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## The Magnetizing Deities

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### D2: The Magnetizing Deities

*Dharmakaya Buddha of Boundless Light and Vajradharma,  
Sovereign of the world, Avalokiteshvara -- embodiment of great compassion,  
The Lotus King -- he who reigns over all of samsara and nirvana,  
The overpowering Heruka -- Formidable subjugator of all that appears and exists,  
Dakini Secret Wisdom and Vajravarahi,  
Mahadeva, King of Desire, supreme bliss, reservoir of great passion,  
Kurukullā -- enchantress of all creatures without exception,*

#### a. Dharmakaya Amitabha

Dharmakaya means the union of emptiness and wisdom, which is beyond all form and concept while possessing all kinds of merit. The deities of the Lotus Family manifest in three kayas. Buddha Amitabha is the dharmakaya representation. His body is red in color; he is completely naked without any adornment. He appears like the primordial Buddha, Samantabhadra, except that he is red instead of blue.

In Vajrayana, naked representations of Buddha figures symbolize the intrinsic nature of all phenomena. In this samsaric world, normally, a person depicted without clothes is considered shameful. However, in this case, as the nature of all phenomena is devoid of intrinsic existence and the nature of mind is bare naked, from this standpoint, any adornment is not necessary.

According to *the Tantra of Liberation through Contact*, “The non-changing light body of the primordial Tathagata is naked, unadorned, red and yellow in color and abiding in the meditation posture.” Clearly, Amitabha is unadorned, his body is of reddish yellow color, his hands form the mudra of meditation, and he is seated in the vajra posture.

The fact that the first deity in Wang Dū is Buddha Amitabha, gives rise to a special origination for rebirth in the pure land. His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche once said, “All of you should aspire for rebirth in Sukhavati upon death. Reciting Wang Dū creates a karmic origination that will lead to rebirth in the Pure Land.” Therefore, those who practice Pure Land Buddhism should also recite Wang Dū often.

Among the nine principal magnetizing deities, apart from Amitabha, a few of the dakinis appear naked as well. From this perspective, Vajrayana is indeed the practice of those with sharp natural capacities. If a person still holds on to the notion of shame, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas merely assume graceful and majestic forms. But if a person has realized the bare naked nature of the mind, where all conceptual thoughts and attachments have ceased to exist, then Buddhas and Bodhisattvas appear in another form. Therefore, if a person thinks that Vajrayana’s naked representations of the Buddhas are inappropriate, it is a sign that they are not yet ready for Vajrayana practice. Therefore, in order to protect the minds of such people, the images of naked Buddhas or Buddhas in sexual union, along with certain practices, are

disclosed with caution.

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas approach us in boundless ways. In addition to imparting dharma to us by means of language, they also use unique ways to demonstrate the true nature of all phenomena. Regarding the images of Buddhas in sexual union, from an ordinary perspective it does appear that the Buddha father and mother are embracing each other. However, such an embrace is symbolic of the union of emptiness and appearance, emptiness and luminosity, and emptiness and bliss.

Sexual union can also be explained as the mind and phenomena dissolving into non-duality. An average person may have difficulty grasping the meaning of emptiness as taught in the second turning of the Dharma wheel and the concept of tathagatagarbha luminosity taught in the third turning of the wheel. This same person may not see how one is not different from the other. Therefore, the imagery of the Buddhas in sexual union serves as a visual aid to demonstrate this notion. Upon seeing a Buddha embracing a consort, a person with sharp natural capacities, might instantaneously realize the innate wisdom that emptiness and luminosity are inseparable, and be able to transform all negative emotions into the great wisdom of the union of emptiness and bliss.

Nowadays, due to its increasing popularity, many people study the Vajrayana, but very few people really understand it. Most people are simply curious. When they see a naked representation of the Buddha, or a Buddha with consort, they immediately take a snapshot with their smart phone. They believe that what they are seeing is an artistic image of the human body; but even graver misunderstandings about the Vajrayana can sprout from such uninformed conclusions. A person who understands the Vajrayana, especially a person who has experience with its advanced practices, knows that such imagery does not represent ordinary lust; and that Vajrayana Buddhism would never advocate attachment of this nature.

