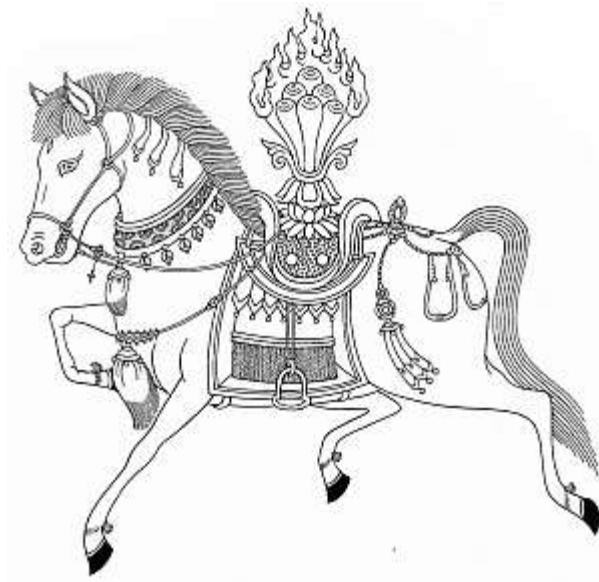


VIPASHYANA

THE ROOT SOURCES FROM THE TIBETAN TRADITION



SOURCE BOOK

**RIME SHEDRA NYC
SMCNY ADVANCED BUDDHIST STUDIES**

CHANTS

ASPIRATION

In order that all sentient beings may attain Buddhahood,
From my heart I take refuge in the three jewels.

This was composed by Mipham. Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee

MANJUSHRI SUPPLICATION

Whatever the virtues of the many fields of knowledge
All are steps on the path of omniscience.
May these arise in the clear mirror of intellect.
O Manjushri, please accomplish this.

This was specially composed by Mangala (Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche). Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee

DEDICATION OF MERIT

By this merit may all obtain omniscience
May it defeat the enemy, wrong doing.
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness and death,
From the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings

By the confidence of the golden sun of the great east
May the lotus garden of the Rigden's wisdom bloom,
May the dark ignorance of sentient beings be dispelled.
May all beings enjoy profound, brilliant glory.

Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee

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A program of Shambhala Meditation Center of New York
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Vipashyana: The Tibetan Root Sources
Twelve Weeks from March 25 thru June 18, 2014

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**The Stages of Meditation on Emptiness
From *The Sutra of the Arrival in Lanka***

***Translated by Karl Brunnholz
In "The Center of the Sunlit Sky"***

By relying on mere mind,
One does not imagine outer objects. (1)

By resting in the observed object of suchness,
One should go beyond mere mind too. (2)

Going beyond mere mind,
One must even go beyond the nonappearance [of apprehender and apprehended]. (3)

The yogic practitioner who rests in nonappearance
Sees the great vehicle. (4)

This spontaneously present, peaceful resting
Is completely purified through aspiration prayers. (5)

Genuine identityless wisdom
Sees by way of nonappearance. (6)

The Stages of Meditation on Emptiness
From Nagarjuna's *Commentary on the Mind of Enlightenment*

Translated by Karl Brunnholz
In "The Center of the Sunlit Sky"

Nagarjuna begins his *Commentary on the Mind of Enlightenment* by saying that bodhisattvas, after having generated the aspiring mind of enlightenment, should generate the ultimate mind of enlightenment through the power of meditation.

The actual progression of this meditation starts with analyzing for the lack of a real personal identity. Next, Nagarjuna turns to phenomenal identitylessness.

As the entities of apprehender and apprehended,
The appearances of consciousness
Do not exist as outer objects
That are different from consciousness.

Therefore, in the sense of having the nature of entities,
In any case, outer objects do not exist.
It is these distinct appearances of consciousness
That appear as the aspect of form.

Just as people with dull minds
See illusions, mirages,
And the cities of scent-eaters,
So do form and such appear.

The teachings on the aggregates, constituents, and so on
Are for the purpose of stopping the clinging to a self.
By settling in mere mind,
The greatly blessed ones let go of these too.

In the above four verses, Nagarjuna clearly presents the intermediate step of realizing that all appearances occur solely within one's own mind as the expressions of this mind. However, just like all other Centrists, he does not stop at that point but-as the following verses and all his other texts show-negates the real existence of the mind as well.

The teaching of the Sage that
"All of these are mere mind"
Is for the sake of removing the fear of naive beings
And not [meant] in terms of true reality.

The third step in Nagarjuna's analysis is that mind itself is also unarisen, without nature, and empty. He describes what this emptiness means and why the example of space is used to illustrate it.

It is without characteristics and unarisen,
Not existent, and free from the ways of speech.
Space, the mind of enlightenment,
And enlightenment have the characteristic of not being two.

Fourth, Nagarjuna presents the defining characteristics of the proper meditation on emptiness and identifies three ways of misunderstanding emptiness.

The emptiness that is called "nonarising,"
"Emptiness," and "identitylessness"
Is what inferior beings meditate on.
It is not the meditation on the [actual emptiness].

What has the characteristic of the stream
Of positive and negative thoughts being cut off
The Buddhas taught to be emptiness.
The other [emptinesses] *they* did not declare to be emptiness.

To abide without observing the mind
Is the characteristic of space.
Their meditation on emptiness
Is declared to be space meditation.

Fifth, Nagarjuna states that both cyclic existence (ignorance) and liberation (realization of true reality) occur within and depend on our mind. Thus, the meditation and realization of emptiness is not spacelike in the sense of a blank nothingness, but it is an open, nonreferential state of mind that is at the same time profoundly peaceful and blissful.

The seeming comes from afflictions and karma.
Karma originates from the mind.
The mind is constituted by latent tendencies.
Freedom from latent tendencies is bliss.

This blissful mind is peacefulness.
A peaceful mind will not be ignorant.
Not to be ignorant is the realization of true reality.
The realization of true reality is the attainment of liberation.

THE STAGES OF MEDITATION II

By Kamalashila

From *Stages of Meditation by The Dalai Lama*

Translated by Ven Geshe Lobsang Jordhen, Losang Choephel Ganchenpa, and Jeremy Russell

9. Actualizing Special Insight

The Motivation

After realizing calm abiding, meditate on special insight, thinking as follows: 'All the teachings of the Buddha are perfect teachings, and they directly or indirectly reveal and lead to suchness with utmost clarity. If you understand suchness with utmost clarity, you will be free of all the nets of wrong views, just as darkness is dispelled when light appears. Mere calm abiding meditation cannot purify pristine awareness, nor can it eliminate the darkness of obscurations. When I meditate properly on suchness with wisdom, pristine awareness will be purified. Only with wisdom can I realize suchness. Only with wisdom can I effectively eradicate obscurations. Therefore, engaging in calm abiding meditation, I shall then search for suchness with wisdom. And I shall not remain content with calm abiding alone.'

What is suchness like? It is the nature of all phenomena that ultimately they are empty of the self of persons and the self of phenomena. This is realized through the perfection of wisdom and not otherwise. *The Unraveling of the Thought Sutra* reads,

"O Tathagatha, by which perfection do Bodhisattvas apprehend the identitylessness of phenomena?" "Avalokiteshvara, it is apprehended by the perfection of wisdom."

Therefore, meditate on wisdom while engaging in calm abiding.

The Selflessness of Persons

Yogis should analyze in the following manner: a person is not observed as separate from the mental and physical aggregates, the elements and sense powers. Nor is a person of the nature of the aggregates and so forth, because the aggregates and so forth have the entity of being many and impermanent. Others have imputed the person as permanent and single. The person as a phenomena cannot exist except as one or many, because there is no other way of existing. Therefore, we must conclude that the assertion of the worldly "I" and "mine" is wholly mistaken.

The Selflessness of Phenomena

Meditation on the selflessness of phenomena should also be done in the following manner: phenomena, in short, are included under the five aggregates, the twelve sources of perception, and the eighteen elements. The physical aspects of the aggregates, sources of perception, and elements are, in the ultimate sense, nothing other than aspects of the mind. This is because when they are broken into subtle particles and the nature of the parts of these subtle particles is individually examined, no definite identity can be found.

The Emptiness of the Mind

In the ultimate sense, the mind too cannot be real. How can the mind that apprehends only the false

nature of physical form and so forth, and appears in various aspects, be real? Just as physical forms and so forth are false, since the mind does not exist separately from physical forms and so forth, which are false, it too is false. Just as physical forms and so forth possess various aspects, and their identities are neither one nor many, similarly, since the mind is not different from them, its identity too is neither one nor many. Therefore, the mind by nature is like an illusion.

The Emptiness of All Phenomena

Analyze that, just like the mind, the nature of all phenomena, too, is like an illusion. In this way, when the identity of the mind is specifically examined by wisdom, in the ultimate sense it is perceived neither within nor without. It is also not perceived in the absence of both. Neither the mind of the past, nor that of the future, nor that of the present, is perceived. When the mind is born, it comes from nowhere, and when it ceases it goes nowhere because it is inapprehensible, undemonstrable, and non-physical.

If you ask, "What is the entity of that which is inapprehensible, undemonstrable, and non-physical?" *The Heap of Jewels* states:

"O Kashyapa, when the mind is thoroughly sought, it cannot be found. What is not found cannot be perceived. And what is not perceived is neither past nor future nor present."

Through such analysis, the beginning of the mind is ultimately not seen, the end of the mind is ultimately not seen, and the middle of the mind is ultimately not seen. All phenomena should be understood as lacking an end and a middle, just as the mind does not have an end or a middle. With the knowledge that the mind is without an end or a middle, no identity of the mind is perceived.

The Emptiness of Emptiness

What is thoroughly realized by the mind, too, is realized as being empty. By realizing that, the very identity, which is established as the aspect of the mind, like the identity of physical form, and so forth, is also ultimately not perceived.

In this way, when the person does not ultimately see the identity of all phenomena through wisdom, he will not analyze whether physical form is permanent or impermanent, empty or not empty, contaminated or not contaminated, produced or non-produced, and existent or non-existent. Just as physical form is not examined, similarly feeling, recognition, compositional factors, and consciousness are not examined. When the object does not exist, its characteristics also cannot exist. So how can they be examined? In this way, when the person does not firmly apprehend the entity of a thing as ultimately existing, having investigated it with wisdom, the practitioner engages in non-conceptual single-pointed concentration. And thus the identitylessness of all phenomena is realized.

The Necessity of this Meditation

Those who do not meditate with wisdom by analyzing the entity of things specifically, but merely meditate on the elimination of mental activity, cannot avert conceptual thoughts and also cannot realize identitylessness because they lack the light of wisdom. If the fire of consciousness knowing phenomena as they are is produced from individual analysis of suchness, then like the fire produced by rubbing wood it will burn the wood of conceptual thought. The Buddha has spoken in this way.

Madhyamakopadesha
Madhyamaka Pith Instructions
By Atisha

From *Straight from the Heart: Buddhist Pith Instructions*
Translated and Introduced By Karl Brunnholz
(Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York and Boulder, Colorado)

Atisa's text is a concise summary of the progressive stages of analytical meditation in the Madhyamaka tradition, while its topics and style are reminiscent of experiential instructions on Mahamudra.

*I prostrate to the Protector of the World.
The light rays of his speech unfold the lotuses of the hearts
Of all the ignorant like me without exception.
I bow down to that supreme holy being.*

The mahayana's pith instructions on the center are as follows. On the level of the seeming, in terms of all phenomena from the perspective of those who only see what is right in front of them, all presentations of cause and effect and so on [explain them] to be real in just the way they appear. However, ultimately or actually, when just this seeming [reality] as it appears is scrutinized and done away with through the great [Madhyamaka] reasonings there is nothing that can be grasped, not even something as tiny as a fragment of the tip of a hair that is split a hundred times. This is what you should internalize with certainty.

Sit on a comfortable seat in the cross-legged position.

1. As a start, [let us say that] entities are of two kinds: what possesses form and what is without form. What possesses form is a collection of infinitesimal particles. When these are analyzed and broken up in terms of their directional parts, not even their minutest [part] remains and they are utterly without appearance.
2. What is without form is the mind. As for that [mind], the past mind has [already] ceased and perished. The future mind has not [yet] arisen or originated. As for the present mind, it is very difficult to examine: it has no color and is without any shape. Since it is just like space, it is not established. In other words, it is free from unity and multiplicity, or, unarisen, or, natural luminosity. When analyzed and scrutinized with the weapons of reasonings, such as [those just mentioned], you realize that it is not established.
3. At the point when those two [what possesses form and what is without form] definitely do not exist and are not established as [having] any nature whatsoever, the very knowledge' that discriminates them is not established either. For example, if you rub

two sticks [against each other], fire comes forth. Through this condition, the two sticks are burned and become nonexistent.

4. Thereafter, the fire that has burned them also subsides by itself. Likewise, once all specific characteristics and general characteristics are established as nonexistent [through discriminating prajna], this prajna itself is without appearance and luminous, not being established as any nature whatsoever. Thus, all flaws, such as dullness and agitation, are eliminated. In this interval [of meditative concentration] consciousness is without any thought, does not apprehend anything, and has left behind all mindfulness and mental engagement. For as long as the enemies or robbers of characteristics and thoughts do not arise, consciousness should rest in such a [state].

When wishing to rise [from the meditation] slowly open the cross-legged position and stand up. Then, with an illusion like [frame of] mind, perform as many positive actions with body, speech, and mind as possible.

If practicing with devotion, for a long time, and uninterruptedly, those with the proper fortune will see reality in this very lifetime. All phenomena are revealed as effortlessly and spontaneously present of their own accord, just as the middle of space. Through [the wisdom] that is attained subsequent to the [meditative equipoise described], all phenomena are known as illusions and the like. From the time of having manifested the vajra-like meditative concentration onwards, these [practitioners] do not even have a [phase of] subsequent attainment, but rest in meditative equipoise at all times.

Here, I do not go into the reasonings and scriptures that make statements such as, "If it were not like that, how would they [*Buddhas*] differ from bodhisattvas?" Through the power of having gathered the accumulations and made aspiration prayers for the welfare of others for countless eons, they *appear* exactly as those who are to be guided [by them] wish [and need them to be]. There are indeed plenty of scriptures and reasonings [on that subject], but I will not elaborate on them here.

This concludes [the text] called Madhyamaka Pith Instructions composed by the master Dipamkarashrijnana. It was translated and edited in its final version by this Indian pandita himself and the monk Tsultrim Gyalwa, the great translator and editor, at Lhasa Trulnang.

Fundamentals of Shamatha Meditation

“Meditation practice is not a way of entering into a manufactured state of tranquility or equanimity. Rather, it is samyak samadhi, the perfect meditation, the perfect absorption. Perfection in this case has no allegiance toward confusion or enlightenment. That’s why it is perfect. When we have no allegiance towards confusion or enlightenment, we free ourselves from any dogma, any bondage. A sense of ultimate relaxation begins to occur.” Chogyam Trungpa

I) Two Stages in Buddhist Meditation

- A) Shamatha: peaceful abiding; two main qualities - mindfulness and awareness
- B) Vipashyana: insight or awareness; two types – analytical and non-analytical

II) Shamatha: The Mindfulness Quality (Skt. Smriti; Tib. Trenpa)

- A) Synonyms: recollection, bare attention
- B) Stages of cultivation
 - 1) Stability: Familiarity with the object
 - 2) Vividness/Intensity: Not forgetting the object
 - 3) Strength: Not moving; holding firm; non-distraction

III) Shamatha: The Awareness Quality (Skt. Samprajanya; Tib. Sheshin)

- A) Synonyms: presently knowing, introspection, investigation
- B) Stages of cultivation
 - 1) Watcher or Spy - Seeing the meditator in context of meditation
 - 2) Alarm System - Notifying the mind when attention leaves the object
 - 3) Radar System or Sheriff - Detecting present and future obstacles to meditation

IV) The Cultivation of Shamatha: Obstacles, Antidotes and Powers

- A) Obstacles that affect the preparation for meditation
 - 1) Laziness – faith, aspiration, effort, pliancy
 - (a) Learning the technique
 - (b) Contemplating the technique
- B) Obstacles that affect the meditation itself
 - 1) Forgetting the instructions – mindfulness/Smriti
 - (a) Mindfulness
 - 2) Laxity and elation – awareness/samprajanya
 - (a) Awareness
- C) Obstacles that affect the increasing of meditation
 - 1) Not applying the antidote – applying the antidote
 - (a) Exertion
 - 2) Over application of the antidote – resting in equanimity
 - (a) Thorough Familiarity

V) Stages in the Progression of Shamatha

- A) Attention: mindfulness of body and breath
- B) Sensation: mindfulness of feeling or sense of presence, space
- C) Nowness: mindfulness of openness, expectancy, energizing
- D) Watching: mindfulness of thoughts, emotions, awareness

NINE STAGES OF SHAMATHA

NINE STAGES	FOUR MENTAL APPLICATIONS	FIVE OBSTACLES	EIGHT ANTIDOTES	THREE LEVELS	THREE QUALITIES	SIX POWERS	EXPERIENCE
1. Placing the Attention on the Object	engaging through concentration (stages 1-2)	1. Laziness (stages 1&2) 2. Forgetting the instructions (stages 1&2)	1. Faith 2. Aspiration 3. Effort 4. Suppleness/ pliancy (stages 1-3) 5. Mindfulness (stages 1-3)	Preparation (stages 1-3)	Stability (stages 1-3)	hearing (stages 1-3) contemplating (stages 1-3)	movement (waterfall) (stages 1-3)
2. Continual Placement							
3. Repeated Placement							
4. Close Placement (coarse laxity)	interruptedly engaging (stages 3-7)	3. Elation/ Laxity (stages 3-7)	6. Introspection awareness (sheshin) (stages 3-7)	Actual Meditation (stages 4-7)	Vividness Clarity (stages 4-5)	mindfulness (stages 4&5) awareness/ introspection (stages 5&6)	attainment (brook) (stage 4) familiarity (slow river) (stages 5&6)
5. Taming (subtle laxity)							
6. Pacifying (subtle elation)							
7. Thoroughly Pacifying (subtle elation and laxity)							
8. Making One-Pointed	uninterruptedly engaging (stage 8)	4. Not applying the antidotes (stage 8)	7. Applying the antidotes (stage 8)	Increasing Meditation (stages 7-9)	Strength (stages 5-9)	exertion (stages 7&8)	stability (calm lake) (stages 7&8)
9. Placement on Evenness/Equalness	effortlessly engaging (stage 9)	5. Over-application of the antidotes (stage 9)	8. Resting in equanimity (stage 9)				

A Brief Summary of the Five Faults and Eight Antidotes
From Tsong-Kha-Pa's *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path*

From *How to Practice Shamatha: Tibetan Buddhist Teachings on Cultivating Meditative Quiescence* by Gen Lamrimpa (Ven. Jampal Tenzin) Translated by B. Alan Wallace

As one first begins the practice, the first fault is laziness. One does not apply oneself to concentration, one does not meditate. To overcome laziness, apply the four antidotes: pliancy, enthusiasm, aspiration and faith.

Once one is meditating, the fault is forgetfulness. The meditator forgets the object of meditation and does not maintain concentration. That being the case, one should apply oneself to the cultivation of mindfulness, which acts as the remedy for forgetfulness.

When the mind is concentrated, the faults that arise are laxity and excitement. When the mind is subject to these faults, it is said to be dysfunctional or unserviceable. To overcome these faults, one should apply the antidote of vigilance.

When laxity and excitement continue to arise because one is not applying the remedies, the fault is non-application. To overcome this fault, one should devote oneself to the antidote of application, which is the antidote to non-application.

When one is free of laxity and excitement the fault is application, because if one applies the antidotes when it is unnecessary it distracts from concentration. The antidote for application is equanimity (non-application).

At the outset of the practice it is difficult to gain any stability whatsoever on the object of meditation. At this initial level, one should give major emphasis to the cultivation of mindfulness.

In the second phase of the practice, as mindfulness becomes stronger, gross scanning and excitement subside and one is likely to become vulnerable to gross laxity. At this time one must confront that fault with the application of vigilance.

In the third phase, gross laxity subsides and is replaced by the occurrence of a more subtle level of excitement and scattering. Here again, the remedy is mindfulness, and as mindfulness increases this allows a more subtle level of laxity to occur.

Once that subtler level of laxity has subsided, then there is still a problem of effort because one has become so accustomed to applying the antidotes. It is hard to break that habit. As the antidote to that effort, one must apply equanimity. It is by this means that one attains the ninth mental stage. As one cultivates that ninth mental state with continuity, pliancy eventually arises. First it is dynamic pliancy, then it transforms into non-dynamic pliancy.

It is in this sequence and by this means that one attains meditative quiescence.

Instructions for the Practice of Analytical Meditation

*“Since they see mentally that all mental afflictions and problems
Arise from the view of the transitory collection,
And realize that the self is the object of that view,
Yogins and Yoginis transcend a self.”*

The Preliminaries:

1. Acknowledge that all suffering is caused by the mistaken view of the skandhas.
2. Realize that the belief in a self is the object of that view.
3. Resolve that therefore one must strive to overcome that view through analytical meditation.
4. Not dismissing the confusion of this view, we welcome it as the basis for the transformation into wisdom.
5. Know that there are many ways of mistakenly viewing the transitory collection, but the foremost are the views of this self as being single, permanent and special.

The Actual Practice - Singularity:

Definition:

6. The view of singularity consists of thinking of oneself as a whole unit both without parts and without surplus or deficit. All other forms of confusion arise on the basis of the view of singularity.

Discriminating the Particulars:

7. Begin by bringing to mind a non-analytical image as the focus of the meditation.
8. See how the view of singularity arises simultaneously with the arising of the object as a deeply rooted subconscious underlying rule of our mental operating system.
9. Analyze the object into its various parts (physical or temporal) carefully, thoroughly and graphically.

Investigating the Essence:

10. With the non-analytic assumption clearly identified in non-conceptual way, we gently approach it and enquire with simple verbal questions about the way this quality of singularity exists, especially in relation to the object of concern.
11. Ask yourself and the object, “Is this object telling me it is singular? Are we telling the object it is singular?”
12. Then investigate:
 - a. **For external objects:** Where is this singularity? Is it inside the object? Is it the same as the object? Is it outside the object? Is it other than the object? Is it the mere collection of the parts of the object? Does it possess the parts?
 - b. **For internal objects** (i.e. the mind): peel away the aspects or parts of the object layer by layer, each time asking if this part is where the singularity resides and concluding it is not, and then moving on to the next inner layer.
13. Using either approach, work progressively with three different types of objects – neutral ones, ones we are attached to and ones we feel aversion towards.

Resting in the Meaning Discovered:

14. The conclusion is that phenomena, both internal and external, are not singular but are compounded, made up of many parts.
15. Then rest using any one of the various types of resting.

Chart 2: *Objects of Observation*

(Objects of observation in *italics* are considered suitable for beginners.)

THE FOUR TYPES OF OBJECT OF OBSERVATION (from the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*, Asaṅga's *Grounds of Hearers*, and Kamalashīla's *Stages of Meditation*)

- 1 Pervasive objects of observation
 - a. Non-analytical image
 - b. Analytical image
 - c. Observing the limits of phenomena
 - (1) the varieties (conventional phenomena)
 - (2) the mode (their emptiness)
 - d. Thorough achievement of the purpose
- 2 *Objects of observation for purifying behavior*
 - a. *The unpleasant: for persons in whom desire predominates*
 - b. *Love: for persons in whom hatred predominates*
 - c. *Dependent-arising: for persons in whom obscuration predominates*
 - d. *The divisions of the constituents: for persons in whom pride predominates*
 - e. *The exhalation and inhalation of the breath: for persons in whom discursiveness predominates*
- 3 Objects of observation for [developing] skill
 - a. The aggregates
 - b. The constituents
 - c. The twelve sources
 - d. The twelve-linked dependent-arising
 - e. The appropriate and the inappropriate
- 4 Objects of observation for purifying afflictive emotions
 - a. Those having the aspect of grossness/peacefulness
 - b. Those having the aspect of the truths

OTHER OBJECTS OF OBSERVATION

A Buddha's body

One's own mind

OBJECTS OF OBSERVATION USED IN TANTRA

A divine body (visualization of oneself as having a divine body)

Subtle drops

An Outline of the Path of Meditation

I. Shamatha: From Initial Placement to Calm Abiding

A. Mindfulness and Awareness

1. Mental Stability
2. Mental Pliancy

B. Mind Training – Mental Cultivation:

1. **Developing Renunciation**
 - a) The Four Reminders
2. **Developing Benevolence & Overcoming Complacency**
 - a) The Four Immeasurables
3. **Developing Bodhicitta:**
 - a) Exchanging self and others
 - b) Tonglen - sending and receiving
 - c) Lojong - slogan practice

II. Analytical Vipashyana: From Infant Stage to Simplicity/One Taste

A. Discriminating Dharmas: Objects and Subjects

1. Objects

- a) **Non-Things**
- b) **Things**

(1) Matter

- (a) Causal form
- (b) Resultant form

(2) Mind

- (a) Primary = six or eight consciousnesses
- (b) Secondary = 46 or 51 mental factors

2. Subjects:

a) **Valid cognition**

(1) Direct valid cognition

- (a) Sense
- (b) Mental
- (c) Yogic

(2) Inferential valid cognition

b) **Non-valid cognition**

- (1) Doubting cognition
- (2) Wrong cognition

B. Discriminating Dharmas Fully: The Six Discoveries

1. Meanings:

- a) Process of verbalization, various types of verbal expression
- b) Conceptual understanding of reality, dharma

2. Things:

- a) Substantiality, internal and external phenomena

b) Three types of objects: referent, appearing and apprehended

3. Characteristics:

- a) Mark or sign, range of phenomena/dhatus
- b) Generally and specifically characterized phenomena

4. Directions:

- a) Spatiality, relativity, our place in our world
- b) Spiritually wholesome or unwholesome directed activity

5. Times:

- a) Duration of experience, the three times – past, present, future
- b) The process of conceptualization in four moments, finding nowness

6. Reasoning:

- a) Interdependence: relativity, causation
- b) Functionality: relation b/w phenomena and function
- c) Nature: conventional or ultimate, two truths, appearance and reality
- d) Logic: the development of inferential cognition of hidden phenomena, e.g. marks and truths, leading to direct cognition, enlightenment

C. Investigating the Essence: The Three Marks of Existence

- 1. All compounded phenomena are impermanent
- 2. All defiled experience is suffering
- 3. All phenomena are void of a self-entity that is -
 - a) Singular
 - b) Continuous
 - c) Autonomous

D. Investigating the Essence Fully: Reasoning into Reality - The Five Skills

- 1. Analyzing causes
- 2. Analyzing results
- 3. Analyzing both causes and results
- 4. Analyzing one or many
- 5. Analyzing interdependence

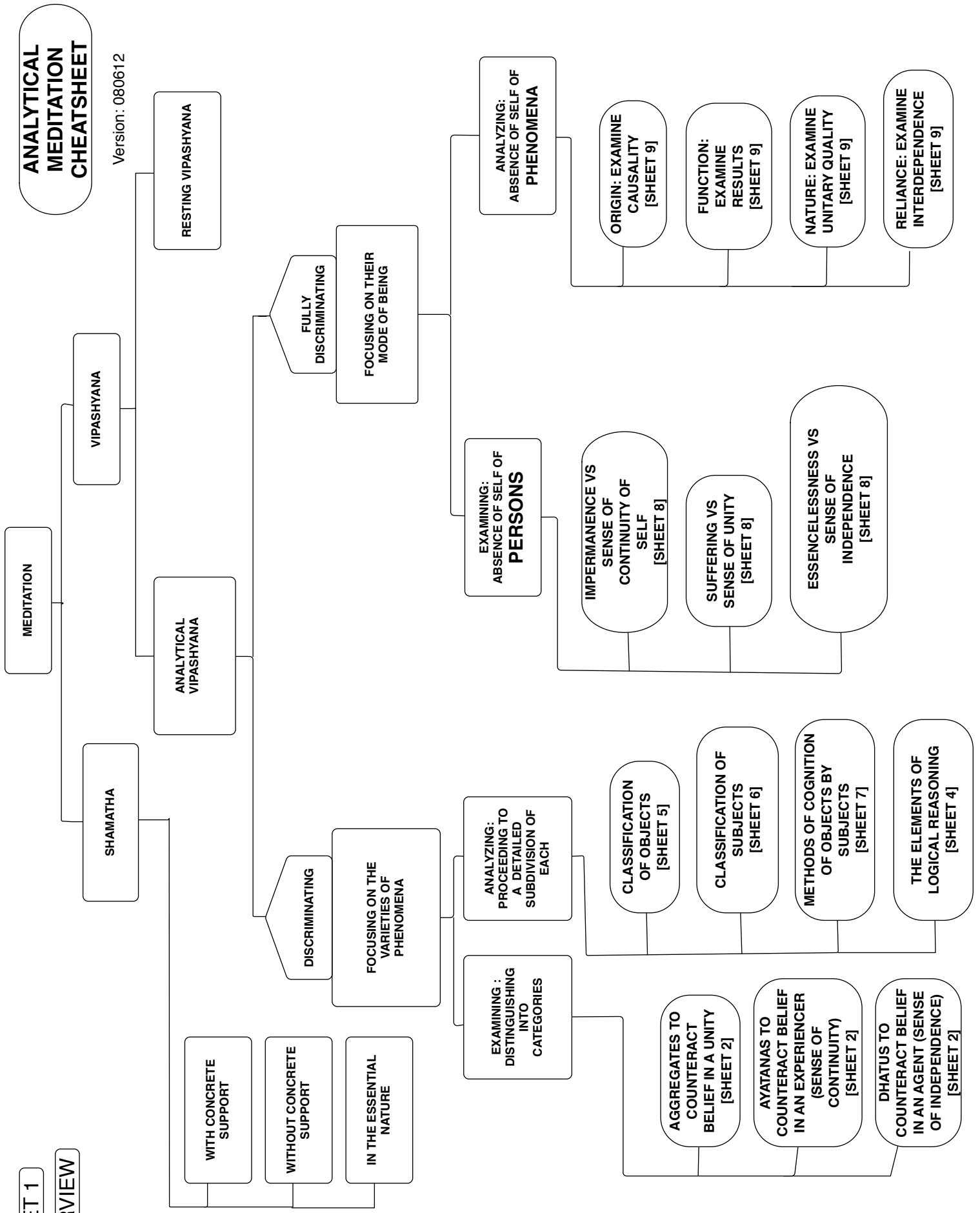
III. Resting Vipashyana: Seeing Things as They Are

A. The Five Absolute Bodhicitta Slogans of Atisha

- 1. All dharmas should be regarded as dreams
- 2. Contemplate the nature of unborn insight
- 3. Self-liberate even the antidote
- 4. Rest in the nature of alaya
- 5. In the post meditation experience, one should become a child of illusion

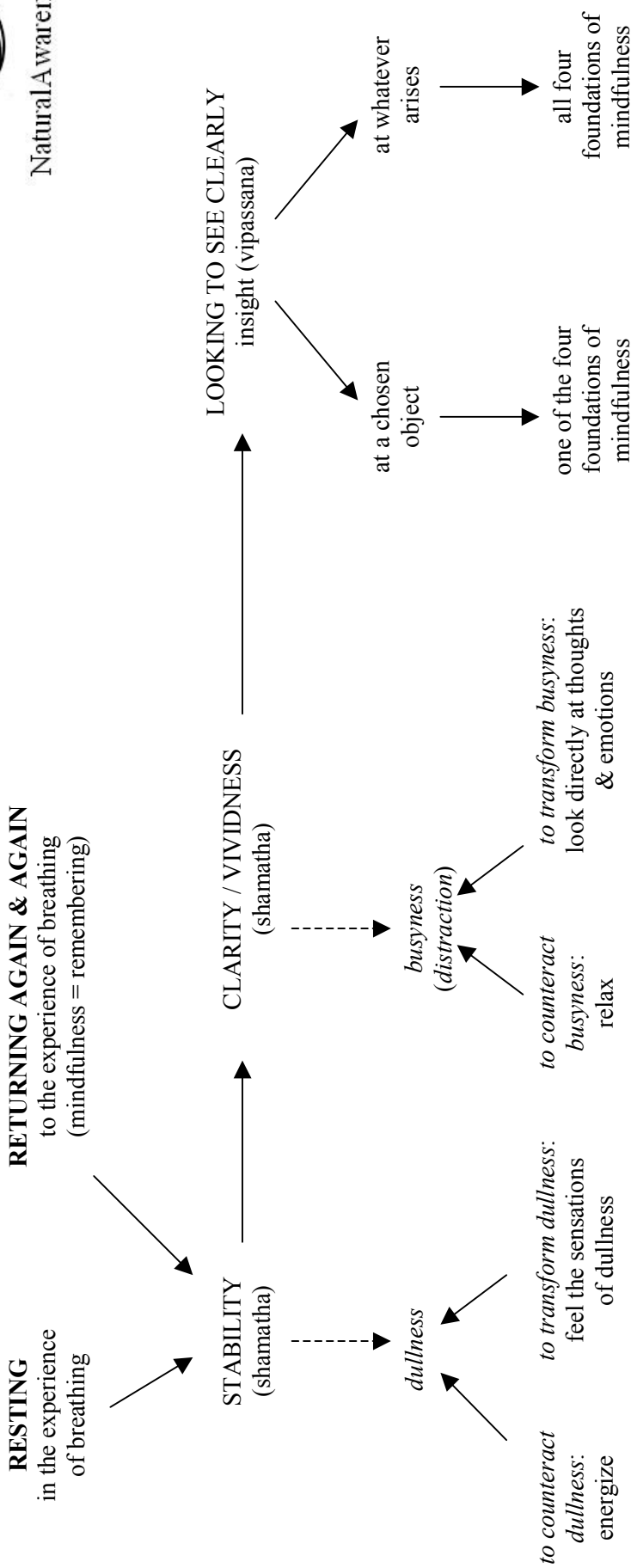
B. The Six Non-Discoveries of Kamalashila:

- 1. Not understanding meanings: literal, explicit, definitive, etc
- 2. Not locating things; objects/subjects internal/external
- 3. Not discriminating characteristics: one or many, general and specific
- 4. Not keeping track of the three times: past, present, future
- 5. Not Doing/Engaging with a goal: wholesome or unwholesome activities
- 6. Not analyzing: causes, functionality, nature, logic





Stability + Clarity is Active Attention



- Resting and returning leads to stability and vivid clarity (*shamatha*).
- Stable vivid awareness allows one to look into the nature of experience (*vipashyana*).
- Look deeply into the nature of sensations, feelings, thoughts and emotions, and objects — the four foundations of mindfulness.
- Trying to look without stability leads to distraction — you won't see steadily and deeply.
- Resting in stability without looking leads to dullness: you won't see clearly.
- Too much stability leads to dullness. The antidote is energizing. Looking at the sensations of dullness transforms dullness into attention.
- Too much clarity leads to busyness. The antidote is relaxation. Looking directly at what distracts you transforms busyness into attention.

For more instruction and commentary, see chapter 3 of *Wake Up To Your Life* by Ken McLeod

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The Stages of Meditation

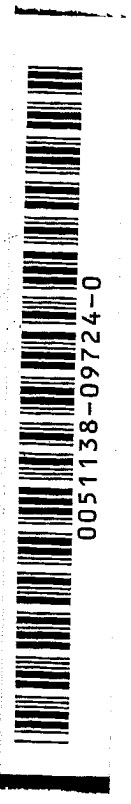
by

Vimalamitra



Introduction and Translation

by Lozang Jamsal, PhD



enlightened sages, and does not lose the name of Bodhisattva as it dispels the poverty of saṃsāra.

[Quoted also in Śikṣāsamuccaya]

It is also said in *Instruction to the King* (15):

O Mahārāja, you have many duties and activities. Therefore, if you cannot practice completely and constantly the perfection of giving as well as up to the perfection of wisdom, you should continuously hold conviction, aspiration, faith and interest in the fully perfect enlightenment, even as you go, stand, sit, lie, wake, eat and drink. Always remember, contemplate and concentrate on it. You should also rejoice in the root of virtue performed by the Buddha, Bodhisattvas, disciples, ordinary people and yourself in the past, present, and future.

[Quoted also in Śikṣāsamuccaya]

Therefore, one who wishes to achieve omniscience should conceive enlightenment. The yogi who wishes to achieve quiescence and insight should rely, from the outset, upon the causes, the prerequisite which produces them.

The Prerequisite for Quiescence

What are the prerequisites which produce quiescence? Dwelling in a suitable place, less desire for worldly objects and contentment, abandoning nega-

tive activity, right morality, and eliminating discursive thoughts such as attachment and so forth, are all prerequisites to developing quiescence.

The five characteristics of a suitable place for meditation on quiescence are: 1) a place where one can easily find clothes and food; 2) where there is no wicked person or enemy; 3) where no contagion exists; 4) where a companion lives who is endowed with morality; and 5) a place where few people gather in the daytime and there is little noise at night.

