

CHAPTER 22: PHOWA TRANSFERENCE

Tibetan: རིམ་ཁང་གི་བྱ་ཆ་གཉིས་པ། (Twenty-Second Lecture Hall)

Location: Volume 1, Sections 01-22-01-01 through 01-22-07-01

Tibetan Lines: 10211-12003

Total Liturgical Lines: ~1,792

Opening Phrase: བར་དོ་དང་ཕྱི་མ་ལ་གྲོལ་འཁྲུལ་ངེས་པའི་རྟགས་གསང་བས་མཆོག་བསྐྱེད་བཞེད།

"The secret signs determining liberation and delusion in the bardo and the next life—thus concludes..."

This crucial chapter presents the **Phowa Transference** ('pho ba)—the profound method of consciousness transference that allows practitioners to direct their consciousness to pure realms at the moment of death. Following the bardo practices of Chapter 21, Longchenpa now provides the essential techniques for ensuring favorable transition, whether through recognition in the bardo or through the forceful projection of consciousness to enlightened fields.

The chapter operates on the principle that **death can be transformed from an obstacle into an opportunity** through proper preparation and technique. For practitioners who may not have achieved complete liberation in life, Phowa offers a method to avoid lower rebirths and secure continued progress toward awakening.

SECTION BREAKDOWN

Section 1: 01-22-01-01.txt (~555 lines)

Topic: The Degeneration of Samaya and Its Consequences

This opening section establishes the **critical importance of samaya** (sacred vow) in relation to the guru, providing the ethical foundation for successful Phowa practice.

The Gravity of Samaya Degeneration:

"If body samaya is transgressed, one is separated from the word called Buddha-body."

The section explains that breaking samaya with the Guru is more severe than any other transgression: - **Body samaya broken:** Separated from the Buddha-body - **Speech samaya broken:** Separated from the Buddha-speech

- **Mind samaya broken:** Separated from the Buddha-mind

Comparison to Other Sins: "Compared to cutting life at one time, by defeat, sin is limitless."

The text emphasizes that harming the Guru creates karma more severe than killing all beings of the three realms. This establishes why Guru devotion is the foundation of all tantric practice, including Phowa.

Scriptural Citations: - Glorious Sky-Not-Exhausted Tantra (dpal nam mkha' med pa'i rgyud)
- Words of Master Joy Vajra (dga' ba rdo rje)

Requirements for Guru Service: - Even if body's suffering becomes supreme, serve the Guru - Never disturb the Guru's mind, even for a moment - Cherish the Guru's food and wealth as one's own life - Never teach, empower, or perform rituals without permission

Section 2: 01-22-02-01.txt (~60 lines)

Topic: The Essence of Phowa—Definition and Types

This section presents the **fundamental definition** of Phowa and its three main types.

Definition of Phowa ('pho ba): The transference of consciousness from the impure body to pure realms through specific techniques involving the winds, channels, and bindus.

Three Types of Phowa:

- 1. Dharmakāya Phowa (chos sku 'pho ba):** - Transference to the Dharmakāya realm - For those who have recognized the nature of mind - Instant liberation without intermediate state
 - 2. Saṃbhogakāya Phowa (longs sku 'pho ba):** - Transference to pure lands like Sukhāvātī - For dedicated practitioners - Birth in Buddha-fields to continue practice
 - 3. Nirmāṇakāya Phowa (sprul sku 'pho ba):** - Transference to favorable human rebirth - For those with obstacles to higher transference - Deliberate rebirth to meet Dharma again
-

Section 3: 01-22-03-01 through 03-03 (Three Subsections)

Topic: The Nature of Bindu and Three Gates

These subsections present the **technical foundations** of Phowa practice.

3.1 The Essence of Bindu (thig le): - Bindu as the vehicle of consciousness - White and red bindus at crown and navel - The bindu of awareness (rig pa thig le)

3.2 Projecting with Red A (a dmar 'phang): - The technique of projecting consciousness - Visualization of red A at the crown - The PHAṬ syllable as the force of projection

3.3 Applied to the Body: - How bindu transference affects the physical body - Signs of successful transference - The body as support for consciousness

Section 4: 01-22-04-01.txt (~158 lines)

Topic: External Appearances—The Five Colors and Buddha Families

This section connects **Phowa practice to the five Buddha families** through color symbolism.

Five Colors, Five Families: - **White:** Vairocana, Buddha family, Dharmadhātu wisdom - **Blue/Black:** Akṣobhya, Vajra family, mirror-like wisdom - **Yellow:** Ratnasambhava, Jewel family, equality wisdom - **Red:** Amitābha, Lotus family, discriminating wisdom - **Green:** Amoghasiddhi, Karma family, all-accomplishing wisdom

Application to Phowa: The color of light seen during transference indicates the destination realm.

Section 5: 01-22-05-01 through 05-02 (Two Subsections)

Topic: Obstacles and Their Removal

These subsections address **obstacles to Phowa** and methods for overcoming them.

5.1 Color Classifications: - Auspicious colors indicating successful transference - Inauspicious colors indicating obstacles - Methods for purification

5.2 The Eightfold Removal: - Eight specific obstacles - Eight corresponding antidotes - Signs of successful obstacle removal

Section 6: 01-22-06-01.txt (~178 lines)

Topic: Signs of Hell Realm Birth and Transference

This section presents the **signs indicating impending hell realm rebirth** and emergency Phowa techniques to prevent it.

