices, such as the emptiness practices in sutra or Cutting Through (trekchod) in Dzogchen, concentration practices that develop the qualities of earth and the stability of mind are recommended. The mind must be stable to progress on the path of meditation, and that stability arises as a development from strengthening the earth element. In the teachings it is said that people who are predominantly fire and air will quickly have spiritual experiences but they will also quickly lose them. People who are predominantly earth and water may be slower to have the experiences but, when they do, they are able to sustain and develop them and ultimately will develop faster.

If you are ungrounded in your meditative practice, develop the quality of earth through developing concentration. Practice steadiness of mind and body. Eat heavier foods and avoid stimulants. Exercise. Usually we already know what to do to remedy problems in our practice but we don't do it. Making ourselves do what is best is one way to develop the consistency of the earth element.

Once stability of mind is developed through concentration, the unwanted movement of the mind slows and stops. Experience is clear and grounded in silence, not filled with buzzing thoughts. Lights and colors are sharper. If we are already introduced to the nature of mind, it becomes easier to continue in the natural state and to integrate the practice with all activities. Mindfulness becomes easy and can be maintained throughout the day, and ultimately throughout the night. When the mind is stable, insight naturally arises. This is the mind waking. It is not concentration but is a higher level of practice that arises from mental stability.

If there is too much earth, the approach is quite different. Eat lighter foods and try to avoid exhaustion. Practice being flexible in your thinking. Call on the elemental qualities of air and fire to generate flexibility, creativity, and liveliness.

When the earth element is fully developed in spiritual practice it becomes the wisdom of equanimity. This is the higher spiritual capacity of earth that allows the practitioner to be grounded and even in any situation, however extreme, and to recognize the luminous innate - awareness common to all experience.

Water

When the water element is in balance, there is comfort in ourselves and in our lives. We can be fluid, moving easily around and through the events and relationships of life. Balanced water is accepting of situations. It is joyful, content. The higher dimension of water in personal experience is the joy of being, a contentment with being alive that is innate rather than dependent on external circumstances. When we are connected to the joy of the water element, it manifests outwardly. We tend to be happy with the people we meet, the places we go. We enjoy life.

This joy can be lost in the unavoidable suffering that accompanies dualistic experience. And then we often look outside for it, believing that we will be comfortable in life when we get the new partner, job, riches, degree, recognition, or whatever the focus of the moment is. We think joy is found in having and doing, rather than in being.

In a person dominated by the water element there can be a lot of feeling and emotion and sometimes too much comfort. Too much

comfort means letting responsibilities slide and floating through life. It means being lost in the comfort, losing presence, feeling content in situations that should be changed, or lacking productivity. There is a tendency not to work hard at what is difficult even if this means giving up what is valuable.

In meditation, too much water can diminish clarity. This is not the dullness and heaviness of earth but a kind of weak drifting that makes it difficult to accomplish tasks and enjoy their fruits. Too much water can also result in our being lost in emotion, constantly tossed and turned on the waves of feeling, too sensitive to transient emotional states, weepy, or trapped in self-pity. Rather than being stuck in the comfort of the water element, we're stuck in the ebb and flow of emotion.

Too little water results in discomfort in ourselves, a lack of joy, and a lack of comfort around other people. Even if we're grounded in earth, if we have too little water it is a dry kind of solidity, without pleasure or appreciation. If both earth and water are deficient, we'll be dominated by fire or air or both, resulting in a lack of groundedness and excessive agitation. Too little water in meditation means internal discomfort in the practice and a loss of the joy in the spiritual path. The practice can become infertile and arid.

Practices that develop the positive aspects of water are the affective practices. For practitioners of the Tibetan traditions these would be Guru Yoga that opens the heart; the development of love and compassion; and the practice of giving and receiving. Spiritual practice can become a project of the mind alone if the heart is not involved; in the Tibetan traditions, compassion and love are considered necessary on the spiritual path. The highest development of the water element in spiritual practice is the development of the mirror-like wisdom.

Fire

The positive aspect of fire is the capacity to create, to initiate projects on every level, and to accomplish what creativity sets in motion. Intuition is related to fire as is enthusiasm and excitement.

Balanced fire results in inspired undertakings, happiness with work, and accomplishment. Fire is related to a bliss and joy that is different from the joy of the water element, which is connected to contentment and acceptance. The joy of fire is more related to enthusiasm and bliss in the body, and the joy of waking experiences. The higher experience of fire is the bliss of being. Its highest expression is the development of the wisdom of discrimination.

People with too much fire are easily agitated. Simple things ignite their irritability and they may react impulsively, lashing out without thinking, in angry words and gestures. Lacking tolerance, they can be annoyed by different religions, different races, different philosophies. They even can become annoyed by the way someone else is sitting or talking.

Because fire is the opposite of earth, too much fire often results in a lack of grounding. There is a lot of fast movement and instability. If there is also a lack of water, there can be a persistent discomfort and restlessness. It's difficult to sit still for five minutes; there's always something to do. Silence and stillness can be bothersome. There are difficulties sleeping. People with too much fire often like to talk a lot, and quickly. The next idea arises before the present one is articulated. Everything just keeps coming.

In meditation practice, too much fire results in thoughts that come fast and are hard to control. New ideas continually arise that seem too important to put aside. There's a lack of calm, a lack of peace,

and too much agitation and restlessness. The agitation may be arise from a relative lack of water; the instability may be a lack of earth. Without enough fire on the spiritual path, the practitioner lacks the energy and inspiration required to do the practice or has a difficult time finding joy and bliss in it. Instead, practice is done by rote, without the inspiration to make the leap to a new understanding or a new experience. As a result the development of the practice is much slower.

When fire is deficient, there is also a lack of vitality and a lack of inspiration. There is no enjoyment in work. There's no enthusiasm. Nothing new arises. Life can be a cycle of routine, plodding existence. Or, if fire is deficient when there is a preponderance of air, there can be movement, but it is repetitive and uncreative. Intellectually the person can be very sharp due to the air - but not be able to create from what is learned.

Practices that develop fire are the inner heat (tummo), made famous through the documentation of practitioners sitting in snow, drying wet towels solely with the heat of their bodies; the practice of the external rushen, in which one surrenders to the experience of karmic tendencies in order to differentiate them from pure experience; and some of the physical yogas.

Air

Air is the element that carries change and, when it is developed, one can transform the negative into the positive, hate into love, jealousy into openness, greed into generosity, pride and egoism into peace. Air is related to curiosity and learning and flexibility of intellect. In its highest aspect, it is the wisdom of accomplishment.

When air is dominant, the qualities of earth and water are usually deficient. Then there is little stability or contentment. It's difficult to stick to anything. If we are in one place, another looks better, and when we're in the new place, we want to be somewhere else. It's hard to accept things as they are, difficult to find and connect to comfort in what is. We may be jittery, unable to focus, worried, or flighty. Happiness gives way to unhappiness when even a small negativity is encountered. Resolution gives way to uncertainty. Belief crumbles easily. There is no inner gravity, so external influences drag us this way and that.

When air is deficient, it's easy to get stuck. Things become difficult to change. When a worry arises, it remains. When a simple concern arises, it lodges inside. When there is balanced air, worry and concern give way to the next thing - a resolution is found. Balanced air allows us to be flexible. If things go wrong, we can still appreciate other aspects of experience: there can be bad news and a beautiful sky at the same time. Air allows the mind to move in new directions, to see things from different perspectives, and this allows the accumulation of knowledge and understanding.

How fast you can change your negative anger or depression or annoyance or self-pity into something positive has to do with how developed your air element is.

The air element is also the prana, which carries the mind. This is why, in tantra and Dzogchen, physical movements and postures are recommended to control the air element in order to support particular experiences. When the air is disturbed, it's difficult for the mind to concentrate. It's difficult to sit for meditation. There is impatience. Questions arise and there is a need to ask them. When there is too much air, it is difficult to have experiences of the empty basis of everything, the kunzhi, because the mind and

energy are darting this way and that, attracted to clarity and manifestation.

Air connects everything. It has to do with every kind of communication. As prana, elemental air pervades everywhere and everything; it is the essential energy of existence.

In Tibetan practices performed at the time of death, the lama summons the dead spirit through the air element, through inhalation. Once the spirit is contacted, the lama will help him or her to resolve what was left unresolved at death.

Some of the tantras talk about air in relation to magical powers. Magic always has to do with transformation; without the elemental energy of air there is no transformation. Traditionally, a lack of air is said to inhibit the ability to perform magic and makes it difficult to direct one's rebirth.

When there is a lack of air, there's often a lack of progress in spiritual practices and an inability to transform what arises into practice.

Practices that develop air are the tsa lung practices that work with the channels and prana in the body. These include the physical yoga of trul khar; the pho wa, or transference of consciousness; contemplative breathing, during which the central channel is opened using the breath and visualization; and so on. Some of these practices are described in detail later in this book. In general, practices related to air separate the pure and impure prana, which also means separating the pure and impure mind states. Air is the element that allows for the discrimination and separation of these states.

Space

Everything arises from space, exists in space, and dissolves into space. In us that sacred element of space manifests as awareness. Experience is what arises in awareness, as the content of awareness, but it is not something other than awareness.

When the space element is balanced in us, there is room in life; whatever arises can be accommodated. There is enough time, enough emotional capacity, enough tolerance. The elements of experience all fit; they are neither too much nor too little. We are not dissociated from experience nor completely caught by it. Rather than running after or away from the content of experience, we are more rooted in ourselves or the one who is experiencing.

When space dominates, we are "spacy" and can't connect to the contents of space, that is, to the other elements. This state is not an integration with the nature of mind. We simply lose connection. There can be a loss of meaning, not from the depression that can happen when earth dominates, but from a kind of superficial connection to life that leaves us rootless and drifting. Too much space results in a lack of awareness, a lack of presence. We become lost and out of touch.

While too much space causes us to lose touch with the qualities that arise in space, too little space leaves us dominated by whatever arises. Everything seems solid and impenetrable. Small problems can be overwhelming. big problems devastating. Too little space makes it easier for another element to dominate and to determine our reactions.