What is less desire for worldly objects? This is recognized as being a diminishing attachment to the feeling of superiority, less desire to possess great quantities of clothing, and so forth.

What is contentment? Contentment is being satisfied with what one receives such as inferior clothing and so forth.

What is abandonment of excessive activities? This is the restraint of negative activities such as pursuing inappropriate business activities, being excessively gregarious with either monks or laymen, practicing medicine or astrology [for one's own profit], and so forth.

What is pure morality? This concerns the keeping of the two precepts [the one of individual liberation (Skt. *prātimokṣa*) and the other of the Bodhisattva]. Offenses may be against the precept of a natural law or against the precept of institutional law. One should not violate these precepts, but if a precept is carelessly broken, one should feel regret and quickly renew it according to law.

In the precepts of the disciples, some offenses are stated as being incorrigible. However, if one has repentance and determines not to break the precept again, or, if one contemplates on the realization of mind's lack of intrinsic nature through which the action was committed, or contemplates upon nature of things lacking of intrinsic nature, one's morality can be made pure again. This is the only pure morality and can be understood according to *Dispelling the Repentance of Ajātaśatru* (16). In this way, one should eliminate repentance [for non-virtuous actions], and strive for meditation.

Also, contemplating that from desires arise many faults in this and future lives, one should abandon conceptualization concerning these desires.

All worldly things, beloved or not, have the characteristic of perishability and impermanence; therefore, since separation is certain, what would be the use of being attached to them? Thus contemplating, one should abandon all conceptualization.

The Prerequisite for Insight

What is the prerequisite for insight? In order to achieve insight, it is necessary to rely on a holy person, seek to study much, and use correct contemplation.

What does "relying upon a holy person" mean? This means that one should carefully follow the instructions of a person whose qualities include having much knowledge and lucidity, compassion, and patience for hardship. One should seek to study as much as one can with such a [qualified teacher].

What does "seek to study much" mean? This means respectful and intensive study of the definitive

and provisional meanings of the twelve sections of the Lord Buddha's teachings. As is stated in *Unraveling the Intention*:

Not learning the teachings of a holy person in accordance with one's wishes is an obstacle to insight.

The same text also says:

Insight arises from the cause of right views, which are the result of study and contemplation.

The *Question of Nārāyaṇa* (17) explains:

One who has the ability to study will develop wisdom, and one who possesses wisdom can pacify defilements.
[Quoted also in *Śikṣasamuccaya*.]

What is correct contemplation? This is the contemplation of the Bodhisattva who, with a very good understanding of the definitive and provisional meanings of the scriptures, will have no doubts about them, and thus thereby the meditation will be certain. Otherwise, riding on the swinging rope of doubt, there will be no certainty, and, like a traveler at the junction of two roads, one cannot decide which way to go.

A meditator should eat the proper amount of food, but give up meat, fish, and so forth and be harmonious, not disharmonious. One should complete one's work and cleanse oneself before sitting down to meditate in a peaceful and comfortable place where

there is no enemy or violence. One's thoughts should be: "I will place all sentient beings in the seat of enlightenment." Thus, one will develop great compassion: the thought of liberating all sentient beings from suffering.

Paying homage to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions with the five limbs of the body [touching the ground], one should place in front of oneself, or wherever is suitable, images and paintings of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, praising them and making offerings of whatever one can. One should then confess one's nonvirtuous actions and rejoice in the virtuous actions of other sentient beings and rejoice in a comfortable seat in the cross-legged full lotus position as that of the Lord Vairocana or in half lotus position, whichever is suitable for one, the meditator should then contemplate the mind. One's body should be straight from nose to navel, arms in equipoise position, head neither too low, nor too high, nor leaning to one side. With eyes neither entirely open nor closed, his sight should be on the tip of his nose. One's teeth and lips should be held in a natural way, with tongue set behind the upper teeth. One's breathing should be relaxed in a spontaneous way, not noisy or rough.

Definition of Quiescence

One should first practice quiescence meditation, which is recognized as being a mental state endowed with clarity that has eliminated the distraction of outer objects, and has an enthusiastic tendency for the continual spontaneous contemplation of a spiritual image.

Definition of Insight

When quiescence comprehends reality, the resultant analysis or examination of reality is insight. As is stated in *Cloud Jewel* (18):

One-pointedness of mind is quiescence,
and thorough analysis is insight.

Therefore, the Lord has declared four kinds of objects for meditators: 1) the nondiscerned image; 2) the discerned image; 3) the reality of things, and 4) the perfect accomplishment of the goal.

Through quiescence, the meditator will develop conviction about the image of all natures, the body of the Buddha and so forth, and this is called the nondiscerned image. In this meditation, there is no discernment about the meaning of reality; therefore, it is recognized as a nondiscerned image.

In order to realize the meaning of reality, the meditator then analyzes with insight whatever he has heard or grasped, therefore this is called the discerned image. Having conviction in whatever is heard and grasped, the meditator will then, through insight, comprehend, examine, or discern this image in order to realize the meaning of reality. In this case, the only characteristic of insight is the discernment of the reality of the image; therefore, it is recognized as being the discerned image.

In this way, the meditator may precisely realize the nature of the image, as it is. For example, when one examines the reflection of one's face in a mirror, one can detect the quality of the face, see a spot and so

forth. In the same way, when one realizes suchness through the characteristic of phenomena, one understands the reality of things. Therefore, the first stage of the Bodhisattva is called the comprehension of the reality of things.

Similarly, like the use of medicinal elixir, through the path of meditation a practitioner may momentarily transform [their defiled state of mind] into the thoroughly pure state on the remaining stages of the path of meditation. When the attainment of the goal, which has the characteristic of abandoning all obscuration, is accomplished, then the intuition on the stage of the Buddha is manifested.

What does this process demonstrate? It demonstrates through the practice of quiescence and insight meditations that one may thoroughly accomplish the goal of abandoning all obscurations. This alone is the state of enlightenment. Therefore, one who wishes to achieve enlightenment must practice quiescence and insight meditations. If one does not practice these, one cannot realize the reality of things and will be unable to attain the perfect goal.

The meditator should then practice quiescence meditation by first placing his or her mind on an image of the Tathāgata which has been seen or heard about. The body of the Tathāgata emanates a refined golden hue, is adorned with the auspicious characteristics and marks, dwells in the assembly of disciples, and practices through various means for the benefit of sentient beings. Constantly contemplating this, the meditator should generate an interest in obtaining its

virtues and should meditate on his image until dullness and restlessness cease, and the meditator can see the body glowing clearly as if sitting in front of fire. It is stated in *King of Meditation*:

The body of the Lord is very splendid with a golden-like complexion; one who places his or her mind on this object is stated to be a Bodhisattva in equipoise.

The meditator should then cultivate insight by contemplating that the body of the Tathāgata does not come from anywhere, nor does it leave for anywhere. It is void of intrinsic nature. It does not [grasp at] I and mine. Similarly, all things are void by their intrinsic nature. They are devoid of coming and going, like a reflection. They lack the intrinsic nature of existence and so forth. Having contemplated in this way, without discerning or verbalizing, the meditator should meditate on reality with single-pointed mind, and sit as long as he or she wishes. This meditation is explained in *Meditation of the Present Buddha Manifesting* (19). From the same text, one should learn the meritorious results of this meditation.

The meditator should also analyze in this way: "Do I properly hold the apprehending object? Do I fall into dullness? Is the mind distracted by outer objects?" If the meditator is overcome by drowsiness or sleep, he should contemplate a very pleasant thing such as the Buddha's image, the twelve deeds of the Buddha, or dependent origination. Thus, dullness and drowsiness will be dispelled.

If one's mind is addicted [to defilements and deeds], or there is a possibility of it becoming distracted by previous additions, and it cannot contemplate the meaning of reality, the meditator should consider that all conditioned things are impermanent, suffering, and so forth; that the inside of the body is impure in many ways; and that outer objects do not last. None of these are reliable because they are not permanent. Therefore, one should think of the nature of things and stop being distracted by them.

When the meditator is not dull or restless, his or her mind will spontaneously perceive its object. At that time, one should lessen effort and cultivate equanimity.

In brief, with the rope of mindfulness and watchfulness, the meditator should tie the elephant of the mind to the pillar of the perceived object.

Having done this, he should remain in the state of quiescence and discern reality with wisdom. One should also know that quiescence alone is not sufficient to see the truth.

The Ultimate Reality

What is the ultimate reality? Ultimately, things are without intrinsic nature. The person, the five aggregates and all attributed things are devoid of their intrinsic nature. How may we realize this? We may realize it by wisdom, and not by any other means. As it is stated in *Unraveling the Intention*:

Avalokiteśvara: "Lord, by what can a Bodhisattva realize things' lack of intrinsic nature?" The Tathāgata:

"Avalokiteśvara, a Bodhisattva can realize things' lack of intrinsic nature by perfect wisdom."

Therefore, one should remain in quiescence and cultivate wisdom.

The meditator should analyze thus: The self [ātman] is not perceived to exist apart from the aggregates, elements and sense media. A self does not have the characteristic of aggregates and so forth because the aggregates and so forth have the characteristics of impermanence and plurality whereas, in accordance with the doctrine of the non-Buddhist schools, a person has the characteristics of eternity and oneness. This is a false statement lacking realization of the real nature of the self. But a self must have the characteristics of oneness or manyness; there is no other way of existence apart from these. So, one should contemplate the [concept of the] worldly "I and mine" as merely being erroneous.

The selflessness of things should also be cultivated in this way. In brief, *things* mean the five aggregates, the twelve sense media and the eighteen elements. From the ultimate viewpoint, the aggregates, the sense media and the elements that are matter do not exist apart from the characteristics of mind. If we split them into atoms and analyze the atoms, no other essence can be adhered to. Thus, it is stated in *Visiting Lanka* (20):

Having analyzed substances down to atoms [and beyond], one no longer

apprehends their form. The presentation of mind-only cannot be realized by an inferior view.
[Ch. 2. v. 126]

However, from beginningless time, we have been mistakenly attached to form and so forth. So for ordinary people, the mind, like a form in a dream, appears in the aspect of the form of an external object, but from the ultimate viewpoint, apart from mind, form and other objects do not exist. This is the way one should examine it. It is also explained in the same text:

External forms do not exist; it is [only] one's own mind that appears as external forms.
[Ch. 10. v. 489]

And again in the same text:

Relying upon the mind alone, one should not apprehend external objects. Perceiving suchness, one must go beyond the mind.
[Ch. 10. v. 256]

Having gone beyond the mind alone, one must go beyond nonappearance. Thus will the meditator, abiding in non-appearance, perceive the greater vehicle.
[Ch. 10. v. 257]

In ultimate reality, external objects do not exist. Similarly, the mind also cannot appear as an external

object. Why? Because if external objects have the nature of mind, the objects would also have the nature of cognition, or if the cognition has the nature of form, then the mind cannot be cognition. Likewise, if the objects have many varieties, the mind also would have many varieties, or like the mind, the objects would not have varieties, furthermore, like the mind, the form also would not be visible.

If there are not external objects and mind alone appears as an external object, then the object could occur anywhere, according to its aspects of form and colour, just as one thinks of or wishes it. Or, if one reduces a form down to atoms and also destroys the atoms, then nothing would exist. In this way, the mind also would not exist. Therefore, it is not possible for the mind to appear as an object. Consequently, subject and object, as well as all apprehensions, are similar to dreams.

The Doctrine of Mind-Only

The mind-only doctrine states: "From beginningless time, one apprehends mind as form, so, through the ripening of a propensity, the mind appears as form, and so forth." But this is not right. An object does not exist from beginningless time. Therefore, the existence of a propensity is not logical.

The Buddha states] in the *Ten Stages* (21):

The three realms are mind-only.

And also in the *Visiting Lanka*:

External objects do not exist, but one's

own mind appears as external objects.

[Except for the word "object" it is identical to ch. 10, v. 489]

The Doctrine of Voidness

These explanations of mind-only [these two quotations above] are for the refutation of the existence of things in ultimate reality, and for the benefit of disciples [at different levels of realization]. Therefore, as objects, form and so forth, are false, similarly mind is also false, because apart from form and so forth mind would not exist.

As there are varieties of external objects and so forth, they cannot have an intrinsic nature of oneness or manyness. In this way, the mind also cannot have the nature of oneness or manyness because it does not exist [apart from the external objects and so forth]. Therefore, mind has only the characteristics of dependent origination, illusion and so forth. Similarly, like the mind, one should consider that all things also have only the characteristics of dependent origination, illusion and so forth. Thus, if one with perfect wisdom analyzes the intrinsic nature of all things, one does no perceive all things. One does not apprehend the past, present and future. It is also mentioned in *Cloud Jewel* (22):

Thus, one who is skillful in [discerning] flaws should cultivate meditation on voidness which is free from mental fabrication. Through intense meditation on voidness, one who seeks the essence of

those things in which his mind indulges and delights, will realize the voidness of those things. Similarly, if one searches the mind, one can also realize the voidness of mind also itself. From the ultimate viewpoint, one who seeks the realization of mind can realize its voidness, and through this realization, can enter into the meditation of signlessness.

[Quoted also in 3rd *Bhāvavāikrāma*.]

Therefore, all things subject and object, and so forth, are void in their intrinsic nature, like a mirage and so forth. However, the discernment of the dependent origination of this and that is conventional. Therefore, it is stated in the *Visiting Lankā*:

The origination of things is conventional, but ultimately, there is no intrinsic nature.

And in the *Charming Expansion* (23):

The Śākya prince who had seen the lack of intrinsic nature of dependent origination of things, and had possessed the sky-like mind, was unmoved by the sight of the deceitful devil and his army. (ch. 21, v. 24)

It is stated in the *Jewel Torch* (24):

That which arises from conditions does not arise in its intrinsic nature. The

Truth Body is the body of the Conquerors; it is superb and exists always, like space. Relying upon this, one can accomplish the process of Dharma practice.

It is also mentioned in *Light Ornament of Entering All Buddha Fields* (25):

One who realizes the essence of all things does not fabricate anything, because all things are produced by causes and conditions. That which is produced by causes and conditions is, in ultimate truth, not produced.

Noble Nāgārjuna also said (in the *Sixty Verses*):

That which has dependently originated cannot arise in its intrinsic nature. That which has not arisen in its intrinsic nature, how can one say it has arisen? (v. 20)

One who conceptualizes the intrinsic originating of even a very subtle thing, that unwise person cannot realize the meaning of conditional arising. (v. 13)

Thus, there is no intrinsic nature from the viewpoint of ultimate truth, and the dependent origination of the conventional truth is merely a magician's illusion. It is stated in the *Visiting Lamika*:

The origination of things is conventional, but ultimately there is no intrinsic nature. That which is mistaken about things' lack of intrinsic nature is accepted as the conventional.

(ch. 10, v. 429)

Thus, the lack of intrinsic nature is the intended point of the Buddha's teaching. Therefore, ultimately, it is not correct to say that things are born from self, other, both of self and other, or without cause.

Things do not arise from themselves or others. Things cannot arise from themselves. If things originate from themselves, do the already originated things, or the nonoriginated originate? If one says that the already originated things originate, this is incorrect because the things already have been established. If already originated things could originate, then, A nonoriginating never be happened, it endlessly become originating.

If unoriginate things could originate, then such things as a rabbit's horn, a barren woman's child and a sky flower would be possible to arise. Therefore, things do not originate from themselves, and cannot arise from others. If things could arise from others, then there would be the problem that anything could arise from anything.

Things cannot originate from both self and others because of the problems mentioned above.

Also, things cannot arise without cause, not depending on anything, because things would be arising all the time. In this case without depending on cause, things would be unconditioned, then, there would be

the problem of being eternal which would result in chaos, because all efforts to accomplish one's goal would be useless.

In this way there is no validity to the arising of things. Therefore, there is no possibility of things arising. The expression of the arising of things is only conventional. Ultimately there is neither Buddha nor nirvāṇa. In that case it is needless to talk about any other things. Thus one should discern. As it is said in the *Transcendence of Wisdom* (26):

Subhūti, even the Buddha is like a dream
and an illusion; even nirvāṇa is like a
dream and illusion, and if there were a
thing far better than nirvāṇa, that too,
would be like a dream and an illusion.

[A similar statement in the *Eight Thousand Lines*,

Sanskrit version, Darbanga, p. 20. Tib. Tog Palace
Kanjur, folio 31b.]

1. Placing the Mind in Meditation

Therefore, ultimately, everything, composed or uncomposed, is nonexistent [in its intrinsic nature]. One should meditate thus.

2. Continuing the Meditation

In this way, anything that is conceptualized is based on a nonexistent. Besides this, there is nothing else to be discerned. So, one should remain luminously meditating on reality without exertion, spontaneously active in the nondiscerning state of mind, without investigation, analysis or criticality. Remaining thus, one should strive for nondistracted continuity of [meditative] mind.

3. Re-placing the Mind in Meditation

If one's mind becomes distracted toward external objects, one should examine the nature of mind, and when the distraction ceases, one should again contemplate on the very exact focused object.

4. Thoroughly Placing the Mind in Meditation

One should place the mind into nonconceptualization of fabrication. It not remain on form, and so forth. If one examines with wisdom the intrinsic nature of things, one will not apprehend anything, and will then become the meditator of perfect wisdom.

5. Cultivating Interest

When one's mind has no interest in meditation, one should seek the virtues of meditation, and should cultivate delightful interest in it.

6. Stopping Distractions

By seeing flaws in a distraction, one should stop unwillingness [for meditation].

7. Ceasing Distraction

When drowsiness or sleep inhibit the mind and cause lack of clarity, one should contemplate a very pleasant thing such as an image of the Buddha, dependent origination or the Twelve Deeds of the Buddha. Distraction will then cease, giving one a firm contemplation of reality. In the same way, due to desire for previously addicted objects when one's mind has been distracted or about to be distracted, one should contemplate impermanence and so forth and discard whatever is causing it, one should stop distraction.

8. Forming One Pointedness

Then one should strive for the mind to spontaneously return to the very focused object.

9. Forming Equanimity

Dullness or restlessness occur when the mind does not remain on reality, and hence there is no quiescence. When the mind concentrates on reality clearly, evenly and spontaneously, there is neither dullness or restlessness, and the meditator, by relaxing, should establish equanimity. At that time, he has accomplished the path of the unity of quiescence and insight.

Sometimes, when meditating on insight, one's wisdom may become excessive, and one's quiescence may become sparse. This causes the mind to vibrate like [the flame of] an oil lamp in a blowing wind, making the meditator unable to perceive reality. At this time, one should cultivate quiescence.

When there is too much quiescence, one is unable to see reality clearly, and one is like a person who feels sleepy. In this case, one should cultivate insight.

Like two yoked bulls working together, when both quiescence and insight have united and turned evenly upon reality, one should remain in meditation without movement for as long as the body and mind are comfortable.

The Obstructions to Meditation

In brief, all meditations have six obstructions: laziness, forgetfulness of the object, dullness, restlessness, non-effort and needless effort.

As antidotes to these, one should cultivate the eightfold course: faith, aspiration, effort, clarity, mindfulness, observance, awareness and equanimity.

The first four of these are antidotes to laziness. Through faith in meditation, one has confidence. Through confidence the meditator can develop aspiration. Through aspiration exertion can be developed. Exertion makes body and mind flexible and energetic. In this way, faith and so forth become the antidote to laziness. Therefore, one should cultivate these things.

Mindfulness is the antidote to the forgetting of the object. Alertness is the antidote to both dullness and restlessness. Having recognized these two through alertness, one can then eradicate them.

When dullness and restlessness occur, if one does not make an effort to stop them, this is a fault. Therefore, as an antidote to this, one should cultivate awareness. But when dullness and restlessness have ceased and the mind is in equipoise, and still further effort is made, then mind will become distracted.

When dullness appears and no effort is made, then, because of the lack of insight, mind will be totally blinded. Therefore, one should stop mental dullness and restlessness and cultivate equipoised equanimity. Then, without any movement, the meditator should sit concentrating on reality for as long as one wishes.

If an occasional obstacle to the body and mind occurs, one should examine all worldly things and realize that all of them are like an illusion, a dream, and a mirage, a reflection of the moon in water, and hallucination. As is explained in *Entering Nonconceptuality* (27):

[In an equipoise state] through exalted knowledge of reality, one sees all things are as the sphere of sky, and through the subsequent knowledge from this equipoise, one sees all things are as an illusion, a mirage, or a reflection of the moon in water.

[Quoted also in the 3rd *Bhāvanākrama*.]

Upon realizing that cyclic existence is like an illusion, one must develop great compassion for all sentient beings. One should think thus: "As sentient beings have childlike minds, they do not realize the profound nature of things. They have assumed things to be really existent that have been peaceful from the outset. Having been deluded in this way, they have accumulated a great variety of deeds and defilements which result in their wandering in cyclic existence [and experiencing all of its sufferings]. Therefore, I must help these sentient beings to realize the profound nature of things."

After this contemplation, one must rest. Then, in a similar way, one should enter into the meditation of the nonappearance of all things. If the mind becomes discouraged, one should relax and again resume the same meditation.

[When one is in meditation retreat] such a process should be done for three hours, or one and half, or one hour, or as long as one can sit in meditation.

Then one may rise from meditation, or, if one wishes, without disturbing the crossed legs of the lotus position, one may contemplate thus:

"From the ultimate point of view, all things are unoriginated, but because of a conglomeration of various causes, when they are not analyzed, they appear as pleasant objects.

As a result [one's philosophy] will be neither repudiating nor reifying. When one analyzes things with wisdom, one cannot apprehend [things as intrinsically real] and thus [one's practice] will not fall into the extreme of eternalism or reification.

If it were not this way, how could the relationship of cause and effect, and so forth, function? Also, if it were not this way, the Lord would not have said [in *Visiting Lamkā*]:

The arising of things occur conventionally; ultimately there is no intrinsic nature.
[Ch. 10, v. 429]

The Person of Small Capacity

Those who lack the insight of wisdom have false knowledge. Attached to self, they commit many kinds of actions, and consequently wander in cyclic existence.

The Person of Middle Capacity

Those who are not attached to cyclic existence, but lack great compassion, do not practice the perfection of giving and so forth for the benefit of sentient beings. Lacking skillful means, they strive only for their own peace and fall into the path of the disciples and hermit sages.

The Person of Great Capacity

Bodhisattvas, with the strength of great compassion, have taken a vow to deliver sentient beings from suffering, even though they have realized the nature of the voidness of sentient beings. They do not have erroneous knowledge, as a magician does not have erroneous knowledge about his performance, and they accomplish great accumulations of merit and wisdom. Consequently, having achieved the state of the Tathāgata, they live to bring all kinds of benefit and happiness to all sentient beings.

Nonlocated Nirvāna

They [Tathāgatas] have abandoned all defilements through the strength of their accumulation of wisdom. Therefore, they do not fall into cyclic existence. Being concerned about all sentient beings, they have accomplished a great quantity of merit. By the strength of this [accumulation], they do not fall into nirvāna, and have become benefactors of all sentient beings.

In this way, those who wish to benefit and make sentient beings happy, and to achieve nonlocated nirvāna, must strive to accumulate a great quantity of merit and wisdom. Thus, one should contemplate. Also in *Secret of the Tathāgata* (28), it is said:

Through the accumulation of wisdom, [Buddhas] abandon all kinds of defilement; through the accumulation of merit, they have become the benefactors of all sentient beings. Therefore, O, Lord, a Bodhisattva Mahasattva must

strive for the accumulation of merit and wisdom.

[Quoted also in the 3rd *Bhāvanākrama*]

It is also said in *Origin of the Birth of Tathāgatas* (28):

Tathāgatas do not arise from only one cause. Why? O Youth of the Victor, Tathāgatas are made of innumerable tens of, hundreds of, thousands of perfect causes. What are they? Through infinitely immeasurable merit and wisdom, perfectly made of endless causes...

It is also stated in *Teaching of Vimalakīrti* (29):

Friends, the body of the Tathāgata has arisen from hundreds of merits, and it certainly arises from all virtuous things. [See Thurman, p. 23.]

Conclusion of the Equipose Session

Having done this meditation, one should halt one's formal sitting posture and pay homage to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions, praise and make offerings to them, recite the aspirational prayer of *Noble Supreme Practice* (30), and so forth.

Then, in order to dedicate the wisdom of voidness and great compassion to unexcelled Enlightenment, one should strive for an accumulation of merit through giving and other perfections, and so forth.

Some Arguments about Meditation

Some people have said that only through hearing the

BUDDHA MIND

An Anthology of Longchen Rabjam's
Writings on *Dzogpa Chenpo*

by

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Edited by

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5. Meditation on the Meaning of the View

For meditation, having realized the view free from extremes, one contemplates on it to purify the defiled emotions and to perfect the paths and stages in order to reach the ultimate goal. Longchenpa summarizes the meditation in three categories of approach to meditation for the three intellectual levels of trainees in the eleventh chapter of *Shingta Chenpo* (SC Vol-II).

MEDITATION AFTER HAVING ASCERTAINED THE VIEW

SC II, 92b/1 After having ascertained (the meditation) by (realizing the) view, it is necessary to contemplate in the meditative state. Otherwise, one will not achieve liberation from the hosts of emotional defilements and will not be able to perfect the stages and paths. So it is certain that one should practice meditation. (The meditation) is to contemplate in the natural state, which is naturally pure like space, by the means of freedom from conceptualizations, doubts, and expectations. . . .

(First, one) should study (the path), then ponder upon it, and after that one should enter into the practice on it, as it is necessary to generate the essential meaning in oneself.

MEDITATIONS FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS OF INTELLECT

Meditation for People of High Intellect

(i) *People of most gifted intellect attain liberation upon realization.* ^{93a/4}Fortunate people of most gifted intellect, who have accumulated merits in the past, attain liberation merely upon realizing the natural state of the Mind, the space-like meaning, which transcends meditation and non-meditation, due to the circumstances (of the blessings) of the *Lama*. They remain naturally in the state of the *yoga* of the stream of the Mind, all the time, with no need of meditation with effort.

(ii) *For a totally realized person, there is no meditation to be practiced.* ^{93b/3}When a person attains the totally realized state (*Klong-Gyur*) . . . because he has been liberated from attachment to (the concept of) true (existence) (*bDen-Zhen*), there will be no antidotes on which to meditate. So the realized state is meditationless. Having remained in the continuity of the absence of attachment to the true (existence), it is a (meditative) play of indefinite (character) with no intervals, transcending dimensions, and it is enjoyment of the Buddha-field of self-liberated *Samanabhadrā*. . . . (In this meditation) there are no signs and levels, as there are (in training on) materialistic and characteristic meditations. . . . (In it) there are no places of deviation, as it has gone nowhere. There are no obscurations of the watcher, as it has not been watched. . . .

The occurrence of obscurations and errors: when the meditator watches the Mind, which is imperceptible by watching, that becomes itself the obscuration. Proceeding to (where there is) no place to go becomes itself the error. . . . By first having the certainty that one's Mind is spontaneously the real Buddha from primordial time, later one realizes that there is no need of aspiration for Buddhahood from any other source. At that very time one dwells in Buddhahood.

(iii) *For people of mediocre and lower intellect it is necessary to meditate.* ^{94b/6}For people who are of mediocre and lower intellect, it is necessary to meditate with great diligence, because

they have not been liberated from apprehension of self (*bDag-'Dzin*), the cause of *samsāra*. The distinction between meditation and no-meditation is made according to whether or not (the concept of) apprehender and apprehended (subject and object) in the mind has been dissolved.

(iv) *Righthness of doing meditation.* ^{95a/2}As long as the arisings (in one's mind) are not self-arisen and self-liberated, all thoughts are ordinary concepts. . . . So they lead to rebirths in the inferior realms. . . . By meditating to pacify those concepts, it is certain that wisdom, the liberation of phenomena, will arise later.

(v) *Need of uniting tranquillity and insight.* ^{95a/6}(Root, SN:;) "Tranquillity subdues the emotional defilements, insight uproots the emotional defilements. . . ."

There are two aspects of the identities, (the sameness and separate identities of tranquillity and insight). For sameness: The aspect of abiding is the tranquillity and the aspect of clarity is the insight. The union of tranquillity and insight, the realization of clarity and emptiness free from extremes, liberates one from *samsāra*. . . .

For separate identity: etymologically, the mind concentrated on the meaning of what has been learned is tranquillity and the realization of the meaning is insight. According to the meaning, being able through meditation to concentrate (the mind) one-pointedly at the beginning is tranquillity, and then realizing that (contemplation) as absence of inherent existence (*Rang-bZhin Med-Pa*) is insight.

(vi) *The reason (why the meditation is necessary).* ^{96a/5}For people of high intellect, just as on a golden island, even if you search, you won't find earth or stone, whatever arises is liberated into the ultimate nature (*Ch'os-Nyid*). So the antidotes have been purified into the ultimate sphere (*dByings*), and there is no longer a need for contemplative periods. . . .

For people of mediocre intellect: after having realized the view, by contemplating without moving, in the state of birthlessness and clarity which is free from torpor and elation, like an unpolluted pond, (one) unites tranquillity and insight and

dissolves the concepts into the ultimate sphere, and space-like realization arises . . .

For people of lesser intellect, one should meditate and tame the monkey-like wild mind, which does not abide even for a while, by means of one-pointed tranquillity. When one becomes able to concentrate, then by meditating, as the antidote, upon the discriminative insight such as emptiness, the absence of inherent existence in phenomenal existence, and by meditating that all appearances are illusions, one realizes the meaning of birthlessness.

THE WAY OF CONTEMPLATION FOR PEOPLE OF MEDIocre INTELLECT

Method of Meditation

(i) *Advice to contemplate on no-thought.* ^{97a/2}When there are strong waves in water no reflections appear, although the water has the potential of having reflection. Likewise, mind spontaneously possesses the qualities such as foreknowledge, but because of the speed of the waves of discursive thought, the qualities do not manifest. So it is important to contemplate one-pointedly . . . If you contemplate, then the disturbing waves of concepts will disappear and the light of the luminous Mind-lamp will naturally shine forth. So contemplate without disturbing the mind-water.

(ii) *Body postures and the way of contemplation.* ^{97a/6}One should contemplate in the three unmoving states free from extremes . . .

(a) For a motionless body there are sevenfold physical posture: legs crossed, hands in the contemplative gesture, spine straight, tongue touching the (upper) palate, breathing slowly, eyes looking at the (level of the) tip of the nose and the neck slightly bent.

(b) For motionless sense-faculties: eyes (keep fixed) without moving and do not stop the sense-faculties of ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Whatever forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, and thought are encountered, neither block the door (of their arising) nor follow after them. If those sense-

faculties are blocked, then the five (enlightened) eyes, such as the divine eyes and the six foreknowledges of the mind, which are the virtues of the purified aspect of the sense-faculties, will not be attained. If the thoughts are followed, the continuous chain of thoughts will never cease and (one will) remain indistinguishable from an ordinary person. Therefore, one should contemplate in the motionless pond of the sense-faculties with ceaseless arisings of various appearing objects (*sNang-Yul*), like reflections of the stars and planets. If the various objects are not apprehended by thoughts, then not only will the (objects of appearance) not harm (one's contemplation), but their qualities will arise. It is called "the primordial wisdom with no thoughts" (*rNam-Par Mi-rTogs-Pa'i Ye-Shes*), as the (forms) appear but there are no concepts. If there is no (appearance of) forms, then there is no intellect (that sees) them, and then there is no question of being with thoughts or without thoughts, and there won't be "the primordial wisdom with no concept." Therefore, when the objects appear to the senses, by remaining in no-thought, the master (*Lama*) of discriminative awareness attains directly the cessation of goings and comings of the thoughts, and that is designated as "the cessation of breathing." Although breathing through mouth and nose continues, thoughts will not waver. The cessation of conceptualization is designated as the death of thoughts. When there is no conceptualization, there is no need of meditation as its antidote and there is no need of wisdom, the *yogini* of freedom from conceptualizations, which is the antidote of conceptualizations . . .

When one perfects that essential point (of cessation of breathing), it is called the (state of) the natural or unfabricated six consciousnesses. Since the objects are appearing to the senses, the senses do not conceive the objects, and although the "senses fall to the objects" or the objects become clear (in the senses), not only do the senses not affect the contemplation, the luminous vision, but they help it to progress . . .

(c) For a motionless mind: the contemplation (of the mind) in the freedom from extremes occurs spontaneously when the

body and sense-faculties are motionless. It is the contemplation unmoving from the state of clear and luminous mind free from projections and withdrawals. . . .

At that time, if you are distracted by conceptions to the substances of the external appearing objects (*sNang-Ba'i Yul*) and to the insubstantial of the internal mind, then a tie is created which obscures the Buddha-essence, the innate Mind. So one should not have the slightest apprehension and attachment to *samsāra* and *nirvāna* as bad or good, and even to the contemplation. Thus, having no concepts of either substances or insubstantial, there will be no thoughts of any other things. At that time, all the movements of thought dissolve into the Mind, the basis (*Sems-Nyid gZhi*). Then, when the mind becomes changeless and stable, one attains liberation from *samsāra* and will not have attachment to oneself and others and apprehension of duality. That is the attainment of the excellent Ultimate Body, transcendent to elaborations, conceptions, and expressions.

(iii) *Way of developing virtues.* ^{99a/2}When contemplating (in that way), all the conceptualizations will be freed. . . . Then as the conceptions are transcended in the ultimate nature (*Ch'os-Nyid*) and all the thoughts are dissolved into the (ultimate) sphere, there arises the Luminous Great Perfection (*A'od-gSal rDzogs-Pa Ch'en-Po*), the realization of one-tasteness as the *Dharmakāya*, which transcends the signs and significances of bliss, clarity and no-thought with their experiences (*Nyams*).

(iv) *Realization of the ultimate nature.* ^{99b/2}At the time of arising of the self-arisen innate primordial wisdom in the mind of the *yogi*, . . . he sees completely the inseparable identity of emptiness and the appearances as the eight illusory examples, and the ultimate nature of phenomena, the unborn nature. . . . The Mind arises as the play of non-duality of *samsāra* and *nirvāna*, the primordial wisdom of transcending existence and non-existence, and the changelessness of clarity. . . . At that time, the primordial wisdom which is non-dual in respect to the objects to be known and the knower intellect arises in the equalness (state).

(v) *It is the direct cause of the primordial wisdom of the noble ones.* ^{100a/3}After immense progress in the experiences of the primordial wisdom of non-conceptualization, as the result of deeds, the high attainments such as the Path of Insight will be achieved spontaneously.

Method of Contemplation

(i) *Contemplation in (the state of) unwaveringness and non-conceptualization.* ^{100a/6}In the sky-like Mind, by letting the thoughts of the mental events remain naturally (*Rang-Sor bZhag*), they dissolve (*Dengs-Pa*) like clouds disappearing (in the sky). One should contemplate in the state of that view, the nature of the example (the sky), without wavering.

(ii) *Contemplation in clearness and clarity without pollutions.* ^{100b/3}Contemplate with clarity in the state which is unpolluted by concepts of apprehender and apprehended and in clarity without torpor and in calmness without elation, like a peaceful ocean, that remains where it is.

(iii) *Contemplation without partiality, like space.* ^{100b/6}Contemplate in the state of the Mind, which is emptiness from its origin like space, without projections and withdrawals of thoughts.

(iv) *Contemplating naturally and effortlessly.* ^{101a/3}Contemplate on the mind in the state of changelessness like Mt. Meru, without (any concept of) preventing or defending and expectation or doubt.

(v) *Contemplation of the objects of appearances without ceasing.* ^{101a/6}In the state of purity and clarity of mind, contemplate on the objects of appearances (which appear) before the senses, vividly without concepts of apprehending or wavering.

(vi) *Contemplation in the originally liberated clarity and purity.* ^{101b/3}Contemplate in the vivid clarity and purity without torpor or elation. . . . Contemplating thus, one will realize the appearances as emptiness, like rainbow lights.

(vii) *Contemplation in one-pointedness like an archer.* ^{101b/6}Contemplate on the mind in the state of ultimate nature, nakedly and straight, without wavering, like aiming an arrow

straight.

(viii) *Contemplation in effortlessness and spontaneity.* ^{102a/2}(First having confidence (in the realization of) the Ultimate Body in its own place by contemplating the mind naturally, later contemplate by relaxing in the state of freedom from expectations and doubts . . . There is no need of very active recollection, but of relaxing the three doors naturally and merely remaining, without wandering. Even if the (mind) is freely distracted, since it has fallen into the ordinary state (of mind), contemplate naturally in the ordinary mind (*Tha-Mal-Gyi Shes-Pa*) without wavering.

(ix) *Conclusion of the eight ways of contemplation.* ^{102b/4}(In those contemplations) there is no apprehended and apprehender, so they are the naturally pure contemplations. They are the union of tranquillity and insight. Although it is said that the aspect of their abiding in "what it is" is tranquillity and the aspect of their clarity is insight, (actually) they are indivisible, and it is called the union. At that point, having no distinctions of either aspect, the concept of tranquillity subsides and the insight is no longer conceived as insight. It is the indivisible, the innate union.