#### b. Vajradharma

According to the Esoteric Buddhism of the Tang Dynasty, Vajradharma is a Bodhisattva of the Lotus Family. He is a member of the retinue of the Buddha Amitabha. In certain sadhanas of Tibetan Buddhism, Vajradharma and Amitabha are two different entities. But in this text, Vajradharma and Amithabha are not different. Vajradharma is the sambhogakaya emanation of Amitabha. He is depicted almost identically to Vajradhara<sup>1</sup>: He stands in a vajra posture, arms crossed in front of the chest, holding a vajra in one hand and a bell with the other. The only difference between them is that Vajradhara is blue, and Vajradharma is red.

His Holiness once mentioned that the red Vajradhara also appears in certain sadhanas composed by Mipham Rinpoche. But in Wang Dü, Vajradharma is the sambhogakaya of Amitabha. So in this thangka, commissioned by His Holiness, compliant to the secret meaning of Mipham Rinpoche, dharmakaya Amitabha is depicted above, sambhogakaya Vajradharma is in the middle, and nirmanakaya Padmasambhava is below.

There is plenty of reliable scriptural evidence supporting the claim that Vajradharma and Amitabha are the same entity. In the tantras, it is explicitly stated that Vajradharma is the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Vajradhara>

manifestation of Amitabha; “The red light beaming from Amitabha’s forehead transforms into the red Avalokiteshvara; red light beaming from his throat takes the form of Padmasambhava; the red light from Amitabha’s heart turns into Heruka and the red light beaming from the tip of his nose becomes Vajrapani<sup>2</sup>.” Some masters have explained that Vajrapani here is Vajradharma, and that Vajradharma is the sambhogakaya of Amitabha, just as Vajradhara is the sambhogakaya to Samantabhadra.

c. Avalokiteshvara

Normally, it is better to follow the sequence of dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya. But this practice is fundamentally a practice of Avalokiteshvara. Furthermore, it is very difficult for ordinary human beings to embark on the path of the dharmakaya and sambhogakaya Buddhas. To do so, we need to receive the blessing of Amitabha and Vajradharma through Avalokiteshvara. Therefore, here we first introduce Avalokiteshvara before introducing Padmasambhava.

Avalokiteshvara assumes many different forms: Avalokiteshvara with two arms, four arms, eleven faces, a thousand arms, a thousand eyes, etc. The Avalokiteshvara here is very special. He is red in color and is holding a lotus flower in his left hand, symbolizing compassion towards all sentient beings. His right hand forms the mudra of offering, symbolizing the removal of affliction and suffering for all sentient beings.

The tantras state that red light radiating from Amitabha transforms into Avalokiteshvara. It is also said in Karma Chakmé Rinpoche’s *Aspiration to be Reborn in the Pure Realm of Sukhavati*<sup>3</sup> that light emanating from Amitabha takes the form of Avalokiteshvara. Therefore, by praying to the red Avalokiteshvara, both the Sutrayana practice and the Vajrayana practice can be achieved. On the one hand you can accomplish the magnetizing activity, and on the other hand you can attain rebirth in the realm of Amitabha.

In Han Buddhism, the practice of red Avalokiteshvara is rare, but in Tibetan Buddhism it is quite common. In Larung, every 30<sup>th</sup> day of the Tibetan lunar month, the sangha recite the Gyalwa Gyamtso Sadhana, in which Gyalwa is depicted as a four-armed red Avalokiteshvara. Reciting his name and mantra are tremendously beneficial to the dead.

We need to clarify that although Wang Dü and Lerab Lingpa’s *Profound Practice of the Illusory Lasso of Avalokiteshvara’s Nine Principle Deities* are both practices of the magnetizing activity, and both supplicate the nine magnetizing deities, that they are different from one another. In Wang Dü, the principle deity is a single-figure Padmasambhava, whereas in *Profound Practice of the Illusory Lasso of Avalokiteshvara’s Nine Principle Deities*, Padmasambhava is absent. There the main deity is red Avalokiteshvara in the posture of sexual union. In his right hand he is holding a copper hook while in his left hand he holds a string of lotus flowers. He is embracing the Secret Wisdom Dakini. His Holiness also commented, “Typically, Lerab Lingpa’s sadhana of nine deities should include Padmasambhava. The reason why Padmasambhava is absent in this sadhana is unclear.”