A person with balanced space may work full time, have a family, take care of a home, meditate and engage in spiritual practices, and accommodate everything. There is enough space for everything. Another person in the same situation but with too little space can't stand it; the work is too much, the kids are a bother, there's no time for friends, there's no time to cook and no way to relax. And a third person, in the same situation but dominated by space, drifts through life; the job isn't important, the kids are distant, the spouse is a roommate, tasks get done or don't. There isn't enough focus.

We usually identify with our external situations: our jobs, relationships, interests, bodies, and so on. This is identifying with the contents of space, the experience rather than the experiencer. Of course, then, when we lose some of these things, we feel lost. The relationship ends, the job ends, we move to a new place, and we say we're lost. We're in-between things and we don't quite know who or what we are.

If we fully integrate with the space element, we know the nature of mind. Then we are free because we are no longer bound by what arises in experience. We realize our true nature and do not try to find ourselves in the particulars of our situation. We are connected to the essence and don't look outside to find the cause of our problems. We know any problem we are experiencing is simply something arising in space; we don't have to become the problem.

We can support ourselves through the experience of being rather than through how others see us or what we have or what we do. There is more acceptance of ourselves and of what we encounter. For example, a man who has a beautiful family and a successful business, and who identifies himself with both, can lose both. Then he can lose himself or open himself, depending on his relationship to space. A painful situation can result in a negative or a positive outcome, depending on the response. With the loss of external

definition, identity can become either constricted, fearful, and fragile or it can expand outside of its normal confines by identifying with the space in which experience arises.

In meditation practice, unbalanced space results in a lack of focus and presence. The mind is easily distracted by whatever arises in it because one identifies with experience rather than the basis of experience. Dzogchen is the main practice for developing the space element, but space is also realized as the other four elements are brought into increasing balance. The wisdom of emptiness is related to space.

The Five Elements - Outline of the Practice in Three Parts

The Preliminary Practice; The Main Practice; and The Concluding Practice

First, The Preliminary Practice – in three parts

1. Nine Purification Breaths
2. Guru Yoga
3. Invite and connect to the four guests

Next, The Main Practice – in four parts (note that parts 1, 2, and 4 each include the recitation of 3 mantras – the seed syllable of the particular element, called ‘the mantra for transformation’; the mantra of the particular elemental goddess; and the mantra of the combined elements, which is the same in each section.)

1. The Transformation of the Body

Sound the seed mantra three, five, or seven times; transform into the elemental goddess. Recite the mantra of the goddess. Recite the mantra of the combined elements.

2. The Transformation of the Energy

Invoke the elemental goddess in the organ. Recite the three mantras.

3. Retrieving the Elemental Energies

The goddesses travel to retrieve the lost elemental qualities.

The elemental energies fill the organ.

4. The Transformation of the Mind

Recite the seed mantra. The goddess from the organ fills the central channel with the elemental essence. The qualities and energies are internalized in the deepest level of yourself, the most subtle levels of experience, as you recite the mantra of the goddess. Then recite the mantra of the combined elements.

The practice can be done for one or more of the elements, or repeated for each of the five elements.

and then, The Concluding Practices – in three parts

1. Recite the long-life mantra

SO DRUM A KAR MU LA TING NAM
‘OD DU MU YE TSE NI DZA

2. Rest in the nature of mind. Abide in pure presence.

and

3. Dedicate the Merit from the practice to the welfare of all beings.

A Chart of the Five Elements

Element: Earth

Mantra for transformation: MA KHAM

Mantra of the goddess: KHAM LA ZHI KYE LE DU

Mantra of all the elements combined: A YAM RAM MAM
KHAM BRUM DU

Color of goddess and syllables: radiant yellow-gold

Organ: spleen

In right and left hands: counterclockwise swastika (unchanging truth) and healing vase

Right and left hands of goddess in the organ: counterclockwise swastika and healing vase

Qualities: strength, steadiness, security, groundedness, focus, connection

Spiritual development: overcoming ignorance, increasing wisdom

Wisdom: wisdom of equanimity

Image: powerful, solid mountains

Element: Water

Mantra for transformation: A MAM

Mantra of the goddess: MAM DANG RA MAM TING DU

Mantra of all the elements combined: A YAM RAM MAM
KHAM BRUM DU

Color of goddess and mantra: luminous blue

Organ: kidneys (goddess in each)

In right and left hands: victory banner with crocodile and healing
vase

Right and left hands of goddess in the organ: wish-fulfilling jewel
and healing vase

Qualities: calm, comfortable, sensuous, relaxed, peaceful, flowing

Spiritual development and wisdom: overcoming jealousy,
increasing openness

Wisdom: mirror-like wisdom Image: vast, calm lake

Element: Fire

Mantra for transformation: A RAM

Mantra of the goddess: RAM TSANG TANG NE RAM DU

Mantra of all the elements combined: A YAM RAM MAM
KHAM BRUM DU

Color of goddess and mantra: luminous red

Organ: liver

In right and left hands: lighting bolt and skull

Right and left hands of goddess in the organ: flame and vase

Qualities: energy, warmth, strong will, inspiration creativity, bliss

Spiritual development: inner fire, overcoming desire and greed,
increasing generosity

Wisdom: discriminating wisdom

Image: fiery volcano

Element: Air

Mantra for transformation: MA YAM

Mantra of the goddess: YAM YAM NI LI THUN DU

Mantra of all the elements combined: A YAM RAM MAM
KHAM BRUM DU

Color of goddess and mantra: luminous green

Organ: lungs (goddess in each)

In right and left hands: waving wind flag and vase

Right and left hands of goddess in the organ: green air wheel and
vase

Qualities: flexibility, liveliness, freshness, quickness

Spiritual development: overcoming pride, increasing peacefulness

Wisdom: all-accomplishing wisdom

Image: fresh wind through the valley and across the mountains

Element: Space

Mantra for transformation: MA A

Mantra of the goddess: A M U YE A KAR A NI A

Mantra of all the elements combined: A YAM RAM MAM
KHAM BRUM DU

Color of goddess and mantra: luminous white or clear

Organ: heart

In right and left hands: wish fulfilling jewel and skull filled with red and white seminal essences

Rather than a goddess, in the central channel at the heart level is a luminous white A radiating the five pure lights. From this the other goddesses emanate and travel, and to this they return and empty the elemental essence into the heart.

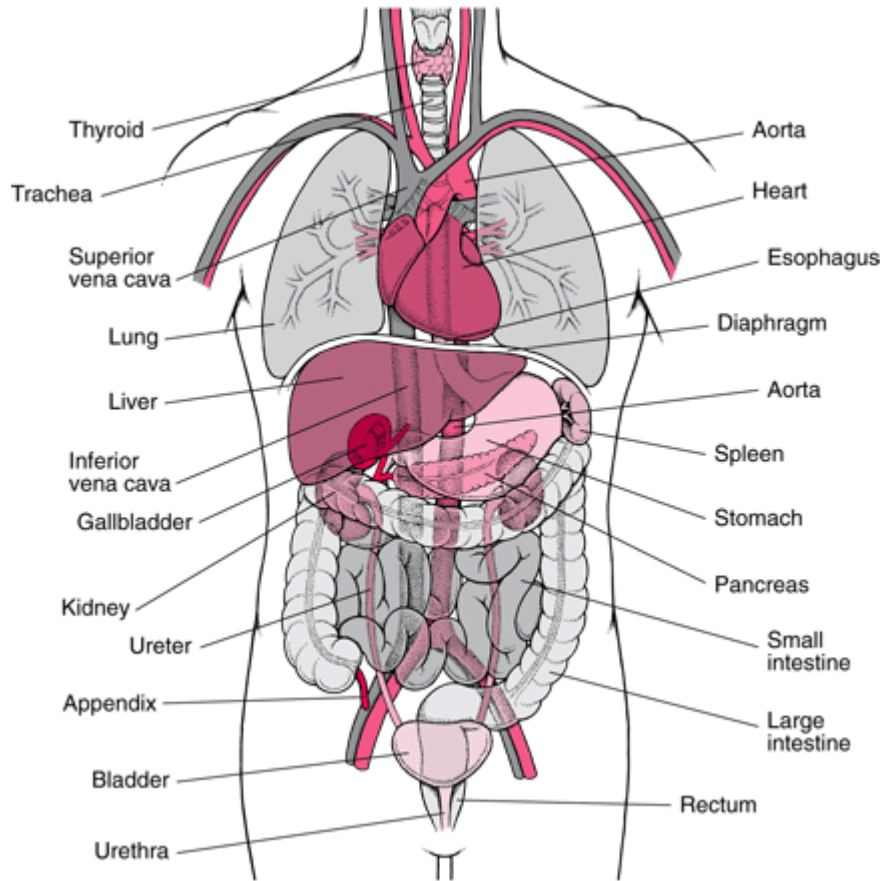
Qualities: spaciousness, ease, clarity, expansiveness, vastness

Spiritual development: overcoming anger, increasing love

Wisdom: wisdom of emptiness

Image: vast open sky over the desert or plains

The Organs



The Nine Purification Breaths

The Nine Purification Breaths is a short practice designed to open and clear the channels and relax the mind and body. It is good to do before any meditation practice and can also be done in the morning upon waking and in the evening prior to sleep.

Sit in a cross-legged meditation posture. Place your hands palm up in your lap, with the left hand resting on the right. Tuck your chin under just a little to straighten the back of the neck. Keep the back straight but not rigid, the chest open. The eyes can be closed or open.

Visualize the three primary channels. The central channel begins in the center of the body, four finger-widths below the navel. It rises straight up the center of the body. It is the size of a thick fountain pen and widens slightly from the heart to its opening at the crown of the head. The side channels are the diameter of pencils and join the central channel at its base below the navel. They rise straight through the body on either side of the central channel, curve under the skull, pass down behind the eyes, and open at the nostrils. In women the right channel is red and the left is white. In men the right channel is white and the left is red. The central channel is blue in both men and women.