The Progress of the Path in Seven Aspects

(i) *The way of seeing the inexpressible (state) through eight contemplations.* ^{103a/1}Explanation of the progress of the path through four levels of primordial wisdom as the result of contemplation . . . Having pacified the penetrations of the intellect into the state of Mind which transcends thoughts and expressions, the arising for the first time of the clear, bright and changeless primordial wisdom is (1) the "manifesting primordial wisdom" (*sNang-Ba'i Ye-Shes*; i.e., *the Path of Accumulations*). It is the perfection of the luminous primordial wisdom. (ii) *Signs of attainment of the path of liberation.* ^{103a/6}Having realized, (1) the luminous "manifesting primordial wisdom," one has recognized the Mind, the innate wisdom. By having entered the path of liberation, the seed of enlightenment has been sown (in oneself) . . . When a person recognizes the

Mind, "the luminous ground primordial wisdom" (*A'od-gSal gZhi'i Ye-Shes*), the adventitious thoughts are liberated instantly and the son and mother luminosities are unified. Because all the activities have become solely virtues, he becomes free from attachment to various phenomena, the five external objects and the internal recollecting and aware mind of negating and affirming (thoughts). Through the state of self-clarity and emptiness mind, he enjoys the virtues of developing compassion toward all living beings without distinctions of distance and dimensions. He also inspires others to virtuous (activities). He renounces distractions and entertainments and enjoys solitude in mountains and forests. Even in his dreams, there will be only pure, virtuous thoughts. Because his body, speech, and mind are highly trained, he develops the qualities of the "Path of Accumulation" and sees various luminous visions in his meditation cell.

(iii) *Primordial wisdom of progress.* ^{104a/5}When one has made great progress in the experiences through the previous meditation, and the obscurations to emptiness and clarity mind, "spontaneously accomplished primordial wisdom" (*Rang-Byung Gi Ye-Shes*), have been reduced, wisdom, contemplation and experiences become powerful. The external appearances will spontaneously be seen as dreams and illusions. The realization of (seeing) various phenomena as having the same taste will arise and remain in the space-like state. It is (2) the "primordial wisdom of progress" (*mCh'ed-Pa'i Ye-Shes*, i.e., Path of Application).

(iv) *The signs of attainment of heat.* ^{104b/3}(At that time,) as the realization is extraordinarily immaculate, one attains extraordinary signs of pliancy (*Shin-sByang*) of body and mind. Remaining day and night in the united extraordinary contemplation, one cannot possibly be separated from it. Because of compassion one acts for the benefit of living beings and develops uncommon revulsion and definite emergence from *samsāra*. Even in dreams, one sees phenomena as dreams and illusions and so on. There will be no worm inside the body nor lice and their eggs upon it. These are the attainments of

the signs of the "Path of Application" (*sByor-Lam*), and one soon reaches the "Path of Seeing" (*mThong-Lam*):"

(v) *The realized noble primordial wisdom.* ^{105s/2}Having first seen the Mind, the uncontaminated (*Zag-Med*) luminous primordial wisdom, one attains what is known as the (3) "realized primordial wisdom" (*Thob-Pa Zhes-Bya-Ba'i Ye-Shes*). (At that time,) the hundred-petalled (*'Dab-Ma*) air which dwells in the *cakras* of the heart will be purified. The wisdom of clear essence (*Khams Dangs-Ma*) becomes highly luminous, and by radiating other *cakras* too, 1200 virtuous (aspect of) air and mental (events) will be stabilized and 1200 emotional airs will cease. Then (as a result) according to *tantras*, the primordially present pure lands appear in (one's) internal essence (*Nang Gi Khams*). According to *Sūtras*, the external pure lands, such as the faces of hundreds of Buddhas, appear (before him). One will achieve a great many more pure and unobscured eyes and foreknowledges than the eyes and foreknowledges of ordinary beings (*So-Sō'i sKye-Bo*), which have obscurations and limitations of the stages. One has been liberated from the emotional defilements of imagination, the "objects of abandonment of the Path of Seeing" (*mThong-Bas sPang-Bya*), and has actualized primordial wisdom, the luminous vision.

(vi) *By training in what has been realized, the primordial wisdom arises.* ^{105b/3}To train in what has already been seen (in the path of insight) is the "path of meditation" (*bsGom-Pa'i Lam*). One attains lower, middle and higher (cycles of this path), and in each stage one achieves the previously mentioned virtues manifold and acts for the benefit of living beings. From the attainment of the first through the seventh stage, there will be concepts during the off-meditation periods and differences between meditation and off-meditation. In the three pure stages (eighth-tenth), as there are no direct (*mNgom-Gyur*) thoughts, there is the unification (of meditation and off-meditation), and here everything is one taste in the very primordial wisdom.

(vii) *Full perfection, the completion of the noble path.* ^{106a/1}The primordial wisdom of the "meditation path" is called the "fully realized primordial wisdom" (*Nye-Bar Thob-Pa'i Ye-Shes*).

Having meditated upon the eight noble paths, one has purified the defilements of the nine stages (of the meditation path). Generally, the virtues of the path and stages appear by relying on the proper veins, air, and essence. The accumulations of merits and primordial wisdom are generated through the perfections (of veins, air, and essence) and through the efforts of training in their perfection.

(*The Path for*) *People of Lesser Intellect*

(i) *The stages of meditation.*

(a) TRANQUILLITY (*Zhi-gNas*)

(1) TAMING THE THOUGHTS

^{110b/1}First (the question) is how to find tranquility. . . .

One should contemplate in a place where there are no thorns (disturbances) of contemplation, such as danger from people, entertainments, and noise, but where the mind will naturally be able to relax. Sit on a comfortable seat in the crossed-legged posture, cover the knees with the palms and visualize the three channels (in the body). While exhaling, think that one exhales through the white *Roma* channel on the right (side of the body) and then the right nostril, and that all the sickness, harmful effects, and unvirtuous obscurations are cleared like smoke going out a chimney. While inhaling, think that the absorptions of the Buddhas, in the form of light have entered through the left nostril, the red *Kyangma* (channel at the left side of the body) and then have emerged into the central channel. For a little while, hold the breath (directly) below the navel (by pushing the breath a bit) both downwards and upwards. Then slowly exhale as before, but hold in a little (of the remaining breath). During the three spring months, the air is earth-air, and it is the time that phlegm develops. So, as its antidote, one should visualize it as air-of-air in green. During the three summer months, to dispel the heat-of-fire, visualize it as water-air in white. During the three autumn months, to dispel the movements of the bile, visualize it as earth-air in yellow. During the three

winter months, as the antidote of coldness-of-water, visualize it as fire-air in red. For the shape of the air, visualize the essence of the mind and air in the designs of a bow, triangle, circle, and square in the heart. (Visualize them) as having the same feeling. For the number (of breaths): count up to seven cycles in the mind. A beginner should visualize the air in the form of a square and so forth, and while emitting it through the nostrils, it gradually grows bigger till it becomes the size of the three thousand world system, and so on. One should contemplate on it without one's mind wavering. When the elements are congested, it should be overcome by saying a forceful Ha! without holding in any breath. When bliss and devotion, and so forth, arise, one should hold in the breath (for a while). By practicing breathing for a few days and nights, the tranquillity of clear and radiant mind without concepts will arise. At that time, as there will be no moment of gross air and there are no thoughts, the white and red moon and sun, the essence of the *Roma* and *Kyanigma* channels, will become stable. In that (stability), there will not be (even a) subtle movement of air, because one remains in the state of no-thought in the central channel and thereby realizes the innate primordial wisdom.

(2) ONE-POINTED CONCENTRATION

^{11.1b/4}After suppressing the gross thoughts, . . .one should train in the four boundless states of mind, such as loving-kindness, and in the two minds of enlightenment, which are aspirations and practice. The *Bodhicaryāvātāra* says: "Having pacified the thoughts, meditate on the Mind of Enlightenment." Or concentrate on the developing stage or on (objects such as) volumes and paintings of deities. The *Samādhirāja-sūtra* says: "On the golden color of the image beautifying the world, whoever focuses his mind is a *Bodhisattva* who is in contemplation." Briefly, a person who has not yet become experienced in the meditation of "no-thought" should contemplate on any virtuous objects without deviating to any other objects.

(3) THE ACTUAL ABSORPTION OF TRANQUILLITY

^{11.1b/4}When there is no projection of thoughts as long as one doesn't abandon the contemplation of concentrating on the object, mind and body are at ease, speech is lessened, words become gentle and the complexion becomes rich; then one has accomplished the one-pointed tranquillity.

(b) INSIGHT (Lhag-mThong)

(1) WAY OF TRAINING IN INSIGHT

^{11.2a/2}Meditate on (perceiving phenomena as) non-existent from their origin but appearing like the eight illusory examples . . . In their true meaning, all things, the world and beings, which are the impure perceptions of the deluded mind, and the triple gem, which are the pure perceptions, are non-existent like a dream. But in the deluded mind they appear because of the accumulation of habituations. All appearances seem to be true, but they are false since they appear to the dualistic perceptions . . . The Buddhas who have appeared to the deluded perceptions are false, as they have the nature of manifested bodies like reflections of the moon in water, and as they are appearances (for ordinary people), while (the Buddhas themselves) do not descend from the spheres of the Ultimate Body and the Enjoyment Body. The pure nature of the Buddhas, however, which is present in the unexcelled pure sphere, is not false. Because of deluded thoughts, it seems that one wanders in *samsāra* during one life after another and experiences successive suffering and happiness, and that one goes through successive lives. But at that very moment (of wandering), according to the view of the unborn state of the Mind, there is no distinction between wandering or not wandering in *samsāra*. The dream-like appearances of delusion are non-existent at the very time of their appearing during the sleep of delusory habituations. . . .

Briefly, the phenomena of appearance and imputation

are non-existent but appear like the eight examples of illusion. One should contemplate upon this with clarity but no apprehensions.

(2) WAY OF ARISING OF INSIGHT

^{113a/2}It is the meditation of (seeing all) as space without having any conceptualization even of the perception (of things) as illusions Even the (view of) 'appearing but being unreal' (*sNang-La bDen-Par Med-Pa*) is itself a (mere) assertion. In meaning, it (the nature) is not an object of conceptualizations about whether it exists or not in its true nature. So one should contemplate on this meaning. By this practice, the thought of viewing external phenomena as true or as untrue like illusions will also be arrested. So, when one realizes the non-conceptualization of the objects of apprehension, since the thought of apprehended, the aspect of the attachment (to the object also) does not exist, subsequently (*Zhar-La*) one realizes the non-existence of the apprehender. Contemplate on the realization of the nature of non-existence of any entities and the nature of the transcending of concepts.

(ii) *Analysis of contemplation.*

(a) ANALYSIS OF THE MIND

^{113b/6}In the mind, when the chain of thoughts of liking and disliking, true, and false, and happiness and unhappiness arises, one should make efforts to examine it without wavering even for a moment: where did the thoughts come from at the beginning, where do they remain now, where do they go in the end, what are their color, design, and characteristics?

(b) WAY OF SEEING THE NATURE

^{114a/6}Perceiving the existence of the mind is a pollution by thoughts. Because in its (true) meaning it has no existence, (mind) has no cause of arising. So it is empty of the cause of arising. There is nothing which exists because nothing has been born. So the presence (of the mind) is emptiness of entity. As (the mind) is not present, there is nothing

ing to cease. So the cessation (of the mind) is empty of characteristics. (Mind) has no color, design, and there is nothing to be shown or to find, even if one examines it and searches thoroughly outside, inside, or in between. This not finding (the mind) is a space-like state, clear, equal, free from designations and analysis, and detached from actor and acted upon. It is the vision of the nature of the Ultimate Body.

(c) CONTEMPLATION IN RELAXED STATE

^{114b/5}Like resting after exhaustion from carrying heavy loads, it is, by abandoning the past experiences of applying gross and subtle analyses, to be in total ease, like reaching the goal or the resting place when one has been totally exhausted. In accordance with this tradition, contemplate by remaining in total ease through relaxation, in the state in which all appearances show clearly, fully and perfectly, free from any memories or thoughts and without the ceasing of the natural glow (*mDangs*) of awareness and bliss Generally, it is natural that if you meditate and concentrate the mind one-pointedly, the mind projects. If you ease the mind, thinking "Go wherever you like to go," it will remain as it is, like a camel When you let the mind go, saying, "Do not return even for a while," even if it seems to have gone, it will return inwardly and remain as the self-dwelling emptiness. It is like a crow in a boat While the mind is being projected to the objects such as forms, since the objects are unreal, the mind will not continue to rely on them even for a moment. The mind will return and remain in the emptiness free from bonds of analysis. For example, a crow flying from a boat in the ocean will not land on other objects but will come down on the boat itself.

(d) WAY OF ARISING OF THE REALIZATION

^{115b/1}By gaining experience in the significance of not finding the thought of attachment to 'I' and 'self' by investigating, one realizes the non-existence of the apprehender "self of person" and thereby (one realizes) the

non-existence of the apprehender [subject]. One has already realized (in the previous lessons) the non-existence of the "self of phenomena," since the apprehended (object) is non-existence in its essence. After realizing the two emptinesses of self, both the objects among which one takes *samsāric* birth and the subject who takes birth are established as non-existent. The liberation of *samsāra* as the non-existent in true nature ('*Khor-Ba Rang-bZhin Med-Pa*) is the attainment of the vision of *nirvāna*, because *samsāra* is nothing else than mind. . . . If one realizes thus, even if one could not attain liberation in this life, it is certain that one will do so in the next one. . . . It is like "the *karma* of definite effect," by which, if one has committed a grave evil or a virtuous act, it is impossible that one will not experience its effects in the next life.

(e) ATTAINMENT OF STABILITY
(IN TRANQUILLITY AND INSIGHT)

^{116a/1}When the reflection of the moon appears in a pond, the water and the reflection of the moon are inseparable. Likewise, when (things) appear (before the mind) and when they are being apprehended (by mind), the mind is inseparable (from the appearances). It should be understood that the appearances (before the mind) are the apprehended (phenomena) (*gZung-Ba*) and not the appearing objects (*sNang-Yul*). The object of appearances and its emptiness are inseparable like water and the (reflection) of the moon in water.

(f) HOW TO LEARN THE MEANING
OF NON-DUALITY

^{116a/4}By apprehending the non-existent object as self, one deludes (oneself) into *samsāra*, just as by perceiving water in a dream as fearful, fear is further aggravated. The creations of the stabilized habits of delusory perceptions are non-established (nothing but delusions). The basis of the arising of delusions, the mind, is naturally pure and its entity is non-existent. So it is never stained by defilements. . . . One should contemplate in the space-like un-

stained primordial wisdom, the core undefiled by extremes and the essence free from conceptualizations, without any search by examining or analyzing. If you search, the Mind will be defiled and thereby worldly thoughts (*Kun-rTog*) will increase. If you keep a poisonous snake in a cage by itself it won't harm (anyone), but if you harass it, it will. Likewise, the mind (itself) is free from efforts, acceptances, and abandonments.

(g) WAY OF REALIZING THE MIDDLE PATH,
FREE FROM EXTREMES

^{116b/6}(Thereby) one pacifies the defilements of emotions, and through the non-conceptualizing absorption of primordial wisdom, which is free from duality of apprehended and apprehender, one achieves the eyes and foreknowledges (etc.) the virtues of realization and liberation.

(h) THE FREEDOM FROM MEDITATION
AND MEDITATOR IS THE REALIZATION
OF THE BUDDHA.

^{117a/3}While a person is in contemplation, although the appearing object (*sNang-Yul*) appears, there is nothing in his mind but remaining in the space-like absence of projections and withdrawals. So for him there is no concept of apprehender ('*Dzin-Pa*). That is the non-dual primordial wisdom, since the concept of dual nature has not been applied, and it is the liberation from creator and creation since there is no duality of meditator and meditation. At that time, one reaches the natural primordial sphere by dissolving the mind and mental events into the ultimate sphere, and one dwells in the realization of Mind, the absolute Buddha, the self-presence of the Ultimate Body. . . . At that time, the mind and mental events have dissolved in the natural purity of the Mind, like salt dissolving in water, and no more thoughts are flickering.

(i) WAY OF REALIZING THE ULTIMATE NATURE
^{117b/3}By realizing the five external apprehended objects as reflections of the moon and as a mirage (*Mig-Yor*), there won't be the slightest tendency to cling by apprehended

concepts to the (objects as) true. By realizing the internal apprehending senses as partless like space, the apprehender (subject) of them is emptiness in its entity. The sense which is natural, absence of apprehender and apprehended (object), and free from projections and withdrawal is the nectar-like perfection of wisdom. It is profound, peace, freedom, natural luminescence and self-discriminating primordial wisdom. . . . It is the perfection of wisdom in which there is no *samsāra* here, *nirvāṇa* there, or the path of training between.

(i) WAY OF COMPLETION OF THE VIEW

^{118a/2}Dwelling in the boat-like state of realization of the meaning of the great vast view, one crosses the *samsāric* ocean of conceptualization, and then without conceptions unifies one's intellect with the ground which is primordially free from conceptualizations. Because the ultimate sphere and wisdom have become inseparable, it is called the state of Great Perfection, and so it is called the perfection of it (the Great Perfection). It is the arising of the realization of the total perfection of self-arisen and uncreated meaning.

(k) RECOGNITION OF THE PERFECT TRANQUILLITY AND INSIGHT

^{118a/5}When one contemplates thus, the mind dwells naturally with no projections and withdrawals. The aspect of no-thought and emptiness due to abiding (in contemplation) is the tranquillity. It is the accomplishment of the accumulation of primordial wisdom and the perfection stage of wisdom, the cause of the Ultimate Body. The aspect of appearances due to clarity is the insight. It is the accomplishment of the accumulation of merits and the development stage of skillful means, the cause of the Form Body. At that time one completes the six absolute perfections, the freedom from conceptualization. . . . The training on giving, and so forth, is the abiding in them and it is not the perfection or going beyond them. When the *Bodhisattva* transcends them, it becomes the perfection of

them. At that time, one perfects the absolute discipline. In *Ārya-sūsthiatamāidevāpūtra-pariprcchā-nama-mahāyāna-sūtra* it is said: "In whom there is no concept of discipline nor stains of discipline (*Tshul-Khrims*), there is the perfection of discipline."

(l) THE FUNCTION OF TRANQUILLITY AND INSIGHT

^{119a/5}Gaining experience (*Dris-Pa*) in the previously realized insight depends on tranquillity. So one should certainly make efforts to accomplish the union (of tranquillity and insight).

(m) THE TIME OF REALIZING NON-CONCEPTUALIZATION AFTER GAINING EXPERIENCE

^{119b/1}While practicing on the perfect meaning, to realize that the subjects and objects and the substances and non-substances (*dNgos Dang dNgos-Med*) are absence of inherent existence (*Rang-bZhin Med-Pa*) is the insight, which comes first. To remain in the state of that realization with no arising of forms in the intellect is the tranquillity, which comes later. When the sphere (*dByings*) and the primordial wisdom (*Yé-Shes*) become inseparable, their inseparability should be known as the attainment of the result of the union.

(ii) *Having gained experience, the way of perfecting the contemplation.*

(a) THE VIRTUES OF THE CONTEMPLATION

^{119b/4}In mind the virtues are present primordially, but while the mind has been covered by obscurations the virtues do not manifest. By meditating on tranquillity and insight, one purifies certain obscurations (such as adventitious concepts) and achieves temporary attainments. When the mental concepts are dissolved into the ultimate sphere (*dByings*), . . . because of having purified the mental concepts, for the time being one achieves many virtues, such as the absorptions (*sNyom-'jug*).

(b) THE NINE ABSORPTIONS

^{120a/3}The nine absorptions are the mind of cessation, four levels of absorptions (of the form realm), and four levels of the formless realm. They are the nine contemplations, the perfections of nine absorptions. . . .

The one-pointed mind with the wisdom of bliss, clarity, and no-thought is achieved in the life of beings of the desire realm, such as human beings, through the training on tranquility and insight, as explained earlier. It is achieved by means of precious human (*Dal-'Byor*) life, and that is why it is connected to human beings. . . . The mind of (four) absorptions (of the form realms): (1) First absorption: When one practices one-pointed contemplation, the preliminary (*Nyer-IDog*) is the ability (to contemplate). It will (start) with the (gross) thought that I should contemplate, and through the application (*sByor-Ba*) of analytical (subtle thoughts) recollections for contemplating in the state of no-thought, the wisdom free from conceptions, the actual (*dNgos-gZhi*) meditation arises. During the off-meditation period, one will have both (gross) thoughts and analysis (subtle thoughts). (2) Second absorption: Through the preliminaries of the mental (stage) of the first absorption and by the application of no-(gross) thoughts but analysis (subtle thoughts), the actual absorption of clarity and no-concepts arises. (3) Third absorption: Through the preliminaries of the mental (stage) of the second absorption and (by the application of) absence of (gross) thoughts and analysis (subtle thoughts), the extraordinary actual absorption of no-concepts arises directly. (4) Fourth absorption: Through the preliminaries of the mental (stage) of the third absorption (and by the application of the) contemplations, the extraordinary actual absorption of joy and bliss arises. *Yum-Bar-Ba* [*Middle Length Prajñāparamitā-sūtra*] says:

“An absorption with (gross) thoughts and analysis (subtle thoughts) is the first absorption. With analysis but no thoughts is the second absorption. With neither

thoughts nor analysis in the mind is the third absorption. Joyous mind is the fourth absorption.

(c) ATTAINMENT OF THE MIND OF THE ABSORPTIONS (OF THE FORMLESS REALMS)

^{121a/3}By means of the mind of (the four) absorptions (of the form realms) the extraordinary minds of (the four) formless realms are generated. (1) The first is the (contemplative) state of space-like infinity. It is a stable conceptualization (*Yid-La Byed-Pa*) that the nature of all phenomena is pure and unstained like space (and the contemplating in it one-pointedly). (2) The state of infinity of consciousness. It conceptualizes that even the space-like infinity is mere mind and that mind (consciousness) is infinite, free from beginning and end. (3) The state of nothingness. It is the conception which does not observe even the infinity of consciousness and (in which) nothing is seen by the mind. (4) The state of the summit of existence (the world). It conceptualizes the transcendence of both extremes of existing and non-existing (non-predication).

The state of cessation: It is the cessation of all conceptualizations (*sPros-Pa*). . . . There are two cessations: the individual analytical cessation (*So-Sor brTogs-Pa* 'i 'Gog-Pa) (is attained through) discriminations and analysis by the mind. The non-analytical cessation (*brTogs-Min 'Gog*) (is attained through) contemplating on the ultimate nature with no (mental) discriminations. In the case of the cessation (attained by the) *Bodhisattvas*, they (still) serve living beings through (the power of) their compassion. . . .

Question: (if he has compassion,) then how could he be free from conceptualizations?

Answer: There are no conceptualizations because he possesses the compassion of the wisdom of no-concepts.

(d) METHODS OF TRAINING IN THE NINE ABSORPTIONS

^{122a/3}By meditating on the final contemplations, one discovers the (five) divine eyes and (six) foreknowledges which he did not possess. He will see different stages of Bud-

dha-fields and Buddha-virtues as he advances in his attainment of the stages of the path. He receives teachings and perfects his accumulations.

(e) **THE TIME OF ATTAINMENT OF THE THREE CONTEMPLATIONS**

^{123a/3}The single sun is known (by many names such as "the illuminator" as it dispels darkness, "the thousand lights one" as it projects rays of brightness, and "the friend of the lotus" as it causes the lotus to open. Likewise, the contemplation is known (by the names) "the illusion-like contemplation," as it is the one-pointed contemplation on the realization of the appearances as illusions, "the moon-like unstained contemplation," as it dispels the darkness and pain of emotions, "the space-like unobscured contemplation," as it is the realization of all phenomena as space, and so on. The contemplation is of the same nature (*rDzas*), but in accordance with its progress, its virtues are increased and hundreds of thousands of more virtues will be obtained.

(f) **ATTAINMENT OF THE UNITED CONTEMPLATION**

^{123b/1}The words and meanings of the Dharma are realized perfectly by discriminative insight, and they are maintained one-pointedly in the mind by tranquility. So the insight is the recollection (*gZangs*, i.e., realization) and the tranquility is the contemplation (*Ting-Nge 'Dzin*). In Ye-Shes rGyas-Pa it is said:

Insight is the recollection (realization) of the Dharma, Tranquility is the contemplation."

6. *Twenty-seven Courses of Training in Dzogpa Chenpo*

In *The Meaning Instructions on Three Virtues of Relaxation in the Natural State of The Mind* (BL), Longchen Rabjam presents a hundred and forty-one courses of training divided into three chapters. The first chapter is on outer common teachings of *Sutra*, the second is on inner esoteric teachings of *Tantra*, and the third chapter is on the innermost resultant teachings of the Great Perfection (*rDzogs Pa Chen Po*). The following is an abridged translation of the third chapter, which has twenty-seven courses of training.

IDENTIFICATION (OF THE BASIS) THROUGH (UNDERSTANDING THE) VIEW.

The External Apprehended Objects Are Non-Existent Emptiness

(i) *The appearances are unreal reflections like the eight examples of illusion.* ^{BL 44a/4}Every aspect of the five objects, such as form, included in the phenomena of the world and beings, are mere appearances with no true existence. All the appearances which have appeared to both the pure perceptions of the Buddhas and the impure perceptions of deluded beings are the percepts of wisdom and the mind. While the appearances are appearing to both perceptions, they are appearing with no inherent existence (*Rang-bZhin*), like a reflection in a mirror and rainbow rays in the sky. To the pure perception of wisdom the (appearances) transcend the extremes of existing and

10. Procedures of Special Insight
From Tsong-kha-pa's *Medium-Length Exposition of the Stages of the Path*
In *Tsong-kha-pa's Final Exposition of Wisdom*
By Jeffrey Hopkins; Edited by Kevin Vose

Divisions of Special Insight

When, from observing the prerequisites for special insight as explained above (27ff.), you have found the view realizing the two selflessnesses, you should cultivate special insight.

Question: How many [types of] special insight are there?

Answer: Here I will not mainly indicate the special insights of those on high grounds but will predominantly indicate those to be cultivated while a common being. All inclusively, the divisions of the special insights to be cultivated while a common being are those of the four natures, the three approaches, and the six examinations.

The four natures (coarse and subtle differentiation and coarse and subtle intense differentiation) are those described in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*, differentiation and so forth. About them:

- Differentiation (*rnam par 'byed pa, vicaya*) observes the diversity [of phenomena]
- Intense differentiation (*rab tu rnam par 'byed pa, pravicya*) observes the mode [of being of phenomena, emptiness].

Differentiation has two types, thorough investigation (*yongs su rtog pa, paritarka*) and thorough analysis (*yongs su dpyod pa, paricāra*); intense differentiation also has two types, [thorough] investigation and [thorough] analysis, which are analyses of coarse and subtle objects [respectively]. Identifications of those four are given in Asaṅga's *Grounds of Hearers*, Ratnākaraśānti's *Quintessential Instructions on the Perfection of Wisdom*, and so forth.

The three approaches are those described in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*:

1. Arisen from a sign (*mtshan ma las byung ba, nimitta-may*) [that is to say, an imagistic recollection of experience gained earlier]
2. Arisen from thorough examination (*yongs su tshol ba las byung ba, paryeṣaṅā-may*)
3. Arisen from individual investigation (*so sor rtog pa las byung ba, pratyavekṣaṅā-may*).

To illustrate identifications of these with respect to, for instance, the meaning of selflessness:

1. The special insight arisen from a sign is a case of observing the selflessness already ascertained and taking to mind its sign [that is, a conceptual image of it]; one does not perform much [additional] delineation [of the meaning].
2. The special insight arisen from thorough examination is a delineation for the sake of ascertaining what was not ascertained earlier.
3. The special insight arisen from individual investigation is a performing of analysis on a meaning already ascertained in the way it was done earlier.

The six examinations are thorough examinations concerning meanings, things, characteristics, classes, times, and reasonings, as well as individual investigation after examination. Concerning those:

1. Examination concerning the meaning is to examine, “The meaning of this word is such-and-such.”
2. Examination of things is to examine, “This is an internal thing; that is an external thing.”
3. Examination concerning characteristics is twofold—to examine, “This is a specific characteristic; that is a general characteristic,” or shared and unshared.
4. Examination concerning classes is to examine the unwholesome class from the viewpoint of faults and disadvantages and the wholesome class from the viewpoint of good qualities and advantages.
5. Examination concerning times is to examine, “Such-and-such such-and-such exists in the present.”
6. Examination concerning reasonings is of four types.
 - The reasoning of dependence is [from the viewpoint] that the arising of effects depends on causes and conditions. It is also an examination of the conventional, the ultimate, and their bases [that is, instances,] individually.
 - The reasoning of performance of function is [from the viewpoint] that phenomena perform their respective functions, such as fire performing the function of burning. Moreover, one examines, “This is the phenomenon; this is the functioning; this phenomenon performs this function.”
 - The reasoning of tenable proof is to prove a meaning without contradicting valid cognition. It is an examination within considering whether or not [the meaning] has valid cognition—direct, inferential, or believable scripture.
 - The reasoning of nature is to examine [from the viewpoint] of:
 - (1) Natures renowned in the world, such as heat being the nature of fire and moisture being the nature of water,
 - (2) Inconceivable natures [such as a Buddha’s placing a world-system in a single hair-pore], and
 - (3) The subsisting nature [such as phenomena’s emptiness of inherent existence]. It is done by way of believing in them and not contemplating other reasons for their being like that.

Through positing six types in that way, the objects to be known by a yogi are limited to three—the meanings of utterances, the diverse objects of knowledge, and the mode [that is to say,

how things are]. The first examination [examination concerning the meaning] is posited in terms of the first [the meanings of utterances]. The examination of things and examination of specific characteristics are posited in terms of the second [the diverse objects of knowledge]. The remaining three [examination concerning classes, times, and reasonings] as well as examination of general characteristics are posited in terms of the third [the mode].

The approaches of the four special insights, which were described initially [namely, the four natures—differentiation observing the diversity that is thorough investigation, differentiation observing the diversity that is thorough analysis, intense differentiation observing the mode that is thorough investigation, and intense differentiation observing the mode that is thorough analysis], are said to be threefold [arisen from a sign, from thorough examination, and from individual investigation], and their modes of examination are said to be sixfold [examination concerning meaning, things, characteristics, classes, times, and reasonings]. Therefore, the three approaches and the six examinations are included in the former four [natures].

Asaṅga's *Grounds of Hearers* says that the four mental engagements explained earlier [on the occasion of cultivating calm abiding], forcible engagement and so forth [namely, interrupted engagement, uninterrupted engagement, and spontaneous engagement], are common to both calm abiding and special insight. Therefore, special insight also involves the four mental engagements.

How to Cultivate Special Insight

This section has three parts:

1. Showing the meaning of statements that special insight is cultivated in dependence on calm abiding,
2. From the viewpoint of which paths of which vehicle—great or small— this is the system, and
3. Actual way to cultivating special insight in dependence on calm abiding.

Showing the meaning of statements that special insight is cultivated in dependence on calm abiding

The *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* a says that having first achieved calm abiding, one should afterward cultivate special insight, and similarly many texts—such as those by the holy Maitreya, Asaṅga's *Grounds of Bodhisattvas*,^b his *Grounds of Hearers*, Bhāvaviveka, Shāntideva, Kamalashīla's three works on the *Stages of Meditation*, Ratnākarashānti's *Quintessential Instructions on the Perfection of Wisdom*, and so forth—also say this.

The thought of these texts is not that first one generates calm abiding observing any object of observation but not the meaning of selflessness, and then the later sustaining [of calm abiding] within observing selflessness is special insight:

- because the two—calm abiding and special insight—are not differentiated by way of object of observation, and
- because Ratnākarashānti's *Quintessential Instructions on the Perfection of Wisdom* also explains that first one generates calm abiding within observing suchness—the emptiness of duality of apprehended object and apprehending subject—and later generates special insight through analytical meditation within observing that same object of observation, and
- because the Superior Asaṅga also describes a special insight observing the diversity and says that after having first generated calm abiding, in dependence on it [mundane] special insight is cultivated having the aspect of [viewing the lower level as] gross and [the upper level as] peaceful, and
- because Asaṅga moreover speaks of this [mundane special insight] as a path common to both non-Buddhists and Buddhists, as well as both common beings and Superiors.

Therefore, when one who has not earlier achieved calm abiding is newly achieving it, it is to be achieved within setting [the mind] one-pointedly on whatever the object of observation is. Except for this, [calm abiding] is not achievable within analyzing the object of observation in many ways. For if you do it the former way [within setting the mind one-pointedly on any object of observation], you will achieve calm abiding, whereas if you do it the latter way [within analyzing the object of observation in many ways], achievement is impossible.

When one who has first achieved calm abiding does not just extend the conditioning to mere stabilizing meditation as before but performs analytical meditation in which the object appropriate to the occasion—the mode or the diversity—is individually analyzed with wisdom, finally a special one-pointed meditative stabilization can be induced. Therefore, since the former [mode of mere stabilization] cannot induce a very powerful one-pointed meditative stabilization as achieved through analytical meditation, analytical meditation is praised.

Just that mode of achievement is how, in dependence on first having sought calm abiding, to cultivate special insight afterwards. Hence, it is the general reason for there being two different modes of procedure in calm abiding and special insight, even though the object of observation—selflessness, for instance—might be the same.

In particular, cultivation of special insight having the aspect of grossness/peacefulness—individually analyzing the faults of a lower realm and advantages of an upper realm—and the cultivation of special insight having the aspect of selflessness, in which the meaning of selflessness is sustained within analysis through the wisdom of individual investigation, necessarily involve generation of strong and steady ascertainment. Consequently, they have great power with respect to abandoning their individual objects of abandonment.

Not only is there cultivation of special insight observing the diversity that has the aspect of grossness/peacefulness for the sake of abandoning the manifest afflictive emotions, but also, as is explained in Ratnākarashānti's *Quintessential Instructions on the Perfection of Wisdom*, there is analytical meditation thoroughly differentiating the character of the eighteen constituents.

Therefore, using this as an illustration you should understand that there are other special insights that involve meditation differentiating the objects comprising the diversity.

Ratnākaraśānti's *Quintessential Instructions on the Perfection of Wisdom* explains that prior to generating calm abiding and special insight observing the mode [emptiness], calm abiding and special insight on the ground [or level] of yoga observing the diversity is to be generated. However, here according to the assertions of Shāntideva, Kamalashīla, and so forth, first any calm abiding is generated and then special insight is generated, and they indicate that this, moreover, is just the special insight observing the mode.

Actual way to cultivate special insight in dependence on calm abiding

If the view of selflessness is not found, no matter what system of meditation you perform, that meditation will not dwell in the meaning of suchness. Therefore, it is necessary to find the view.

If although you have understanding of the view, during meditation on suchness you do not meditate within being set in its context—not becoming mindful of it—such will not serve as meditation on suchness. Therefore, even to set [the mind] without contemplating anything at the end of first doing a little analysis of the view is not a sustaining of suchness. Even to become accustomed to a mere placement within the view upon becoming mindful of it is reduced to being just the way to sustain calm abiding explained earlier. Therefore, such is not the meaning of texts describing the way to sustain special insight, which is distinct from that.

For this reason, within individually analyzing the meaning of selflessness by means of wisdom as explained before [when presenting the reasonings establishing selflessness], you should sustain [the view]. Moreover, if analytical meditation is solely done, the calm abiding generated earlier will degenerate. Therefore, having mounted the horse of calm abiding, you should sustain [the view] within analysis and then periodically alternate it with stabilizing meditation.

Furthermore, if due to too much analytical meditation stability lessens, you should perform more stabilizing meditation and reinstate the factor of stability. If due to too much stabilizing meditation you do not want to analyze or, despite analyzing, it is unworkable and the mind entirely goes into the factor of stability, you should perform more analytical meditation. It is very powerful when [in this way] the two— calm abiding and special insight—are cultivated within continuously making them equal; therefore, you should do it this way. The last of Kamalashīla's [three works on the] *Stages of Meditation* says:

Moreover, when due to having cultivated special insight [too much], the wisdom [of individual analysis] becomes excessive, [the stability of] calm abiding diminishes. Due to this, like a butter-lamp set in a breeze, the mind fluctuates [and becomes unstable], whereby suchness is not seen very clearly. Therefore [in order to achieve stability seeing suchness clearly], at that time you should cultivate [just] the calm abiding [of nonanalytical fixation]. Also, when [the stability of] calm abiding is excessive, you will, like a person asleep, not see

suchness very clearly [due to the diminishment of individual analysis]. Therefore, at that time also you should cultivate the wisdom [of individual analysis].