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Vajrapani>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Aspiration\\_to\\_be\\_Reborn\\_in\\_the\\_Pure\\_Realm\\_of\\_Sukhavati](http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Aspiration_to_be_Reborn_in_the_Pure_Realm_of_Sukhavati)

In Wang Dü, it is very easy to count the nine deities. But in Lerab Lingpa's sadhana, they are not as obvious. According to Khenpo Sodargye's teaching, one could count the nine deities of Lerab Lingpa's sadhana as follows: Amitabha, Vajradharma, Padmasambhava, Red Avalokiteshvara, Guhyajñāna, Heruka, Vajravarahi, Kurukullā, Mahadeva. Amitabha, Vajradhara and Padmasambhava, are present in an imperceptible way. Firstly, Amitabha, as chief of the Lotus Family, is positioned above the head of Avalokiteshvara. Secondly, Vajradharma, transformed from Amitabha, is visible to the Bodhisattvas whose perceptions are pure. Thirdly, for ordinary sentient beings with tainted perceptions, the emanation of Amitabha is as the Lotus King.

d. Padma Gyalpo: The Lotus King Padmasambhava

*"He who reigns over all of samsara and nirvana"* expresses that Padmasambhava has attained the ultimate accomplishment, and therefore, has control over all of samsara and nirvana, and all animate and inanimate phenomena.

Padmasambhava is white in color with a hint of red, holding a vajra and a skull cup, with a khatvanga or three-pointed trident tucked under his arm. Usually, Padmasambhava is depicted with a consort, but it was the instruction of His Holiness not to include a consort. Instead, the khatvanga serves as a symbol of the dakini consort.

The Lotus King, Padma Gyalpo, is one of the many epithets of Padmasambhava. According to his biography, when Indrabhuti of Orgyen was on his way back home from a treasure-hunting voyage, he passed by a lake. At the center of the lake, he saw a noble-looking boy sitting atop a lotus flower. This boy was Padmasambhava. The king was very delighted by what he saw, and brought the boy to his palace, where he was adopted as the king's own son and thus, became a prince. Later, Padmasambhava granted empowerment to the king, and imparted secret teachings to him. Extremely delighted, the king offered all his wealth and retinue to Padmasambhava, and honored him with the name, Lotus King.

Padmasambhava belongs to the Lotus Family of the west. According to the tantras, Padmasambhava is the emanation of Amitabha and Avalokiteshvara. It is also said in Karma Chakmé Rinpoche's *Aspiration to Be Reborn in the Pure Realm of Sukhavati*, that Padmasambhava originated from a beam of light that radiated outward from Amitabha's heart. Because he has gained control of samsara and nirvana, we should offer him our most devout prayers. Through invoking him, demonic forces and obstacles will be removed, and we will gain control of our body and mind.

Padmasambhava displayed incredible power and benefited countless beings across India, Tibet and China. His deeds are so great and so numerous that they are beyond recounting. This is especially true in Tibet, where without Guru Rinpoche's influence, the harmonious merging and flourishing of Sutrayana and Vajrayana Buddhism could not have succeeded to the extent that it did. Tibetan Buddhism's prosperity in the world and the blessings of Padmasambhava are inseparable. In this dark age, Padmasambhava's teachings are showing their incredible power more than ever. In terms of the effects of transforming our mental afflictions, no other spiritual body of knowledge, can compare to the teachings of Padmasambhava. To be more specific, if it were not for the blessings of Padmasambhava, even you, the reader, would not be

able to benefit from Tibetan Buddhism. Therefore, we should all be grateful to Padmasambhava.

e. Hayagriva: The Overpowering Heruka

The overpowering Heruka refers to Hayagriva, and his power to subjugate the entire world. Hayagriva is a wrathful manifestation of Amitabha. While some Hayagriva practices can be found in Tang Esoteric Buddhism, it is in Tibetan Buddhism, that one finds the greatest variety of these practices. Throughout the history of Tibet it has been recorded that many people reached the ultimate accomplishment through Hayagriva practices. In Dudjom Rinpoche's *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, it is documented that Galwa Choyang, one of Padmasambhava's twenty-five heart sons, reached enlightenment by following the practices of Hayagriva. Later, the great siddha, Thangtong Gyalpo<sup>4</sup>, who is considered to be the emanation of both Avalokiteshvara and Hayagriva, also attained the ultimate accomplishment through this practice.

Hayagriva is extremely powerful. Wondrous signs of accomplishment accompany the attainment of enlightenment through Hayagriva. For example, a horse's head may grow from the crown of your own head and make a loud neighing sound which resounds into the space above you, conquering the demons of heaven; the space below you, where it conquers all the demonic forces of the realm of the nagas; the space to the right where all male demonic beings are destroyed; and the space to the left, where all female demons are destroyed. In an age such as this, when the Dharma is in decline, it is very necessary to practice Hayagriva.