First Three Breaths

Men: Raise the right hand with the thumb pressing the base of the ring finger. Closing the right nostril with the ring finger, inhale green light through the left nostril. Then, closing the left nostril with the right ring finger, exhale completely through the right nostril. Repeat this for three inhalations and exhalations.

Women: Raise the left hand with the thumb pressing the base of the ring finger. Closing the left nostril with the left ring finger, inhale green light through the right nostril. Then, closing the right nostril with the left ring finger, exhale completely through the left nostril. Repeat this for three inhalations and exhalations.

With each exhalation, imagine all obstacles linked with male potencies expelled from the white channel in the form of light blue air. These include illnesses associated with the winds as well as obstacles and obscurations connected with the past.

Second Three Breaths

Men and Women: Change hands and nostrils and repeat for three inhalations and exhalations. With each exhalation, imagine all obstacles linked with female potencies expelled from the red channel in the form of light pink air. These include illnesses associated with bile as well as obstacles **and obscurations associated with the future.**

Third Three Breaths

Men and Women: Place the left hand on top of the right in the lap, palms up. Inhale green healing light through both nostrils. Visualize it moving down the side channels to the juncture with the main channel, four fingerwidths below the navel. With the exhalation, visualize the energy rising up the central channel and out the top of the head. Complete three inhalations and exhalations. With each exhalation, imagine all potencies for illnesses associated with hostile spirits expelled from the top of the head in the form of black smoke. Also expel illnesses associated with phlegm and any other obstacles and obscurations associated with the present.

The Four Guests

Invite and connect to the four guests.

Invite the four guests and visualize them in the space above you and surrounding you on all sides. Connect with them. Don't limit yourself, be open. Feel an emotional and energetic connection. Let it change you, soften you, and revitalize you. Find a greater lightness in yourself. Let go of what is negative. This kind of spiritual practice is not passive; you must be involved. If you have a strong intent and open yourself, higher forces and entities will respond, but if you do all this mechanically there will be little benefit.

Invite the first guests

The first guests include the buddhas and enlightened protectors and bodhisattvas, the teachers of the lineage to which you are connected, and the deities to whom you have tantric commitments. The illuminated goddesses of the elements are included in the first guests. Visualize them and feel their presence. They are beautiful, fully enlightened goddesses. The Space Goddess is white, the Air Goddess is green, the Fire Goddess is red, the Water Goddess is blue, and the Earth Goddess is yellow.

Make prayers to the goddesses, requesting help in removing internal and external obstacles, retrieving the lost and damaged qualities of the soul, and overcoming even the innermost spiritual obstacles. Ask for blessings, for power and support, and for guidance. Be clear about what you're asking for. These are the enlightened beings and, though beyond turmoil themselves, they respond to our intent and need and will help. Ask them for healing for yourself and for all beings who need healing.

If you don't believe in spirits, just try to connect to higher forces, It's not a question of believing and not believing, We all have the experience of higher forces, Here we are giving them a name and trying to understand them as they are understood and experienced in the ancient Tibetan traditions. If you focus au and connect with these forces, whatever name you use, you can draw positive qualities from that connection.

Invite the second guests

Connect to the second guests. They are the powerful guardians and protectors of the teachings, gods and goddesses, and the beings that are the stars and planets. Ask them for healing power in order to heal yourself and others. Ask them to remove obstacles and pacify disturbances. Ask that they bless you with their own positive qualities.

Invite the third guests

Connect to the third guests: the eight classes of beings and the karmic guests. These include the spirits related to place - to the mountains, the water, the trees, and the fields. They are the forces you can feel in different locations, that can be beneficent or malevolent. Ask them to support you and to not disturb you. Request that they guide you to the time and place where your energies and qualities were lost, stolen, or damaged. Connect to the spirits who have taken energies from you and ask that they return what they took. Offer them prayers for their well-being.

Invite the fourth guests

Connect to the fourth guests, the guests of compassion. These are the beings weaker than you and beings who, like yourself, suffer the difficulties of daily life, whatever realm they may inhabit. Imagine offering them whatever they need in order to be happy and healthy. Cultivate generosity in your giving. Ask them for help in healing the soul and life-force, and to return the energy they have taken.

Guru Yoga

Guru Yoga is a fundamental practice in all Tibetan traditions. If you have not already been taught a specific form of the practice, you can visualize all the enlightened beings and teachers to whom you are connected and pray to them. Relax your body and open your heart. Generate feelings of devotion and gratitude. Make a sincere request for aid and support on the spiritual journey, and particularly for the practice you are about to do.

The central figure in the visualization can be a Buddha or your teacher. If you have received the appropriate initiation or transmission, you may use a male or female visionary deity. Visualize a great wisdom fire coming from the heart of the Master, burning away your negative karmic traces and obstructions. After the flame, imagine powerful wisdom winds rushing from the Master's heart, blowing away the residue of the fire and any remaining obstructions. Finally, visualize a torrent of pure water streaming from the heart of the Master, washing away any remaining negativities, leaving you completely purified--a pure vessel fit for the sacred teachings.

Now, receive initiation from the Master: A beam of pure white light, originating in the chakra behind the Master's brow, shines into your corresponding chakra situated between and behind the eyebrows. Through this you receive the initiation and empowerment of the body. Feel your entire body relax. Then a pure red light radiates from the Master's throat chakra into your throat chakra. Through this you receive the initiation and empowerment of the energy. Feel an even deeper relaxation. After this, a pure blue light shines from the Master's heart into your own. Through this you receive the initiation and empowerment of the mind. Feel a relaxation into the most subtle dimension of yourself.

Then imagine the Master and the surrounding enlightened beings transforming into light that enters your body through the crown chakra and then descends to rest in your heart. Let all effort, visualization, and thought dissolve, and rest in clear presence. If you have been introduced to the nature of mind, abide in that during the practice. If not, remain as present and aware as possible.

Earth

The Main Practice, in Four Parts

1. The Transformation of the Body

Sing the mantra MA KHAM three, five, or seven times. Immediately, from the infinite distances of vast space, many luminous yellow-golden syllables -MA KHAM - begin to move toward you. They radiate the pure yellow light of the earth element and the light washes over and through you. The syllables gather above your head, above the crown chakra, and then descend. Feel the sensation on your crown as they enter your body. The moment they touch the top of your head, your entire body is instantaneously transformed into the Earth Goddess. Visualize this, but more importantly, feel the change.

Your skin, flesh, blood, nerves, channels, bones - all the cells in your body - are transformed into the elemental earth energy. You are earth! In your left hand is a vase full of the healing nectar of the earth element. In your right hand is the counterclockwise swastika representing the changeless, eternal truth. Completely embody the energies and qualities of the Goddess of Earth. Feel her presence, loving and wise, and pray to her to remove any diseases, pain, or afflictions on the level of the body.

Then sing the mantra of the goddess - KHAM LA ZHI KYE LE DU as you receive her blessings, generating the experience of the positive qualities of the earth element in the body. Feel grounded, strong, capable, steady, and feel that all illnesses, obstacles, and obstructions of the body are removed.

Try to feel the qualities of the particular element. Beyond the differences, all the goddesses are enlightened, loving, powerful, and beautiful. They are the pure aspect of the elemental energy that is enlightened and that can respond to you as an individual.

As you generate the positive qualities of the element and receive the blessings of the goddess, recite her mantra: KHAM LA ZHI KYE LE DU. There is no fixed number of recitations-sing the mantra as long as it is helpful. Allow the practice to open and soften your heart.

Finally, abide in the transformed state while singing the mantra of all the elements combined: A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU - for as long as you are comfortable. This seals the practice, empowering and stabilizing the experience.

This is the transformation of the body.

2. The Transformation of the Energy

You have transformed into the goddess. Again, sing the mantra MA KHAM three, five, or seven times. Keep your mind focused in the spleen. (The organ is in the transformed body. If you cannot feel the organ, focus in the part of the body where the spleen is.) Now visualize and feel the presence of the Earth Goddess in the organ. The goddess situated in the organ is the same luminous yellow goddess into which you have transformed, but smaller. Pray to her, asking her to remove all energetic obstacles and negativities, asking that she cultivate in you the positive qualities of earth.

Use your imagination to make a strong connection to the goddess, to her love and wisdom, as you recite her mantra: KHAM LA ZHI KYE LE DU. Feel that all obstructions and negativities on the level of energy are being removed, all illnesses healed, all mental confusions cleared. As before, in her left hand is a vase filled with healing nectar, in her right, the counterclockwise swastika. Feel the transformation in the dimension of energy.

Finally, abide in the transformed state as you recite the mantra of the combined elements - A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU - for as long as you are comfortable.

This is the transformation of the energetic dimension.

3. Retrieving the Elemental Energies

Breathe slowly and deeply. With each exhalation, the goddess in the spleen sends out countless emanations of herself to retrieve the elemental earth essence. They travel through the channels of the body and leave through the right nostril. As they leave, they carry from your body whatever is negative, no longer needed, or toxic and release those things, dissolving them in pure space.

The goddesses travel beyond any limitations of time and space. They travel to the enlightened beings and ask for your healing. They travel to times and scenes in which positive elemental qualities have been lost and retrieve the elemental essence that was lost there. They travel to places of great natural power - where the earth energy is strong and where great masters have practiced - and collect the elemental energies. They travel to beings who have taken the energies from you and they recover what was taken.

The elemental energies are retrieved as pure elemental essence and carried in the vases that each goddess has in her left hand. The goddesses return and enter your body with the inhalation, through the left nostril. They are like bees returning with pollen collected from many flowers. They enter the spleen and pour what they have recovered into the organ, healing it, and into the vase the goddess in the spleen holds. As the organ is healed, imagine all energetic obstacles being cleared.

Between the inhalation and the exhalation, hold the breath gently for a few seconds and feel the elemental energies pervade all experience. Then, with the exhalation, the goddesses travel back out through the right nostril and the cycle repeats. With each exhalation goddesses travel outward, with each inhalation goddesses return to you with the elemental essence. Spend time with this, breathing deeply and slowly into and from the spleen, expelling what is negative and accumulating the positive earth energies. Feel the presence of the goddess, loving, wise, and powerful. Feel the changes in your body, energy, and mind.