With respect to sustaining [meditation] within analysis in this way, it is not correct to stop analytical meditation upon holding that all conceptuality whatsoever is apprehension of signs—that is, apprehension of true existence. For earlier [I] have proven in many ways that conceptuality apprehending true existence is just one class of conceptuality. It is established that to regard that whatever conceptuality apprehends incurs the damage of reasoning is a deprecation in which the object of reasoned negation is excessive and also is not the meaning of the scriptures. If with regard to other subjects you do not assert that whatever conceptuality apprehends incurs the damage of reasoning, but you think that whatever the mind apprehends with respect to the noumenon is a consciousness apprehending signs that is an adherence to true existence, this also is a fallacy in which the mode of estimation is faulty. All whatsoever apprehensions [about the noumenon] are not [apprehensions of true existence] because it is said that one of limited perspective who is seeking release must inquire into suchness through multiple approaches of scripture and reasoning.

Objection: Concerning this, if meditation on suchness is for the sake of generating the non-conceptual, it will not be generated from individual analysis because the two—cause and effect—must accord.

Answer: About this, the Supramundane Victor himself gave a clear answer; the *Kāshyapa Chapter* says:

Kāshyapa, it is thus: For example, from the rubbing together of two branches by the wind fire arises, and once arisen, the two branches are burned up. Similarly, Kāshyapa, if one has correct individual analysis [of things, through its force] a Superior's faculty of wisdom is generated. Through its generation correct individual analysis itself is consumed.

This says that a Superior's wisdom is generated from individual analysis. Also, Kamalashīla's middle [of three works on the] *Stages of Meditation* says:

When analyzing in that way with wisdom, yogis [meditating on emptiness] definitely do not apprehend an inherent nature of anything [being analyzed] as ultimately [existing], they enter into meditative stabilization [of emptiness] not conceptualizing [that objects truly exist]. They also realize the naturelessness of all phenomena. The conceptualization [of true existence]—of those who do not cultivate individual analysis of the nature of things with wisdom but only cultivate just a mere thorough abandonment of mental application—will never be reversed, and they will never realize naturelessness because of not having the illumination of wisdom. It is thus: The Supramundane Victor said [in the *Kāshyapa Chapter*] that when the fire of knowing the real just as it is arises from correct individual analysis itself, the wood of conceptuality is burned, like the fire of sticks rubbed together.

....

For sustaining special insight you should know how to observe the six preparatory practices, how to sustain the actual session and its conclusion, how to act between sessions, and especially how to sustain the session free from laxity and excitement as explained before.

Measure of Having Established Special Insight Through Meditative Cultivation

When you have meditated in that way analyzing by way of the wisdom of individual analysis, up to the point prior to generating the pliancies described earlier it is a similitude of special insight. Then the pliancies having been generated, it is fully qualified special insight. The entities and modes of generating the pliancies are as explained earlier. Moreover, because one even has the pliancy induced by calm abiding that has already been achieved and has not deteriorated, [the achievement of special insight] is not the mere presence of pliancy.

Question: Then, what is it?

Answer: When the power of having performed analytical meditation itself is able to induce pliancy, it then becomes special insight. This is the same for both special insight observing the diversity and special insight observing the mode [of being of phenomena]. Furthermore, in that way the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* says:

“Supramundane Victor, until a Bodhisattva has attained physical and mental pliancy [induced through the power of analysis], what is the mental contemplation—that is an internal taking to mind of an image, an object of meditative stabilization, of those phenomena that have been contemplated [and analyzed] well— called?”

“Maitreya, it is not special insight; it should be said that it is [a mental contemplation that] is associated with determined attention that is a similitude of special insight.”

And Ratnākarashānti’s *Quintessential Instructions on the Perfection of Wisdom* also says:

Abiding in just that attainment of physical and mental pliancy [induced by calm abiding], they individually analyze the meaning of just what was contemplated through determined attention to the object, which is an internal image of meditative stabilization. As long as physical and mental pliancy [induced through the power of analysis] are not generated, [this analytical meditation] is a mental contemplation that is a similitude of special insight. When those [pliancies] are generated, it is special insight.

When the power of [analysis] itself is able to induce pliancy, it is also able to induce one-pointedness of mind. Therefore, this inducing of calm abiding through analytical meditation of individual analysis by its own power is a quality of previously having achieved calm abiding.

Since in that way calm abiding becomes far more developed through analytical meditation performed by one who has already achieved calm abiding well, you should not hold onto thinking that if analytical meditation of individual analysis is performed, the factor of stability will diminish.

How Calm Abiding and Special Insight Are Unified

If calm abiding and special insight are not attained as they were described above at the point of [discussing] the measure of their establishment, there will be nothing to be unified. Therefore, those two must definitely be attained in order for them to be unified.

Concerning this, from the start of attaining special insight a union [of calm abiding and special insight] is attained. Hence, with regard to how this is done: When, through the force of having performed analytical meditation in dependence on calm abiding [gained] earlier, one attains the mental activity of natural engagement without the activity [of applying antidotes to laxity and excitement] as was explained earlier in the section on calm abiding, it becomes a union.

....

Also, Ratnākarashānti's *Quintessential Instructions on the Perfection of Wisdom* says:

After [accustoming to individual analysis within calm abiding], when—observing just the image that is being analyzed— [calm abiding is induced] through the continuum of mental engagement of unsevered continuous [attention to the object of observation] and uninterrupted [force of analytical meditation, and] both [calm abiding and special insight] are experienced [in equal strength] in that very mind, this is called a “path of a union of calm abiding and special insight.” Concerning that, calm abiding and special insight are the pair; joining means possession, that is, operating within mutual bonding [that is to say, depending on and influenced by each other such that calm abiding operates like special insight and special insight operates like calm abiding].

In that, “uninterrupted” means that [the power of] analytical meditation itself [at the point of attaining special insight] induces the nonconceptuality [of calm abiding], without needing to set aside the run of that analytical meditation itself and to stabilize in non-conceptuality.

“Both are experienced” means that both calm abiding observing the unanalyzed image and special insight observing the image along with analysis are experienced. “Through the continuum” is in reference to the fact that analytical special insight and the calm abiding that

is a stabilizing at the end of analysis do not arise simultaneously, but at the time of the calm abiding that is the actual one induced through the power of analysis, special insight—intense differentiation of phenomena observing the mode [of being of phenomena]—and calm abiding, which is the meditative stabilization of one-pointed steady abiding on the mode, operate in mutual association. At such a time, calm abiding and special insight are mixed; they operate equally.

For this, realization that is a state arisen from meditation must be attained. Therefore, a composite of the two—the suitability of (1) individually analyzing the meaning of selflessness within the nondestruction of the influence of (2) non-conceptuality that is the steady factor of abiding, these being like the small fish [of analysis] moving about while staying in the unmoving water [of mental stability]—is posited as a similitude of calm abiding and special insight. Except for [being a similitude], such a composite does not have the meaning of a union of actual calm abiding and special insight.

You should understand how calm abiding and special insight are unified in that way according to what appears in reliable texts and not put confidence in explanations that make superimpositions in other ways. Reasoned final decisions, scriptural sources, and modes of cultivation concerning the stages of the path to enlightenment should be known in extensive form from my *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path*.

The Treasury of Knowledge

By Jamgon Kongtrul

Chapter Eight: The Progressive Classification Of the Training in Superior Samadhi

Part One: The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana - The General Basis of All Samadhis

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THE STAGES OF MEDITATION OF SHAMATHA AND VIPASHYANA, THE GENERAL BASIS OF ALL SAMADHIS

Through the superior knowledge arising from reflection, one eliminates misconceptions and finds certainty regarding the deep view and the general and specific character of phenomena; this understanding should then be applied to one's own being through meditation. Thus, the eighth chapter deals with the progressive classification of the training in superior samadhi.

The Necessity of Practicing Samadhi

One needs to practice by meditating on the meaning of what one has listened to and reflected upon, just as a farmer needs to make use of a good crop. One needs to practice, focusing inwardly on what one has understood through the superior knowledge arising from listening and reflecting. No matter how deeply one listens and reflects, if one does not also meditate, one will not be freed from bondage, just as a farmer needs to make use of his crop, since no matter how good it is, if it is not used for food, it will not dispel hunger. Similarly, no matter how skillful one may be in reading and understanding medical treatises, one cannot dispel the pain of a sick person unless one actually applies one's knowledge.

Identifying the Samadhi to be Practiced

One should gain certainty in both shamatha and vipashyana, which comprise the ocean of samadhis of both the greater and lesser vehicles.

The Sutra Unravelling the Thought states, “As the Bhagavan has said, one should know that the many types of samadhi of the Sravakas, Bodhisattvas and Tathagatas are all included in shamatha and vipashyana.” Thus, since it is said that shamatha and vipashyana comprise all the samadhis of both the greater and lesser vehicles, and since it is impossible for anyone striving for samadhi to fathom the great number of divisions, this ocean of samadhis is classified into just shamatha and vipashyana. Therefore, one should first gain certainty in these two. This is necessary because, as stated in the same Sutra, all the qualities ensuing from the practice of the greater and lesser vehicles, whether mundane or supramundane, are the fruit of shamatha and vipashyana. Also Maitreya has said, “One should know all mundane and supramundane virtues of the Sravakas, Bodhisattvas or Tathagatas to be the fruit of shamatha and vipashyana.”

The Detailed Explanation

The Essential Nature of Shamatha and Vipashyana

The essential nature of these is: one-pointedness and individual analysis which fully discriminates phenomena.

Shamatha is to rest the mind one-pointedly, using a correct object of observation, and vipashyana is to completely analyze suchness by means of superior knowledge that fully discriminates and individually analyses phenomena. *The Cloud of Jewels Sutra* says, “Shamatha is one-pointedness, vipashyana is individual analysis.” Also, Vasubandhu's *Commentary* on this says, “One should know shamatha and vipashyana respectively as resting the mind in mind and fully discriminating phenomena on the basis of perfect samadhi; without samadhi there is neither. These are the defining characteristics of shamatha and vipashyana.” Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation II* says, “Having calmed distraction towards external objects, one abides in a state of mind which is supple and delights in focusing inwards continuously and naturally; this is called shamatha. While focused on this calm, abiding mind, one thoroughly analyses its suchness; that is called vipashyana.”

Etymology

Having calmed distraction, one completely abides, and the superior nature is seen with the eyes of wisdom.

The etymological definition of shamatha and vipashyana is as follows: ‘shama’ means ‘calms’ and ‘-tha’ is ‘abiding’ so “shamatha” means ‘calm abiding’. It is thus called since distraction towards objects such as form etc. Has been calmed, and the mind abides one-pointedly in whichever concentration one is practicing. In the word ‘vi(shesa)pashyana,’ ‘vishesa’ means ‘special or superior,’ and ‘pashyan means ‘seeing’ or ‘observing’ so ‘vi(shesa)pashyana’ means ‘superior seeing.’ It is thus called since one sees ‘the superior,’ i.e. the nature of phenomena, with the eyes of wisdom.

The Necessity of Both

Just as in the example of the bright oil lamp not blown by the wind, one realizes the true nature by bringing both together.

In order to understand the necessity of both shamatha and vipashyana, consider the example of an oil lamp: if the flame is bright and there is no wind, one will see clearly; however, if the flame is bright but it is being blown by the wind, one will not see by it. Similarly, if one has both the superior knowledge which is certain and unmistakable concerning suchness, and the concentration which stays at will on the object of observation, one will see suchness clearly.

However, if one has undistracted concentration but lacks the superior knowledge that realizes the true nature, it will not be possible to realize the nature of mind. Also, if one has the view which comprehends selflessness but lacks the samadhi in which the mind rests one-pointedly, it will not be possible to see the true nature clearly. Therefore, since it is considered that by bringing both shamatha and vipashyana together one will be able to realize suchness, it is advised in all the Sutras and Tantras to combine these two.

The Progressive Order

The progression is from the support to that which is supported.

The progression from shamatha to vipashyana is such that one depends on the other, like the oil and the flame of an oil lamp. In *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* it is said, "Having understood that the afflictions are completely overcome by vipashyana which fully incorporates shamatha, one begins by practicing shamatha." Thus, having first accomplished shamatha, one proceeds to practice vipashyana. The reason for this is that vipashyana is seeing the nature of the mind as it is by observing it through discriminating knowledge; and in order to see it, one must start with shamatha, since it is absolutely necessary to have control over the mind to be observed, by making it workable.

VIPASHYANA SECTION

The Prerequisites for Vipashyana

The prerequisites for vipashyana are to rely on a wise person and to seek the view by listening extensively and reflecting accordingly.

In his *Stages of Meditation II*, Kamalashila says: "What are the prerequisites for vipashyana? To rely on a wise teacher, to spare no effort in listening extensively, and to reflect accordingly." Relying on a scholar who has full knowledge of the meaning of the teachings, one listens to authentic treatises and develops the view, i.e. the understanding of suchness, through the superior knowledge arising from listening and reflecting; such are the indispensable prerequisites for vipashyana. This is because without an unmistakable view, it is impossible to

give rise to the realization of vipashyana. Moreover, it is necessary to rely on the definitive rather than on the provisional teachings in order to develop such a view; thus, an understanding of the deep definitive teachings must be preceded by a knowledge of the differences between these two levels of teaching. Furthermore, one should seek the view, that is, the understanding of profound emptiness, by relying on the genuine traditions founded by Nagarjuna and Asanga.

The Particular Types of Vipashyana

The types are -

- **The non-buddhists' contemplation of the peaceful and coarse levels;**
- **The shravakas' and pratyekabuddhas' contemplation of the four noble truths and their attributes;**
- **And the paramitayana's contemplation of emptiness, which in the mantrayana is taught to be endowed with bliss.**

The common preparatory stages are similar to those of the mundane path; however, those who have entered the mantrayana and the others do not strive for them.

The classification of vipashyana in terms of types is as follows;

- i) Mundane vipashyana, which suppresses evident afflictions, and consists in contemplating the higher and lower levels as peaceful and coarse respectively—this is common to both buddhist and non-buddhist systems;
- ii) The Shravakas' and Pratyekabuddhas' practice of contemplating the four noble truths and their sixteen attributes such as impermanence, etc.;
- iii) The Paramitayana's contemplation of emptiness; and
- iv) The Mantrayana teaching according to which emptiness is endowed with bliss.

The latter three types are supramundane vipashyana, which completely eradicates afflictions. The way to accomplish the actual concentrations, common to buddhist and non-buddhist systems, by means of the seven preparatory stages of which the first is shamatha, has been described in the chapter dealing with the mundane path. However, those who have entered the Mantrayana and those who have realized the outstanding view of the Paramitayana do not particularly strive for these.

The Classification According to the Essential Nature

The classification is into -

- **The *four types of vipashyana investigating the essence*: discriminating, fully discriminating, examining, and analyzing;**
- **The *three gateways*: designations, thorough investigation, and individual analysis;**
- **And the *six investigations*: meaning, thing, character, direction, time and reasoning, the latter being of four kinds: the reasoning of dependence, of function, of logical proof, and of nature. Through these six, discrimination is applied to each and every phenomenon from form up to omniscience.**

The Three Main Classifications of Vipashyana

What is mainly taught here is not the vipashyana of the high levels and paths, but the vipashyana to be practiced by ordinary persons. There are three main types of classification for this:

The Four Types

1. Firstly, according to the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought*, there is a classification known as the four types of vipashyana investigating the essence. These are discriminating and fully discriminating, each of which is divided into thoroughly examining and analyzing.

Discriminating involves focusing on the varieties of phenomena, distinguishing them into categories such as the aggregates, the elements and the entrances, and proceeding to a detailed subdivision of each. Fully discriminating involves focusing on their mode of being and realizing the absence of a self of persons and of phenomena. Examining and analyzing refer to the coarse and subtle aspects of discrimination respectively.

The way of examining is described in the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* as “fully examining, definitely examining, fully understanding and closely understanding.” This also applies to analyzing. Thus, the extensive classification involves sixteen subdivisions. The detailed presentation of these can be found in the *Levels of Hearers*.

A classification similar to the one given in the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* was given in the *Compendium of Knowledge*: “What is vipashyana? It is discriminating, fully discriminating, thoroughly examining and thoroughly analyzing phenomena; it is the remedy to rigidity and conceptuality, draws the mind away from the erroneous and settles it in that which is not erroneous.”

The Three Gateways

2. Secondly, there is a three-fold classification of vipashyana known as the three gateways. The *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* says: “O Bhagavan, how many types of vipashyana are there? Maitreya, there are three: the one arising from designations, the one arising from thorough investigation, and the one arising from individual analysis.

If one identifies those three in relation to meditation on selflessness, they are as follows:

- One focuses on the recognition of selflessness, concentrating on its attributes, without making use of much logical argumentation;
- One uses reasoning in order to ascertain what one formerly could not understand; and
- One analyses repeatedly as before the meaning which has been ascertained.

The Six Investigations

3. Finally, there is a six-fold classification of vipashyana known as the six investigations. Here one thoroughly investigates the six aspects of phenomena, which are meaning, things, character, direction, time and reasoning; this is also a case of vipashyana arising from individual analysis:
- a. Investigation of meaning entails finding out the sense of a given word or phrase;
 - b. Investigation of things entails classifying them as either internal or external;
 - c. Investigation of character entails identifying the general (or abstract) and the specific (or concrete) character of phenomena, referred to as common and uncommon investigation respectively;
 - d. Investigation of direction entails investigating what is unwholesome by considering its faults and shortcomings, and what is wholesome by considering its qualities and benefits;
 - e. Investigation of time entails considering what has happened in the past, what will happen in the future and what takes place in the present;
 - f. Investigation of reasoning is of four types:
 - i. The reasoning of dependence refers to the investigation of the dependence of an effect upon causes and conditions for its arising. In this context one investigates the deceptive, the ultimate and their basis of imputation individually;
 - ii. The reasoning of function refers to the performance by each phenomenon of its own particular function: for example, fire burns, etc. Here one investigates by identifying the phenomenon, the function and their mutual relationship;
 - iii. The reasoning, of logical proof refers to establishing the validity of propositions in accordance with valid cognition. Here one investigates phenomena with respect to three types of valid cognition, namely, direct valid cognition, inferential valid cognition and the valid cognition of trustworthy scriptures;
 - iv. The reasoning of nature refers to investigating phenomena in terms of their conventional nature, e.g. fire being hot, water wet, etc.; their inconceivable nature; and, their abiding nature. One accepts these natures as such and does not look for other reasons for their being so.

Thus, by means of the six investigations, one discriminates and comprehends each and every phenomenon, from form up to omniscience, whether afflicted or pure.

The six investigations should be known as three: the meaning, the mode of being and the varieties.

The six investigations should be known as three: the meaning, the mode of being and the varieties. Vipashyana can also be condensed into preparatory or “analytic” and actual or “unfluctuating.”

This six-fold presentation of vipashyana can be condensed into three main categories which are what a yogi should know: the meaning of words, the varieties of phenomena and their mode of being. The first of these corresponds to the first investigation; the second corresponds to the

investigation of things in general and of the specific character of phenomena; and the third corresponds to the last three investigations as well as to that of the general character of phenomena.

The three gateways are the entrances to the four vipashyanas explained at first, and the method of investigation was presented as six; therefore the three gateways and the six investigations are included in the four vipashyanas.

Vipashyana can also be condensed into preparatory or *analytic* and actual or *non-fluctuating*.

The Way to Meditate

The way to meditate is to analyze selflessness by means of superior knowledge, and then to rest in a state free from mental fabrications. Non-conceptual images are the basis for analysis; having identified the particular object, one cuts through misconceptions regarding its qualities.

If one has no understanding of the view of selflessness, whichever type of meditation one may do, will be mistaken with respect to suchness; therefore, it is necessary to establish the view. On the other hand, even though one may have an intellectual understanding of the view, if one does not rest within that understanding, suchness will not have been meditated upon. Therefore, one first analyses selflessness by means of superior knowledge and then rests within the sphere of complete freedom from mental fabrications.

Furthermore, if the ability to rest in equipoise decreases due to extensive analytical meditation, one should emphasize stabilizing meditation, and thus restore the abiding aspect. If one loses interest in analysis due to too much stabilizing meditation, one should go back to analytical meditation. Thus shamatha and vipashyana are said to be most effective when practiced equally in this way.

The method explained here, namely to analyze the object of meditation by means of discriminating knowledge and finally to rest in a state free of mental fabrications, is common to all systems of tenets. Moreover, according to the Gelug tradition, during the actual phase of equipoise, the mode of apprehending the object is repeatedly brought to mind.

The Actual Meditation on Vipashyana

When meditating on shamatha, due to the concentration of mind, many images appear which may or may not be similar to what is found in the external world. These are known as “non-analytical images.”

In the practice of vipashyana as well, such images arise due to the force of shamatha, and are then taken as the basis for individual analysis; thus the analysis is not actually directed towards the outside, since the mind is solely turned inwards. When analyzing these images arising out of

samadhi, it is necessary to begin by focusing on each object individually with discriminating knowledge, since without identifying a particular object it is not possible to cut through misconceptions regarding its qualities. Therefore, one begins by clearly bringing to mind the object regarding which one wishes to eliminate misconceptions, and proceeds to examine it through perfect discriminating knowledge, thus ascertaining its lack of inherent existence. Then, grasping the object of samadhi (i.e. the non-analytical image) undistractedly, one should realize its being mere appearance, empty of inherent existence.

Thus, samadhi and superior knowledge are unified, being focused on the same object. As said in the *Compendium of Knowledge*: “Samadhi and superior knowledge have the same object of observation.”

The nature of the percept is understood to be empty like space; the perceiver is examined as to origin, abiding, shape, etc.; discriminating knowledge itself, like a fire produced by rubbing wood, vanishes in the expanse of "not finding"; thus one rests free of grasping.

While resting in equipoise on form etc., one also realizes its empty nature by means of discriminating knowledge, and remains in that state without being attentive to the attributes of the object. One begins by familiarizing oneself with this practice, and as a result one comes to cognize emptiness as if suspended in the midst of space, with no reference even to the nature of mere percept. This is the yoga of non-referential percept and is the external aspect of meditation, i.e. meditation on appearance and emptiness as inseparable.

The internal aspect refers to the perceiver. When for example anger arises in consciousness, one should identify it and examine it with discriminating knowledge. First, one looks for the cause of its arising, then whether it dwells within or without, and if it has any shape or color; finding nothing whatsoever, one rests in equipoise within that understanding. This method is to be applied to whichever of the six root afflictions may arise, as well as to neutral thoughts, etc. In short, whatever type of thought arises, one should be aware of it and meditate as described above. This is the yoga of non-referential perceiver and is the internal meditation on awareness and emptiness as inseparable.

Finally, the object examined “and discriminating knowledge itself, just as a fire produced by rubbing wood together, vanish into the sphere of not finding.” At that point, one rests in a state free of grasping.

The main points regarding these two yogas are given by Atisha in his *Quintessential Instructions on the Middle Way* as follows:

“Thus, the mind of the past has ceased altogether; the mind of the future has not yet arisen and the present mind is extremely difficult to examine; this is because, just like space, it has neither shape nor color, and therefore cannot be established as truly existent. Alternatively, this lack of true existence can be proven by reasons such as “neither-one-nor-many” and “non-production,” or because it is by nature luminosity,

etc. Thus, one investigates with the sharp weapon of reasoning and realizes this absence of true existence of the present mind.”

“In this way, when neither percept nor perceiver can be established as anything whatsoever, discriminating knowledge as well is understood to lack inherent existence. For example, by rubbing together two pieces of wood, fire is produced, which in turn consumes that very wood; as a result, the fire itself subsides. Likewise, when all abstract and concrete phenomena are established as non-inherently existent, then discriminating knowledge itself is beyond duality, it cannot be established as anything whatsoever, it is luminosity beyond mental fabrications. Therefore all conditions such as laxity and agitation are cleared away. At that point, awareness is totally free of concepts, nothing is perceived, and all recollection and mental activity have been eliminated. For as long as the enemy or thief of conceptuality has not arisen, let awareness rest in this manner.”

The Measure of Accomplishment

When suppleness is obtained, vipashyana is said to be accomplished.

When practicing analytical meditation by means of discriminating knowledge, until suppleness is attained, one only cultivates a similitude of vipashyana; when suppleness has arisen, one has achieved vipashyana proper.

The essential nature of suppleness and the way it arises are as previously explained in the section dealing with shamatha.

According to the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* and the *Quintessential Instructions on the Prajnaparamita* by Shantipa, as well as other scriptures, vipashyana is said to be accomplished when suppleness can be induced by the power of analytical meditation itself. This applies to both kinds of vipashyana, namely the one focusing on the varieties of phenomena and the one focusing on their mode of being.

The Training in Shamatha and Vipashyana Conjoined

The Actual Method of Training

Though Madhyamikas differ with respect to the method of development, they agree on what is to be developed, namely shamatha, vipashyana and the two together; these three are to be practiced in succession and the main point is non-distraction.

With respect to achieving the non-dual wisdom resulting from the conjoined practice of shamatha and vipashyana, the various Madhyamika masters explain the method of development differently. However, they all agree regarding what is to be developed, namely the union of shamatha and vipashyana.

According to the master Bhavaviveka, one first develops shamatha by contemplating ugliness, love, etc., after which vipashyana is generated by the power of reasoning. However, according to the master Shantideva, one begins with cultivating shamatha by means of meditation on bodhicitta, and then generates the superior knowledge of vipashyana by focusing on emptiness. According to the master Kamalashila in his *Stages of Meditation II*, one begins with developing shamatha by using an object of observation such as an image of the Buddha, etc., and then proceeds to accomplish vipashyana by analysing the nature of that very object. The master Chandrakirti considers that both shamatha and vipashyana are to be accomplished in dependence upon the view based on the analysis of suchness.

All of these methods are correct, unerring paths; all explanations agree in that these three practices, i.e. shamatha, vipashyana and their conjunction should be definitely accomplished in succession since they are related as cause and effect; and in all of them, the main point is an undistracted, one-pointed mind.

The Union of Shamatha and Vipashyana

When practicing meditation with designations, the full discrimination of phenomena focuses on the images arising out of shamatha; this is union. When non-conceptual vipashyana is attained, they have become one essence; thus they are unified.

At which point can shamatha and vipashyana be said to be unified? When practicing shamatha and vipashyana with designations, both the non-discursive mind that focuses on the images arising out of shamatha, and the realization of the vipashyana which fully discriminates phenomena come together in a natural way - this itself is the union of shamatha and vipashyana.

Here, when both non-conceptual shamatha and non-conceptual vipashyana are attained, they have become one essence; therefore they are known as "unified." *The Stages of Meditation I* says "When focusing on the essencelessness of all phenomena in a state free of laxity and agitation, etc., where awareness rests without any conceptual effort, the path of unifying shamatha and vipashyana is completed."

The Fruition

This is the genuine samadhi, by the perfection of which non-abiding nirvana, freedom from the bondage of existence and peace, is attained.

Such a samadhi, which is the union of shamatha and vipashyana, is authentic samadhi. Maitripa's *Commentary on the Ten Suchnesses* says: "The phrase 'by correct, authentic samadhi' means that the conjoined practice of shamatha and vipashyana is correct, authentic samadhi; thus, this is what accomplishes the path."

The perfection of this samadhi results in the attainment of non-abiding nirvana, freedom from the bondage of conditioned existence and peace. The *Sutra Unravelling the Thought* says: "If

the practitioner familiarises himself with shamatha and vipashyana, he will be freed from the fetters of rigidity and conceptuality.”

In the post-meditative phase, with the understanding of the illusion-like nature of all phenomena, one should exert oneself in applying skillful means such as making offerings to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, practicing compassion towards all sentient beings, dedicating all virtue etc.

A GENERAL SUMMARY OF THE CATEGORIES

Brief Listing of the Categories

The Different Categories of Shamatha.

In brief, the meditations on ugliness, love, the cycles of breath, pratyahara, nadis, prana, generating phase, mantra recitation, resting the mind naturally - all are but methods for developing the concentration of shamatha.

In brief, in the common path, one meditates on the nine aspects of ugliness; one trains the mind in love and compassion, and concentrates on the breath by counting its cycles of rising, falling and resting. In the Vajrayana, there are many methods such as the instructions of pratyahara, by which the ordinary connection between the sense faculties and their object is individually cut through and distraction is eliminated; visualization of the nadis as hollow pathways; prana-yoga; concentration on the bliss arising through the melting of bindu; visualization of deities, and mantra recitation. Finally (in the practices of Mahamudra and Maha-ati) one rests the mind in a natural, spacious and uncontrived state. All these are nothing but methods for developing shamatha and must begin with concentration on the object, in accordance with the faculties of each practitioner.

The Different Categories of Vipashyana

Analysis of definiendum, definition and example, and of general and specific character; dependent arising; the five reasons; pointing out the nature of mind by means of scripture, reasoning, spiritual influence and symbols - all are methods for developing supreme discriminating knowledge in accordance with the faculties of individuals.

When practicing vipashyana, one uses methods such as the analysis of definiendum, definition and supporting example, as in the study of valid cognition; analysis of the general and specific character of phenomena, as in the Abhidharma; investigation of the twelve links of dependent arising in the order of production and in the reverse order; analysis of the cause, the effect, the combination of these and the essential nature of a given phenomenon, as well as interdependence, these being the five great reasons of the Madhyamika tradition by means of which mental fabrications are severed; and various ways of pointing out the nature of mind

directly and nakedly, as for example scriptures, reasoning, spiritual influence and symbols. All these are gradual methods for developing supreme discriminating knowledge in accordance with the faculties of individual practitioners. Since one can accomplish the samadhi of shamatha and vipashyana by any of these methods, it is not necessary for a single practitioner to use all of them together.

The Accomplishment of Shamatha and Vipashyana By Means of Analytical and Stabilizing Meditation

Shamatha and vipashyana can be equally accomplished by either analytical or stabilizing meditation.

The accomplishment of shamatha and vipashyana by conjoining analytical and stabilizing meditation was described above. Moreover, if practiced profoundly, either or these types of meditation will result in the achievement of both samadhis; therefore, with regard to their essential point, analytical and stabilizing meditations are ultimately the same.

Supplementary Explanation of the Three Stages of Concentration

First by child-like concentration, one perceives signs such as smoke, etc.; by the discrimination of phenomena, the sameness of pairs of opposites is realized and supreme concentration is accomplished; by focusing on suchness, all phenomena are seen to be emptiness, which in turn is realized to be peace by nature.

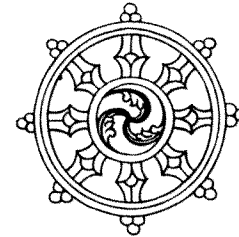
According to the scriptures, there are three stages to the development of concentration. First, by means of child-like concentration, the mind is slightly withdrawn from external distraction; at this stage one starts perceiving the “ten signs of empty form” such as smoke, etc. Then, by means of the concentration which discriminates phenomena, the illusion-like interdependent manifestations and the total pacification of mental fabrications are realized as “one taste.” By this the mind acquires the ability to genuinely rest in the sameness of all pairs of opposites, so that the concentration has now become unmistakable and supreme. Finally, through the concentration focusing on suchness, one knows all dualistic phenomena to be emptiness, and realizing this emptiness to be by nature, primordially, peace, the effortless nature is accomplished.

This completes the first part being the explanation of the stages of meditation of shamatha and vipashyana, the basis of all samadhis.

Essence of Ambrosia

A Guide to Buddhist Contemplations

by
Taranatha



Translated by
Willa Baker

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is achieved within the process of searching for an experience of the view, tranquility can be achieved simultaneously with insight. Therefore, for the convenience of students with regard to teaching and understanding, I have not explained the practice of tranquility meditation in detail here.}



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

WISDOM



CONTEMPLATION 52

The Perfection of Wisdom

The perfection of wisdom is the primary and most superlative among all forms of training and the ultimate of all practices. There are three kinds of wisdom: the wisdom that realizes the ultimate truth, the wisdom that realizes relative truth and the wisdom that knows how to benefit others. The first is the wisdom that realizes the true nature, emptiness. The second is the wisdom that realizes without error the essence of all objects of knowledge, their classifications and the interdependence of causes and conditions. The third is the wisdom that knows how to benefit others through the four ways of gathering disciples. These are

1. Giving: The first way to gather disciples is to give material possessions and to know how to inspire beings in many ways to practice religion.
2. Speaking pleasantly: The second way entails knowing how to speak pleasantly when imparting religious instructions appropriate to the dispositions of those beings.
3. Helping others: The third way is to be familiar with how to establish others in the meaningful activity of the six perfections.
4. Acting in accord with the meaning:¹⁰⁹ The fourth way entails helping others without transgressing the conduct of the six perfections oneself. From among these, establishing others in the six perfections involves knowing which methods are appropriate for which disciples.

Furthermore, I should develop the wisdoms of listening, reflecting

and meditating. By way of listening, understanding develops. By way of reflecting, doubts are cut. Through meditation, true realization is attained. I will definitely engender these three wisdoms in my mind.

This is the general training in the contemplation of wisdom.



{Next you must train in the practice of the perfection of wisdom. The practice of wisdom has three steps: meditation on the selflessness of persons, meditation on the selflessness of phenomena and training in emptiness endowed with the heart of compassion.}

CONTEMPLATION 53

The Selflessness of Persons

The preliminaries for a session and the conclusion are the same as explained before. For the main practice, sit with your legs crossed¹⁰ and your hands in the position of meditative equipoise. Straighten your spine. Pull in your chin (lit. crook your neck). Square your shoulders. Let your jaw and lips rest naturally. Join your tongue with your upper palate. Look at the tip of your nose. Exhale slowly and deeply through your nostrils three times, then just breathe naturally. First, meditate on renunciation and weariness intensely. Then meditate on love and compassion until you feel deeply moved. Finally, mentally focus on your body, speech and mind—scrutinize them. Contemplate as follows:

Throughout beginningless cyclic existence, having become accustomed to clinging to the concept of “I” as being the “self,” I have become convinced that a continuous self exists. However, this “I” or “self” in truth has never existed.

This is the basis of the contemplation.

If that which is called an “I” or a “self” truly exists, there must be something designated as an independent personal entity, a self of person. But the material existence of such a thing has never been established. Therefore, since no material existence can be found, the essence of a self of person¹¹ cannot be proven either. Nevertheless, the ego has a way of clinging to this non-existent self as if it did exist. In accord with this deluded perception, I believe the self to be permanent,

singular, and independent. From that, I have the thought “Last year I did that” and “This year I will do this” and “Last year’s self was like that” and “My self in the present is like this.” Thinking that I will continue to exist like this is what is called “clinging to the self as permanent.”

When these present thoughts arise, I consider outer and inner occurrences to be other than I. It seems to me that there is an essence of a self that is established at the core of my being that is unmixed with this multitude of experiences and appearances. That is “clinging to a self as singular.”

It seems to me as if the self is the owner of certain enjoyments, substances and possessions. That is “clinging to a self as independent.”

Even though those various ways of clinging are my mode of perception, things cannot be proven to be like that in truth. If the self were permanent, then if I experienced happiness one time, I would always have to experience it. If I experienced suffering one time, I would always have to suffer. If I were initially trapped in cyclic existence, a time of future liberation would never occur. Similarly, using the same logic in reverse, if a time of future liberation did come about, it would mean that a previous cyclic existence was never experienced. However, happiness and suffering are both experienced and individual incidents of bondage and liberation do occur. Therefore, I should resolve that there is no permanent self.

The self as singular is also not an acceptable proposition. Although it seems as if the various parts that make up the body and mind exist, the eyes are not the self. The ears, nose, tongue and mind are also not the self. If each of them were the self, then there would be many selves. If each one of them is not the self, then a self cannot be found.

Moreover, if the self were an aggregate, it would have to be impermanent.¹² If it were something other than an aggregate, then, when something is seen by the eye consciousness, it would contact the entire body of the seer.¹³ I would have the perception that I touched the object. Therefore, an “I” or “self” that has the nature of singularity is not established. Since its singularity is not established, neither is its independence. Moreover, since I can patently see that all occurrences depend on conditions, the existence of an independent self is impossible.

Hence, a self cannot be established outside of the aggregates. A self does not abide within the aggregates. Each of the aggregates individually is not the self. The self is not some kind of sheath encasing the aggregates.

The self is not the aggregates taken as a whole. It is not a whole that is other than each of the aggregates. Therefore, the so called “self” is a mere mental imputation, a mere mask of confusion, only a distortion. It does not ultimately exist at all.



{This meditation on the selflessness of persons can be divided into several contemplation sessions in accord with the intellectual capacity of the student.}

CONTEMPLATION 54

The Selflessness of Phenomena

Phenomena is defined as the aggregates, constituents and sources.¹¹⁴ Beings do not perceive these as mental imputations: they seem to exist as material things with a solid identity. Although the term “self of phenomena” is used to identify the aggregates, constituents and sources, such a thing has never existed. All phenomena are without a self of phenomena. Even though that is the case, throughout infinite rebirths in cyclic existence, I have become habituated to the concept that perceives the aggregates, constituents and sources as possessed of a solid identity. Therefore, I need to meditate on the selflessness of phenomena.