Even as a child, Khenpo Sodargye had very strong faith in Hayagriva. He said during the teaching, "Back in those days, I would lead the yaks out to pasture every day. As I walked barefoot in the mountains, I would spin a small prayer wheel while reciting the mantra of Hayagriva: *Om Vajra Krodha Hayagriva Hulu Hulu Hum Phat*. Anyone seeing me would think that I was a Hayagriva yogi. We also had a few horses in our household. The local Tibetans believed that if we recited the Hayagriva mantra, the horses would be safe from attack by wild animals. When my father entrusted these horses to my care, he asked me to recite the Hayagriva mantra with diligence. I felt that since I had been entrusted with such an important responsibility, I had better recite the mantra as often as I could. In retrospect, I believe that although at that time I recited the mantra out of self-interest, I also sowed the seed of a good habit."

f. Guhyajñāna: Secret Wisdom Dakini

The next deity is Guhyajñāna, also known as the Secret Wisdom Dakini, or Vajrayogini. She is red in color, and has one face with three eyes. In each of her four arms she is holding a flaying knife, a skull-cup full of nectar, a trident and a sword of wisdom. In the yabyum practices of Avalokiteshvara, she is his consort.

Guhyajñāna is a very important Buddha figure in Tibetan Buddhism. Tibetan masters have said that no matter to which Buddha-figure you practice, it is important to choose Guhyajñāna as a parallel practice. In the guru yoga practice in Patrul Rinpoche's text *The*

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Thangtong\\_Gyalpo](http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Thangtong_Gyalpo)

*Words of My Perfect Teacher*, it instructs the practitioner to visualize themselves as Guhyajñāna.

Historically, many people have attained achievement through Guhyajñāna practice. Most of the eighty mahasiddhas of India practiced Guhyajñāna. In Tibet, Guhyajñāna was practiced in the strictest secrecy and even then, only by practitioners of the Sakya and Nyingma traditions. It was not until later that this practice passed to other sects. In the Sakya tradition, Guhyajñāna practice was passed on to only one person at a time. Later, the requirements were lifted to allow from seven to twenty-one people of each generation to receive it through oral transmission. Today, the transmission of this practice is still very rare.

We should attach great importance to Guhyajñāna practice. If we can pray earnestly to Guhyajana, then her specific blessing will help us swiftly transform our lust into discerning wisdom and, as such, it will manifest itself in all worldly and non-worldly accomplishments.

g. Vajravarahi

Vajravarahi is also red in color, with one face, two arms and three eyes. On the right side of her face is a swine's head. She holds a flaying knife in her right hand and in the left hand at her chest she is holding a skull-cup. A khatvanga is tucked under her left arm.

Vajravarahi is portrayed with the head of a swine, which symbolizes the absence of dualistic labeling of phenomena as being either pure or impure. As pigs cannot tell clean from filthy, and are indifferent to whether the food that they eat is clean or dirty. The swine's head symbolizes that Vajravarahi has obliterated all conceptual thoughts of cleanliness and filth.

Vajravarahi has many different forms. In addition to the red Vajravarahi, there is also a blue Vajravarahi and a black Vajravarahi. Vajravarahi is a practice common to each Tibetan lineage and in particular to the Kagyu tradition. Many Tibetan masters have personally seen Vajravarahi herself. The biography of Venerable Longchenpa mentions that Vajravarahi appeared to him quite often. Once, Longchenpa even asked Vajravarahi why she would appear to him, even though prayers to her were not a specific part of his practice. Vajravarahi also appeared to Jigme Lingpa on many occasions.

h. Mahadeva: Reservoir of Great Passion

The next deity is Mahadeva. Also red in color, Mahadeva is depicted with one face and two arms, with his left hand holding a skull-cup in front of his chest, and his right hand brandishing a trident.

We may wonder why the expressions “*supreme bliss*”, “*King of Desire*”, and “*reservoir of great passion*” are used to describe Mahadeva. This is because this deity can benefit all sentient beings by means of his great wisdom in which bliss and emptiness are inseparable.

In the tantras, there are two Mahadevas: one is a worldly god, and the other is a manifestation of Avalokiteshvara. Some tantras document that Buddha Shakyamuni has in the past, also taken the form of Mahadeva. Therefore, Mahadeva is not an ordinary god but is a manifestation of an enlightened being. Relying on him, you can ripen your abilities to benefit beings and your abilities to magnetize. In order to benefit sentient beings, Buddhas and

Bodhisattvas will manifest themselves in the forms of celestial gods. As such, it is difficult for ordinary beings like ourselves, to tell the difference. So, it is better not to jump to hasty conclusions when you hear the name of a celestial god.