As the goddesses leave your transformed body through the right nostril, they travel without any restrictions. They go to enlightened beings and ask for healing energy for you. They go to the places and incidents in the past where you know you lost some positive quality connected with the element. In the case of earth, it's where you lost groundedness, strength, steadfastness, confidence, fertility, capability. You needn't try to direct the goddesses or look for such incidents, just let them go. They go into the past of this life and other lives, to the scenes of trauma, loss, terror, or shock. They enter all six realms of existence. They visit areas of great natural potency, taking earth energy from the mountains, the fields, the grasslands, and the deserts.

This is the main part of the practice. If you have time, spend a half-hour to an hour doing just this part of the practice, breathing slowly and deeply, exhaling from the organ, inhaling into the organ, breathing out the negativities, breathing in the positive qualities of the element's essence.

With each visit to a place or time or being, the goddesses recover the elemental essence as healing nectar - luminous, yellow, elemental earth energy gathered in the vases they hold in their left hands. Then they return, entering your transformed body with the inhalation, through the left nostril. They return to the organ and pour the light of the elemental essence into the organ and into the vase of the goddess there. The nectar is a psychic and spiritual medicine that heals even the most subtle levels of your being.

You can use your fingers to block one nostril and then the other but it isn't necessary. Simply visualizing the goddesses leaving from the right nostril and returning through the left is enough. Breathe deeply, with your full attention. Don't be thinking of something else. Make the inhalation slow and deep. The exhalation can be a little stronger. Feel the organ itself doing the breathing and healing in the process. Feel the elemental quality not only in the organ, but also radiating throughout the body, healing body, energy, and mind.

With each exhalation more goddesses leave to retrieve the element. With each inhalation goddesses return, pouring the elemental light they have retrieved into the organ.

The goddesses may go to places unknown to you. As they travel, images or memories may arise. In the West it seems common for traumatic memories to be activated. If this happens to you, just let the goddesses go to the event and retrieve the positive qualities that were lost there as pure elemental energies. Don't be concerned if

emotion arises. And don't lose your transformed identity; remain as the powerful and enlightened identity of the goddess and abide in the balance of the sacred elements. If you revisit a traumatic incident, visit with power, strength, and forgiveness as the goddess would, and allow healing to take place.

The goddesses may also go directly to non-physical beings to recover what those beings took from you. This is the traditional way of describing what occurs during the retrieval of the elemental qualities. And they may go to areas of the natural world that have strong elemental energy - the water of the ocean, the fire of a volcano, the air at the top of the highest mountains, the earth of raw land, and the space of the sky. They go to the spirits associated with the elements, the divine forces associated with the elements. You don't need to plan; just let them go freely. Continue to let images arise - they help connect you to specific qualities - but don't hold on. Let them fade away or transform.

Continue until you feel healed.

4. The Transformation of the Mind

Exhale fully, then inhale deeply. Imagine all the goddesses returning with that inhalation. They enter the organ, pour out the elemental essence they have retrieved, and are absorbed back into the goddess in the organ. Hold the breath for a few moments and feel the elemental energy pervade **the** body and pervade every element of experience. Repeat this a few times.

Sing the mantra MA KHAM three, five, or seven times. As you do, the goddess in the organ becomes increasingly lively, vivid, and joyful.

Imagine the positive qualities that have accumulated in the vase of the Earth Goddess to be the pure healing nectar of the earth element. As you sing the seed syllable, she rises up the central channel and pours the golden nectar into your crown chakra. Experience the nectar flowing down through your central channel. The nectar in the central channel is the subtlest dimension of healing.

From the vase in her left hand, the Goddess pours the essence of the earth element, in the form of a nectar of pure yellow light, into your crown chakra, into the blue central channel, filling it with luminous earth energy.

Feel the healing nectar flowing into the central channel, from the crown chakra to the bottom of the central channel four finger-widths below the navel. Feel it flowing up and down the central channel, removing even the most subtle obscurations and blockages, and allow yourself to feel increasing peace and bliss.

The nectar slowly accumulates in the heart center, and then is integrated into consciousness, into the soul.

From the depth of connection with the natural state, recite the mantra as the self-arising sound of the Goddess. All subtle obstacles to contemplation and all doubts are healed through the power of the mantra and the blessings of the Goddess.

Develop this experience as much as possible while chanting the mantra of the goddess: KHAM LA ZHI KYE LE DU. Feel the light in the heart center and in the deepest levels of experience. Feel it integrate with your awareness until awareness and the elemental quality merge completely. Feel that whatever needs healing is healed. Whatever needs to be strengthened is strengthened.

Ignorance is dispelled and wisdom manifests, particularly the *wisdom of equanimity*. The subtle spiritual and mental obscurations are cleared. Use your imagination, your deep breathing.

Then abide in the transformed state as you recite the mantra of the combined elements - A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU - for as long as you are comfortable.

(note that resting in the nature of mind can be beneficially done at this point, and also after the recitation of the long life mantra, which I have organized as one of the concluding practices)

Feel that all your doubts are resolved and abide in the nature of mind: changeless, with neither beginning nor end, clear, fresh, vivid.

Feel your deepest doubts clarify; experience the nature of mind: changeless, ceaseless, bright, fresh, vivid. Feel this unbounded, open presence, and merge your mind with the unbounded state. The visualization dissolves into space as your mind dissolves into the natural state. Rest there as long as the experience remains fresh.

Water

The Main Practice, in Four Parts

1. The Transformation of the Body

Sing the mantra A MAM three, five, or seven times. Immediately, from the infinite distances of vast space, many luminous blue syllables –A MAM - begin to move toward you. They radiate the pure blue light of the water element and the light washes over and through you. The syllables gather above your head, above the crown chakra, and then descend. Feel the sensation on your crown as they enter your body. The moment they touch the top of your head, your entire body is instantaneously transformed into the Water Goddess. Visualize this, but more importantly, feel the change.

Your skin, flesh, blood, nerves, channels, bones - all the cells in your body - are transformed into the elemental water energy. You are water! In your left hand is a vase full of the healing nectar of the water element. In your right hand is a victory banner with a crocodile. Completely embody the energies and qualities of the Goddess of Water. Feel her presence, loving and wise, and pray to her to remove any diseases, pain, or afflictions on the level of the body.

Then sing the mantra of the goddess - MAM DANG RA MAM TING DU - as you receive her blessings, generating the experience of the positive qualities of the water element in the body. Feel calm, comfortable, sensuous, relaxed, peaceful and flowing, and

feel that all illnesses, obstacles, and obstructions of the body are removed.

Try to feel the qualities of the particular element. Beyond the differences, all the goddesses are enlightened, loving, powerful, and beautiful. They are the pure aspect of the elemental energy that is enlightened and that can respond to you as an individual.

As you generate the positive qualities of the element and receive the blessings of the goddess, recite her mantra: MAM DANG RA MAM TING DU. There is no fixed number of recitations-sing the mantra as long as it is helpful. Allow the practice to open and soften your heart.

Finally, abide in the transformed state while singing the mantra of all the elements combined: A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU - for as long as you are comfortable. This seals the practice, empowering and stabilizing the experience.

This is the transformation of the body.

2. The Transformation of the Energy

You have transformed into the goddess. Again, sing the mantra A MAM three, five, or seven times. Keep your mind focused in the kidneys. (The organ is in the transformed body. If you cannot feel the organ, focus in the part of the body where the kidneys are.) Now visualize and feel the presence of the Water Goddesses (2) in the organs. The goddesses situated in the organs are the same luminous blue goddess into which you have transformed, but smaller. Pray to them, asking them to remove all energetic obstacles and negativities, asking that they cultivate in you the positive qualities of water.

Use your imagination to make a strong connection to the goddesses, to their love and wisdom, as you recite the mantra: MAM DANG RA MAM TING DU. Feel that all obstructions and negativities on the level of energy are being removed, all illnesses healed, all mental confusions cleared. As before, in their left hands are vases filled with healing nectar, in their right, victory banners with a crocodile. Feel the transformation in the dimension of energy.

Finally, abide in the transformed state as you recite the mantra of the combined elements-A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU- for as long as you are comfortable.

This is the transformation of the energetic dimension.

3. Retrieving the Elemental Energies

Breathe slowly and deeply. With each exhalation, the goddesses in the kidneys send out countless emanations of themselves to retrieve the elemental water essence. They travel through the channels of the body and leave through the right nostril. As they leave, they carry from your body whatever is negative, no longer needed, or toxic and release those things, dissolving them in pure space.

The goddesses travel beyond any limitations of time and space. They travel to the enlightened beings and ask for your healing. They travel to times and scenes in which positive elemental qualities have been lost and retrieve the elemental essence that was lost there. They travel to places of great natural power - where the water energy is strong and where great masters have practiced - and collect the elemental energies. They travel to beings who have taken the energies from you and they recover what was taken.

The elemental energies are retrieved as pure elemental essence and carried in the vases that each goddess has in her left hand. The goddesses return and enter your body with the inhalation, through the left nostril. They are like bees returning with pollen collected from many flowers. They enter the kidneys and pour what they have recovered into the organ, healing it, and into the vases the goddesses in the kidneys hold. As the organs are healed, imagine all energetic obstacles being cleared.

Between the inhalation and the exhalation, hold the breath gently for a few seconds and feel the elemental energies pervade all experience. Then, with the exhalation, the goddesses travel back out through the right nostril and the cycle repeats. With each exhalation goddesses travel outward, with each inhalation goddesses return to you with the elemental essence. Spend time with this, breathing deeply and slowly into and from the kidneys, expelling what is negative and accumulating the positive earth energies. Feel the presence of the goddess, loving, wise, and powerful. Feel the changes in your body, energy, and mind.