First, I should meditate that the aggregates of my own continuum¹¹⁵ are without a true nature. If I examine the phenomena of the form aggregate of my body, it is nothing but a conglomeration of various things that seems to be one thing. I give it the generic label “body” and think there is a thing that is equivalent to the name. Except for my mistaken cognitive perception, it does not exist.

This body can be separated into discrete parts such as the visual sense, the auditory sense, the olfactory sense, the gustatory sense and the tactile sense. There are also inner faculties that rely on each of the senses but are not the same as those senses. The body form aggregate is made up of various parts: the head, neck, chest, back, waist, stomach, gut, the two upper arms, two shoulders, two elbows, two lower arms, two hands, two thighs, two calves, two feet, the body’s internal organs such as the five critical organs and the six secondary organs, the nine orifices and so forth. Except for the mental imputation “body,” this

collection is not ultimately real. If each of these parts were the body, then there would be many bodies. If the body were none of these parts, then the body cannot be found. If I think it is the entire conglomeration of parts, I should consider that the body cannot be something other than each of its parts. Therefore, I am compelled to conclude that it is merely a mental imputation.



CONTEMPLATION 55

The Selflessness of the Form Aggregate

To reinforce that the form aggregate is not established as a valid entity, reflect as follows:

Each of my four limbs is made up of many parts. It has an upper and lower part, a joint and its extension, an outside and an inside. If I wonder “Is each part established as a valid entity?”¹¹⁶, it is not. Each part is connected by three joints and so forth. If I wonder “Is each joint ultimately real?”, it is not. For example, the fingers have many joints. If I wonder “Is each part of the fingers established as a valid entity?”, it is not. Each finger has seven parts. Each of these parts is also not real. After mentally dividing the fingers into seven parts, each part can be broken down further into coarse particles: “soma” particles, “sunlight” particles, “cow” particles, “sheep” particles, “rabbit” particles, “water” particles, and “iron” particles.¹¹⁷ Each of these particles, when divided into seven parts, yields the next type of particle in the list [each is seven times smaller than the previous one]. If I wonder whether the “iron” particle [the smallest in this list] is truly existent, it is not. If I scrutinize the “iron” particle, it is made up of seven “subtle” particles. The “subtle” particle is also not established: it is made up of seven “minute” particles. In other words, when I scrutinize and try to measure the coarse sevenfold particles, each of the previous particles is split into the subsequent particles to yield a total of 343 particles [7x7x7]. Hence, there are a total of seven types of coarse particles and forty-nine possible divisions. Even the smallest of these particles can be broken into seven.



CONTEMPLATION 56

The Selflessness of Minute Particles

If I wonder whether a minute particle can be established as a valid entity, it cannot. Each one has sides, a top and a bottom. And each one must have a middle part. If this were not the case, then if I looked at the particle from the east or west, I would be unable to see it.¹¹⁸ If I divide each of these seven-part particles in this way, they are found to be not established. This division can go on infinitely: The process is endless. Consequently, what I call the “body” is merely a mental imputation. In reality, its existence is completely unfounded. Therefore, these mere, unimpeded, illusion-like appearances are by nature primordially non-existent. On the basis of this logic, these seemingly material things are not established as singular. Since they are not established as singular, they cannot be established as multiple. The reasoning is that in order to prove that a collection of many things is established, one must first prove that one thing can be established.



CONTEMPLATION 57

The Selflessness of the Other Four Aggregates¹¹⁹

Well, what if I think that, although the form aggregate is not real, the mind is real? Mind, too, can be divided into parts. The seeing of forms, the hearing of sounds and so forth make up consciousness, the principal part of the mind. There are eight distinct consciousnesses.¹²⁰ Therefore, the existence of multiple aggregates of consciousness is confirmed. Feelings such as happiness, suffering and neutrality are also experienced as part of the mind. Hence, “feeling” cannot be established as a singular entity either. There are also perceptions designated by definitive terms such as high and low, good and bad and so forth. “Perception” cannot, therefore, be characterized as singular. Finally, there are multiple concepts such as attachment, aversion, faith and so forth. All of these concepts collectively are designated “mental formations.” Therefore, “thinking” is also not a singular entity. Because these aspects of mind cannot be established as singular, they also cannot be established as multiple.



CONTEMPLATION 58

The Selflessness of Awareness

All the epithets for consciousness refer to nothing other than this vivid, dynamic awareness. Nothing else can be established as true. The phenomena that appear to the mind are like a mountain reflected on the surface of a lake.¹²¹ If I examine this dynamic awareness, the mind of the past has ceased and, therefore, does not exist. The mind of the future has not yet arisen; therefore, it too does not exist. The present momentary awareness is all there is. Nevertheless, from its own side, it is not established as true because this single moment of awareness cannot be established. It can be divided into a beginning of the moment, a ceasing part of that moment and a part that abides in the center. If I examine that middle part, it too can be divided into three parts. In this way, I can analyze infinitely *ad absurdum*. Therefore, nothing can be established as having a singular essence. If one cannot be established, many cannot be established either.



CONTEMPLATION 59

Meditation on the Emptiness of All Sentient Beings
Inhabiting the World

By that reasoning, I can resolve that the aggregates of my own body are not real. On the basis of resolving that the five aggregates comprising my body and mind are not real, I can conclude that the five aggregates comprising the minds and bodies of all sentient beings are just like that. In particular, when I focus on a particular object that generates strong emotions such as an enemy that I despise or a friend that I love, I can analyze his or her body in the same way that I analyzed my own. Just as I analyzed the aggregate that I label my mind, I should analyze his or her mind. By mentally imputing names to people such as “Lisa” and “George,”¹²² I decide that this person or that person exists. Although I make this mistaken imputation with certainty, the basis for the imputation does not exist at all. It is like an illusion.

Training in this way, apply this reasoning to all circumstances.



CONTEMPLATION 60

Meditation on the Emptiness of the Outer Environment

Not only are sentient beings who inhabit the world not real, the outer world itself is not real either. If I scrutinize the billion-world system, it can be broken into parts such as a million-world system, a thousand-world system, the four continents, our world, one country, a square mile, an acre, a square yard, a square foot, six square inches, the size of a grain, all the way down to the space of a minute particle. The latter ones prove the previous ones are not established. Even a minute particle, when carefully scrutinized, cannot be established as real in the end. If it cannot be established as one, it cannot be established as many. The reasoning is the same as the previous contemplation.

In brief, everything is like this. I say, "This is a home. This is a field. This is grain. This is wealth. This is a harvest." Likewise, there seem to be entities such as mountains, plains, lakes, kingdoms and so forth. However, these are merely compounded appearances that are not established as real. By mentally assigning names and imputing terms to them, I perceive them as being real. However, in truth, they are not in the slightest bit established.

By meditating as above, cultivate this outlook on the world.



CONTEMPLATION 61

The Emptiness of the Outer Environment and Its Inhabitants

All material things—my self, others, the environment, its inhabitants and forms that I see and hear—are comprised of the five elements of earth, water, fire, wind and space. The mind, with all its energy and movement, is comprised of consciousness. The previous reasoning, that nothing can be established as having its own true existence on the subtlest level, can be applied to the four material elements [earth, water, fire and wind]. Just as an atom of earth is not established, this can be applied to the other elements.

The thing we call "space" is the void that lacks all those material forms. Except for being a mental imputation, space does not do anything

and has no manifest existence. Consciousness also is merely an aspect of appearance arising due to adventitious conditions. Other than that, it cannot be identified. Therefore, my self, others, the environment and its inhabitants are all by nature not truly existent. Although the projections of the confused mind of each sentient being are unimpeded, they are without an inherent nature, like an illusion.



CONTEMPLATION 62

The Meditation on Ultimate Freedom from Elaborations

So called "non-things" are merely imputed by mind depending on a concept of "things." They are not established even as objects on the conventional, functional level let alone as an ultimate truth. In other words, since nothing inherently exists at all and all these phenomena that appear or are heard have never been established, it can also be surmised that what is called "the phenomena of emptiness that has been primordially rootless" does not exist. It is like the example of the son of a barren woman. It is not possible for a son of a barren woman to be born in the first place. Therefore, it is not valid to say that "The son of a barren woman does not exist."¹²³ This kind of emptiness depends on an idea of non-emptiness and is, therefore, mentally imputed. Existence and non-existence, being and not being and so forth are not at all established.

Therefore, do not mentally cling to anything and instead rest vividly in a state of clarity and non-conceptuality. When a thought arises again, look at its essence: it is free from identification. Meditate directly on that. It is important to meditate again and again for short periods lucidly on this and the previous contemplation.



CONTEMPLATION 63

How to Sustain Meditation on Selflessness and Emptiness

Next, mediate synthesizing all of those previous contemplations on selflessness and emptiness. In order to synthesize the previous understandings, reflect as follows:

My self and others, the world and its inhabitants are all lacking a truly existent self. No creator made all of this. It appears merely due to the assemblage of interdependent connections. Nothing can be at all established to exist as one thing or many. It all merely appears as the face of delusion; in reality, none of it truly exists. If I examine the matter carefully, “not established” and “non-existent” are also newly fabricated attributes created by the mind. In order to indicate something that seems to be the opposite [of existence], I merely impute the terms “non-existent” and “not established” to it.

By analyzing back and forth in this way, the object of focus dissipates. In the void that is left, rest evenly without thinking about anything at all. After the previous object of focus is cleared away, a state arises that is free from all identification. For as long as that lasts, rest in that non-conceptuality. If that state deteriorates, rest in the mere non-conceptuality of the disappearance of the aspect of emptiness. Because it is necessary to do the meditation just described repeatedly, it is important to recognize the point at which this disappearance starts [to come to distinguish between the state of non-conceptuality and its deterioration].

At first, you will not be able to stay in this state for very long. Eventually, when you get the point of the experience, you will be able to sustain it for longer and longer periods than before. Concentrating the mind on the object of focus¹²⁴ is known as “placement”¹²⁵, and extending that experience is called “continuous placement”. When you become able to stop thoughts as soon as they arise, that is “repeated placement”. Then, when the state of non-conceptuality extends for longer and longer periods, that is “close placement.” Eventually, remembering the good qualities of trance, you will start to meditate more frequently and with joy, and enthusiasm will arise. This is the stage called “disciplined”. Sometimes, by recollecting faults such as distraction, distraction will cease on its own. This stage is called “pacification”. These two phases are also known as “engendering enthusiasm” and

“engendering renunciation.” Whatever thoughts of hope and fear, attachment and aversion arise, look directly at their essence and seal them with the meditation on their unreality that you cultivated previously. This natural pacification is the stage known as “close pacification.” As long as your mind sometimes uses and sometimes loses [its mindfulness], you should cultivate these methods again and again. At some point, when you concentrate the mind, you will be without the faults of dullness and restlessness and will be able to rest the mind for a long time on the object of focus, which is emptiness. At this time, it is necessary to concentrate, engaging in one-pointed focus of the mental continuum. Eventually, just by remembering the experience of the view that you cultivated previously, you will be able to simply rest and abide for a long time in the aspect of emptiness. At that time, you should relax your effort and rest naturally settled. At this point, you have achieved the state called “resting evenly.”

{The way of sustaining meditation presented above comes from the tradition of the Treasury of Phenomenology. It is the single way to meditate on tranquility that is preceded by insight. It can be construed as the same as the tradition presented in Stages of Meditation¹²⁶ by Kamalashila and so forth known as “the method of meditating with the precedent of non-conceptuality”. It can also be construed as the tradition of glorious Atisha from the great Master Potowa’s Annals¹²⁷ called “the only necessary preliminary”. These instructions are in accordance with the sutra tradition such as the many instructions on mind training imparted by Atisha and with the many tantric instructions such as the teachings on mahamudra. Although there are a great many instructions that take this approach, in this case I have wished to present the instructions in a graduated way so have needed to rely on the teachings of Shenyen Potowa.¹²⁸

In Potowa’s tradition of sustaining the view, once the mind comes to rest, then insight meditation is again practiced. It is also asserted that from the beginning tranquility and insight may be cultivated in union.}



CONTEMPLATION 64

Emptiness with the Heart of Compassion

Realizing emptiness alone is not sufficient to achieve the perfection of wisdom. I need to practice emptiness and compassion in union. Because compounded phenomena appear and exist as ultimate truth, they cannot be established whatsoever as having inherent existence. They are like space. If I truly realize that only the non-establishment of phenomena is established, then sentient beings who experience suffering do not exist. The suffering they experience does not exist. The way that they experience suffering due to the cyclic interactions of karma, emotions and suffering has primordially never been established. Nevertheless, until that realization occurs, the appearance of sentient beings who experience suffering arises. The appearance of their suffering arises. The way they experience suffering and the way they are caught in the cycle arise. All these phenomena do not truly exist and yet appear. Even so, sentient beings are deceived by this illusion and, therefore, experience these various sufferings. Poor dear ones! Having dispelled their delusion, I must establish them in buddhahood, the realization of the true nature.

Ultimately, I too do not exist. Those sentient beings do not exist. Delusion does not exist. Even the path that dispels delusion does not exist. However, from the point of view of relative confused appearances, suffering and obscurations seem to exist. The path seems to exist. Through the path of meditation, delusion is dispelled, and a person becomes a buddha who abides in the essence of the natural state. Therefore, my illusion-like self will show illusion-like sentient beings the illusion-like path and teaching. In this way, the adversities of their illusion-like suffering will be liberated into the expanse.

Since all experiences of suffering and those who experience it are not established as truly existent, it is also impossible to establish any phenomena of perception such as appearance or sound as truly existent. However, one might assert the extreme of permanence, suggesting that a second nature is superimposed on the non-existent nature. In this case, one might consider it possible that there is truly existent suffering. But there is no way to augment the experience of unreal suffering with

some other experience of truly existent suffering.¹²⁹ If this suffering were realized to be non-existent, it would be self-liberated. How I feel compassion for those who have not realized this!

Meditate, thinking in this way again and again.



**TO DISPEL THE MISERY OF THE WORLD
WHISPERED TEACHINGS OF THE BODHISATTVAS**

Ga Rabjampa Kunga Yeshe
Foreword by Khenpo Appey
Translated by Rigpa Translations

A. HOW TO PRACTICE VIPASYANA

This has three parts:

- (I) Eliminating conceptual constructs through the view
- (II) Taking to heart through meditation, and
- (III) Enhancing through conduct.

(I) Eliminating conceptual constructs through the view

This has three parts:

- (a) Eliminating conceptual constructs regarding outer objects
- (b) Eliminating conceptual constructs regarding the mind, and
- (c) Eliminating conceptual constructs regarding the antidote of meditation practice.

(a) Eliminating conceptual constructs regarding outer objects

The root text says:

1. Consider all things and events as dreamlike.

The meaning of this is explained in *Stages of Meditation II*:

"Things and events" (or *dharmas*), in short, are comprised of the five aggregates, twelve sense sources (*ayatana*), and eighteen elements (*dhatu*). The physical aspects of the aggregates, sense sources, and elements are, in an ultimate sense, nothing other than aspects of the mind. When they are broken down into subtlest particles, and these are examined to determine the nature of their parts, no real nature can be definitively identified.

Therefore, through the force of age-old clinging to forms and so on, which are in fact unreal—just like the appearances in a dream—visual forms and the like appear to ordinary beings as if they were external to the mind. Yet we must examine them, because on the ultimate level, these forms and such are nothing other than aspects of mind.

As this says, as a result of our habitual tendencies from waking life and through the contributing circumstance of being asleep, we may experience all manner of things in our dreams, yet nothing that we experience in the dream has even the slightest reality. In just the same way, through the habitual tendency-which has developed throughout beginningless time-of perceiving things as real, and through the contributing circumstance of our own karma, we experience a variety of objects. Although these appear to us to be more than just aspects of mind, it is certain that they do not have even the slightest reality.

(b) Eliminating conceptual constructs regarding the mind

The root text says:

2. Examine the nature of unborn awareness.

Stages of Meditation II says:

When you consider how all the three realms are merely the mind, and you realize that this is so and that all imputed phenomena are really nothing other than the mind, then by examining the mind, you are examining the nature of all phenomena. Then analyze along the following lines. On the ultimate level, the mind too cannot truly exist. How can the mind that perceives the aspects of forms and so on-which are essentially unreal-and that appears in these various aspects ever be real? Just as physical forms and so on are false, since the mind is not separate from them, it too is false.

When we examine the nature of mind with wisdom in this way, we find that ultimately mind is perceived neither inside nor outside. Nor is it perceived somewhere else. The mind of the past is not perceived; nor is that of the future. The mind that arises in the present too is not perceived. When the mind is born, it comes from nowhere, and when it ceases, it goes nowhere. Mind is not apprehensible, it cannot be pointed out, and it is not physical.

As this says, when we understand that all appearances are the magical manifestation of mind, and we examine the essence of mind using ultimate analysis, we arrive at the certain conclusion that it is beyond all conceptual constructs, such as outer and inner; past, present, and future; arising and ceasing; and so on.

(c) Eliminating conceptual constructs regarding the antidote of meditation practice

The root text says:

2. Let even the antidote be freed in its own place.

Stages of Meditation II says:

If, in this way, the fire of the awareness of things as they are can be ignited through precise investigation, then just like flames sparked by rubbing sticks together, it will consume the wood of conceptual thought. This the Buddha himself has said.

In the noble *Cloud of Jewels Sutra*, he said, "In order to be free of all conceptual constructs, the one who is skilled in discerning faults practices the yoga of meditation on emptiness.

Such a person, through repeated meditation on emptiness, when searching thoroughly for the identity and nature of the objects of mind's distraction and delight, realizes them to be empty. When the mind itself is also examined, it is realized to be empty. When you search in every way for the nature of what is realized by the mind, this too is realized to be empty. Through realization such as this, you enter into the yoga of signlessness."

As this explains by drawing upon the Sutras, when we meditate, having analyzed both outer objects and the mind, if we become attached to the meditation that is the antidote, we must thoroughly investigate its essence, cause, and result and become certain that it is, and always has been, empty.

(II) Taking to heart through meditation

The root text says:

4. Rest in the alaya, the essence of the path.

Generally, there are many explanations of the *alaya* (or "universal ground") as one of the eight collections of consciousness, but here, as in the teachings of the Lamdre tradition, it refers to *sunyata*, meaning the nature of awareness and emptiness, inseparably united. It is called the "universal ground" because it is the basis for all the phenomena of samsara and nirvana. Therefore, as Lord Atisa said:

In the nature of things, beyond all conceptual elaboration, consciousness too comes to rest, beyond all concepts.

In other words, when it is directed toward the "object;" the nature of reality beyond the limitations of fixed ideas, the mind that is the "subject" enters a mode of utter simplicity, or freedom from concepts, by cutting through any fixed ideas in the way described above. When we enter this state of simplicity, we simply rest in meditative

equipoise without any further analysis or evaluation, projection or absorption, effort and exertion, or the like.

Stages of Meditation II says:

When entering in this way into the reality of the selflessness of individuals and phenomena, since there is no further analysis to be done, you gain freedom from concepts and evaluation. Mental activity enters, naturally and spontaneously, into a single experience that is beyond expression.

Without conceptualizing, remain in meditation with exceptional clarity regarding reality itself. And while abiding in that state, do not allow the flow of mind to be distracted.

The way to dispel dullness and agitation has already been described.

(III) Enhancing through action

The root text says:

5. The seven and their processes are conceptual, so forsake them.

The seven, meaning the consciousness associated with the six senses, and the rigid idea of "I" and "mine" which is referred to as the emotional mind (Skt. *klistamanas*), together with their accompanying thought processes, are all said to be *false conceptual patterns*, as we find in Maitreya's *Distinguishing the Middle from Extremes (1:8)*:

False conceptual patterns are the mind
and mental processes of the three realms.

Whenever our minds are like this, and we are caught up in thinking about various things or reacting to objects, we must avoid the tendency to perceive things as real or to cling to their reality. Instead, by thoroughly examining the essence of the objects that mind is directed toward and the thoughts themselves, we must decide that they are beyond any conceptual constructs. If we can familiarize ourselves with this and with the technique, by practicing it again and again, then all proliferation of conceptual thoughts will become a support for the arising of nonconceptual wisdom. That is why this is referred to as *enhancement*.

B. THE MEASURE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

Stages of Meditation II says:

While focused in that state of samatha, to analyze reality is vipasyana.

And:

Once we have achieved physical and mental pliancy, when abiding in that, having eliminated every other mode of thought, whatever is contemplated by the mind within the realm of samadhi is considered to be like a reflection. Within that domain of samadhi meditation, to regard these reflections and discern the meaning of these objects of knowledge, to discern them thoroughly, understand them fully, analyze them fully, endure them, take delight in them, discern their distinctive features, observe them, and understand them is what is known as vipasyana. Thus the bodhisattva is skilled in the practice of vipasyana.

As this says by drawing upon the *Samdhinirmocana Sutra*, vipasyana is discerning wisdom that is built upon physical and mental pliancy. It is called *vipashyand* (superior insight) because, with a capacity exceeding that of other states of mind, it sees the nature of objects.

Samatha and vipasyana, which have now been explained, must be practiced as a unity. This is because each of them by itself will not fulfill the purpose of eliminating the destructive emotions, realizing the nature of things, and so on. We must therefore acquire a detailed understanding, including the knowledge of how they are to be combined. This has already been explained elsewhere.

C. PRACTICE BETWEEN SESSIONS

The root text says:

6. Between sessions, be a conjurer of illusions.

As this indicates, during all our activities between sessions, having first aroused great compassion, we must work for the benefit of others, while maintaining illusory mindfulness and vigilance. *Stages of Meditation II* says:

Should you suffer from physical harm and the like, regard the whole world as similar to an illusion, a mirage, a dream, a reflection of the moon in water, or an optical illusion. And think: "Since they do not understand the profound teachings, these beings are overwhelmed by their emotions in sarpsara." And by thinking, "However I can, I must help them to understand reality;" arouse great compassion and bodhicitta.

And:

Then slowly rise from the cross-legged position and prostrate yourself before the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions. Make offerings to them and

recite praises. Then make vast prayers of aspiration by reciting *Samantabhadra's Prayer of Good Actions* and so on.

This is the clear advice given by the great pandit Kamalasila through his great compassion in these and other such sacred glimpses of the path to liberation.

*Appearances, in all their variety, are mind's magical manifestation,
and the nature of mind is and always has been unborn.
To those with wisdom beyond duality and transcending concepts,
in whom this is realized genuinely and with certainty, I prostrate.*

The Wheel of Investigative Meditation

A Thorough Training in Mental Analysis called 'The Wheel of Precise Investigative Meditation'

By Mipham Rinpoche

*Translated by Adam Pearcey, based on a version prepared by Garth Copenhaver and Adam Pearcey
In 2002 through the kindness of Ringu Tulku Rinpoche. © Adam Pearcey, 2004.*

Namo mañjushriye!

Whatever problems there are in the world
Are created by the afflictions in our own minds.
A mistaken attitude is a cause for the kleshas,
Yet the pattern of our thoughts can be refined.

Here there are three sections:

- (i) how to meditate,*
- (ii) the measure of progress, and*
- (iii) the significance of the practice.*

1. How to Meditate

Imagine someone who stirs in you intense attachment,
And consider them now present vividly before you.
Separate this person into five component *skandhas*,
And begin by investigating the physical body.

Consider all its impure substances
Of flesh and blood, bones, marrow, fat,
Internal organs, limbs and organs of sense,
Feces, urine, bacteria, hair, nails and the like,
And the components of earth and other elements.

Think of all these aspects, each of which
Can still be divided even further, and then,
Down to the very tiniest particle,
Mentally dissect them all stage by stage,
Checking whether you feel desire for each in turn.

Since there is nothing we could call "body"
Apart from these substances, varied and impure,
A body is nothing but an unclean contraption,

A bundle of muscles and fibres, a mound of waste,
And seething fluids that ooze and trickle.
Seeing this fact, sit and consider it mindfully.

Once the momentum of this insight fades,
Turn to feelings, perceptions, formations and consciousness,
And look into their nature,
By dividing them into their various aspects.

When you see them as insubstantial like bubbles,
A mirage, a plantain tree or a magical illusion,
You will understand how in these too there is nothing
To which one could ever be attached.

Continue with this thought until it fades.
Then, once it does, do not try to prolong it,
But turn instead to another investigation.
Reflect deeply on how these aggregates,
Which are impure and lack real essence,
Do not remain once they have arisen,
But perish from one moment to the next.

All the civilizations and societies of the past,
Met with only destruction in the end,
And so will those of today and ages yet to come.
The nature of the conditioned can inspire disenchantment.

Death is certain for all living things,
Suddenly it comes, and without warning.
Reflect on how all that we experience in life
Is changing from one moment to the next.

In summary, to the best of your ability,
Consider all the aspects of impermanence
That characterize conditioned things.
Reflect on each in turn with lucid thoughts.

Recognize how the aggregates of those that we desire,
Are transient as lightning, evanescent like bubbles,
And fleeting like clouds in the sky.
Until the momentum of this idea fades,
Focus your attention on nothing else.

Then consider how within each of the aggregates,

Which are momentary and consist of many aspects,
There are experiences we might describe as pain itself,
And those that seem pleasant until they change.

Yet they all provide the cause for future woes,
And thus the skandhas are the basis of suffering.
Reflect as well, as much as you are able,
On all the misery there is within the world.

All is due to the skandhas' imperfections.
There is not the tiniest speck or pin-tip's worth
Of these contaminated aggregates
That is free from the defect of suffering.

As they are the source of suffering,
The skandhas are likened to a filthy swamp,
A pit of burning coals or an island of demons.
Remain with this insight for as long as you can.

At the end, investigate these aggregates,
Which have many aspects and are impermanent,
And whose suffering nature has now been shown,
And look for what it is that we call "I."

When you see that, like a waterfall,
A shower of rain or an empty house,
They are devoid of any intrinsic self,
Remain until this conviction fades.

When it does disappear, then once again
Investigate in the stages as they have been shown.
Sometimes contemplate in no particular sequence,
Or else investigate a variety of things.

Practise investigating these points again and again,
Sometimes considering another's aggregates,
Sometimes looking into your own,
And at times, analyzing all that is conditioned.

Let your attachment to anything be undermined.
In short, renounce any thought that does not
Involve an investigation of these four points
[Multiplicity, impermanence, suffering and selflessness.]

And turn the wheel of analysis again and again.

The more you analyze, the more your certainty will grow.
Apply therefore a clear mind of intelligence
To all kinds of observations just like these,
And, like wildfire spreading across a grassy plain,
Practise continually without interruption.

Say to yourself: "In the past, I would always
Get caught in my mistaken ideas and attitudes,
Which led to all kinds of useless speculation,
But now I will consider only this instead."

If you find yourself getting tired,
Yet notice that the afflictions still do not arise,
Even without your applying the antidote,
Then rest in equanimity to refresh your mind.

After a while, once your tiredness is no more,
Repeat the investigation just like before,
At all times being mindful and aware
Of the insight the investigation brings.

If, at times, you slip into forgetfulness,
And the afflictions have occasion to arise,
Then take up this investigation once more,
Like reaching for a weapon when enemies appear.

Just as light will banish darkness,
It is almost needless to say that
A precise investigation such as this,
Even if it is only practised a little,
Will do great harm to the kleshas.

However much one understands the flaws
Of this conditioned samsaric world,
One will also understand the unconditioned,
Nirvana's supreme and refreshing peace.

2. The Measure of Progress

Eventually, through familiarity with this practice,
You will naturally appreciate how everything
Included within the five skandhas and the unconditioned
Is manifold, impermanent, painful and devoid of self.

Even without any deliberate effort,
The whole of your experience
Will seem magical and insubstantial,
And you will overcome the kleshas.

When it is free from the waves of the afflictive emotions,
The ocean of your mind is made serene and calm.
This is conducive to gaining mental self-control,
Through which one reaches the samadhi of calm abiding.

If you can then look into the very identity
Of the mind in one-pointed concentration,
That is the extraordinary insight of vipashyana.

It is here that one finds the initial entry point
That is common to all three vehicles.

3. The Significance of the Practice

All illusory phenomena which arise interdependently,
Have never arisen since the very dawn of time,
And so in emptiness--the lack of phenomenal identity—
They are beyond extremes such as sameness or difference.

This absolute space of great indivisible equality,
Is also known as the essence of the sugatas.
Once it is realized, one finds the great nirvana
That abides in neither existence nor quiescence.

This is supremely pure and blissful,
The great unconditioned, totally permanent,
The great self-identity—these are its
Transcendent and unsurpassable qualities.

This is the theme of the highest secret essence tantras,
The all-pervading space of ultimate co-emergent bliss,
It is also referred to as 'naturally arising wisdom,'
A state in which all phenomena have total perfection.

To introduce this directly through the master's
Pith instructions is the approach of the Great Perfection.

Therefore, as a preliminary training

For the mahayana path of both sutra and mantra,
Breaking through the shell of confusion surrounding the conditioned,
This path of precise investigation is excellent indeed.

First, through the power of fine analysis,
One destroys the marks of rising afflictions.

Then through confidence in the emptiness of the aggregates,
One lets go of desires and hopes based on the three realms,
And eventually, by progressing in stages, all conceptual notions
Are pacified completely within the state of emptiness.

Not wishing for any antidotes or further relinquishing,
One is freed entirely from attachment and clinging to extremes.

With the purest compassion beyond attachment,
One courses through existence without the slightest fear,
Like a bird soaring through absolute space,
And attains the level of a supreme bodhisattva.

Based on the texts of noble masters, I have here explained
The important points of the paths of the three vehicles,
Which provide a training in mental investigation,
As a preliminary to the paths of shamatha and vipashyana.

The more familiar you become with this practice
Of thorough training in investigative meditation,
The more the afflictions will diminish,
And the subtler the kleshas will become.

This will make it easier to practise shamatha,
And just like gold that is treated in fire
So it becomes malleable and ready to craft,
Mind will be refined once it is freed from attachment.

Imagine if someone were to offer plentiful gifts
To the Three Jewels for a thousand godly years.
It is said in the sutras that the merit of this generosity
Is surpassed by the merit of even a moment's reflection
On impermanence, emptiness and selflessness.

This is because the teachings say that
To recite the Four Seals of the Mahayana Dharma
Is equivalent to understanding the teachings

In the eighty-four thousand sections of the Dharma.

If you meditate well on the points explained here,
Since they bring together the key points of many thousands of sutras,
You will easily gain the treasure of knowing perfectly the profound and vast,
And liberation will swiftly follow in its wake.

By the virtue of this explanation, may all beings
Tormented by the troubles of this degenerate age,
Meet this elixir-like teaching on non-attachment,
And, through its power, reach a state of perfect peace.

This was written by Mipham Nampar Gyalwa in the Iron Hare year [1891] on the 18th day of the tenth month. Mangalam!

An Investigation of the Mind

Published here for the first time, this commentary by one of the great Tibetan masters of the 20th century, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche will appear in *The Collected Works of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche* (Shambhala, 2010)

The following teaching is an explanation of the way to examine the mind according to a text written by Lama Mipham, called “The Wheel of Investigation and Meditation That Thoroughly Purifies Mental Activity.” Why is this teaching called the “wheel of investigation”? Because just as a wheel revolves all the time, we need to constantly investigate the true nature of things. This constant investigation will eliminate deluded thoughts and lead to an understanding of the true nature of the mind.

How do we investigate the nature of mind and the root of samsaric delusion? The very root of delusion is the thought of “I,” the habit of clinging to the notion of a “self.” This notion is simply due to a failure to investigate. There is no such thing as a truly existing, autonomous self. We fabricated this concept in the same way that we make up all our other thoughts. Then, after constructing this self over and over again, we get so used to our invention that it seems to really exist as a distinct entity.

Once this thought has deeply taken root, we demand that the self should be happy and comfortable, enjoying wealth and pleasures. If it could be the center of the universe, that would be the best. This attitude is the very basis for our wandering around and around in samsara.

We associate the self with our body, our name, and our mind. If, however, we examine it carefully, the first thing we find is that the self is a product of the mind. So let us examine this mind that is responsible for such a close identification with the self.

In brief, we can say that the mind consists of past, present, and future thoughts.

Our past thoughts are likened to a shattered vase or a corpse—there is absolutely nothing left of the vase or the once-living person but a memory. Take just the thoughts you had since this morning. Is there any trace of them left that you can grasp or point to? Nothing remains but your remembrance of them.

What about our present thoughts? At this moment, for instance, you think that you are reading the teacher’s instructions and you should pay attention to them. This gives rise to a host of other thoughts in your mind. But can you point to an exact place where these thoughts are located?

See whether, in your own experience, you can find a location for your present thoughts. First look at the body. Are your thoughts in your head, your brain, or your chest? Are they on the skin, in the bones, inside the intestines, or in any other part of this body? The more you look, the less you are able to find a location for present thoughts.

What about the nature of thought itself? If the mind truly existed, if it were something we could see or hear, we certainly should be able to define it in some way. That, however, is not the case.

Examine a single thought that you believe to exist. Right now, for instance, you are reading these words and understand their meaning. So there is definitely a mind that is conscious of something. But if that mind exists, it should surely have some characteristics. Any object we look at has a color, a shape, some kind of texture. But is the mind yellow, white, or black? Is it round, oblong, or asymmetrical? Does a tall person have a big mind? Does a short person have a small mind? Does the mind look like a bird, a cat, or any wild animal? Is it like diffuse, a cloud?

Does the present mind have any tangible characteristic that you can define? When you conduct such an examination, no matter how long you work at it, you cannot pin down any characteristics of your mind.

Now try to examine your future thoughts. Do you know what thoughts will go through your mind from now until tomorrow? There is no way for anyone to anticipate thoughts that have not yet been born.

So, whether we consider past, present, or future thoughts, there is nothing we can define as being a “mind” entity. If we take one hundred beads and thread them together, we call that a rosary. But as soon as the thread is removed and the beads are scattered, there is no more rosary. “Rosary” was just a name that we attached to a collection of odds things that were connected for a while. In the same way, past thoughts, present thoughts, and future thoughts appear to be strung together, and we call that appearance the “mind.” In actual fact there is no such entity. Past thoughts no longer exist, while present thoughts seem to exist now. How could the nonexistent and the existent come together to constitute an entity? Existence and nonexistence have nothing in common. Imagine trying to use a cattle’s horn, which is a real object, in combination with a “rabbit’s horn,” which is unreal. Although the rabbit’s horn has a kind of existence as a fictional thing, it is radically different in nature from a real horn, and they cannot be accommodated within a single entity. The same reasoning applies to future thoughts. How could the present,

which is manifesting now, and the future, which is not yet born, have any contact with each other?

Now the only thing we are left with is the present mind. So let's see whether it has a tangible existence. Certainly it has some kind of presence. For instance, someone coming to a monastery thinks in the morning: "There will be some teaching this afternoon, and I should attend." Because of that thought, when the afternoon comes, the person receives the teaching. So, the moment a thought arises, it has some power to make us act. It appears to have an existence. But what kind of existence?

Our belief in a continuous mind arises from the fact that we cannot perceive extremely short instants of consciousness that follow one another in rapid succession. If a needle is quickly and forcefully pushed through a stack of sixty leaves, it seems as though the needle pierced them all at once. In reality, the needle passed through the leaves one by one. It is said that in the time it takes to snap your fingers, at least sixty thoughts are formed in your mind. The process of mind is actually made up of small instances of thoughts that seem to be continuous, but only because we do not see the movements of these instantaneous thoughts.

If we look at the moon and press our eyes with our fingers, we see two moons. These two moons certainly appear, but they don't possess true existence. In the same way, through the power of delusion the mind appears in many ways and we mistakenly think of it as an entity.

All we can say is that the mind is manifesting and at the same time ungraspable. When you eat a mouthful of delicious food, your mind becomes happy. If someone comes and calls you a thief, you get upset. So, on the one hand, the mind perceives the world and reacts to it. On the other hand, if we look for the mind, we cannot find anything tangible. The mind is something that appears, yet is devoid of true existence: it manifests in an illusory way.

The same is true of our concepts of self and body. Our notion of the physical body as a unified entity cannot hold up under close examination. If we were to cut a body into pieces and put the skin to one side, the bones on the other side, and the organs somewhere else, then there would be nothing left of what we once called "the body."

By assembling a few sticks of wood and pieces of cloth and arranging them in a certain way, we create something we call "a tent." If, however, we remove a few pieces of wood, everything collapses. In the same way, the body is just a name, a collection of things that come together for a certain length of time. In actual fact there is no such thing as a body, only a concept.

We can take this investigation further by looking closely at the separated parts—the skin, the bones, the blood. We then break these down into finer and finer component particles until nothing at all is left that we can call skin or bones. Likewise, we can persist in analyzing any concept until any illusory entity such as a body vanishes into nothing.

At the moment, there are combinations of different parts of our body and mind, and while we are alive these parts remain together. But even though the mind is impossible to locate in the eyes or the brain, it possesses the faculty of knowing. When we see with our eyes, taste with our tongues, or feel with our hands, this is only possible because of the intimate association between body and mind. Yet the mind is in no way an integral part of the body. It does not reside in the body and is not an inherent entity.