Historically, many people attained enlightenment through the Mahadeva practice. In the biography of Guru Chowang<sup>5</sup>, a treasure revealer of the Nyingma tradition, there are many fascinating stories of his personal encounters with Mahadeva.

i. Kurukullā: Enchantress of the Minds of All Living Beings without Exception

“*Enchantress of all living beings without exception*” means that Kurukullā can captivate the minds of sentient beings with creative methods. Kurukullā has a beautiful and majestic body that enchants those who behold her. She is red in color, with one face and four arms. She holds a bow and arrow with her two upper arms; and in her two lower arms she holds an iron hook and a lasso made of lotus flowers.

Kurukullā, an emanation of Tara, is an enlightened manifestation of discerning wisdom. The power that she possesses is very uncommon. A Buddhist monk or nun who wants to maintain their precepts untainted, should pray to Kurukullā devoutly, for she has the power to transform desire into the wisdom of great bliss and ensure that the practitioner’s precepts remain immaculate. His Holiness gave very clear teachings in this regard, “Monks and nuns, in a time when Dharma is in decline, may choose to exchange their extremely precious precepts for a moment of physical pleasure. This would be extremely shameful. By praying to Kurukullā devoutly, hardships of this kind can be completely dispelled.”

For lay people who are experiencing difficulty finding a spouse, Kurukullā can be of help as well. It is for this reason that Kurukullā, is known to some as “the personal deity of love”. There are many single men and women who are having difficulty finding a partner. Many of them ask for help from their Tibetan Rinpoches. These Rinpoches out of compassion for them suggest that they recite the Kurukullā mantra, *Om Kurukulle Svaha*.

People who seek matrimonial harmony can also solicit help from Kurukullā. There is a story about a once beautiful, but aging queen in ancient India, who had over time, lost the affection of her king. Determined to regain the king’s affection the queen sent a maid out on a mission to find an elixir that could re-ignite her husband's love. The maid searched far and wide for the elixir with no result, until one day she met a beautiful red-skinned woman. After learning of the maid’s mission, the red-skinned woman quickly prepared a particular type of food and gave it to the maid, telling her that if she could get the king to eat it, all of the queen’s problems would be solved.

The maid returned to the palace and repeated the red-skinned woman’s words to the queen. Afraid of the consequences of feeding this unidentified food to the king, the queen threw it into a nearby lake. (Another account of the story is that the queen having lost the king’s affection completely, was exiled and therefore couldn’t give the food to the king.) A naga who lived in the lake ate the magical food, was transformed into an image of the king, and in this disguise impregnated the queen.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Guru\\_Ch%C3%B6kyi\\_Wangchuk](http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Guru_Ch%C3%B6kyi_Wangchuk)

When the king heard the news of the queen's pregnancy, he became enraged, and decided to punish her. The queen saw no alternative but to confess to everything. Dubious, the king demanded that the maid summon the red-skinned woman to the palace. As she stood before him, the king immediately realized that this red-skinned woman was none other than the goddess Kurukullā herself, and prostrating before her asked for teachings that could help him surpass all desire. Through diligent practice, the king was eventually able to attain enlightenment, and thus it is said that the king was the first in the human realm to hold the lineage of Kurukullā's teachings.

It is hoped that this story may encourage your faith in Kurukullā. In Tibetan Buddhism, there are many different practices related to Kurukullā. His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche has written a liturgy and praise of Kurukullā. When he visited the holy mountain of Chimpu, he revealed a terma that contained a liturgy for Kurukullā practice.

The previous paragraphs have introduced each of the nine magnetizing deities. Each of them have extraordinary qualities and if you pray to any one of them you will receive incredible blessings. His Holiness once said, "If you don't have wealth, Wang Dü can bring you wealth; if you want position, Wang Dü can help you get position. Relying on this prayer, you can gain everything that your heart desires. If however, due to having no control over your mind, you are unable to give rise to bodhicitta, emptiness and other non-worldly accomplishments, reciting Wang Dü with diligence will allow you to gain these qualities with ease." Therefore, whether it is to achieve your worldly or transcendent goals, you can pray to the nine deities and by relying on their blessings all your wishes will come true.