As the goddesses leave your transformed body through the right nostril, they travel without any restrictions. They go to enlightened beings and ask for healing energy for you. They go to the places and incidents in the past where you know you lost some positive quality connected with the element. In the case of water, it's where you lost comfort, joy, or peace, or a flowing quality. You needn't try to direct the goddesses or look for such incidents, just let them go. They go into the past of this life and other lives, to the scenes of trauma, loss, terror, or shock. They enter all six realms of existence. They visit areas of great natural potency, taking water energy from the oceans, lakes, rivers, and streams; from within the earth, and from the sky.

This is the main part of the practice. If you have time, spend a half-hour to an hour doing just this part of the practice, breathing slowly and deeply, exhaling from the organ, inhaling into the organ, breathing out the negativities, breathing in the positive qualities of the element's essence.

With each visit to a place or time or being, the goddesses recover the elemental essence as healing nectar - luminous, blue, elemental water energy gathered in the vases they hold in their left hands. Then they return, entering your transformed body with the inhalation, through the left nostril. They return to the organ and pour the light of the elemental essence into the organ and into the vase of the goddesses there. The nectar is a psychic and spiritual medicine that heals even the most subtle levels of your being.

You can use your fingers to block one nostril and then the other but it isn't necessary. Simply visualizing the goddesses leaving from the right nostril and returning through the left is enough. Breathe deeply, with your full attention. Don't be thinking of something else. Make the inhalation slow and deep. The exhalation can be a little stronger. Feel the organ itself doing the breathing and healing in the process. Feel the elemental quality not only in the organ, but also radiating throughout the body, healing body, energy, and mind.

With each exhalation more goddesses leave to retrieve the element. With each inhalation goddesses return, pouring the elemental light they have retrieved into the organs.

The goddesses may go to places unknown to you. As they travel, images or memories may arise. In the West it seems common for traumatic memories to be activated. If this happens to you, just let the goddesses go to the event and retrieve the positive qualities that were lost there as pure elemental energies. Don't be concerned if

emotion arises. And don't lose your transformed identity; remain as the powerful and enlightened identity of the goddess and abide in the balance of the sacred elements. If you revisit a traumatic incident, visit with power, strength, and forgiveness as the goddess would, and allow healing to take place.

The goddesses may also go directly to non-physical beings to recover what those beings took from you. This is the traditional way of describing what occurs during the retrieval of the elemental qualities. And they may go to areas of the natural world that have strong elemental energy - the water of the ocean, the fire of a volcano, the air at the top of the highest mountains, the earth of raw land, and the space of the sky. They go to the spirits associated with the elements, the divine forces associated with the elements. You don't need to plan; just let them go freely. Continue to let images arise - they help connect you to specific qualities - but don't hold on. Let them fade away or transform.

Continue until you feel healed.

4. The Transformation of the Mind

Exhale fully, then inhale deeply. Imagine all the goddesses returning with that inhalation. They enter the organs, pour out the elemental essence they have retrieved, and are absorbed back into the goddesses in the organs. Hold the breath for a few moments and feel the elemental energy pervade **the** body and pervade every element of experience. Repeat this a few times.

Sing the mantra A MAM three, five, or seven times. As you do, the goddesses in the organs becomes increasingly lively, vivid, and joyful.

Imagine the positive qualities that have accumulated in the vases of the Water Goddesses to be the pure healing nectar of the water element. As you sing the seed syllables, they rise up the central channel and pour the luminous blue nectar into your crown chakra. Experience the nectar flowing down through your central channel. The nectar in the central channel is the subtlest dimension of healing.

From the vases in their left hands, they pour the essence of the water element, in the form of a nectar of pure blue light, into your crown chakra, into the blue central channel, filling it with luminous water energy.

Feel the healing nectar flowing into the central channel, from the crown chakra to the bottom of the central channel four finger-widths below the navel. Feel it flowing up and down the central channel, removing even the most subtle obscurations and blockages, and allow yourself to feel increasing peace and bliss.

The nectar slowly accumulates in the heart center, and then is integrated into consciousness, into the soul.

From the depth of connection with the natural state, recite the mantra as the self-arising sound of the Goddess. All subtle obstacles to contemplation and all doubts are healed through the power of the mantra and the blessings of the Goddess.

Develop this experience as much as possible while chanting the mantra of the goddess: MAM DANG RA MAM TING DU. Feel the light in the heart center and in the deepest levels of experience. Feel it integrate with your awareness until awareness and the elemental quality merge completely. Feel that whatever needs healing is healed. Whatever needs to be strengthened is strengthened.

Ignorance is dispelled and wisdom manifests, particularly *mirror like wisdom*. The subtle spiritual and mental obscurations are cleared. Use your imagination, your deep breathing.

Then abide in the transformed state as you recite the mantra of the combined elements - A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU - for as long as you are comfortable.

(note that resting in the nature of mind can be beneficially done at this point, and also after the recitation of the long life mantra, which I have organized as one of the concluding practices)

Feel that all your doubts are resolved and abide in the nature of mind: changeless, with neither beginning nor end, clear, fresh, vivid.

Feel your deepest doubts clarify; experience the nature of mind: changeless, ceaseless, bright, fresh, vivid. Feel this unbounded, open presence, and merge your mind with the unbounded state.

The visualization dissolves into space as your mind dissolves into the natural state. Rest there as long as the experience remains fresh.

Fire

The Main Practice, in Four Parts

1. The Transformation of the Body

Sing the mantra A RAM three, five, or seven times. Immediately, from the infinite distances of vast space, many luminous red syllables – A RAM - begin to move toward you. They radiate the pure red light of the fire element and the light washes over and through you. The syllables gather above your head, above the crown chakra, and then descend. Feel the sensation on your crown as they enter your body. The moment they touch the top of your head, your entire body is instantaneously transformed into the Fire Goddess. Visualize this, but more importantly, feel the change.

Your skin, flesh, blood, nerves, channels, bones - all the cells in your body - are transformed into the elemental fire energy. You are fire! In your left hand is a skull. In your right hand is a lightning bolt. Completely embody the energies and qualities of the Goddess of Fire. Feel her presence, loving and wise, and pray to her to remove any diseases, pain, or afflictions on the level of the body.

Then sing the mantra of the goddess – RAM TSANG TANG NE RAM DU as you receive her blessings, generating the experience of the positive qualities of the fire element in the body. Feel warmth, strength of will, inspiration, creativity and bliss, and feel that all illnesses, obstacles, and obstructions of the body are removed.

Try to feel the qualities of the particular element. Beyond the differences, all the goddesses are enlightened, loving, powerful, and beautiful. They are the pure aspect of the elemental energy that is enlightened and that can respond to you as an individual.

As you generate the positive qualities of the element and receive the blessings of the goddess, recite her mantra: RAM TSANG TANG NE RAM DU. There is no fixed number of recitations - sing the mantra as long as it is helpful. Allow the practice to open and soften your heart.

Finally, abide in the transformed state while singing the mantra of all the elements combined: A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU - for as long as you are comfortable. This seals the practice, empowering and stabilizing the experience.

This is the transformation of the body.

2. The Transformation of the Energy

You have transformed into the goddess. Again, sing the mantra A RAM three, five, or seven times. Keep your mind focused in the liver. (The organ is in the transformed body. If you cannot feel the organ, focus in the part of the body where the liver is.) Now visualize and feel the presence of the Fire Goddess in the organ. The goddess situated in the organ is the same luminous red goddess into which you have transformed, but smaller. Pray to her, asking her to remove all energetic obstacles and negativities, asking that she cultivate in you the positive qualities of fire.

Use your imagination to make a strong connection to the goddess, to her love and wisdom, as you recite her mantra: RAM TSANG TANG NE RAM DU. Feel that all obstructions and negativities on

the level of energy are being removed, all illnesses healed, all mental confusions cleared. In her left hand is a vase filled with healing nectar, in her right, a flame. Feel the transformation in the dimension of energy.

Finally, abide in the transformed state as you recite the mantra of the combined elements-A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU- for as long as you are comfortable.

This is the transformation of the energetic dimension.

3. Retrieving the Elemental Energies

Breathe slowly and deeply. With each exhalation, the goddess in the liver sends out countless emanations of herself to retrieve the elemental fire essence. They travel through the channels of the body and leave through the right nostril. As they leave, they carry from your body whatever is negative, no longer needed, or toxic and release those things, dissolving them in pure space.

The goddesses travel beyond any limitations of time and space. They travel to the enlightened beings and ask for your healing. They travel to times and scenes in which positive elemental qualities have been lost and retrieve the elemental essence that was lost there. They travel to places of great natural power - where the fire energy is strong and where great masters have practiced - and collect the elemental energies. They travel to beings who have taken the energies from you and they recover what was taken.

The elemental energies are retrieved as pure elemental essence and carried in the vases that each goddess has in her left hand. The goddesses return and enter your body with the inhalation, through the left nostril. They are like bees returning with pollen collected

from many flowers. They enter the spleen and pour what they have recovered into the organ, healing it, and into the vase the goddess in the liver holds. As the organ is healed, imagine all energetic obstacles being cleared.

Between the inhalation and the exhalation, hold the breath gently for a few seconds and feel the elemental energies pervade all experience. Then, with the exhalation, the goddesses travel back out through the right nostril and the cycle repeats. With each exhalation goddesses travel outward, with each inhalation goddesses return to you with the elemental essence. Spend time with this, breathing deeply and slowly into and from the liver, expelling what is negative and accumulating the positive fire energies. Feel the presence of the goddess, loving, wise, and powerful. Feel the changes in your body, energy, and mind.

As the goddesses leave your transformed body through the right nostril, they travel without any restrictions. They go to enlightened beings and ask for healing energy for you. They go to the places and incidents in the past where you know you lost some positive quality connected with the element. In the case of fire, it's where you lost energy, passion, warmth, will, inspiration, creativity or bliss. You needn't try to direct the goddesses or look for such incidents, just let them go. They go into the past of this life and other lives, to the scenes of trauma, loss, terror, or shock. They enter all six realms of existence. They visit areas of great natural potency, taking fire energy from the sun, from volcanoes and lava, from hearths, from lightning, and other sources of power.

This is the main part of the practice. If you have time, spend a half-hour to an hour doing just this part of the practice, breathing slowly and deeply, exhaling from the organ, inhaling into the organ, breathing out the negativities, breathing in the positive qualities of the element's essence.