At the time of death, consciousness enters the intermediate state (*bardo*) and the body is left behind as a corpse. At that moment the corpse cannot see or feel, nor can it react to events with pleasure or displeasure. Once body and mind are separated, not a trace of the mental faculties will remain with the body.

In addition to identifying with our body and our mind, we also cling strongly to our name, because we associate our “self” or “ego” with it. It is quite easy to recognize that there is nothing to this. For example, if we are called John, when we hear someone calling “John,” it has a strong effect on us. But this name is merely an assemblage of letters. If we separate these letters—*J*, *o*, *h*, and *n*—they no longer evoke our name and we don’t identify with it or react to it.

We have thus seen that the three main things that we identify with our self or ego are our body, our name, and our mind. But none of these truly provides a basis for a “self” entity to dwell. The self or ego is a mere concept. Identifying with the ego begins the process of delusion and suffering. From believing in the existence of self, we then proceed to thinking of “I,” “my,” and “mine”—my body, my clothes, my house, my relatives, my friends, my enemies. This is how we create a fundamental split between the “I” and the rest of the world. From this split comes the impulse of grasping at whatever we expect will be pleasant or useful to the self. Or the opposite: we feel aversion toward anything that threatens or displeases the self. All these attachments arise because of clinging to the “I.” Thus we maintain a continuum of mental confusion and basic ignorance.

We think there is an ego when there is none, we think there is a body when there is no “body” entity, and we think of our name as having true existence on its own when there is no

such entity. To believe in the true existence of things that are devoid of intrinsic reality is the essence of ignorance. So those three processes—ignorance, attachment, and aversion—are the three root poisons responsible for the delusions and suffering of samsara.

If we examine those things in themselves, their true nature is simply empty of true existence. But we must experience directly whether this is true or not, and for this we need to examine the nature of our own mind, body, and name.

If you actually look and fail to find anything, you will be compelled to recognize the void nature of phenomena. In this way you ultimately reach a complete realization of emptiness, and then you clearly understand how the roots of samsara have taken hold. It is a very important practice to undertake such an investigation for yourself.

Commentary on the Verses

NAMO, MANJUSHRI YE

The text begins by paying homage to Manjushri, the ultimate manifestation of wisdom. Many great teachers, including Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Lama Mipham, had visions of Manjushri.

*Whatever problems there are in the world
Are created by the afflictions in our own minds.
A mistaken attitude is a cause for the kleshas,
Yet the pattern of our thoughts can be refined.*

As we have seen, the very root of samsara is the concept of self and our habit of clinging to our identification with an “ego.”

The most primary basis for clinging to the notion of self is the aggregate of *form*—that is, the body. When this body undergoes various experiences, we perceive some things as pleasant and desire them. Other things are perceived as unpleasant and we want to get rid of them. This corresponds to the second aggregate, *feeling*.

The third aggregate is discrimination. We start to discriminate between what is pleasant and what is unpleasant.

The fourth aggregate is impulse. Once we have identified something as being pleasant, desire for it arises. At the same time, we want to get rid of whatever is unpleasant and try to accomplish this in various ways. What actually experiences the ensuing feelings of satisfaction or misery is *consciousness*, the fifth aggregate. Consciousness itself has five aspects, related to sight, hearing, smell, touch, and mental consciousness. Prior to these five aspects and underlying them at all times, there is a basic, undetermined ground consciousness, which corresponds to a vague perception of the outer world and of existence, an awareness that “there is a world out there.”

It is to all these aggregates coming together that we attach the notion of a self. As a result the aggregates become intimately linked with suffering. However, when we try to investigate these different elements, one by one, they cannot withstand analysis. They have no shape, no color, no location. We cannot determine where they come from, where they remain, and where they go. In no way do they constitute autonomous entities.

In truth, the notion of self we attach to the aggregates is a mere mental fabrication, a label put on something that does not exist. People who wear tinted glasses or suffer from a visual impairment would see a white conch as yellow, even though the conch has never been anything but white. In the same way, our deluded minds attribute reality to something that is utterly nonexistent.

This is what we call ignorance: not recognizing the void nature of phenomena and assuming that phenomena possess the attribute of true existence although in fact they are devoid of it. With ignorance comes attachment to all that is pleasant to the ego as well as hatred and repulsion for all that is unpleasant. In that way the three poisons—ignorance, attachment, and hatred—come into being. Under the influence of these three poisons, the mind becomes like a servant running here and there. This is how the suffering of *samsara* is built up. It all derives from a lack of discernment and a distorted perception of the nature of phenomena.

Because of this distortion, some people perceive *samsara* as quite a happy place. They don't realize that it is pervaded with suffering. They imagine that the body is something exceedingly beautiful and desirable. They don't see that when investigated, it is found to be composed of rather foul substances. In this erroneous way of seeing things, we take suffering for happiness and perceive the impermanent world as permanent. We thus labor under four main misconceptions: believing that phenomena are pure when they are not; misconstruing suffering

for happiness; considering phenomena to be permanent when they are transitory; and imagining that there is a self abiding in the midst of all this, when there is none to be found.

These are the roots of afflictive mental states, the *kleshas*. To counteract them, we have to establish clearly the empty nature of the eight consciousnesses, the five aggregates, the five elements, and all phenomena, so that we correctly perceive their true nature, which is devoid of intrinsic existence.

There are different ways to come to such a conclusion and experience it directly. We may undertake a whole course of study, reflection, and meditation, which gives rise to a clear understanding of the relative and absolute truth. Or we may apprehend it directly through contemplative practice, and recognize through our own experience the dream-like nature of phenomena, which is the way of the yogis. These teachings help us to progress in both ways, through a logical investigation of mind and through experiencing and integrating the result of this investigation through meditation.

Here follow three sections: (1) how to meditate, (2) the measure of progress, and (3) the significance of the practice.

How to Meditate

To begin, we visualize in the space above our head Lord Buddha Shakyamuni radiating infinite light in all directions. Then we generate a strong, fervent devotion, supplicating:

May you bless me so that I will be able to recognize the impure nature of ordinary phenomena, that they are permeated with suffering, impermanent and devoid of any kind of "self."

Then we visualize rays of different colors emanating from the Buddha, blessing our minds so that such an understanding may take birth in our being.

*Imagine someone who stirs in you intense attachment,
And consider them now present vividly before you.*

For the actual investigation, we select the object for which we feel the strongest attachment, whether it is a person or any valuable or precious object to which we cling.

*Separate this person into five component skandhas,
And begin by investigating the physical body.*

Let's now examine this object. If we begin by examining a human body to which we are attached, we acknowledge that it is made up of five aggregates (*skandhas*): form, feeling, discrimination, impulse, and consciousness.

The first one, the aggregate of form, is the foundation for the other four, just as the earth is the supporting ground for all the mountains, forests, and lakes upon it. There are several aspects of this aggregate of form, but here we will investigate the one related to the human body.

It is because we cling to the entity of a body that even a tiny prick from a thorn makes us miserable. When there is warm sunshine outside, we feel comfortable and the body is pleased. We are constantly preoccupied with the comfort and attractiveness of our body and treat it like the most precious thing. Clinging to the body is the reason we experience such reactions to the pleasant and the unpleasant.

To eradicate this clinging, we have to examine what the body is really made of. Let's imagine that like a surgeon we cut a body open and separate all its major constituents—the blood, the flesh, the bones, the fat, the five main internal organs, the four limbs. The body also contains various fluids and excrements. Inside the body, it is said that there are eighty-four thousand different kinds of worms, bacteria, and other microscopic forms of life. Furthermore, there are eighty-four thousand hairs on the body, thirty-two teeth, and the fingernails and toenails.

If we consider these components separately, not a single one looks clean or pure. Taken one by one, each of the components does not seem at all appealing. The whole body is just a collection of rather disgusting parts, formed of the five elements. The flesh corresponds to the earth element, the blood and the other fluids correspond to the water element, the breath corresponds to the wind element, our body warmth corresponds to the fire element, and the cavities within the body correspond to the space element.

One of the main ways to decrease or eliminate our attachment to the body is to examine the various parts of the body one by one. If you were to take a piece of flesh from a body and place it someone's hand, the person would feel repelled. If we look at our skin from the outside, it may have an attractive color and be very smooth. But when we look at the inner side, the blood vessels and fat attached to it are not very attractive.

The skin itself is not an entity on its own. If one were to tear the skin into pieces, eventually it would be reduced to minute cells, molecules, and atoms. At this stage there is nothing left of something called "skin" that could constitute a self-existing entity. Even the atomic particles are in the end equivalent to energy and are devoid of intrinsic existence.

When we conduct such an examination of a human body, where has the object of our attachment gone? What is left for us to be attached to? We should keep examining each part more and more minutely until we reach the point where we cannot find the object of our attachment. At that point, the attachment itself just vanishes.

We can do exactly the same investigation with the bones and the blood. In each case, as we go deeper and deeper, the feeling of attachment is bound to vanish. Then we realize that the body is made of nothing but all these elusive things put together. We may think that the body is very beautiful and desirable, but if we look at its components, it is nothing but a collection of unpleasant things, a kind of walking machine.

You can pile up grass to the height of a mountain, but if you take each blade of grass one by one, you will end up with nothing, with no such thing as a "mountain" entity. In the same way, with many stones we can make a solid wall. But if we then remove the stones one by one, not even the name "wall" will be left. Sometimes bubbles appear on the surface of a body of water. From the outside they look like spheres, with a certain solid form that lasts. But when they burst, nothing is left. Similarly, we have taken for granted that the body is existent when in reality there is no such thing.

Unavoidably we come to the conclusion that the body does not truly exist. We have then recognized the void nature of our body and of ~~form~~ all forms.^{ok} When this state of understanding is reached, we simply rest for a while in the equanimity of this recognition. When a thought arises within this state, we repeat the same investigation.

Once it has been fully grasped that this “body” is empty of true existence, we can easily understand that it is the same with our “name” and with the “mind” made up of the thoughts that go through our consciousness.

In investigating the nature of phenomena, there are Four Seals or main points we should understand: (1) All things are compounded; that is, they are an assemblage of multiple elements instead of being unitary entities. (2) They are therefore impermanent and (3) are linked with suffering. (4) They are devoid of self-identity.

The compounded nature of phenomena is often explained by using the example of time. It is argued that since no common ground can be found between past, present, and future phenomena, they cannot logically constitute a single, unitary phenomena. For instance, how could a past thought and a present thought exist simultaneously or even come in contact with each other in any way, since the past thought no longer exists? If the father is already dead, how can he have a child?

Similarly, the present moment cannot have any actual contact with the future, not even for an instant. Otherwise the present would become the future or the future the present. It would be like saying that an unborn child is already here now.

The same is true for the process of the mind. Our past thoughts are like a corpse, and the present thought is like something that appears to exist. But there cannot be any contact between something that does not exist anymore and something that exists. At the same time, we do not know what thoughts we are going to have in the next few moments. The future thought is unborn, totally nonexistent. The present thought possesses some kind of reality, although it has no true intrinsic existence. It somehow appears, but it cannot have any contact with something that is not yet born.

As for impermanence, we have a very strong feeling that our body, our mind, our name, and our ego are all permanent. This leads to strong clinging. So, to gain certainty in the realization that all phenomena are utterly transitory is very important. It is like when a thief is unmasked and everyone learns his identity: he then becomes completely powerless to fool anyone, since all are aware of his mischievous nature. The thief can no longer harm anyone. In the same way, if we recognize that everything is impermanent—the universe as well as our thoughts—then naturally we will turn our backs on the objects of our grasping and embrace the Dharma as the only thing that can really benefit us.

Regarding the truth of suffering, we need to recognize that suffering is the condition of all phenomena pertaining to relative truth. Whatever is linked to the five aggregates is intimately connected with suffering. This is because grasping at the aggregates leads to the arising of the five mental poisons (*kleshas*)—hatred, desire, delusion, pride, and jealousy—which themselves are the causes of nothing but suffering. Even though we may enjoy some kind of temporary happiness in samsara, close inspection reveals that we have often achieved this happiness at the expense of others, or even through harming others, by cheating, stealing, and the like. In behaving like this, although we experience a fleeting happiness, at the same time we are creating causes for our future misery. It is like eating plants that are tasty but poisonous. We may savor them for a few moments, but soon afterward we will die. It is the same for all enjoyments that are linked with negative actions.

Once we realize this, we no longer take pleasure in samsaric life, and our desire for it is completely exhausted. This leads to a strong wish to renounce our attachment to worldly affairs and our addiction to the causes of suffering.

The final one of the four points is about the negative consequence of clinging to the self and the recognition that phenomena are devoid of self-identity. All of the first three points boil down to grasping at self, the main cause of suffering in samsara. Once we latch onto the concepts of “I” and “mine,” anything that seems to threaten that “self”—or an extension of it, such as friends and relatives—is identified as an “enemy.” This leads to craving, hatred, and lack of discernment, the basic causes of samsara

How did this happen at all? It happened because of our mental process, the chain of thoughts. For instance, the thought comes to your mind, “I shall leave my retreat and go into town,” and you follow it. You go into town and perform all kinds of actions there, accumulating a great deal of karma. If, at the moment the thought first arose, it had occurred to you, “There is no point in going to town,” the sequence of thoughts would have been interrupted and all the impulses that followed would have never have occurred. Nothing will happen at all. The cause of delusion is the linking of thoughts, one thought leading to the other and forming a garland of thoughts. We need to free ourselves from these automatic processes. This is the reason for these teachings, which are like a spinning wheel of lucid investigation of the nature of discursive thoughts and the ego. After paying attention to the teacher's words, we should also put them into

practice and investigate thoroughly our thoughts and our psychophysical aggregates, until we gain a true certainty about their nature.

Until now, we had the strong conviction that the self exists as a separate entity. With the help of these teaching, we can now achieve a strong and firm conviction that the ego has no true existence. This will lead to the gradual disappearance of afflictive emotions and thoughts.

In turn, this will lead to mastering the mind. In our ordinary condition, when a thought of hatred arises, we have no idea how to deal with it. We let that thought grow and become stronger. This could eventually lead us to seize a weapon and go to war. It all began with a thought, nothing more. Look at the succession of thoughts that lead to full-blown hatred: The past thoughts are dead and gone. The present thoughts will soon vanish. There is nothing graspable in either of them. So, if we examine the thoughts in depth, we cannot find anything truly existing in them. Under scrutiny, they vanish like a big heap of grass set ablaze. Nothing will be left of it.

We really must verify for ourselves that whatever thought comes into our mind has never acquired any true existence: thoughts are never born, they never dwell as something truly existing, and they have nowhere to go when they disappear from our mind.

Unless we come to a clear understanding of this, why talk about things like the “primordial purity of the Great Perfection” or the “innate wisdom of the Mahamudra”? None of these will help, so long as we perceive phenomena in a deluded way, like the jaundiced eye perceiving a white conch as yellow.

We have spoken of the main ways in which we distort reality: by assuming that conditioned phenomena are endowed with true existence; that fleeting phenomena are permanent; that samsara is generally imbued with happiness despite the pervasiveness of suffering; and that there could ever be such a thing as an autonomous, truly existing self.

Now we have to replace these distorted perceptions with accurate ways of thinking. Instead of being convinced that there is a self entity, we realize that self is a mere concept. We should get used to this and impress it on our minds. To achieve this, we must investigate with determined effort the nonexistence of the self until we have covered every aspect of the analysis. Then, like someone who has finally completed an exhausting journey after painstakingly walking over a long distance, we can completely relax in the natural void state of mind. Without entertaining any thoughts, we simply rest in equanimity for a while.

After we have recovered our mental strength, thoughts will return. Instead of falling under their influence, apply the same investigation over again, and remain clearly mindful of the nonexistence of the self. This will result in a genuine and powerful realization of the absence of a truly existing self.

There are two aspects of mindfulness: first, to remember what causes suffering and needs to be avoided, and what brings happiness and needs to be accomplished; and second, to be constantly vigilant lest we fall under the power of delusion. If we mechanically follow our wandering thoughts instead of remembering to investigate our mind, afflictive emotions such as craving and hatred will rise up strongly. Whenever these assail your mind, you should react just as if you had seen an enemy coming at you: lift the weapon of mindfulness and resume your investigation of the mind.

Simply by turning on the light, you can instantly destroy the darkness. Likewise, even a rather simple analysis of ego-clinging and afflictive emotions can make them collapse. By suppression we may temporarily subdue our afflictive emotions, but only an investigation of their true nature will completely eradicate them.

The Measure of Progress

Once this is accomplished, a great happiness will settle in the mind. As soon as we notice deluded thoughts arising in relation to conditioned phenomena, generating the scorching heat of samsara, we will recognize the unsurpassable, supreme, unconditioned nature of nirvana, which bestows a cooling, pacifying shade.

Following our analysis, we should check whether or not the practice has taken birth within us. Having pursued this investigation over and again, we naturally arrive at a genuine understanding that all our aggregates, like all phenomena, are molded by numberless fleeting causes and conditions. They are compounded things, so that if we take them apart there is nothing left such as a “body” or any of the other entities whose existence we are so convinced of. We will know without doubt that there are no permanent phenomena, since everything changes at every moment.

We will also know that all phenomena are linked with suffering, and that various ways of assuming the existence of a “self,” are all groundless. Thus, we will have thoroughly integrated these Four Seals of the Buddha’s teaching into our understanding. From then on, our mindfulness

will come naturally and we won't have to exert so much effort to maintain it. This achievement comes from the power of gaining confidence in the fact that phenomena are devoid of true, inherent existence. A great master once declared that the solidity of the phenomenal world will start to collapse even if one simply begins to doubt that phenomena are truly existing and merely glimpses the fact that emptiness is the nature of all phenomena and appearances.

When we begin to win the struggle to free ourselves from the waves of afflictive emotions, the mind will become like a calm and vast lake. This peaceful state, the natural tranquility of mind, will lead to deep samadhi, which is the pacification of wandering, deluded thoughts.

What is more, our mind will gain the natural capacity to focus one-pointedly on any object of concentration. This understanding will open up a deeper, vaster insight (*vipashyana*). This pacification of the mind is essential to all vehicles—the Fundamental Vehicle, the Great Vehicle, and the Adamantine Vehicle.

The Significance of the Practice

The third part explains the need for engaging in the practice of investigation.

All phenomena appear as result of a web of interdependent causes and conditions, which are as devoid of intrinsic existence as things seen in a dream. Once we understand this, it becomes clear that from the very beginning all phenomena are “unborn.” They never came into true existence. By realizing that all phenomena are devoid of “self,” or “identity” and that their nature is emptiness, we are freed from grasping at extreme concepts such as “existence” and “nonexistence.”

If, for instance, we had been thinking that phenomena were made of autonomous entities, we will now understand that truly separate and intrinsically distinct entities could not relate with one another and thus could not come together to form a “body.” If, at the other extreme, we believed that phenomena consist of single unitary entities such as a “body,” then we would not be able to distinguish any parts within it, such as form, feelings, volition, and so on—yet we have done so. The indisputable conclusion is that phenomena consist neither of truly separate, autonomous parts nor of singular entities.

Realizing this freedom from all conceptual extremes, we attain realization of the great expanse of the indivisible evenness. This understanding corresponds to the first *bhumi* of the Great Vehicle, which is the ultimate realization of the path of seeing. Not only will we

understand the ultimate nature of emptiness, but we will also realize the wisdom of the absolute expanse of luminous awareness. And as it says in the *Prajnaparamita*, the *Transcendent Perfection of Wisdom*:

“Mind.

Mind does not exist.

Its expression is luminosity.”

“Mind” here refers to the deluded mind. “Mind does not exist” refers to the understanding of the emptiness of true existence. “Its expression is luminosity” refers to the luminous wisdom aspect of emptiness.

This luminous or wisdom aspect is what is called the essence of buddhahood, or *tathagatagarba*, which is present in all sentient beings. Even when we don’t have a full and ultimate understanding of emptiness, as a buddha does, merely to have a glimpse of it will make the deluded perception of phenomena collapse.

Moreover, once we have reached the thorough realization of emptiness, an all-pervading compassion will manifest within it naturally. Thus we will dwell neither in the extreme of samsara nor in the extreme of nirvana. We will swiftly reach the level of buddhahood, in which all past accumulated karma—as well as the obscuring and afflictive mental states and emotions that caused it—will have been purified. It is a place where there is nothing but absolute bliss, and where even the word “suffering” has never been heard.

This is called the Great Uncompoundedness or the Great Uncreated State. By this we do not mean a state like death, extinction, or nothingness. It is the primordial nature of all phenomena, which is uncompounded. With this understanding of ultimate nature, the qualities of the other transcended perfections (*paramitas*) will reach their height.

This is exceedingly difficult to understand, however, for it is the ultimate meaning of the eighty-four thousand sections of the Dharma, the secret quintessence of all the teachings, which is very hard to grasp. It may be called coemergent great bliss or primordial wisdom. All the phenomena of samsara and nirvana take place within such state. If we follow the structure of the five paths, such an understanding corresponds to the path of seeing, which is reached after having traveled for a very long time on the path of accumulation and the path of joining.

However, one may also reach such an understanding in a direct way, through the pith instructions of an authentic and realized spiritual teacher. This is the way of the pith instructions that point to the true nature in a direct way, according to the tradition of the Great Perfection.

This is the ultimate, definite meaning of the profound section of the tantras, the view of the Secret Mantrayana. It is the excellent path of the discriminating investigation that destroys all the forms of delusion. Such investigation is a necessary foundation to all paths.

When the deluded, confusing emotions are completely eliminated through the power of such investigation, we arrive at a clear certainty that the aggregates of outer phenomena are, by nature, completely devoid of true existence. Our compulsive clinging to the three realms of samsara will disappear.

Having thus meditated on the voidness of all phenomena, and having analyzed all their aspects, we can dwell in a state of perfect simplicity and peace, free from concepts and discursive thoughts. When thoughts arise, just apply the same analysis once more. By doing so, you will be able to remain in an effortless inner calm and peace. Even though we have to make sustained efforts to begin with, when we reach to the realization of the empty nature of all phenomena, we will no longer need to apply any effort to get rid of obscuring mental states. Nor will there be any need to apply specific antidotes to the various emotional afflictions. Everything will be natural and free from clinging to conceptual extremes, unaffected by attachment or repulsion. Attachment is transformed into unconditional love and compassion for all sentient beings. For one who has realized the void nature, spontaneous compassion arises for all living beings who suffer because they have not realized this empty nature.

When we obtain a glimpse of this absolute nature, which is called the “absolute expanse,” we will fly through this expanse like a bird soaring effortlessly through the sky. We will thus pass through samsara, the world of existence, without any fear or hardship.

Universal compassion arises when ordinary attachment disappears. It is the sublime attachment, that of all-pervading compassion for sentient beings, which transcends ordinary attachment. When this happens, we fly with ease through the absolute expanse, completely without fear of samsara. We thus achieve the supreme level of the bodhisattvas, the sublime level of absolute *bodhichitta*. There are two levels of *bodhichitta*: the relative and the absolute. The relative is the ordinary *bodhichitta* directed to particular beings, and the absolute *bodhichitta* is the realization of the absolute nature of the absolute expanse of emptiness.

As is clearly mentioned by the Buddha himself in various sutras, this preliminary path of inner calm and deeper insight, *shamatha* and *vipashyana*, is the necessary entrance not only to the fundamental vehicle, but to all the paths of the Buddha's teachings, including the Mahayana and the Vajrayana. It is necessary to analyze and purify the mind-stream. The more we do this practice, the more the deluded emotions decrease, the thinner our tendencies become, and the easier it is to achieve the natural serenity of mind. A very pure gold is obtained through the refining process, by melting and beating the metal.

In the same way, the true nature of mind is realized when we discipline our mind and investigate it thoroughly, and finally become free from ordinary clinging through the pacification of deluded thoughts..

We may offer all that is perfect in this universe—flowers, perfumes, and every beautiful object—to the Three Jewels for a thousand years. But all these merits are nothing compared with the merit accrued through the understanding that all phenomena are compounded, that conditioned phenomena are pervaded with suffering, impermanent, and devoid of self. Simply to have these thoughts in your mind for the time it takes to snap your fingers generate merits that are immeasurably greater than vast material offerings offered continually over a thousand years.

In essence, the Four Seals of the Mahayana teaching are these: all conditioned phenomena are impermanent; whatever is tainted by obscuring emotion is pervaded with suffering; nirvana transcends suffering; and phenomena are devoid of self. All eighty-four thousand sections of the Buddha's teachings are contained in these four tenets.

By understanding these tenets, we will easily and swiftly master the great treasure of wisdom, understanding and realizing the profound and vast aspect of the teaching. This will allow us to meditate in the proper way on the essential points of the whole of the Buddha's teaching. To meditate on the Four Seals is to meditate on the meaning of thousand of sutras.

This concludes the main explanation of “The Wheel of Investigation and Meditation That Thoroughly Purifies Mental Activity.”



THE SHRAVAKAYANA

A Collection of Teachings

The great treasure revealer Chokgyur Lingpa

THE SAGE WHO DISPELS THE MIND'S ANGUISH

The Advice of the Guru, the Gentle Protector Manjushri

The Manner of Accomplishing the Yogas of Shamatha and Vipashyana

By Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche

*zhi gnas dang lhag mihong gi rnal 'byor sgrub pa'i tshul 'jam ngon
bla ma'i zhal lung drang srong yid kyi gdung sel zhugs*

Homage to the Guru Shakyamuni!

Regarding training in the yogas of shamatha and vipashyana (superior clear seeing), by focusing on the body of the Teacher, Buddha, infuse [your mind] with the precious bodhicitta that wishes to obtain buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings and think like this:

“At this time when I have obtained the support of the freedoms and riches and met with the Tathagata’s teachings, I will put aside all worldly activities [that bring about] bad results. Although making offerings to the Tathagata’s body and so on does indeed generate immeasurable merit, these accumulations of merit based on material wealth are something that the Tathagata advised mainly for householders. As something much more superior than that, to renunciate, those following in the footsteps of the Buddha, he praised discipline (*tshul khrims, tsultrim*) and genuine

inward resting. Since that is the case, I, in accordance with the Tathagata’s word, will practice those as much as I can.

“In particular, since beginningless time, we have been disturbed day and night, without break, by all kinds of different conceptual thoughts (*nam par rtog pa, nampar togpa*) like wind, clouds, and ocean waves, and have fallen into decline. On top of not accomplishing a single remarkable quality, we have become afflicted by all sorts of suffering. Since that is so, now by whatever means, having freed myself from the mire of all these different conflicting conceptual thoughts, then, even if just for a single instant, focusing on the Tathagata’s body, that which when focused on is of great merit and meaning, I will properly give rise to the yogas of shamatha and vipashyana!”

With an intense pledge of one-pointed yearning thinking, “Guru, Victorious Ones, and your descendants, I supplicate you to grant your blessings that I may be able to do that!” first of all remove yourself from hustle and bustle; in a place free from impediments to meditative concentration (*bsam gtan, samten*), such as people moving around in the day and hubbub in the night, stay on a comfortable seat in the meditation posture. Then thoroughly mix your mindstream with the preliminary dharms.

Then place in front of you, at whatever height and so forth is comfortable to look at, a beautiful and pleasing image of the Tathagata, the King of Shakyas, which has been correctly drawn by a skilled artist. With the power of aspiration recall the Tathagata’s blessings and by reciting the Essence of Causation mantra' consecrate [the image]. Having done that, place it at whatever distance is right for you to look at without it being too close or too far away.

Look at the image and with admiration as if it were the Tathagata’s real body think, “The Tathagata, like the utpala

flower that appears in the world only every few hundred years, arises from the cause of the immeasurable inconceivable accumulations of merit and wisdom. Since the Tathagata is fully adorned with the thirty-two excellent marks and eighty excellent signs, seeing him is without disharmony. In the world of gods, the extremely clear and steadfast noble rupakayas are seen in common by all the sentient beings of that world at that time. [The rupakayas] also teach the dharma [there]. As well, they display many manifest arrays of miracles. For the benefit of those to be tamed they also perform many different actions such as staying, departing, getting up, and sleeping, thereby bringing immeasurable sentient beings' roots of virtue to fruition. Our Teacher, Shakyamuni, the Lion of the Shakyas, was also born into the royal line of Shakyas. Finally, having attained enlightenment, at Vulture Peak and so forth he taught the dharma to bodhisattvas, shravakas, and most gatherings of beings and so forth."

Keeping these qualities and aspects in mind think, "This is what the shape and appearance of that Tathagata's body is like." The Tathagata is the gathering of discipline, of samadhi, supreme knowledge (*shes rab, sherab*), complete freedom, the gathering of the wisdom and seeing of complete liberation and so forth; he is endowed with inconceivable excellent qualities that are not conveyed even by the limits of the undefiled phenomena of space.

He closely embraces us all with great love. For our sake he underwent immeasurable hardships; you should learn about them from the supportive teachings for the *Treasury of Blessings*², where it tells how the Brahman Samudrarajah gave rise to bodhicitta and so on. In those ways, for three immeasurable aeons by [practicing] the six paramitas he gathered inconceivable

and inexpressible accumulations of merit and wisdom, whereby he was freed from all obscurations. By conquering the four maras he completely perfected all excellent qualities without exception, and having obtained the kaya of the great wisdom of omniscience he became the refuge, protector, and friend of all sentient beings until the end of time. The virtuous roots of recalling that unsurpassable Bhagavan, the Transcendent Conqueror, paying homage to him, uttering his name, seeing his bodily form, and resting the mind one-pointedly on it and so forth, no matter how small, will become the cause for supreme awakening. Thinking, "Since that is due to the power of the Tathagata's past aspirations and inconceivable wisdom, how fortunate we are!" give rise to great faith recalling the Buddha.

Then, without being too tight or too loose, in a leisurely manner, without letting your mindfulness (*dran pa, drenpa*) and attentiveness (*shes bzhin, shezhin*) decline, focus the mind continuously on the appearance of the Tathagata's body. Removing your mind far away from all thoughts (*rnam par rtog pa, nampar togpa*) apart from what one is focusing on, rest solely on [the Buddha's form]. Then finally rest one-pointedly without break as much as you can.

In short, practice progressively with the nine methods of mental-abiding (*sems gnas pa'i thabs dgu, sem neyney tabgu*) until you have achieved the 'one-pointedness of a mind of the desire realm' (*'dod pa'i sems rtse gcig pa, döpey sem tse chigpa*).

Look at and focus on the body in general. Or in particular, in order to obtain the noble dharma and pacify dullness (*bying ba, jing ba*), also focus the mind on the ushnisha, the crown on the Buddha's head whose limit is impossible to see. In order to obtain samadhi and pacify agitation (*rgod pa, göpa*), concentrate

the mind directly on the enlightened mind's glorious knot (*thugs dpal gyi be'u, tuggel gyi beyu*) [at the Buddha's heart center]. To accomplish great merit and reach happiness, concentrate on the appearance of the coil of hair between the Buddha's eyebrows that is snow-white like a conch and curls to the right. In order to make the great melodious sound of dharma pervade the whole world and to benefit sentient beings by teaching the dharma, fix the mind on the form of the throat, the source of the sixty qualities of melodious speech, the conch of dharma with three lines and so on. Focus the mind unwaveringly wherever you feel inclined.

When focusing your mind like that, at the very beginning it is like catching a snake; since [the mind] is so wild and untamed, the first meditation experience (*nyams, nyam*) is called the experience of movement that is like a waterfall. At that time one thinks, "My mind is in constant motion." From the *Sutra Requested by Subahu*:

This mind [is] like lightning, wind, and clouds,
Like the waves of a giant ocean—
Cunning, indulging in everything it desires,
Moving, straying, [I] must certainly tame it.

Form the resolve thinking, "Since all sentient beings have fallen under the sway of this completely distracted mind, come what may, without giving into laziness I will persevere! If one perseveres there is nothing that is not achieved in the end." Then endeavour in remaining on the focus for as long as you can.

By persevering like that then after a while one's previously very obvious and rough discursive thoughts (*nam rtog, namtog*), their wildness and turbulence, will settle down a little. However,

there is still the busyness of many different thoughts—a bubbling stream of many restless [thoughts]. That is called the second meditation experience of attainment that is like a river flowing through a narrow canyon. That example is used because although a river running through a narrow canyon is still very turbulent and noisy, it is a little slower than a waterfall.

If you keep persevering and continue practicing, then you will feel that inwardly the mind's thoughts (*rtog pa, togpa*) are slowing down and you are remaining on the object of focus. However, if you examine carefully you will see that you are still involved in a continuous stream of many subtle conceptual thoughts. This is the third experience called the experience of familiarisation that is like a gently flowing stream; although when you look at it from afar it seems still and you cannot tell that it is moving, when you get up close you see that it is moving a little and rippling.

If henceforth you don't give up persevering, but keep on striving, you will have less hardship and suffering than before. Therefore, exert yourself continuously! By practicing like that, even the movement of subtle conceptual thoughts will be pacified and as long as you have the conditioning (*'du byed, dtichey*) for the focus you will be able to remain as long as you like. However, it is not the case that no conditions whatsoever are unable to shake you. This is the fourth meditation experience, called the experience of stability that is like an ocean free from waves, since the mind abides and is stable.

Having obtained that, without needing to undergo great hardships, the fifth meditation experience, perfection that is like a mountain, will arise as you familiarise yourself [with that state] over time. It is of the same meaning as the effortless formation (*rtsol ba med pa'i 'du byed, tsolwa mepey dtichey*).

The mind naturally mixes with whatever one focuses on and, without the need for any effort, remains steadily on whatever one wants; conceptual thoughts do not have the power to shake [the mind]. That is the accomplishment of what is called the 'one-pointedness of a mind of the desire realm'.

At that time, various experiences resulting from the mind's abiding will also arise. When you have become familiar with that state, mind and body are said to become supple (*shin tu sbyangs ba, shindu jangwa*). By body and mind becoming workable, whatever focus one settles [the mind] upon, even if one remains there for many days, there is no sense at all of either the body or mind being unable to cope; the body feels light like cotton wool and mind is pervaded by the bliss of vivid clarity.

The suppleness is at first rough and heavy with a sense of solidity. By becoming familiar [with that] previous [kind of suppleness], it becomes exhausted and an unwavering shamatha that, like a shadow, is extremely fine and clear, a mind of meditative concentration that is in accord with the main part of practice, arises. That kind of meditation (*sgom pa, gompa*) obtains the name of 'shamatha', since it is a mind endowed with suppleness. It also pertains to the aspect of the first meditative absorption's capable preparatory stage (*bsam gtan dang po'i nyer bsdogs mi lcogs med, samten dangpö nyerdog michog mey*). With this [kind of meditative concentration], whatever one meditates upon—a conceptual focus (*mtshan ma'i dmigs pa, tseñmey migpa*), or non-conceptual (*mtshan med, tsanmey*) emptiness and so forth—there is nothing it is incapable of.

There are many enumerations of the branches of the accomplishment of shamatha, such as the four mental engagements (*vid byed bzhi, yiche zhi*) and the six powers (*stobs drug, tob drug*). However, essentially they are contained in [the

following dictum]: the mind remaining totally concentrated as long as possible on the focus with mindfulness and attentiveness, and by familiarising oneself with that giving rise to the five meditation experiences.

When you have accomplished shamatha like that, by the strength of the mind's workability the body has a gleaming complexion, is comfortable, and strong. The mind is clear and lucid and settles on whatever object is suitable. Body and mind are also pervaded by the moisture of immeasurable joy and bliss. The afflictions (*nyon mongs pa, nyon mongpa*) are less and one has an experience concordant with the extraordinary joy of inner solitude.

By the strength of the merit of practicing shamatha like that focusing on the form of the Buddha, together with the blessings of the Buddha, in actuality, in an experience, or even in dreams you will see the Buddha, obtain dharma teachings and so forth—all sorts of different excellent qualities will arise in your mindstream.

Once you have accomplished shamatha in that way, begin the practice of vipashyana (superior clear seeing). How should one do that? When first practicing shamatha, one rests the mind using a drawing of the Buddha's body as a support. Even when not using a support for the focus, [the Buddha's body] arises as a mental object and one rests the mind there and so forth. When, having practiced in whichever way one wishes, one finally accomplishes shamatha, even without a support the Buddha's body appears in the manner of a perfectly vivid appearance (*gsal snang, salnang*) as the form of the mark of samadhi.

It first of all shines vividly and steadily forth as an object of the mind, like a reflection in the mirror. By familiarising yourself with that more and more, it manifests as an object of

your senses as well, like something actually present. If you again familiarise yourself with that, the image you are focusing on will be perceptible as an object of others' senses in the same way. So, it is said that the first clarity appears as a mental object; the second as an object of the senses; and the third as an object of touch, as is taught in all the Early Translations' textbooks on approach and accomplishment (*bsnyen sgrub, nyendrub*).