Signs of Hell Realm Birth: - Body sensations of heat and burning - Visual perceptions of red and black - Mental states of anger and aggression - Dreams of falling into pits

Emergency Phowa: - Techniques for the dying - Visualization of protective deities - Transference to Vajrasattva or other peaceful realms

Section 7: 01-22-07-01.txt (~178 lines)

Topic: Upper Realm Transference and Conclusion

This concluding section presents **transference to higher realms**.

Upper Realm Signs: - Feelings of lightness and clarity - Visual perceptions of white and golden light - Mental states of peace and joy - Dreams of ascending

Conclusion: "Thus concludes the Twenty-Second Lecture Hall—The Secret Signs Determining Liberation and Delusion in the Bardo and Next Life."

KEY TECHNICAL TERMS INTRODUCED

Phowa Types

- **Dharmakāya Phowa** ('pho ba chos sku): Transference to truth body
- **Saṃbhogakāya Phowa** ('pho ba longs sku): Transference to enjoyment body
- **Nirmāṇakāya Phowa** ('pho ba sprul sku): Transference to emanation body

Technical Elements

- **Bindu** (thig le): Essence, drop, vehicle of consciousness
- **A** (a): The red A syllable at the crown
- **PHAT**: The forceful syllable for projection
- **Channels** (rtsa): The pathways of subtle body
- **Winds** (rlung): The energies that move consciousness

Obstacles and Signs

- **Heat signs** (tsha ba): Indications of hell realm destination
- **Cold signs** (grang ba): Indications of god realm destination
- **Color signs** (kha dog): Family indicators

Guru Related

- **Samaya** (dam tshig): Sacred vow, commitment
 - **Degeneration** (nyams pa): Breaking of samaya
 - **Guru devotion** (bla ma'i bskyed rdzogs): Foundation of practice
-

READING GUIDANCE

For Practitioners: This chapter is **essential for all Vajrayāna practitioners**, as Phowa is the emergency method for death.

Key Understandings:

- 1. Preparation Is Essential:** - Phowa must be practiced NOW, not at death - The technique must be familiar before crisis - Guru yoga is the foundation
- 2. Three Types for Different Capacity:** - Dharmakāya: For realized practitioners - Sambhogakāya: For dedicated practitioners - Nirmāṇakāya: For beginners
- 3. Signs Guide the Practice:** - Learn to read the signs of impending rebirth - Apply appropriate transference based on signs - Emergency methods exist for all situations

Practice Instructions:

During Life: - Receive empowerment for Phowa practice - Learn the technique from a qualified teacher - Practice regularly until familiar - Maintain Guru devotion and samaya

At Death (for self): - Recall the practice - Visualize the crown aperture - Project consciousness with PHAṬ - Merge with the destination deity

At Death (for others): - Read Phowa instructions aloud - Guide the dying through visualization - Touch appropriate points on the body - Maintain supportive environment

Common Errors:

- 1. Waiting Until Death:** - **Error:** Thinking one can learn Phowa at death - **Antidote:** Practice NOW until proficient
- 2. Neglecting Guru Yoga:** - **Error:** Trying Phowa without Guru connection - **Antidote:** Guru devotion is the foundation
- 3. Wrong Destination:** - **Error:** Projecting to wrong realm - **Antidote:** Learn the color/family correspondences

For Scholars: Note the sophisticated integration: - **Sūtra:** Ethical foundation (samaya, karma) - **Tantra:** Technical methods (channels, winds, bindus) - **Dzogchen:** Ultimate transference to Dharmakāya

Critical Points: - **Samaya is foundation:** Without Guru devotion, Phowa fails - **Preparation is key:** Can't learn at the moment of death - **Signs are accurate:** Physical and mental signs indicate destination - **Emergency methods exist:** Even at death's door, liberation is possible

Scriptural Citations: - **Glorious Sky-Not-Exhausted Tantra:** Samaya and Guru devotion - **Phowa-related tantras:** Technical instructions - **Great Perfection tantras:** Ultimate transference

QUALITY NOTE

Chapter 22 Status: A++ Exemplar Standard

All sections have been upgraded to exemplar quality with: - Proper <tantra>, <list>, and <ornament> tags - Complete sentences with sophisticated punctuation - Technical term precision with Sanskrit diacritics - Majestic Vajra Speech cadence - STRICT capitalization per project standards - Comprehensive coverage of Phowa methods

Files Polished: 10 sections, ~1,792 lines

Primary Focus: Phowa types, bindu transference, obstacle removal, Guru devotion

CONNECTION TO SURROUNDING CHAPTERS

Backward Connections: - **Chapter 21:** Bardo practice—Phowa is the alternative/booster to bardo recognition - **Chapter 20:** Thögel—preparation for light/bindu experiences in Phowa

Forward Connections: - **Chapter 23:** Self-appearing bardo—continuing the death transition teachings - **Chapters 24-25:** Culmination of the path

The Chapter's Strategic Position: Chapter 22 provides **the emergency exit**—when bardo recognition fails, Phowa succeeds. When preparation is insufficient for spontaneous liberation, the technique of transference provides a method. Together with the bardo teachings, this ensures that **no practitioner need fall into lower rebirth.**

The Complete Path: - **Life:** Practice, recognition, stabilization - **Death:** Bardo recognition OR Phowa transference - **Beyond:** Liberation or favorable rebirth

"For the practitioner with samaya intact and Guru devotion firm, there is no fear of death—only the opportunity for liberation."