With each visit to a place or time or being, the goddesses recover the elemental essence as healing nectar - luminous, red, elemental fire energy gathered in the vases they hold in their left hands. Then they return, entering your transformed body with the inhalation, through the left nostril. They return to the organ and pour the light of the elemental essence into the organ and into the vase of the goddess there. The nectar is a psychic and spiritual medicine that heals even the most subtle levels of your being.

You can use your fingers to block one nostril and then the other but it isn't necessary. Simply visualizing the goddesses leaving from the right nostril and returning through the left is enough. Breathe deeply, with your full attention. Don't be thinking of something else. Make the inhalation slow and deep. The exhalation can be a little stronger. Feel the organ itself doing the breathing and healing in the process. Feel the elemental quality not only in the organ, but also radiating throughout the body, healing body, energy, and mind.

With each exhalation more goddesses leave to retrieve the element. With each inhalation goddesses return, pouring the elemental light they have retrieved into the organ.

The goddesses may go to places unknown to you. As they travel, images or memories may arise. In the West it seems common for traumatic memories to be activated. If this happens to you, just let the goddesses go to the event and retrieve the positive qualities that were lost there as pure elemental energies. Don't be concerned if emotion arises. And don't lose your transformed identity; remain as the powerful and enlightened identity of the goddess and abide in the balance of the sacred elements. If you revisit a traumatic incident, visit with power, strength, and forgiveness as the goddess would, and allow healing to take place.

The goddesses may also go directly to non-physical beings to recover what those beings took from you. This is the traditional way of describing what occurs during the retrieval of the elemental qualities. And they may go to areas of the natural world that have strong elemental energy-the water of the ocean, the fire of a volcano, the air at the top of the highest mountains, the earth of raw land, and the space of the sky. They go to the spirits associated with the elements, the divine forces associated with the elements. You don't need to plan; just let them go freely. Continue to let images arise - they help connect you to specific qualities - but don't hold on. Let them fade away or transform.

Continue until you feel healed.

4. The Transformation of the Mind

Exhale fully, then inhale deeply. Imagine all the goddesses returning with that inhalation. They enter the organ, pour out the elemental essence they have retrieved, and are absorbed back into the goddess in the organ, Hold the breath for a few moments and feel the elemental energy pervade the body and pervade every element of experience. Repeat this a few times.

Sing the mantra A RAM three, five, or seven times. As you do, the goddess in the organ becomes increasingly lively, vivid, and joyful.

Imagine the positive qualities that have accumulated in the vase of the Fire Goddess to be the pure healing nectar of the fire element. As you sing the seed syllables, she rises up the central channel and pours the red nectar into your crown chakra. Experience the nectar flowing down through your central channel. The nectar in the central channel is the subtlest dimension of healing.

From the vase in her left hand, the Goddess pours the essence of the fire element, in the form of a nectar of pure red light, into your crown chakra, into the blue central channel, filling it with luminous fire energy.

Feel the healing nectar flowing into the central channel, from the crown chakra to the bottom of the central channel four finger-widths below the navel. Feel it flowing up and down the central channel, removing even the most subtle obscurations and blockages, and allow yourself to feel increasing peace and bliss.

The nectar slowly accumulates in the heart center, and then is integrated into consciousness, into the soul.

From the depth of connection with the natural state, recite the mantra as the self-arising sound of the Goddess. All subtle obstacles to contemplation and all doubts are healed through the power of the mantra and the blessings of the Goddess.

Develop this experience as much as possible while chanting the mantra of the goddess: RAM TSANG TANG NE RAM DU. Feel the light in the heart center and in the deepest levels of experience. Feel it integrate with your awareness until awareness and the elemental quality merge completely. Feel that whatever needs healing is healed. Whatever needs to be strengthened is strengthened.

Ignorance is dispelled and wisdom manifests, particularly the *wisdom of discrimination*. The subtle spiritual and mental obscurations are cleared. Use your imagination, your deep breathing.

Then abide in the transformed state as you recite the mantra of the combined elements - A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU - for as long as you are comfortable.

(note that resting in the nature of mind can be beneficially done at this point, and also after the recitation of the long life mantra, which I have organized as one of the concluding practices)

Feel that all your doubts are resolved and abide in the nature of mind: changeless, with neither beginning nor end, clear, fresh, vivid.

Feel your deepest doubts clarify; experience the nature of mind: changeless, ceaseless, bright, fresh, vivid. Feel this unbounded, open presence, and merge your mind with the unbounded state. The visualization dissolves into space as your mind dissolves into the natural state. Rest there as long as the experience remains fresh.

Air

The Main Practice, in Four Parts

1. The Transformation of the Body

Sing the mantra MA YAM three, five, or seven times. Immediately, from the infinite distances of vast space, many luminous green syllables – MA YAM - begin to move toward you. They radiate the pure green light of the air element and the light washes over and through you. The syllables gather above your head, above the crown chakra, and then descend. Feel the sensation on your crown as they enter your body. The moment they touch the top of your head, your entire body is instantaneously transformed into the Air Goddess. Visualize this, but more importantly, feel the change.

Your skin, flesh, blood, nerves, channels, bones - all the cells in your body - are transformed into the elemental air energy. You are air! In your left hand is a vase full of the healing nectar of the air element. In your right hand is a waving flag. Completely embody the energies and qualities of the Goddess of Air. Feel her presence, loving and wise, and pray to her to remove any diseases, pain, or afflictions on the level of the body.

Then sing the mantra of the goddess - YAM YAM NI LI THUN DU - as you receive her blessings, generating the experience of the positive qualities of the air element in the body. Feel fresh, lively, flexible and quick, and feel that all illnesses, obstacles, and obstructions of the body are removed.

Try to feel the qualities of the particular element. Beyond the differences, all the goddesses are enlightened, loving, powerful, and beautiful. They are the pure aspect of the elemental energy that is enlightened and that can respond to you as an individual.

As you generate the positive qualities of the element and receive the blessings of the goddess, recite her mantra: YAM YAM NI LI THUN DU. There is no fixed number of recitations - sing the mantra as long as it is helpful. Allow the practice to open and soften your heart.

Finally, abide in the transformed state while singing the mantra of all the elements combined: A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU - for as long as you are comfortable. This seals the practice, empowering and stabilizing the experience.

This is the transformation of the body.

2. The Transformation of the Energy

You have transformed into the goddess. Again, sing the mantra MA YAM three, five, or seven times. Keep your mind focused in the lungs. (The organ is in the transformed body. If you cannot feel the organ, focus in the part of the body where the lungs are.) Now visualize and feel the presence of the Air Goddesses (2) in the organs. The goddesses situated in the organs are the same luminous green goddess into which you have transformed, but smaller. Pray to them, asking them to remove all energetic obstacles and negativities, asking that they cultivate in you the positive qualities of air.

Use your imagination to make a strong connection to the goddesses, to their love and wisdom, as you recite the mantra: YAM YAM NI LI THUN DU. Feel that all obstructions and negativities on the level of energy are being removed, all illnesses healed, all mental confusions cleared. As before, in their left hands are vases filled with healing nectar, in their right, waving flags. Feel the transformation in the dimension of energy.

Finally, abide in the transformed state as you recite the mantra of the combined elements-A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU- for as long as you are comfortable.

This is the transformation of the energetic dimension.

3. Retrieving the Elemental Energies

Breathe slowly and deeply. With each exhalation, the goddesses in the lungs send out countless emanations of themselves to retrieve the elemental air essence. They travel through the channels of the body and leave through the right nostril. As they leave, they carry from your body whatever is negative, no longer needed, or toxic and release those things, dissolving them in pure space.

The goddesses travel beyond any limitations of time and space. They travel to the enlightened beings and ask for your healing. They travel to times and scenes in which positive elemental qualities have been lost and retrieve the elemental essence that was lost there. They travel to places of great natural power - where the air energy is strong and where great masters have practiced - and collect the elemental energies. They travel to beings who have taken the energies from you and they recover what was taken.

The elemental energies are retrieved as pure elemental essence and carried in the vases that each goddess has in her left hand. The goddesses return and enter your body with the inhalation, through the left nostril. They are like bees returning with pollen collected from many flowers. They enter the lungs and pour what they have recovered into the organ, healing it, and into the vases the goddesses in the lungs hold. As the organs are healed, imagine all energetic obstacles being cleared.

Between the inhalation and the exhalation, hold the breath gently for a few seconds and feel the elemental energies pervade all experience. Then, with the exhalation, the goddesses travel back out through the right nostril and the cycle repeats. With each exhalation goddesses travel outward, with each inhalation goddesses return to you with the elemental essence. Spend time with this, breathing deeply and slowly into and from the lungs, expelling what is negative and accumulating the positive air energies. Feel the presence of the goddesses, loving, wise, and powerful. Feel the changes in your body, energy, and mind.

As the goddesses leave your transformed body through the right nostril, they travel without any restrictions. They go to enlightened beings and ask for healing energy for you. They go to the places and incidents in the past where you know you lost some positive quality connected with the element. In the case of air, it's where you lost freshness, liveliness, flexibility or quickness. You needn't try to direct the goddesses or look for such incidents, just let them go. They go into the past of this life and other lives, to the scenes of trauma, loss, terror, or shock. They enter all six realms of existence. They visit areas of great natural potency, taking air energy from the fresh air that moves across mountains, and through valleys, forests, and fields; from over the ocean; from strong winds like hurricanes, and from refreshing gentle breezes from the sky.

This is the main part of the practice. If you have time, spend a half-hour to an hour doing just this part of the practice, breathing slowly and deeply, exhaling from the organs, inhaling into the organs, breathing out the negativities, breathing in the positive qualities of the element's essence.

With each visit to a place or time or being, the goddesses recover the elemental essence as healing nectar - luminous, green, elemental air energy gathered in the vases they hold in their left hands. Then they return, entering your transformed body with the inhalation, through the left nostril. They return to the organs and pour the light of the elemental essence into the organs and into the vases of the goddesses there. The nectar is a psychic and spiritual medicine that heals even the most subtle levels of your being.