When one accomplishes just the first clarity, from then on one should practice vipashyana: the way the form of the Buddha endowed with the marks and signs, beautiful, delightful, vivid, and steadfast now appears as a mental object as if actually present—this is also just the appearance of habitual imprints in one's own mind: it has not come from anywhere, nor does it go anywhere. When examined it is isolated. It is not found anywhere at all, inside or out. It depends on the mind and fully appears from the mere interdependent arising of habit. The mind to which it appears as well, when examined, is not found anywhere, inside or out; since it is devoid of any basis or root, what need to speak of what appears to it? Therefore, this appearance does not possess even the slightest trace of true nature (*ngo bo nyid, ngowo nyi*).

In just the same way as this appearance, the appearance of buddhas in the world as well appears due to the power of the interdependent arising of the roots of virtue of the pure intentions of sentient beings and the buddhas' great aspirations made in the past, just like someone's reflection appears in a clean mirror. Although in worldly beings' domain of experience it does indeed appear undecieving, the Tathagata does not have even the slightest bit of phenomena that are distinguished as aggregates (*phung po, phungpo*), elements (*khams, kham*), and sense sources (*skye mched, kyeche*), since he is the utterly

unfathomable wisdom kaya (*ye shes kyi sku, yeshe kyi ku*) equal to dharmadhatu, the basic space of phenomena. In the *Sutra of the Ornament of the Appearances of Wisdom* it says:

The Tathagata, by inexhaustible virtue,

Is a reflection of dharmas;

Since there is no tathata (*de bzhin nyid, dezhin nyi*) there is also no Tathagata.

In all worlds [the Tathagata] appears entirely as a reflection.

Also from the *Samadhi the Present Buddha is Directly Abiding In*:

Buddhas are analysed by bodhisattvas.

Mind as well is completely pure, naturally luminous, Stainless, not merged with conceptual thoughts.

Whoever knows that will attain supreme awakening, buddhahood.

As it was taught, examine with supreme knowledge and recognise [that to be the case].

Having understood in that way, just as it is with the Tathagata, likewise all phenomena of appearance and existence that are contained within the aggregates, elements, and sense sources also appear in the world and are experienced in this way by the force of interdependent origination. However, all of those [phenomena] are no more than mere appearances [that arise] due to the interdependent arising of their individual causes and conditions; when properly examined, not even an atom of true nature of any phenomena whatsoever is found. For example, just like objects of experience such as the appearance of magical

illusions and the appearance of dreams, in reality there is no going or coming, arising or ceasing and so forth at all. Nevertheless, childish ordinary beings, who cling to appearances [as existing] the way they appear and who have forsaken individual analysis (*so sor brtag pa, sosor tagpa*), grasp to arising and ceasing and so forth as existent. It is similar to how someone with cataracts does not have the notion of clearing away the appearance of falling hairs in their eyes. Since beginningless time our minds have been tainted by the cataracts of ignorance and so do not know the way things genuinely are (*yang dag pa'i gnas lugs, yangdagpey neylug*).

From the perspective of those who have realised the way things genuinely are, there is no need to be rid of these appearances since, although these appearances do appear, they are not established whatsoever. Having seen this they have realised that all phenomena are naturally primordially unborn. In the *Sutra Requested by Anavatapta* it says:

Whatever was born from conditions was not born;

It is essentially devoid of birth.

Whatever relies on conditions is taught to be empty.

Whoever knows emptiness is careful (*bag yod pa, bagyöpa*).

Also, in the *Mother of the Victorious Ones*, the *Prajnaparamita*, it says:

All phenomena are like illusions and dreams.

Nirvana as well is like an illusion and dream.

If there is any dharma superior to nirvana, that is also like an illusion and dream.

Furthermore, from the *King of Samadhi Sutra*:

Just like mirages, cities of gandharvas,

Like magical illusions, like dreams,

Conceptual meditation is essentially empty.

Understand all phenomena to be like that.

And in the *Root Knowledge of the Middle Way* it is taught:

Like a dream, like a magical display,

Like a city of gandharvas, just so—

Both arising and dwelling and, likewise,

Destruction—all were taught to be like this.³

Therefore, although the Buddha's body appears in that way to the mind, all acts of focusing on it are non-existent from the beginning. All phenomena as well are like that. Oneself is also like that. Whatever is one's own nature, is the nature of the Buddha. Whatever is the nature of the Buddha, that is also the nature of all phenomena. From the *Sutra of the Ornament of the Appearances of Wisdom*:

Permanently unborn phenomena are the Tathagata.

All phenomena are like the Sugata.

Those with childish minds who grasp at characteristics

Engage in the worlds in non-existent phenomena.

From the *Condensed Prajnaparamita*:

Understand all sentient beings to be like oneself.

Understand all phenomena to be like sentient beings.

Not conceptualising [things] as either unborn or born—
This is the practice of the supreme prajnaparamita.

From the *Root Knowledge of the Middle Way*:

Whoever produces constructs about Buddha,
Beyond constructs and inexhaustible,
Will be brought down by constructs.
They will not see the Tathagata.

Whatever is the nature of the Tathagata,
That is the nature of these wanderers.
The Tathagata is without self-nature.
These wanderers also lack self-nature.

As it was taught, in the natural state (*gnas lugs, neylug*),
the ultimate nature (*mthar thug gi don, tartug gi don*), all
phenomena are perfect equality in dharmadhatu (the basic space
of phenomena) that is beyond all webs of mental constructs
(*spros pa, tröpa*) of being born, unborn and so forth. From the
Sutra Requested by Sagaramati (Ocean of Intelligence):

This dharma is stainless, pure, virtuous, naturally luminous;
Like the sky, equal, and primordially unarisen.
Unborn, unarisen, without abiding, and without ceasing—
This is the victorious ones' stainless unwavering seal.

From the *Avatamsaka Sutra*:

Fine, white crystal, the path of great sages,
Non-conceptual, not an object of conceptual thought,

difficult to look at.

Naturally peaceful, without ceasing, without arising,
It is realised by the wise who clearly understand.
Empty of essence, peaceful, devoid of suffering,
Free from the continuum, equal nirvana,
Free from centre and extremes, inexpressible,
Free in the three times, like the sky.

From the [*Sutra Spoken*] *In the Presence of Noble Rahula*:

Inconceivable, inexpressible, the prajnaparamita,
Unborn, unceasing, the nature of space,
Object of the wisdom of individual self-awareness (*so so
rang rig, soso rangrig*)—
I prostrate to the mother of the victorious one's of the
three times!

The protector Nagarjuna taught:

Not known from other, peaceful, and
Not elaborated by elaborations (*spros pa, tröpa*),
Free from concepts (*nam rtog med, namtog mey*),
devoid of plurality—
That is the definition of suchness (*de nyid, denyi*).

Accordingly, the yogi who resolves thusness—that which is
beyond all expressions, elaborations, and objects of focus—at
first by means of the samadhi that realises all phenomena to
be like illusions rests in equanimity on the Tathagata's illusory
body. He or she should look at the body of the Tathagata
and then when listening to dharma and so forth train in the

manifestations of illusory objects of experience.

If [the yogin] then rests in inexpressible equanimity, the emptiness that is to be individually recognised, in that manner he or she will attain the patience towards the dharma that is concordant with dharma. And owing to that there is no doubt that before long [the yogin] will attain in actuality the wisdom of the path of seeing. This is clearly explained in the pith instructions for taking into experience the meaning of the *Samadhi the Present Buddha is Directly Abiding In* and the *Same Arrangement Samadhi*.

Even those who are not able to practice in that way should engage in the yoga of continually recalling the Teacher, Lord of the Sages, as is taught in the *Treasury of Blessings*: bring to mind the visualisation for taking refuge and giving rise to bodhicitta, and with a firm and confident pledge recite the following three times:

In the Buddha, the dharma, and the supreme assembly
I take refuge until enlightenment.
By the merit of my generosity and so forth
May I attain buddhahood for the benefit of beings.

After meditating on the four abodes of Brahma, from the illusory state of the unity of emptiness and interdependently-arisen appearances [say]:

Ah

Like the illusory display of the unity of unborn emptiness etc.

Visualise as it is described in the *Treasury of Blessings* chant text. Thinking that the Buddha is there in person, with longing

and steady faith practice that by which the bodhisattvas, those expert in skilful means, gather together the accumulations of many aeons in a single instant of mind: the condensed key point that accumulates, purifies, and increases, the seven branches of homage and so forth. In order not to let one's hopes go to waste, supplicate the Buddha with confidence and make aspirations for the desired aims as is taught in the root text.

After that, with one-pointed faith bow down to the buddha bhagavans with as many bodies as there are motes of dust in the universe and make offerings with all the offering objects. With the one-pointed aspiration of thinking, "Until obtaining unsurpassable enlightenment, I and all sentient beings go for refuge!" recite the [Buddha's] names with, "Guru, Teacher, Transcendent Conqueror" and so on, as much as you can.

Finally by reciting the dharani mantra (*gzungs, zung*) in the manner of invoking the Tathagata's enlightened mindstream, light-rays shine out from the Tathagata's body filling the expanse of space. Think that by dissolving into oneself and all sentient beings all obscurations and suffering are cleared away and you become possessed of happiness. The excellent qualities of the Mahayana path, such as faith, dharani mantra, samadhi, courage, supreme knowledge, and wisdom and so forth, arise properly in one's mindstream. One becomes someone with the fortune of attaining enlightenment from the level of non-returner up until final, unsurpassable great awakening. Then recite the mantra as much as you can.

From the *Jewel Mound Sutra's* eleventh chapter, the *Light Radiating Out* chapter:

Now, by the causes and conditions
Of inconceivable virtuous actions

[I] have completely abandoned all delusion
And accomplished manifold light-rays.

Furthermore:

By the power of non-doing
Lights of immeasurable colours stream out,
Fulfilling the hopes
Of those aspiring accordingly.

From one light-ray two colours shine out and so on until
immeasurable different kinds of light-rays are radiating out:
light-ray Shining Clean Cloud, Pristine Eyes, Pristine Nose and
so forth up to Pristine Mind. Similarly, Pristine Form and so
forth up to Pristine Phenomena, Pristine Earth and so forth up
to Space, Pristine Aggregates and so forth, Pristine Truth and so
forth, Pristine Courage and so forth, with the names of the colour
White, Yellow and so forth, Supreme Excellent Quality, Naga's
Splendour, Elephant's Splendour, Prosperous Lion, Prosperous
Supreme Naga and so forth, Tamed Naga, Tamed Yaksha and so
forth, Vajra Strength, Empty and so forth, and Completely Pure
Past Virtue arise individually.

The light-ray called Dharmata makes ten million buddhafields
quake. The one called Taming Maras terrifies the maras. By
holding in mind the name of the light-ray called Merit Victory
Banner, harm is abandoned. By holding in mind the name of
the one called Mighty Victory Banner, enemies are abandoned.
By holding in mind the name of the one called Completely
Pacifying Victory Banner, desire is abandoned and so on. By
merely holding their names in mind all faults, such as sexual
misconduct and corrupt discipline, are abandoned. Also, by

merely taking the name of any of the light-rays, discipline,
samadhi and so forth are perfected and all afflictions such as
delusion (*rmongs pa, mongpa*) are annihilated. Similarly,
happiness is obtained, one is freed from anguish, transcends all
mental constructs, and gives birth to excellent qualities such as
knowing the three times.

Each light-ray, such as Sorrow-Free, has as well a retinue of
eight thousand billion. In such ways it is said that by means of
the different light-rays the Tathagata has, the number of which
goes beyond the count of particles in the buddhafields, sentient
beings are brought to fruition and their individual hopes are
completely fulfilled.

In the bodhisattva pitaka it also says:

The buddhas' infinite light,
Inconceivable web of light,
Pervades an infinite ocean
Of buddhafields in all directions.

Furthermore, one should think as well about the meaning of what
is taught in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* and the *Excellent Splendour
chapter* in the *Precious Palm Tree Sutra* and so forth.

In this context as well, by putting into practice in whatever way
is appropriate the yogas of shamatha and vipashyana as taught
above, you will accomplish something that is merely in accord
with (*rjes mthun pa tsam, jetunpatsam*) shamatha and vipashyana.

When settled in a session, make mandala offerings, praises
and supplications, and dedicate the virtue and make different
aspirations in whatever way is suitable. There is no need to
supplicate [the Buddha] to come and dissolve, since wherever
one visualises the Buddha's body, there he abides; in the space-

like kaya of equanimity there is no coming, going, arising, or decreasing. You can recall [the Buddha] in any place or time.

In the breaks between sessions exert yourself in roots of virtue as much as you can by reading different sutras, or doing prostrations, making offerings, doing circumambulations and so forth. Even if you are unable to do that, recall the Buddha as much as you can and bring to mind repeatedly the concepts (*'du shes, dūshhey*) of impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and selflessness, and the concept of nirvana, peace.

When lying down, for as long as you are not overwhelmed by sleep engage in spiritual practice. When falling asleep visualise that the light radiating out from the Buddha's body pervades [everywhere] and meditate on the concept of light! From the dharma text known as the *Completely Certain Meaning*:

Bhikshus, if you wonder how one attains the wisdom of seeing by training thoroughly in samadhi meditation, bhikshus, the bhikshu thoroughly takes hold of the concept of light and so on.... Bhikshus, it is like this: for example, during the last spring moon the sky is cloudless, and on a cloudless day the sun's form appears completely pure, completely white, and luminous; it is not dark. Bhikshus, likewise the bhikshu thoroughly takes hold of the concept of light. He keeps it perfectly in mind. He perfectly encounters it. He perfectly realises it. Having truly abided in the concept of sun and meditated on its light in the mind, just as in the day so also in the night, just as in the night so also in the day, just as early on so also late, just as late so also early on, just as below so also above, just as above so also below. Like that, with mind free from all divisions and cycles

truly abiding in the concept of the sun [he] meditates on its light in the mind. If you cultivate this samadhi meditation at all times and deeply familiarise [yourself] with it, [you] will obtain the wisdom of seeing!

Likewise, constantly endeavour as much as you can in the practice of recollecting the Lord of Sages, and with sincere intentions dedicate all roots of virtue for the sake of unsurpassable perfect awakening. All those who exert themselves like that and, by resting in equanimity in the manner of the illusory relative and the absolute, free from elaborations, accomplish shamatha and vipashyana will obtain extraordinary qualities of the path such as seeing the Buddha, hearing the dharma and so forth. In those who merely practice in accordance with them (*rjes mthun tsam du zhugs pa, jetün tsamdu zhugpa*) as well, all kinds of blessings and siddhis will arise. Wonderful signs, such as seeing the Tathagata in dreams as well, will arise.

Moreover, with regards to good and bad signs in dreams, from the *Sutra Called Accomplishing the Fourth Noble One*:

The Youthful Manjushri spoke like this to the devaputra Bhadvika: "The four dreams of dusty obscurations are as follows: seeing a moon disk inside a dusty well; seeing a moon disk at the bottom of a dirty pond well; seeing a moon disk in a sky obscured by large clouds; and seeing a moon disk in a sky shrouded by smoke and clouds of dust.

"Moreover, the four dreams in accord with the cause of the obscuration of karma are: falling into an abyss from a huge precipice; approaching an undulating road; approaching a narrow road; and seeing polluted places

and many frightening things.

“The four dreams in accord with the cause of the obscuration of the afflictions are: being upset by fierce poison; hearing the sound of mostly ferocious wild animals; staying in a fraud’s home; and seeing one’s own body as filthy and wearing stained clothes.

“The four dreams in accord with the cause of obtaining dharani mantra are: seeing [a place] full of all sorts of precious treasures; seeing a pond totally filled with blooming lotus flowers; seeing one find a set of white clothes; and seeing a deity holding a parasol above the crown of [one’s] head.

“The four dreams in accord with the cause of obtaining samadhi are: seeing a lovely girl adorned with fine jewellery offering scattered flowers; seeing a flock of white and grey geese in the sky hooting and then flying off; seeing the Tathagata place his hand, beautified by many lights, on the top of one’s head; and seeing the Tathagata sitting in a lotus flower in meditative concentration.

“The four dreams in accord with the cause of seeing the Tathagata are: seeing a moon disk rising; seeing a sun disk rising; seeing a blossoming lotus flower; and seeing Lord Brahma in an extremely peaceful posture.

“The four dreams in accord with the cause of the bodhisattva’s own qualities are: seeing a big Sala tree filled with all sorts of leaves, flowers, and fruits; seeing a bronze vessel filled with gold; seeing the face of the sky filled with parasols, victory banners, and standards; and seeing a great chakravartin king.

“The four dreams in accord with the cause of taming

the maras are: seeing a great athlete defeating all [other] athletes, hoisting a standard up, and going; seeing a great hero win a battle and leave; seeing someone being empowered as king; and seeing oneself in Bodhgaya taming the maras.

“The four dreams in accord with the cause of the signs of a non-returner are: a white skull being tied on one’s head; one making unstinting offerings; one sitting on a big dharma seat; and seeing the Tathagata staying in Bodhgaya and teaching the dharma.

“The four dreams in accord with obtaining the essence of enlightenment are: seeing a vase; seeing a chicken encircled by Indian Jays; wherever you go all the trees rising up, bowing down, and making prostrations; and seeing a huge golden-coloured light.”

Having also understood the good and bad signs of dreams described, rely on the skilful means for clearing away faults and accomplishing excellent qualities. In [Buddha Vairochana’s] *Chökyl Gyamo* it is taught that:

Signs of true purification through remorse are seeing the Buddha come, rub [his hand] on the crown of one’s head, and lights radiating out; and seeing flowers and so on.

In other sutras it is also said that if you see lotus flowers in dreams your aim has been accomplished. From the *Liberation Sutra*:

The dream signs of having purified negative actions are wanting to cross an enormous river and then going across on top of a bridge, others washing you, and rain falling

on your body. These are all signs of complete purification. Joining and sitting in a row of many ordained sangha members, and entering a stupa or temple and seeing all the images of the buddhas and bodhisattvas are signs of following in the footsteps of the Buddha and dharma. If you dream of finding fruit and eating it, you will actualise the accomplishment of the fruits of excellent qualities in this life.

It is taught that by dreaming one dream like that one of the five evil deeds of immediate fruition is purified, while if you dream five dreams like that five of the five evil deeds are purified. This should also be understood according to the *Dreams Chapter* of the *Jewel Mound Sutra* and so on.

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Although there are many different bodhisattva practices for the time of death, such as the eleven concepts taught in the sutras, the crucial point is taught and contained in the *Noble Wisdom of Passing Sutra*. In that [sutra it is taught that] at the time of death the bodhisattvas meditate on the wisdom of passing as follows: whenever you think, "I am dying!" visualise the Guru, Lord of Sages, on the crown of your head and give rise to intense faith. Then think like this: "Not only myself, but all sentient beings are not beyond the law of death. Although here in samsara I and others have again and again undergone countless births and deaths, aside from experiencing solely the suffering of death, [all these births] have been totally meaningless. However, I will make this present death meaningful!"

Having contemplated like that, [reflect that] as for all conditioned phenomena (*'dus byas, düichey*) subsumed within the internal and external, of the past, present, and future, there is

nothing, not even for a single instant, that is not impermanent, of the nature of arising and ceasing. Within the conditioned there are those things whose continuum ceases after a short time, like water bubbles, bolts of lightning and so on. There are also those whose continuum ceases after a long period of time, like the world's realms. Nevertheless, whether [they abide] for a long time or a short time, all conditioned phenomena at the end cease; there are none that are unchanging. The entire world of the vessel and contents will also disintegrate, and if even the Tathagata, the Transcendent Conqueror, demonstrated [death] in the manner of passing into nirvana, what need to speak of myself?! Therefore the Tathagata said, "Everything conditioned is impermanent."

"Not understanding the nature of conditioned things like this, being averse to separation and death and delighting in gathering and birth, sentient beings remain in samsara and circle around again and again. However, I, taking this death I have now arrived at as a virtuous spiritual friend, will realise from the depth of my heart all conditioned things to be impermanent! I will resolve it!" Thinking earnestly like this at the time of death, "In all [future] lifetimes as well until attaining the essence of awakening, by having understood everything conditioned to be impermanent may I not become attached to conditioned objects of experience! Guru, Lord of Sages, victorious ones and your sons, I supplicate you! Grant your blessings that that may occur!"

Then, as it is said in the Mahayana sutra, the *Noble Wisdom of Passing*:

Since all phenomena are naturally pure
Meditate on the concept of non-entities.
Fully endowed with bodhicitta

Meditate on the concept of great compassion.

Since the nature is unseeable luminosity

Meditate on not being attached to anything at all.

Mind is the cause for the arising of wisdom.

Do not search for another buddha.

As it was said, at first, illustrated by one's own death, focus on all sentient beings, who, in the infinite space, clinging like that to impermanent conditioned things as permanent and to painful samsara as pleasure, experience death and endless varieties of sufferings, and give rise to a mind of great compassion. "In order to free them from the suffering of birth, old age, sickness, and death and establish them in unsurpassable perfect awakening may I, having become the protector of the three worlds, the buddha, the transcendent conqueror, free all sentient beings from [their] endless suffering!" Thinking that, meditate on the concept of great compassion endowed with bodhicitta.

Similarly, when one examines all phenomena exemplified by this death, they are solitary in nature. Nevertheless, by conceptualising, under the force of mere imputations (*sgro btags pa, drotagpa*) we create happiness and suffering, benefit and harm; if [these phenomena] really existed, there would be no so-called death and suffering at all! Thinking, "All phenomena are non-existent (*dingos po med, ngöpa mey*)!", resolve [that that is the case] and reflect.

Likewise, all of these phenomena, such as death, have no established identity whatsoever, yet like illusory appearances their expression is completely unobstructed. When analysed they cannot be expressed whatsoever in terms of the extremes of existence and non-existence. They are naturally non-conceptual and luminous. Therefore, one's own mind that does not abide

as any entity or non-conceptual thing whatsoever is primordially luminous; in the state of the present direct awareness (*shes pa, shepa*) all phenomena of samsara and nirvana are totally equal. Therefore, resolve the enlightened mind of the Teacher, Lord of Sages, and one's own mind as well to be indivisible in the nature of mind (*sems nyid, semnyi*), the state of self-existing wakefulness (*rang byung ye shes, rangjung yeshe*). If without getting distracted from that [state] you come to possess confidence and develop certainty in it, that is the realisation of the true nature of one's mind (*rang gi sems kyi de kho na nyid, rang gi semkyi de kho na nyi*). Other than that there is no so-called 'buddha' whatsoever.

In that state there is no death and birth. Death and so forth are mere concepts (*rnam rtog tsam, namtog tsam*); in the truth of the innate nature of mind free from concepts, birth and death are not in any way established. If one passes away resting evenly (*mnyam par bzhag, nyampar zhag*) in that state, without the deluded appearances of the intermediate state and so forth occurring, one will be reborn in a buddhafield.

If you do not have that level of confidence, [but] at the time of death and all throughout the intermediate state remember only the Guru, Lord of Sages, and do not forget, simply by that you will be led to a pure realm. Moreover, no matter what terror and suffering occurs in this life, if you remember the Buddha you will certainly be liberated from those troubles. No matter what happiness and excellence arises know it to be the great kindness of the Buddha, and visualising those pleasurable objects as a Samantabhadra offering cloud offer them to the Buddha.

Constantly reflect on the three liberations (*rnam thar gsum, namtar sum*) that arose from the Teacher's spoken words, and the meaning of the six paramitas and so forth. With great

compassion to all sentient beings give rise to the mind of supreme enlightenment and train as much as you are able in the conduct of the bodhisattvas. Recalling the Teacher like this is extremely important, for recalling the Buddha is that which sets one out on the beginning of all the bodhisattva paths and has immeasurable benefits. It generates all the excellent qualities of the path.

In these days [of] holding the practices of one's own school (*grub mtha' drubta*) to be most important, only a few people consider the Teacher, Lord of Sages, as especially important. However, those who have entered into these teachings who lack the concept (*'du shes, dñishey*) of faith to the Teacher as supreme lack intelligence. Why is that? Because it is solely due to the compassion of the Teacher demonstrating the acts of the Buddha in this realm and time to us wandering beings of the degenerate age that the teachings—the three pitakas, and not only that, but all the way up to the teachings of the secret mantra Vajrayana, the path that can actualise in one short lifetime of this degenerate age the unified [state] of no-more learning—appeared. [It is also solely due to his compassion] that the beings who are the holders of the teachings, those who have entered the teachings of sutra and mantra, the sangha of noble beings as many as they are, appeared.

If the Teacher had not radiated out the light of the teachings here in this realm and time, we would not hear even the mere sound of the three jewels. What need to speak then of practicing the paths of sutra and mantra? Therefore, whichever tradition one practices, whether it is from the New Schools or the Old School, to have intense faith that holds the Teacher as especially important is indispensable at all times. Therefore, one must be especially devoted to the Teacher and persevere in that yoga!

Some others may think, "If it is not the Teacher, Lord of Sages, but is the Buddha in the form of a renunciate free from

attachment, or in the form of the peaceful and wrathful yidams and so on, whoever one has devotion towards, what difference does it make?" Essentially there is no difference, since all Buddhas are the wisdom kaya, perfect equality, and there is no higher or lower whatsoever in terms of their abandonment and realisation. However, from the perspective of the relative level of mere appearance it is due to the compassion of the Teacher that the visualisations and recitations of the yidam deities of the different schools in all their peaceful and wrathful forms and the paths and trainings emerged.

Therefore, just as the source of all the water in the world is Lake Manasarovar, all appearances of the greater and lesser teachings of the practices of the paths of sutra and mantra are certainly the compassion of this Teacher. Just as when you supplicate your own root guru you receive more blessings than [by supplicating other gurus], because of the power of your connection, supplicating the Teacher, Lord of Sages, brings swifter blessings that supplicating other buddhas.

If you then wonder, "Well, aside from solely the Lord of Sages, [should] I stop supplicating other buddhas as much?" it is not like that: understand that whatever yidam one supplicates in reality is not different from the Teacher, Lord of Sages, since it is taught that all buddhas are equal in dharmakaya. One needs to understand, thinking, "The supreme Teacher, showing different bodily appearances of this and that yidam deity, showed himself to be the refuge and friend of all of us wandering beings of the degenerate age." If one nevertheless separates the Teacher and one's yidam and, giving up the Teacher, one has the concept of grasping to the yidam as something other [than the Teacher] it will be difficult for accomplishments (*dhagos grub, siddhi, ngödrub*) to arise.

Similarly, in the tradition of unsurpassable secret mantra, the guru who is one's vajra master is in essence inseparable from all the buddhas of the three times. The [guru's] manifestation is of even greater kindness than the buddhas of the three times, since without the guru, even though the buddhas of the three times are present, blessings and accomplishments will not arise in one's being. Therefore, even if you make an offering to just one pore of the guru's body it is much more noble than making offerings to the buddhas of the three times. It is praised extensively in all the vajra tantra scriptures that simply by succeeding in pleasing the guru, one will please the buddhas of the three times and receive their blessings. For those reasons, the guru is known as the complete embodiment of the three jewels or also as the fourth jewel. Therefore, understand that the guru is more powerful (*gnyan pa, nyenpa*) than the buddhas of the three times.

If you wonder, "Is there anything superior to guru yoga and so forth?" there certainly is not. Since although in the tradition of secret mantra there is no practice for entering the door of blessings, no dharma superior to the profound path of guru yoga, the guru who teaches one the secret mantra is also an emanation of the Teacher, the Lord of Sages. In the section of sutras about nirvana it is said:

Do not despair, Ananda.

Do not lament, Ananda.

I, in the future,

Manifesting as virtuous spiritual friends

Will act for the benefit of yourself and others.

Since they have practiced the paths of sutra and mantra that were taught out of the compassion of the Teacher, the Lord of Sages,

the gurus are also offspring born from Shakyamuni's speech. The guru endowed with experience and realisation is the heart son who has received the blessings of the relative and absolute bodhicitta of the Teacher's enlightened mindstream. Therefore, whatever guru yoga you practice, you must understand that [the guru] is not separate from the Teacher, Lord of Sages. Not only that, you must understand that the guru and whichever yidam you meditate on, those two are not separate, and that [they] are also not separate from all the buddhas of the three times. In those who have concepts of high and low and adopting and abandoning with regards to the buddhas, accomplishments will not arise.

Acknowledge the great kindness of the Teacher of the past and be supremely devoted to him. Having understood them [the gurus, yidams and so on] to be inseparable from [Shakyamuni], then whichever yoga of visualisation and recitation one engages in, be it the guru or yidam, it is certain that great accomplishments will be obtained.

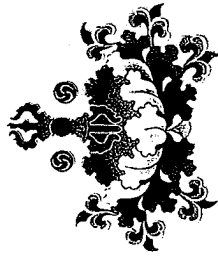
Therefore, when one visualises and recites based on the practice of recollecting the Lord of Sages, one must visualise and recite with the devotion of understanding that not only the sublime gurus who teach the dharma of sutra and mantra, but all the three jewels of the three times as well are actually contained within [the Buddha]. Although here in the context of sutra, merely recollecting the Buddha is considered most important, it is also quite alright to meditate on [the Buddha] as being indivisible with the guru. Yet this is not absolutely necessary, since simply by recalling the Buddha the aim will be accomplished.

When [reciting the Buddha's] names, [Buddha] is given the name 'Guru, Teacher', because [Buddha] is the guru of the three

worlds. Therefore, it is an appropriate name for the Buddha. However, if you understand it as being a sign that [the Buddha] is indivisible with whichever guru you yourself have faith in that is also quite alright.

In any case, even if you practice in the manner of guru yoga in which the guru himself, the root of the tradition of unsurpassable secret mantra, is in the form of the Lord of Sages, do as explained above. Since the guru him- or herself is the essence that embodies all buddhas, then on whichever buddha in whichever form you meditate there is no contradiction. It is the nature of things that the blessings as well arise in accordance with one's own devotion.

This was adapted from the *White Lotus*, the supportive teaching for the *Treasury of Blessings*, the teachings of the Gentle Protector [Manjushri], Mipham Rinpoche, without corrupting either the words or meaning. It is said that it is very good if those who do not know how to practice mahamudra and dzogchen practice in accord [with these teachings]. This was heard [by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche] from Rigdzin Tegchok (Vidyadhara of the Supreme Vehicle), the direct disciple of the omniscient guru. May virtue and excellence flourish!



THE VIDYADHARA'S FEAST

A Guide to the Meditation Stages of the Nine Yanas of the Heart Essence of the Three Enlightened Families

The Heart of the Tantras, Statements, and Pith Instructions

*rigs gsum snying thig gi theg dgu'i sgom rim gyi zin bris rgyud lung
man ngag gi snying po rig pa 'dzin pa'i dga' ston bzhugs so*

[THE SHRAVAKA YANA]

(1) The Shravakas' View:

[The shravakas] consider the apprehended and apprehender (*gzung 'dzin, zung dzin*) of the self of phenomena to be the absolute (*don dam, dondam*) and regard the causal and resultant four truths of samsara and nirvana as things to adopt and abandon. In Buddhaghya's *Stages of the Path* it says:

All those who have not realised non-duality

Skillful Grace
Tara Practice for Our Times



Teachings by
Tulku Urgyen & Adeg Rinpoche

Translated & edited by
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SKILLFUL GRACE

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When practicing anything that is true and good, do not give in to laziness and distraction, but instead continue with some constancy. The third type is the diligence of not turning back, which is not to lose faith or courage even if there are no immediate signs in your practice. Instead, see the value and carry on until reaching the final result.

The training is in the pledge that “I will train in these four paramitas to the best of my ability.”

Shamatha with Support

I will now explain in more detail the second part involving concentration, which is dhyana, the fifth paramita. There are two aspects: the causes for bringing forth concentration, and the actual concentration itself.

Since dhyana and shamatha are of identical nature, here is how to bring forth the support that is the cause for producing concentration. Keep your body away from distractions by finding a quiet place. Moreover, keep your mind away from conceptual thinking. Distractions are children, spouse, friends, and followers—basically all sentient beings. Likewise, further distractions are food, wealth, honor, gain, praise, fame, and a good reputation. To cling to any of these is a diversion. This being so, in a sutra the Buddha has taught the twenty shortcomings of attachment to diversions.¹⁹ The negative side of distractions is that they prevent the mind from simply remaining at ease. Distractions are that which diverts your attention whenever you try to sit down calmly. They capture your attention and draw you away from your practice. That is the definition of a distraction.

A remote place is somewhere free of these diversions. Having given up distractions, remain alone in a remote place,

in a retreat. The Tibetan word for retreat is actually *gompa*, and these days the monasteries have the name *gompa*. Actually, *gompa* means a place far away from the city or the village, or at least removed a certain distance from settlements. The Buddha has taught the benefit of retreat as being that it will quickly allow *samadhi* to take birth in your stream of being. When remaining in a remote place, your body and voice can be employed in virtuous actions and practice. However, being in solitude will not bring much benefit if you physically and verbally make yourself busy or pursue negative or pointless activities while staying in a quiet place. You are just giving another name to being in a distracted state. Abandon all those things. We can also make our minds emotionally disturbed by various kinds of thinking, becoming caught up in subtle or coarse thoughts. Give this up. Without distracting yourself in any way, one-pointedly train in shamatha and concentration. This is how *samadhi* will take birth in your being. That was the preparation.

Now comes the actual training in dhyana or concentration. The way to begin is by the first type of dhyana, the dhyana of peacefully abiding in actuality. Apply that presently in this life, not in some future life. Do so by developing pliancy of body and mind. In this context, there are certain physical and mental key points to implement. The first has to do with posture.

There are two ways to place the body: one with effort, the other effortless. These two types of body postures are used in both Mahamudra and Dzogchen—they are basically the same. The effortless posture means to leave the legs loosely crossed in the *sattva* posture and rest the hands freely on the knees. This is called the ‘position of mental ease.’ You are neither too tight nor too relaxed.

The deliberate or effortful posture is described as the 'sevenfold posture of Vairochana.' There are seven points to it. First, cross the legs like a vajra [this is commonly known as full lotus]. Straighten the spine like a pillar, so that it is perfectly erect, with one vertebra directly on top of the next. Extend the shoulders like the wings of a vulture, and bend the neck slightly like a hook. Keep the tongue touching the upper palate, the lips and teeth slightly parted, and hold the gaze at a forty-five degree angle in the direction of the tip of the nose.

There is a reason why we place the body in a particular position. Keeping the meditation posture affects the energy currents, of which there are five major and 21,600 minor currents. The five major currents are known as the upward-moving, the downward-clearing, the equalizing, the life-force sustaining, and the pervading currents. When the key points of the vajra body are activated, then these five primary currents automatically become currents of the wisdom winds, the winds of original wakefulness. This has to do with how, at some point, the materiality of the physical being disperses into rainbow light. There are many other reasons for each aspect of the sevenfold posture of Vairochana—primarily the specific way it affects the function of and the direct interaction it has with the energy currents. Of course, we could study all this, but the main benefit has to do with attaining the rainbow body.

There is an oral tradition that says when the body is straightened, the channels are straight, and when the channels are straight the energy currents flow freely. When the currents flow freely, the state of mind is suspended in naturalness. Body posture can have a direct effect on your

state of mind. When all the energy currents flow freely in a certain position, it is called 'the solitude of body.' When we suspend all verbal articulation and utterance, remaining silent with a particular type of free-flowing breathing, it is called 'the solitude of speech.' The energy currents are called the karma winds, and are interconnected with our mind and thought activity—all our concepts of good and evil, pleasant and unpleasant, hope and fear, and so on. When this particular body posture affects the flow of currents, the mental state eases into naturalness, which is called 'the solitude of mind.' Taken together, these are considered 'the threefold solitude of body, speech and mind.'

These points all have to do with the actual physical posture of settling your body and positioning it. Neither be too tight nor too relaxed. There is a medium balance between the two.

The way to begin meditation practice in this context is by using a support for the attention. Eventually, you go on to having no support, resting in unsupported concentration.

For the first of these, use Arya Tara as a support. This could be in the form of a painting or statue, but it should be of the correct proportions and of fine quality. Place the image in front of you so that you can direct your attention to the figure of Tara. If you do not have a physical statue or painting, it is fine to simply visualize what Tara looks like. As the root text states:

In particular, straighten your body, expel your stale breath.

Your focus, in the sky before you, is the form of Jetsün Tara,

Inseparable from your guru.

The nature of your guru is in the form of Tara. She is green like the purest emerald, brilliant, clear, radiant, and surrounded by five-colored light shining in all directions. She is peacefully smiling, with her right hand resting upon her right knee in the gesture of supreme giving, the right arm extended. In front of her heart center, her left hand holds, between the thumb and the ring finger, the stem of a blue lotus in full bloom at the level of her left ear. Her hair is loosely styled. At the top of her head, some braids are tied together with a huge shining jewel, the rest of the hair flowing freely down her back. She wears the various types of jewelry. First is her crown, adorned with different jewels. She wears earrings, necklaces, bracelets, anklets and a jeweled belt. The silken ornaments include the upper covering and the lower garment. Her right leg is slightly extended, while the left is slightly bent. She sits upon a white lotus and moon disc. This is how to visualize her.