You can use your fingers to block one nostril and then the other but it isn't necessary. Simply visualizing the goddesses leaving from the right nostril and returning through the left is enough. Breathe deeply, with your full attention. Don't be thinking of something else. Make the inhalation slow and deep. The exhalation can be a little stronger. Feel the organ itself doing the breathing and healing in the process. Feel the elemental quality not only in the organ, but also radiating throughout the body, healing body, energy, and mind.

With each exhalation more goddesses leave to retrieve the element. With each inhalation goddesses return, pouring the elemental light they have retrieved into the organs.

The goddesses may go to places unknown to you. As they travel, images or memories may arise. In the West it seems common for traumatic memories to be activated. If this happens to you, just let the goddesses go to the event and retrieve the positive qualities that were lost there as pure elemental energies. Don't be concerned if

emotion arises. And don't lose your transformed identity; remain as the powerful and enlightened identity of the goddess and abide in the balance of the sacred elements. If you revisit a traumatic incident, visit with power, strength, and forgiveness as the goddess would, and allow healing to take place.

The goddesses may also go directly to non-physical beings to recover what those beings took from you. This is the traditional way of describing what occurs during the retrieval of the elemental qualities. And they may go to areas of the natural world that have strong elemental energy - the water of the ocean, the fire of a volcano, the air at the top of the highest mountains, the earth of raw land, and the space of the sky. They go to the spirits associated with the elements, the divine forces associated with the elements. You don't need to plan; just let them go freely. Continue to let images arise - they help connect you to specific qualities - but don't hold on. Let them fade away or transform.

Continue until you feel healed.

4. The Transformation of the Mind

Exhale fully, then inhale deeply. Imagine all the goddesses returning with that inhalation. They enter the organs, pour out the elemental essence they have retrieved, and are absorbed back into the goddesses in the organs. Hold the breath for a few moments and feel the elemental energy pervade **the** body and pervade every element of experience. Repeat this a few times.

Sing the mantra MA YAM three, five, or seven times. As you do, the goddesses in the organs becomes increasingly lively, vivid, and joyful.

Imagine the positive qualities that have accumulated in the vases of the Air Goddesses to be the pure healing nectar of the air element. As you sing the seed syllables, they rise up the central channel and pour the luminous green nectar into your crown chakra. Experience the nectar flowing down through your central channel. The nectar in the central channel is the subtlest dimension of healing.

From the vases in their left hands, they pour the essence of the water element, in the form of a nectar of pure green light, into your crown chakra, into the blue central channel, filling it with luminous water energy.

Feel the healing nectar flowing into the central channel, from the crown chakra to the bottom of the central channel four finger-widths below the navel. Feel it flowing up and down the central channel, removing even the most subtle obscurations and blockages, and allow yourself to feel increasing peace and bliss.

The nectar slowly accumulates in the heart center, and then is integrated into consciousness, into the soul.

From the depth of connection with the natural state, recite the mantra as the self-arising sound of the Goddess. All subtle obstacles to contemplation and all doubts are healed through the power of the mantra and the blessings of the Goddess.

Develop this experience as much as possible while chanting the mantra of the goddess: YAM YAM NI LI THUN DU. Feel the light in the heart center and in the deepest levels of experience. Feel it integrate with your awareness until awareness and the elemental quality merge completely. Feel that whatever needs healing is healed. Whatever needs to be strengthened is strengthened.

Ignorance is dispelled and wisdom manifests, particularly *all-accomplishing wisdom*. The subtle spiritual and mental obscurations are cleared. Use your imagination, your deep breathing.

Then abide in the transformed state as you recite the mantra of the combined elements - A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU - for as long as you are comfortable.

(note that resting in the nature of mind can be beneficially done at this point, and also after the recitation of the long life mantra, which I have organized as one of the concluding practices)

Feel that all your doubts are resolved and abide in the nature of mind: changeless, with neither beginning nor end, clear, fresh, vivid.

Feel your deepest doubts clarify; experience the nature of mind: changeless, ceaseless, bright, fresh, vivid. Feel this unbounded, open presence, and merge your mind with the unbounded state.

The visualization dissolves into space as your mind dissolves into the natural state. Rest there as long as the experience remains fresh.

Space

The Main Practice, in Four Parts

1. The Transformation of the Body

Sing the mantra MA A three, five, or seven times. Immediately, from the infinite distances of vast space, many luminous white syllables -MA A - begin to move toward you. They radiate the pure clear white light of the space element and the light washes over and through you. The syllables gather above your head, above the crown chakra, and then descend. Feel the sensation on your crown as they enter your body. The moment they touch the top of your head, your entire body is instantaneously transformed into the Space Goddess. Visualize this, but more importantly, feel the change.

Your skin, flesh, blood, nerves, channels, bones - all the cells in your body - are transformed into the elemental space energy. You are space! In your left hand is a skull full of red and white seminal essences. In your right hand a wish fulfilling jewel. Completely embody the energies and qualities of the Goddess of Space. Feel her presence, loving and wise, and pray to her to remove any diseases, pain, or afflictions on the level of the body.

Then sing the mantra of the goddess – A MU YE A KAR A NI A as you receive her blessings, generating the experience of the positive qualities of the space element in the body. Feel spaciousness, ease, clarity, expansiveness and vastness, and feel that all illnesses, obstacles, and obstructions of the body are removed.

Try to feel the qualities of the particular element. Beyond the differences, all the goddesses are enlightened, loving, powerful, and beautiful. They are the pure aspect of the elemental energy that is enlightened and that can respond to you as an individual.

As you generate the positive qualities of the element and receive the blessings of the goddess, recite her mantra: A MU YE A KAR A NI A. There is no fixed number of recitations - sing the mantra as long as it is helpful. Allow the practice to open and soften your heart.

Finally, abide in the transformed state while singing the mantra of all the elements combined: A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU - for as long as you are comfortable. This seals the practice, empowering and stabilizing the experience.

This is the transformation of the body.

2. The Transformation of the Energy

You have transformed into the goddess. Again, sing the mantra MA A three, five, or seven times. Keep your mind focused in the heart. (The organ is in the transformed body. If you cannot feel the organ, focus in the part of the body where the heart is.)

Rather than a goddess, in the central channel at the heart level is a luminous white A radiating the five pure lights. Pray, asking that all energetic obstacles and negativities be removed, and that you cultivate the positive qualities of space.

Use your imagination to make a strong connection to the space element and to the goddess, to her love and wisdom, as you recite her mantra: A MU YE A KAR A NI A. Feel that all obstructions

and negativities on the level of energy are being removed, all illnesses healed, all mental confusions cleared. Feel the transformation in the dimension of energy.

Finally, abide in the transformed state as you recite the mantra of the combined elements - A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU - for as long as you are comfortable.

This is the transformation of the energetic dimension.

3. Retrieving the Elemental Energies

Breathe slowly and deeply. With each exhalation, from the A at your heart, goddesses emanate and travel, and to this they return and empty the elemental essence into the heart. They travel through the channels of the body and leave through the right nostril. As they leave, they carry from your body whatever is negative, no longer needed, or toxic and release those things, dissolving them in pure space.

The goddesses travel beyond any limitations of time and space. They travel to the enlightened beings and ask for your healing. They travel to times and scenes in which positive elemental qualities have been lost and retrieve the elemental essence that was lost there. They travel to places of great natural power - where the space energy is strong and where great masters have practiced - and collect the elemental energies. They travel to beings who have taken the energies from you and they recover what was taken.

The elemental energies are retrieved as pure elemental essence and carried in the vases that each goddess has in her left hand. The goddesses return and enter your body with the inhalation, through the left nostril. They are like bees returning with pollen collected

from many flowers. They enter the heart and pour what they have recovered into the organ, healing it. As the organ is healed, imagine all energetic obstacles being cleared.

Between the inhalation and the exhalation, hold the breath gently for a few seconds and feel the elemental energies pervade all experience. Then, with the exhalation, the goddesses travel back out through the right nostril and the cycle repeats. With each exhalation goddesses travel outward, with each inhalation goddesses return to you with the elemental essence. Spend time with this, breathing deeply and slowly into and from the heart, expelling what is negative and accumulating the positive space energies. Feel the presence of the pure element of space, and of the goddess, loving, wise, and powerful. Feel the changes in your body, energy, and mind.

As the goddesses leave your transformed body through the right nostril, they travel without any restrictions. They go to enlightened beings and ask for healing energy for you. They go to the places and incidents in the past where you know you lost some positive quality connected with the element. In the case of space, it's where you lost spaciousness, ease, clarity or expansiveness. You needn't try to direct the goddesses or look for such incidents, just let them go. They go into the past of this life and other lives, to the scenes of trauma, loss, terror, or shock. They enter all six realms of existence. They visit areas of great natural potency, taking space energy from the sky and from vast vistas, from every place that has the feelings of room, distance, boundlessness and clarity.

This is the main part of the practice. If you have time, spend a half-hour to an hour doing just this part of the practice, breathing slowly and deeply, exhaling from the organ, inhaling into the organ, breathing out the negativities, breathing in the positive qualities of the element's essence.

With each visit to a place or time or being, the goddesses recover the elemental essence as healing nectar - luminous, clear white elemental space energy gathered in the vases they hold in their left hands. Then they return, entering your transformed body with the inhalation, through the left nostril. They return to the organ and pour the light of the elemental essence into the organ. The nectar is a psychic and spiritual medicine that heals even the most subtle levels of your being.

You can use your fingers to block one nostril and then the other but it isn't necessary. Simply visualizing the goddesses leaving from the right nostril and returning through the left is enough. Breathe deeply, with your full attention. Don't be thinking of something else. Make the inhalation slow and deep. The exhalation can be a little stronger. Feel the organ itself doing the breathing and healing in the process. Feel the elemental quality not only in the organ, but also radiating throughout the body, healing body, energy, and mind.

With each exhalation more goddesses leave to retrieve the element. With each inhalation goddesses return, pouring the elemental light they have retrieved into the organ.

The goddesses may go to places unknown to you. As they travel, images or memories may arise. In the West it seems common for traumatic memories to be activated. If this happens to you, just let the goddesses go to the event and retrieve the positive qualities that were lost there as pure elemental energies. Don't be concerned if emotion arises. And don't lose your transformed identity; remain as the powerful and enlightened identity of the goddess and abide in the balance of the sacred elements. If you revisit a traumatic incident, visit with power, strength, and forgiveness as the goddess would, and allow healing to take place.

The goddesses may also go directly to non-physical beings to recover what those beings took from you. This is the traditional way of describing what occurs during the retrieval of the elemental qualities. And they may go to areas of the natural world that have strong elemental energy - the water of the ocean, the fire of a volcano, the air at the top of the highest mountains, the earth of raw land, and the space of the sky. They go to the spirits associated with the elements, the divine forces associated with the elements. You don't need to plan; just let them go freely. Continue to let images arise - they help connect you to specific qualities - but don't hold on. Let them fade away or transform.

Continue until you feel healed.

4. The Transformation of the Mind

Exhale fully, then inhale deeply. Imagine all the goddesses returning with that inhalation. They enter the organ, pour out the elemental essence they have retrieved, and are absorbed back into the organ. Hold the breath for a few moments and feel the elemental energy pervade the body and pervade every element of experience. Repeat this a few times.

Sing the mantra MA A three, five, or seven times. As you do, the goddess in the organ becomes increasingly lively, vivid, and joyful.

Imagine the positive qualities that have accumulated to be the pure healing nectar of the space element. As you sing the seed syllables, the goddess rises up the central channel and pours the nectar into your crown chakra. Experience the nectar flowing down through your central channel. The nectar in the central channel is the subtlest dimension of healing.

From the vase in her left hand, the Goddess pours the essence of the space element, in the form of a nectar of pure clear white light, into your crown chakra, into the blue central channel, filling it with luminous space energy.

Feel the healing nectar flowing into the central channel, from the crown chakra to the bottom of the central channel four finger-widths below the navel. Feel it flowing up and down the central channel, removing even the most subtle obscurations and blockages, and allow yourself to feel increasing peace and bliss.

The nectar slowly accumulates in the heart center, and then is integrated into consciousness, into the soul.

From the depth of connection with the natural state, recite the mantra as the self-arising sound of the Goddess. All subtle obstacles to contemplation and all doubts are healed through the power of the mantra and the blessings of the Goddess.

Develop this experience as much as possible while chanting the mantra of the goddess: A MU YE A KAR A NI A. Feel the light in the heart center and in the deepest levels of experience. Feel it integrate with your awareness until awareness and the elemental quality merge completely. Feel that whatever needs healing is healed. Whatever needs to be strengthened is strengthened.

Ignorance is dispelled and wisdom manifests, particularly the *wisdom of emptiness*. The subtle spiritual and mental obscurations are cleared. Use your imagination, your deep breathing.

Then abide in the transformed state as you recite the mantra of the combined elements - A YAM RAM MAM KHAM BRUM DU - for as long as you are comfortable.

(note that resting in the nature of mind can be beneficially done at this point, and also after the recitation of the long life mantra, which I have organized as one of the concluding practices)

Feel that all your doubts are resolved and abide in the nature of mind: changeless, with neither beginning nor end, clear, fresh, vivid.

Feel your deepest doubts clarify; experience the nature of mind: changeless, ceaseless, bright, fresh, vivid. Feel this unbounded, open presence, and merge your mind with the unbounded state. The visualization dissolves into space as your mind dissolves into the natural state. Rest there as long as the experience remains fresh.

The Concluding Practices, in Three Parts

1. The Long Life Mantra

Reinforce the power of your meditation with the Long Life Mantra. At the end of the practice, whether you have worked with one element or all five, sing the long-life mantra three, five, seven, or as many times as you wish.

SO DRUM A KAR MU LA TING NAM 'OD DU MU YE TSE NI
DZA

(Pronunciation: so droom a car mu la ting nam o due mu yea tsay
nee dza)

This mantra is sung to support healing and long life. It is sung at the end of the practice in order to act as armor, to protect the positive results of the practice. Although mantras cannot be literally translated, often each syllable carries a symbolic meaning. Below are the meanings associated with the syllables of the long-life mantra:

SO empty space

DRUM Long Life Deity's castle

A *KAR* unborn wisdom

MU LA seed syllable of yogi

TING NAM nectar

'OD DU receiving long-life force

MU YE prosperity

TSE long life

NI seed syllable of the human realm

DZA light that is the medium for positive qualities

2. Resting in the Nature of Mind

Finally, remain in silence in a relaxed, aware state as long as it is fresh.

Observe the results of the practice. Abide in pure presence.

3. Dedication

At the end of all practices, dedicate the merit to the benefit of all beings. Your motive should always be to help others. Even your own healing should be undertaken with the intention that your increased health and wholeness will enable you to better aid others.

May all beings benefit.

May the supreme Jewel bodhicitta,
arise where it has not arisen;
where it has arisen, may it not diminish
May it ever grow and flourish

May this bring about healing wherever it is needed, and the firm establishment of true health and happiness for all beings

Notes on the practice

In the beginning don't worry about what the implements are or any of the other details. Instead, focus on your experience. Generate the positive qualities of the elements and try to make the experience as strong as possible - really feel all this in your body, energy, and mind. Pay attention to the results of the practice. Once you have strong, felt experience, then add the details. Your internal experience is more important than having all the details correct.

The most important aspect of the practice is to develop the ability to generate, and to integrate with, the qualities of the elements. There are three stages of transformation in the practice, during each of which you should try to develop the specific qualities or the elements in the dimensions of the body, energy, and mind.

When the mantric syllables touch the top of your head and you transform your body into the goddess, generate the feeling of the qualities associated with the element in the body. When evoking the goddess in the organ, feel the energetic qualities of the element pervade the energetic dimension of your experience. When the elemental essence is poured into the central channel, feel the integration of the elemental essence in the most subtle dimension of experience, the dimension of light, as changes in the qualities of consciousness.

In Tibetan medicine the elements are related to the internal organs. The practice begins with the transformation of the body, and then transforms the more subtle level of energy represented by the organ. Healing the organ is an important part of the practice but because the energetic dimension is what is being worked with, the physical organ is less important than the energy; if you are missing

a spleen, or lung, or kidney, work with the area of the body and the sensation. The feeling is as important as the visualization. With the double organs-lungs and kidneys-visualize a goddess in each.

As with the earlier practice of internalizing qualities from the natural elements, the progression in this practice moves from gross to subtle.

First the body is transformed, then the organ associated with the element. The pure elemental energy heals the organ, then is poured into the central channel. It then accumulates in the heart center and is integrated with consciousness. The quality of the element is the same during each step of the practice but it is meant to permeate progressively subtler levels of experience, finally integrating into pure consciousness.

In the practice of the retrieval of the elements the healing works from the external, the body; to the energy, the organ; to the central channel; to the heart center; to the soul. In the shamanic view, the soul abides in the heart center in the central channel. The soul is not healed until the energy is brought into the subtlest level of experience. The sign of accomplishment in the practice is that the whole being is affected. The more strongly you can generate the experiences in the practice, the more profound the effects will be.

If you are particularly working with difficulties in your daily life-relationships, jobs, and so on -add emphasis to the transformation of the body and the generation of the grosser qualities of the element. If working with more energetic problems - disturbances in the emotions, health, or energy -then give emphasis to the evocation of the goddess' presence in the organ and to the generation of the elemental qualities in the energetic dimension.

If you are working with obstructions in meditation practice and in your spiritual life, then emphasize the integration of the quality with the mind, when the elemental energies are poured into the central channel.

When the elemental essence is poured into the central channel, try to feel that any obscurations or negative emotions associated with the element are entirely overcome and that the positive qualities are generated. Each element is associated with one of the five wisdoms which dawns when the element is completely purified and integrated.

The Practice in Daily Life

It's best to work with all five elements, one after the other, but if that is too much, practice with the element you most feel needs to be strengthened. Try to develop a relationship with the goddesses. The strength of the practice does not depend on perfect visualization or the use of perfect words. What is important is to have an experience of the positive elemental qualities and to learn to use the elements for healing. As the qualities are retrieved, feel your body, energy, and mind becoming stronger and more balanced.

The practice can be done as part of your daily schedule, as a personal or group retreat practice, or at any time that you feel it would be helpful. The text suggests that the practice be done intensively on a retreat of twenty one, fourteen, or seven days' duration.

According to the text, the individual elements are strongest during particular periods of the day and night. If you wish to augment

your practice you can work with each element during the time that it is strongest:

Space: from dawn to sunrise

Fire: from sunrise to midmorning

Earth: from midmorning to midday

Air: from midday to sunset

Water: from sunset until all stars are visible in the night sky

Many centuries ago, it was written in one of the Tibetan texts that the biggest obstacle humans face on the spiritual path is their tendency to be too busy. It's hard to think of the world of yak herders as busy compared with our modern world in which there are jobs and cars and paperwork, email and phones and faxes, televisions and shopping centers and newspapers. But it is our nature to fill time, to fill in the spaces in our lives, and then to complain that we have too much to do. For some, adding spiritual practice to life seems to be just another thing that we have to fit into our schedules. But it doesn't have to be like that.

As long as we breathe, we can practice. If nothing else, we can inhale what is positive and exhale what is harmful. We can remain mindful and practice kindness and compassion. These take no time away from anything else. Similarly, we can practice with the elements at any time, in any place.

If you're out of balance, call on the energy of the element that is needed to rebalance. Before meals, offer the food to the first and second guests. Offer the leftovers to the third and fourth guests. Spend time feeling connected to the grounded earth, and maybe the next day to the spacious sky. Stay connected for a week to the comfort of water or the flexibility of air or the creativity of fire.

The elements can be approached in nature or through visionary connection to the elemental goddesses. When the connection is firm and the experience of the elements is vivid, there are endless possibilities for healing and generating positive qualities, for overcoming negativities and obstacles, and for progressing on the spiritual path.