This specific practice is taught by all the buddhas to help focus your attention and achieve stillness of mind. There are other methods you could use, but one particular way is to use a form of an awakened being, such as Tara, as a support for nondistraction. It is not the same as the visualization practice, where you have the three principles of stable pride, vivid presence and pure recollection of the symbolism. The image here is a support to avoid getting distracted by other things. Simply let your attention rest on the image, without speculating about whether it is correct or incorrect, good or not good.

Jamgön Kongtrül explains that you simply use this as a support for capturing the attention. Do not worry whether it is vivid or dull, precise or vague, whether the mind rests or does not rest, and so forth. You should completely

abandon any such hope, fear, worry or concern. Simply keep mindfulness on guard against getting distracted and wandering off.

When you are neither dull nor agitated, but poised, then rest your eyes at the level of Tara's heart center and simply remain settled in equanimity. If dullness, drowsiness, or murkiness is more predominant, raise your attention to between Tara's eyebrows, and simply focus there. If you feel agitated and disturbed, imagine a small blue sphere at the level of her navel and lower your eyes slightly. In all cases, focus your mind, eyes, and breath together one-pointedly, just as you do when you thread a needle. With such focused attention there is a one-pointedness that is undistracted. Train in this for a short period, but repeat it many times. As soon as you notice that you have wandered off, bring your attention back and again let it rest. By training in this repeatedly, the attention eventually is captured. When it has been caught, you simply remain there, undistracted, very relaxed and naturally, for as long as you can sustain it. At the end of the session, imagine that the form of the deity before you melts into light and is absorbed into you, so that the guru, Arya Tara's mind and your own mind are indivisibly of one taste, and then remain in the equanimity.

When training in this way, the main point is short periods repeated many times. Every time you feel drowsy or tired, raise your eyes and imagine that there is a little white sphere between Tara's eyes. When you feel disturbed or restless, lower your gaze and imagine that there is a small blue sphere at Tara's navel. When neither disturbed nor drowsy, simply rest your gaze at the level of her heart. By practicing in this way, you will develop quietness of mind. At the end of the session, just as before, settle into the state

of equanimity totally free of any mental constructs of the three spheres, as explained earlier.

This concludes the section on shamatha with support.

Shamatha without Support

In the previous section, I explained how to use the form of Arya Tara as the support for being undistracted in the development of dhyana, concentration. The next training is in developing concentration without using any support.

Here, Jamgön Kongtrül continues to explain that in order to develop concentration without using a support, assume the posture as in the previous practice. Exhale the stale breath. Then instead of keeping something in mind, simply interrupt any thinking about whatever occurs in the three times: past, present, and future. In other words, you do not ruminate over what has taken place previously, nor do you plan or anticipate anything that might happen in the future. Neither should you try to improve, modify or adjust your awareness in the present moment. Do not try to eliminate anything or encourage anything. Simply keep a lucid and undistracted awareness. The main point is to remain undistracted without doing anything else.

Previously, I mentioned that when you feel drowsy you should raise your gaze up to the place between Tara's eyes. If you feel agitated, you may lower the gaze to the navel. When you feel balanced, leave the gaze at Tara's heart. In this case, you may continue to raise or lower your gaze, but no other focus needs to be kept in mind. The main point is to simply allow your awareness to be very gentle and serene. Each time you do so, the thought flow, the involvement in thoughts, is interrupted. When you get distracted, merely come back to resting like that again.

Train like this over and over, but in such a way that you do not grow tired of it.

By training in this way, you will sometimes see things with your eyes or hear sounds with your ears that generate thoughts. Sensory experiences occur, based on the five senses, which stimulate thoughts. When that happens, do not follow up on the thought, but leave your attention right there. Take whatever you see or hear as a support and let your attention remain on it, instead of flying off to the next thing. By doing this, any sound, sight, or other potential distraction can be used as a support for the quietude and calmness of the mind.

When you get too agitated, distracted or restless, or you feel bored or tired of this, do not try to calm down the mind or stop it from being agitated. If suddenly the mind gets too restless and wants to think of something, let the attention go to that. But whatever it goes to, leave the attention on that, rather than jumping to a second or third subject. You are somewhat allowing thoughts to occur, but you do not jump onto the next. Merely sustain the awareness of what you think of. In doing so, you alternate between remaining with whatever occurs, and thinking of something and then remaining with that.

Usually in this kind of practice you go back and forth between being focused and being relaxed. There is some fluctuation between those two. As you grow more accustomed, you do not fluctuate too much between being too concentrated or too tight and too loose. You cultivate a more balanced way of sustaining awareness. Once you get to that, there are certain stages that you go through, three of which are mentioned here. The first one is said to be like a waterfall in the mountains, the second like a peacefully flowing river, and the third like an

ocean free of waves. In the beginning, it feels like there is a continuous stream of thoughts. It is somewhat violent—one thing, then the next and the next and the next and the next, continually. You think, “Do I actually get so occupied with thinking? I never used to have thoughts like this.” In the meditation state, you discover how much your mind churns out thoughts. It is usually like this—it did not just happen because you started to meditate. Now, you finally become aware of the flow of thought that has been taking place all the time. This is the first level of experience in shamatha. As you simply let go and train with that, it diminishes. The rush eases off, to become more like the gentle flow of a river. That is the second level. Eventually the thoughts become less and less and less, until the mind is like a placid ocean undisturbed by waves.

The practice up to this point is called planting the roots or laying the foundation for all subsequent meditation. Samadhi, vipashyana, and so forth are henceforth possible, as you have prepared yourself in this way. All the different practices that follow have a platform or a root from which they can grow. The instructions up to this point belong to the first type of dhyana.

The second type of dhyana is ‘the dhyana that produces the virtuous qualities.’ This means any kind of pursuit that you have in meditation practice. All of these states of samadhi that produce specific qualities, called ‘emancipations’, ‘subjugations’, ‘perception spheres’, ‘totalities’, and so forth, now become possible due to your having laid this foundation. The third type of dhyana is called ‘the dhyana that accomplishes the welfare of sentient beings.’ It has to do with the samadhis, clairvoyance, and the superknowledges, by means of which you can actually help others. Developing

both the second and third types of dhyana require having perfected the first type.

PRAJÑA

Now we have come to the sixth paramita—insight, *sherab* in Tibetan or *prajña* in Sanskrit. Please understand that this *prajña* is, in essence, exactly the same as the awakened state of all buddhas. It is the intelligence that fully discerns all phenomena; in that sense, it is not different from the awakened state. It manifests due to the accumulation of merit. As Shantideva says, “All the Buddha’s teachings are simply for the purpose of *prajña*.” Jamgön Kongtrül places his explanation under two headings: intent and application.

The intent has three parts. Initially it is the knowledge of the ultimate, which is realization of emptiness, the natural state. Subsequently, there is knowledge of the relative, which is to clearly understand how all knowable things are in their identities, and the connection between causes and effects and dependent origination. Thirdly, there is the intelligence of how to benefit beings, which is carrying out the four means of magnetizing, and so forth.

The application can also be divided into three sections. First, there is the training in the absence of personal identity; next, the training in the absence of identity of phenomena or things and finally, the training in the emptiness suffused with compassion, or the emptiness with the heart of compassion. In this way, all the great treatises and scriptures teach exactly the same thing. This is called ‘establishing certainty in the view.’ This is the kind of knowledge that is necessary to understand.

There is much more to study about these topics, but now we are going to train in a particular type of *prajña*—how to produce the wakefulness of *vipashyana*.

Vipashyana

In this context, the insight of *vipashyana* is produced by realizing the natural state. This type of *vipashyana* is an insight that comes after having understood how things actually are. I will explain how to realize the nature of things according to the approach taken by Atisha. The substance of the training is none other than the wisdom of *vipashyana* brought fully forth. After realizing it, you can then truly train in *vipashyana*, which has two aspects: inquiring what the nature of things actually is, and then settling in the natural state.

Inquiry has three aspects. First, inquire into externally perceived objects. Next, inquire into the inner perceiving mind. Lastly, seek and investigate the very identity or nature of this mind.

Regarding investigation into the perceived objects that are external, the Buddha says in *The Lankavatara Sutra*, “The mind that is churned by habitual tendencies is seen as if it were various objects. In actuality, these are not objects, but the mind itself. So, to see objects as being external is mistaken.” In the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, the Buddha says something like, “Hey, children of the conquerors, the three realms are only mind.” As the root text states:

Within this state, all that appears
As outer and inner, the world and beings,
Is merely personal perception, like dreaming.

Endless quotations substantiate this principle, both in the words of the Buddha and in the treatises of Buddhist masters. That which is regarded as the outer world, formed of the four elements, as well as the beings living in it who appear through the four types of rebirth, are all experienced by deluded mind as if they were external. In actuality, apart from these confused perceptions, there is not even as much as an atom that truly exists outside. It is like this example: while dreaming, you may see mountains, walls, houses, men and women, horses, and cattle, and so forth, in all different shapes and forms. There can be pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, fear and anxiety—but no matter what you dream of, it is nothing but a dream. Such phenomena are merely perceptions that take place within deluded mind, apart from which they have no real existence. Though the state of dreaming is intrinsically unreal, we still dream. Due to not knowing that it is a dream, all the various emotions—joy and sorrow, fear and anxiety—are experienced as real.

Our present perceptions are similarly unreal and insubstantial. They unfold and function within the experience of deluded mind. The whole falsehood of relative delusion collapses once you understand and recognize that they are false and mistaken, and you understand that all appearances are simply your own mind. This is the understanding to arrive at. Be persistent in inquiring and examining in this way.

That was about external objects. Now, let's address the inner perceiving mind. If the perceived objects are all mind, shouldn't the mind itself actually exist? Shouldn't the perceiving mind within be real? Actually, mind has no reality or concreteness whatsoever, because the stream of mind is

not composed of either singular or multiple moments. This stream of mind is not perceptible by anyone. It cannot be seen. It has no location. Therefore, you cannot prove that there is such a thing as 'mind.' In *The Sutra Requested by Kashyapa*, the Buddha says, "Kashyapa, mind is not inside or outside. Nor can it be found anywhere between the two. Kashyapa, mind is not something you can scrutinize, nor can it be shown. It is not supported by anything. It is not visible. It is not perceptible. It does not remain anywhere. Kashyapa, this mind has never been seen, is not being seen and will never be seen, even by all the buddhas."

What we label 'mind' is, in fact, just an occurrence of thought that suddenly appears and in the next moment completely vanishes. Besides that, there is no thing there whatsoever. It is comparable to how a cloud forms in the sky and vanishes without a trace, simply disappearing within the empty expanse. Similarly, in the empty, natural state, a thought occurs and naturally vanishes. This seemingly continual arising and ceasing fools all sentient beings, for, in actuality, within emptiness there is no thing whatsoever. The sudden arising of a moment of knowing is thought of as being 'me' and clung to as being 'I.' That ego is believed to be the personal identity. This so-called 'self' does not possess even the slightest substance indicating a true existence. Please inquire and look carefully into your own experience, until you fully realize that this is so. Decisively and from deep within your heart, you should be very certain that there is no real personal identity.

The first inquiry covered the absence of identity of phenomena, and the second was the inquiry into the absence of personal identity. Now, the third inquiry involves seeking and investigating the nature of this mind.

Since there is no basis whatsoever for assigning the labels 'personal identity' and 'the identity of phenomena,' in that there is not anything that can be verified and proven, you may think, "Well then, there is nothing at all. It is only a void nature of mind, nothingness." However, this is not the case. That the perceiver and perceived have no concrete existence does not mean that there is a complete nothingness. To maintain so would involve assigning a new label, such as 'inconcrete' because of not being concrete. All phenomena are from the very beginning unverifiable, by their very nature. Whether something is concrete or not is merely a matter of conceptual labeling. Reality transcends both. As the Buddha said in *The Lankavatara Sutra*, "Just as external objects that are neither concrete nor inconcrete, so is the mind. It cannot be held as having substantial existence. Therefore, 'nonarising nature' means to have given up every opinion."

In addition, in the *Prajñāparamita*, the Buddha says, "Mind does not exist as mind, but as a nature that is luminous wakefulness." This luminosity refers to the naked quality that is able to know. Even though it is not a 'thing,' there is still an unimpeded ability to know. That is called luminosity—empty, yet able to know. Saraha says, "To hold the opinion that mind is concrete is to be like an ox. But to hold the opinion that it is inconcrete is to be even more foolish." Accordingly, when you inquire into the very identity of your own mind, you cannot find any 'thing,' because it does not have any physical form, shape, or color; it is not a material entity with defining marks. Nothing supports that. Likewise, you cannot maintain the opinion that there is nothing at all, because there is a knowing that forms the basis for any experience belonging to samsara or nirvana. In

other words, there is a lucid quality that is simply conscious or aware, unceasingly.

This being so, we may then form the opinion that there are many kinds of minds. Yet this does not hold up either, because all of them are of the same taste or nature, being emptiness. As all moments of experiences are equally empty, there are not many kinds. Moreover, you cannot say that there is only one mind, because there are so many kinds of experiences possible, such as those of the five senses and the mental field. In other words, how the reality of experience actually *is* defies any conceptual constructs that we may form about it. This inquiry is to recognize how the nature of mind truly is.

Settling into the Natural State

We have now investigated external objects and personal identity, what is considered this 'me' that perceives. By doing this, we have become certain that these are not to be found anywhere. In short, we are unable to prove a concrete reality of anything whatsoever. This is what such inquiry is for—discovering the natural state, what is real. Now we need to settle in that, which is the second section. It is how to just be that way. Kongtrül explains that the settling evenly in the continuity of the natural state is *after* having investigated by means of discriminating intelligence in the previous way, and *after* having achieved some certainty in how reality is; it is to settle in equanimity within that certainty. As Shantideva says, "Once you do not hold in mind any concept of anything as being concrete or inconcrete, at that point, you do not need to hold anything else in mind, but simply remain utterly peaceful and without concepts." Having discovered that everything is like a rainbow or magical illusion, that there

is no concrete reality to the perceiver or the perceived, you do not need to form any extraneous opinion. Simply remain like that, utterly peaceful.

The way to practice this is to keep the sevenfold posture, the same posture as before, and exhale the stale breath. Through training in shamatha, you have already acquired a sense of ease, of remaining free of concepts and yet quite lucid. Beyond these attributes, you do not have to establish or exclude, adopt or avoid anything whatsoever. Simply divest or divorce yourself of any opinion. You do not need to produce a thought about anything. You do not have to speculate about anything. Simply allow your attention to be as it is, free of all constructs. In other words, remain naturally, like a totally clear, wide-open sky, and allow that to continue. Simply remain in that.

Vipashyana here is not some particular insight that you try to keep. In shamatha, the mind is somewhat settled and calm. Now, through inquiry, there is a seeing of how this mind actually is—that there is neither perceiver nor perceived really existing anywhere. To simply see what is real is called insight and given the label 'vipashyana.' It does not mean fabricating or holding any understanding in mind whatsoever. It is nonfabrication, merely allowing the natural state to continue. Vipashyana is nothing other than simply being natural and continuing in that way.

In the text called *The Precious Treasury of Nonarising*, Longchen Rabjam states, "When you do not conceptualize anything whatsoever and you do not speculate in any way, to simply be uncontrived is the precious treasury of nonarising." In other words, complete nonfabrication.

Among all the various instructions, the guidance in vipashyana is exactly this, the nonfabrication. During the

state of composure, there is actually no thing being meditated upon or cultivated yet, at the same time, you are not to be distracted from that for even one instant. You simply settle in your natural state that is lucid and aware, and maintain its continuity. This was about the state of composure.

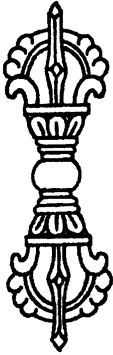
In postmeditation, you regard whatever you perceive, all appearances and perceptions, as being a magical illusion, or like a dream. You keep that assurance, that confidence. At the same time, you regard with compassion all other sentient beings that are continuously involved in experiencing samsaric suffering due to mistakenly believing in themselves and appearances as being real. They have not understood the natural state or the reality of emptiness. All these beings are your own parents. There is a deepfelt compassion towards all of them that is indivisible from this emptiness, free of perceiver and perceived. Endeavor in this until you attain confidence in the nature of reality, your innate state. This transcendent knowledge, *prajñāparamita*, is the ultimate Arya Tara. In this way you come face to face with the ultimate Tara; you meet the real Tara.

To reiterate, during the meditation session you simply remain without speculating, without forming any concepts whatsoever. Remain completely natural and uncontrived. Then, during postmeditation—meaning during daily activity—try never to lose the attitude that all of this is like a dream or a magical illusion. In this way, compassion for others arises from within this state of emptiness free of perceiver and perceived. This compassion is completely spontaneous and unfabricated. By growing increasingly accustomed to this training during composure and postmeditation, you will eventually recognize the ultimate Tara, *prajñāparamita*, transcendent knowledge.

In some teachings, it is said that through intelligent inquiry, you discover that there is no real basis to the perceiver or the perceived—in other words, you discover emptiness. Settling into that assurance, you still need to retain a very subtle understanding of emptiness. For if you let that slip, then there is no difference between just settling there and shamatha without support.

However, in my opinion, once you have gone through the intellectual inquiry, have discovered the lack of perceiver and perceived, and have gained the assurance that there is no thing there to hold in mind, you do not need on top of that to hold in mind the idea that they are devoid of true existence. That is definitely not required. There is no danger of losing anything, because once you have realized this that is it. This does not mean you should stray into forgetting through thinking about something else, either. As long as you are not distracted, you do not have to keep the conceptual idea of emptiness during the composure, the meditation state. Nonetheless, during the postmeditation state, when you interact with others, you should continuously bring to mind the notion that all of this is like a dream. All of this is like a magical illusion.

This concludes the stages of instruction and the trainings that correspond to the medium type of person.



Wild Awakening

*The Heart of
Mahamudra & Dzogchen*

DZOGCHEN PONLOP



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MAHAMUDRA LINEAGE HISTORY

Mahamudra emphasizes the continuity of oral instructions, which are passed on from master to student. This emphasis is reflected in the literal meaning of the name “Kagyü.” The first syllable, *ka* (*bka'*), which means “speech,” refers to the scriptures of the Buddha and the oral instructions of the guru. *Ka* carries the sense of the enlightened meaning conveyed by the words of the teacher, as well as the force with which such words of insight are conveyed. The second syllable, *gyu* (*brgyud*), means “lineage” or “tradition.” Together, these syllables mean “the lineage of the oral instructions.”

Over twenty-five hundred years ago, Prince Siddhartha attained enlightenment under the bodhi tree in Bodhgaya and then manifested as the Buddha. According to Buddhist cosmology, he was the fourth historic Buddha of this fortunate aeon. Prince Siddhartha’s achievement of enlightenment—the realization itself—is called the *dharmakaya*, or the body of truth. When that realization is expressed through subtle symbols, it is called the *sambhogakaya*, or the body of enjoyment. The physical form of Shakyamuni Buddha, which is the historical manifestation of such realization in a form more accessible to sentient beings, is called the *nirmanakaya*, or the body of manifestation.

The Mahamudra lineage traces its origin back to Shakyamuni Buddha through Marpa Chökyi Lodrö, the great translator and realized yogi who brought the unbroken lineage of Buddha’s Mahamudra from India to Tibet. At the age of fifteen, Marpa first trained as a translator under Drogmi Shakya Yeshe and later traveled three times to India and four times to Nepal in search of Buddhist teachings. Marpa is said to have studied with 108 masters and yogis, but his principal teachers were Naropa and Maitripa. Marpa then transmitted the lineage to his heart son, the famous yogi Milarepa.

The great master Gampopa, who is also known as Dakpo Lhaje, and Rechungpa were the principal students of Milarepa. Gampopa was prophesied in the sutras by the Buddha and established the framework of the lineage by unifying Milarepa’s Mahamudra lineage with the

stages-of-the-path tradition of the Kadampa lineage. The resulting unique tradition, known as the Dakpo Kagyu, was critical to the unfolding of the Kagyu lineage.

Gampopa transmitted this lineage to his three heart sons, one of whom was the First Karmapa, Düsum Khyenpa. In the Kagyu lineage supplication, the line “knower of the three times, omniscient Karmapa” is a reference to the First Karmapa. The transmission was passed from the First Karmapa to his disciple, Drogön Rechenpa, and then from him to the Second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi. It has passed continuously in this way to the present incarnation, who is the Seventeenth Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, the youngest living Mahamudra lineage holder. The continuity of this lineage transmission is known as the golden rosary.

In general, there are two main lineages of Mahamudra, which are known as the direct and the indirect lineages. The original source of the transmission of the direct lineage is the Buddha Vajradhara, while the original source of the transmission of the indirect lineage is Shakyamuni Buddha.

The Direct Lineage

The original source of the teachings for the special transmission of the direct lineage is Vajradhara, who is the primordial, or dharmakaya, buddha. Vajradhara expresses the quintessence of buddhahood itself, the essence of the historical Buddha’s realization of enlightenment. The skylike dharmakaya nature of Vajradhara is depicted in paintings by his dark blue color. Vajradhara is central to the Kagyu lineage because Tilopa received the Vajrayana teachings directly from Vajradhara, who is synonymous with the dharmakaya, the source of all manifestations of enlightenment. Thus, the Kagyu lineage originated from the very nature of buddhahood.

Tilopa acknowledged the origin of this Mahamudra lineage in his songs. He sang, “I, the yogi Tilopa, do not have any human teacher; I do not have any human master to follow. My teacher, my guru, is the great Vajradhara, the dharmakaya nature of Vajradhara.” This shows that the lineage came directly from Vajradhara to Tilopa.

The Indirect Lineage

The line of transmission originating with Shakyamuni Buddha, which is known as the indirect lineage, is also referred to as the oral instruction lineage. Tilopa originally inherited four main streams of wisdom that were transmitted by Indian mahasiddhas such as Saraha, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Chandrakirti, and Matangi. Tilopa then condensed these four special transmission lineages into one and transmitted it to Naropa. This stream then passed from teacher to disciple: from Naropa to Marpa, Marpa to Milarepa, and then Milarepa to Gampopa.

However, Gampopa received the transmissions of two different Indian lineages. One was the tantric lineage, which came from Tilopa to Naropa to Marpa and then to Milarepa. That tradition conveys a very strong Vajrayana element. Gampopa also received the full transmission of the Indian master Atisha, which is known as the Kadampa lineage.

Atisha was trained at Nalanda University and became a great Buddhist master. He also served as the discipline master at Nalanda University. During the time of Marpa, he came to Tibet and transmitted many Sutrayana teachings. He was responsible for the transmission of both the philosophical and the practice traditions of the Prajnaparamita teachings. Thus, Atisha's lineage was based primarily on the sutras, although he also transmitted some tantric and Mahamudra practices.

Therefore, when the Mahamudra lineage came to Gampopa, it was a rich mixture of the tantra and sutra traditions. Gampopa presented the Mahamudra lineage by teaching three different methods of practicing Mahamudra.

THREE CLASSIFICATIONS OF MAHAMUDRA

According to the teachings and tradition of Lord Gampopa's lineage, the three classifications of Mahamudra are Sutra Mahamudra, Mantra Mahamudra, and Essence Mahamudra. Sutra Mahamudra is

primarily based on the sutra teachings, and Mantra Mahamudra is primarily based on the mantra teachings. Essence Mahamudra draws from both sutra and mantra, but is traditionally distinguished as the devotional path based on blessings.

Sutra Mahamudra: The Secret Road in the City

The general teachings of Mahamudra were presented by Lord Buddha and his followers in such sutras as the Prajnaparamita sutras or the discourses on transcendental knowledge. These sutras teach primarily “the great emptiness.” The shortest of the Prajnaparamita sutras is the *Heart Sutra*, which teaches the inseparability of form and emptiness. That sutra, along with the whole collection of Prajnaparamita teachings, is one of the bases for Sutra Mahamudra.

The teachings on buddha nature are the other basis for Sutra Mahamudra.³ The buddha-nature teachings point out that the nature of our mind, emotions, and thoughts is complete wakefulness. That wakefulness is what we call buddhahood, or enlightenment. Furthermore, that enlightenment is the nature of all sentient beings. This essence of enlightenment is what we call buddha nature or *tathagatagarbha* in Sanskrit.

These two streams of teachings form the basis for the sutra aspect of Mahamudra. The practice of Sutra Mahamudra essentially involves the study and contemplation of these sutras, followed by meditation. We contemplate the teachings on emptiness, or *shunyata*, as well as the teachings on buddha nature, which is our fundamental wakefulness. Through this process, we discover our own heart of enlightenment. We discover that enlightenment is nothing external to us but is found within this very mind—within our emotions, thoughts, and perceptions. It is within these experiences that we see the basic state of enlightenment.

The meditation of Sutra Mahamudra essentially consists of resting one’s mind, free of mental activity, in the state of nonconceptual wisdom. This is the fundamental definition of Sutra Mahamudra: mind resting in the state in which it experiences the *dharmadhatu*, which is

the expanse or nature of all things. This resting is essentially a nonconceptual wisdom beyond all elaboration, or the unity of clarity and emptiness. In this context, one meditates in the following way: The object of one's meditation is luminosity free of any projections; the perceiving subject is the lack of mental engagement; and one meditates without mental engagement. There are many extensive explanations on meditating without mental engagement, found primarily in the teachings of Maitripa and Sahajavajra.

The Sutrayana approach to Mahamudra is seen as a very profound method because it does not require any of the sophisticated and complex tantric rituals, deity yoga visualization practices, or *samayas*.⁴ It is a simple sutra approach, yet it conveys the direct transmission of the tantric essence of awakening. This particular approach is also known as a secret passage. It can be compared to a secret street within a city—a route that has not been widely discovered. Although it is right in the heart of the city, very few people know about this secret street. What is the difference between this street and the other streets in the city? This street is a shortcut, without traffic or traffic lights, and it is a direct route. This street is right within this very city, and it will take you straight to your destination without any delays. Thus, in order to find this path, you do not have to go far. The direct and profound methods of Sutrayana Mahamudra are found right within the sutra approach, right within the ordinary and simple path of spiritual practice. Through this path, we can attain complete buddhahood by traversing the five paths and ten *bhumis*.⁵

Sutra Mahamudra is viewed as being very profound, straight to the point, yet simple. The difference between Sutra Mahamudra and other sutra approaches, such as the general Hinayana and Mahayana paths, is that Sutra Mahamudra has a tradition of skillful means that contains profound methods of directly pointing out the selfless and luminous nature of mind. There is a direct method of pointing out, which usually does not exist in other sutra approaches. The skillful methods of pointing out the nature of mind used in Sutra Mahamudra are imported, in a sense, from the Vajrayana tradition. Therefore, the essence of Sutra Mahamu-

dra is usually described as being prajnaparamita, or the transcendental wisdom of emptiness, with a touch of the Vajrayana. Finally, it is called Mahamudra, the great seal, because by using the very words and teachings of the sutras, it brings the realization of Mahamudra.

The Sutra Mahamudra approach is seen as a specialty of the Kagyu tradition and was the central emphasis of Gampopa's teachings. Therefore, although it originated in India and was also taught by Marpa and Milarepa, Gampopa is regarded as the main figure responsible for bringing this teaching to its full development and manifestation.

Mantra Mahamudra: The Path of Great Upaya

The second aspect of the Mahamudra tradition is the approach of the Mantrayana, or the Vajrayana.⁶ This approach involves quite profound and sophisticated methods, which include working with creation stage and completion stage deity practices, as well as very detailed instructions on working with *nadi*, *prana*, and *bindu*.⁷ The main presentation of Vajrayana Mahamudra is found in the *Anuttarayoga* tantras and in the instructions of those tantras. These tantras are transmitted through the four principal *abhishekas*, or empowerments. When Mahamudra is introduced as the naked, natural state through the use of Vajrayana methods, this is called Mantra Mahamudra.

A special feature of the Vajrayana path is the variety and richness of its methods, through which one can realize the nature of mind. This diversity of methods is not emphasized in the Sutra Mahamudra approach, in which there is just one simple pointing-out method for experiencing Mahamudra. In Mantra Mahamudra, there are many means of pointing out mind's nature, such as the process of the four *abhishekas*. When we go through the initiation process of an *abhisheka*, we are empowered to practice the mandala of a particular deity, which symbolizes the nature of mind. This is the traditional way in which a student is introduced to the nature of mind. The images of deities represented in paintings and sculptures are actually reflections, mirror images, of the nature of our own mind. By working with such a reflection through the process of visualization, we are working toward the

recognition of our own mind. For example, in order to see your own face, you have to rely upon a mirror. When you see your reflection, you can say, “Oh, yes, my face has such and such features,” and you can recognize whether your face is clean or dirty. Similarly, the pure and impure aspects of mind are reflected in these symbolic images of a deity. Thus, through deity yoga practice, Mantra Mahamudra reflects to us the nature of mind.

The Mantra Mahamudra deity practice is very profound; at the same time, it is quite easy to misunderstand the images and to misinterpret the deity as an external entity. The practice of the Vajrayana path requires a very strong understanding, and the source of that understanding is the instructions of the lineage and the Vajrayana tantras. When we study the instructions and receive the transmission, our understanding becomes clear. Through this clear understanding, we are able to genuinely relate to Vajrayana deity practice.

Essence Mahamudra: Simultaneous Realization and Liberation

Essence Mahamudra is transmitted through a path more profound and more wondrous than the previous two because it leads to the sudden realization of the true nature of mind, which is called *thamal gyi shepa* (*tha mal gyi shes pa*), or ordinary mind.⁸

Essence Mahamudra is practiced when an extremely realized guru bestows a transmission—a particular type of blessing, or adhishtana, that is called “the empowerment of vajra wisdom”—upon an extremely receptive, open, devoted, and qualified student. This empowerment is regarded as the descent of the actual realization of the root and lineage gurus upon or into a student. Through the descent of the blessings of this vajra wisdom, *thamal gyi shepa* suddenly awakens in that student’s heart and is fully recognized on the spot. As a result, the student experiences what is called simultaneous realization and liberation.

On this path, there is no need for either the elaborate methods of Mantra Mahamudra or the gradual training of Sutra Mahamudra. In Sutra Mahamudra, there are still some forms; for example, the practices of *shamatha* and *vipashyana* meditation, as well as the practices of

bodhichitta, are retained. There is also a great deal of formal study. In Mantrayana Mahamudra, there is also a certain formality of method that can be seen in the reliance upon ceremony and ritual; for example, there are extensive liturgies, visualizations, and mantra recitations. Thus, in this sense, Vajrayana Mahamudra is also a very formal way of introducing the nature of mind. In contrast, the Essence Mahamudra path is totally formless. The transmission happens instantaneously. Essence Mahamudra is nothing more than one's naked, ordinary mind resting in the unfabricated state.

In the Essence Mahamudra tradition, all conceptual clinging, such as clinging to ideas of sacred and profane or of virtuous and unvirtuous, is cut through, and we work directly with the experience of mind and its nature. The lineage guru points out the nature of mind to us, directly and nakedly. This kind of pointing-out instruction is very genuine. It is not something that we can mimic or repeat. We cannot "try it out" one time and say, "That was just a rehearsal. It did not work out, so okay, let's do the same thing again." That is not how it works. In the tradition of this lineage, we get one direct and naked pointing out, which has an effect. Throughout the history of Essence Mahamudra, pointing out has always happened in a simple, ordinary way. This type of pointing out typifies the Essence Mahamudra approach, where we are working directly with our experiences of ordinary, worldly life, as well as our experience of the nature of mind.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE MAHAMUDRA JOURNEY

We prepare ourselves for the Mahamudra journey first by coming to understand its place within the more general Buddhist journey and, second, by grounding ourselves in its essential meanings, characteristics, and forms. Then we will be ready to look more closely at the details of the three modes of Sutra, Mantra, and Essence Mahamudra.

Ground, Path, and Fruition

The Mahamudra journey is usually viewed from the perspective of ground, path, and fruition. For example, when we begin our Sutra

The Treasury of Knowledge

Book Eight, Part Four

Esoteric Instructions

*A Detailed Presentation of the
Process of Meditation in Vajrayāna*

Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé

KALU RINPOCHÉ TRANSLATION GROUP
under the direction of Venerable Bokar Rinpoché

This volume
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The Long Traditions of Sutra and Mantra [i]

Sutra tradition is freedom from elaborations,
 Mantra tradition of bliss-emptiness mahāmudrā is special due to
 coemergence and empowerment.

This widely renowned tradition called “Incomparable Dakpo Kagyu” is reported to be no mere lineage of words but rather the lineage of ultimate meaning. This refers to the fact that it is an uninterrupted lineage of flawless realization of mahāmudrā. One’s root guru is thus whoever was the source of one’s mahāmudrā realization, and that practice system has not deteriorated right up until the present. Here we focus on the most famous instructions of this precious lineage, the mahāmudrā.

There are two well-known traditions. The one that is in common with the sutra tradition instructs one to rest in equanimity with luminous clarity as the object, without any mental fabrication on the part of the subject. The mantra tradition is the mahāmudrā of the union of bliss and emptiness, joined coemergence.²⁰⁵ The pristine awareness arising from empowerment²⁰⁶ and targeting the vital points of the vajra body makes it special.

[The Sutra Tradition] [aa]

In the teachings of Dakpo Rinpoche²⁰⁷ he says:

The sourcebook of this mahāmudrā of ours is the *Mahayana Highest Continuum* composed by the transcendent conqueror Maitreya.

Furthermore, the powerful lord Maitrīpa,²⁰⁸ having received the instructions of the Great Brahmin Saraha²⁰⁹ and his spiritual heirs, composed works such as *The Ten Verses on Suchness*²¹⁰ that give the esoteric instructions of the perfections consistent with the mantra tradition. Upon listening to them, Lord Marpa said:

The essential meaning of the ultimate vehicle
 Free of limits, unfabricated by mind,
 The dharma of mahāmudrā is introduced...
 (etc., up to:)

...This is the tradition held by the great lord Maitrīpa.

And Milarepa said:

Right now in the intermediate state between samsara and nirvana,
Mahāmudrā introduces the abiding nature.
Seek to ascertain the view, the basic ground.

The meaning of all these is expressed in terms of the view and meditation:

There is nothing at all to remove,
And not the slightest thing to be added.
Look genuinely at the genuine.
When genuinely seen, it is total liberation.²¹¹

And again from the *Mahayana Highest Continuum*:²¹²

The [buddha nature] constituent is empty of incidental [stains],
Which have the characteristic of being separable from it.
It is not empty of unsurpassed qualities,
Which have the characteristic of being inseparable from it.

That is to say, this luminous clarity that is mind's nature has no stains at all that need to be removed because it is naturally without stains since the very beginning. There is not the slightest quality that was not there before that needs to be newly created and added because the essence of the qualities has existed inherently since forever. For these reasons, the buddha nature constituent is empty of artificial, incidental stains that have the characteristic of being completely separable from that essence. But the constituent is not empty of the unsurpassed buddha qualities, such as the ten powers, that are its own genuine nature and have the characteristic of being completely inseparable from it. For example, when a jaundiced person sees a white conch shell as yellow, the conch itself is empty of the projected yellow but not empty of the white.

Thus the desire to remove stains and the desire to add qualities are both obscuring conceptualizations of hope and fear and ought to be abandoned. The genuine suchness is the ordinary mind of the present moment, appear-

ance and emptiness inseparable, neither true nor false. Without corrupting it with acceptance or rejection, one should look at just that suchness with the wisdom of one's own reflexive awareness and meditate.

The “view” (*lta ba*) is to know and see with discernment. “Meditation” (*sgom pa*) is to rest one-pointedly within that without distraction. Concerning how to do this, the honorable Rangjung said:²¹³

Everything is neither true nor false,
The wise deem it all to be like water-moons.
This ordinary mind itself
Is called essence of the victors, the realm of reality.

And in order to clarify further, glorious Khachö Wangpo said:

This simple clarity of appearance-awareness in the present
moment
Is the very face of the relative truth of phenomena.
If you know the vital point of this uncontrived norm,
Then the ultimate truth is also just this.
Scholars of scriptural sophistry cite the two truths
With many references and reasonings but miss the point.
Holding the two as different violates the nondual.

The relative truth is the incidental stains, like the yellow projected on the conch. The ultimate truth is the buddha nature, like the white of the conch. That is, there is only an appearance perceived by a confused subject. Other than that, the object of the conch itself has no white or yellow to be added or removed. Therefore, the esoteric instruction is to rest undisturbed in the uncontrived state.

In short, what are called “samsara” and “nirvana” are posited only from the perspective of mere appearances in relative reality. The inherent nature of them both is luminous clarity free of elaboration, which is said to be “buddha nature” (*bde bar gshegs pa'i snying po*, Skt. *sugatagarbha*). Therefore, in the definitive meaning, mere appearance and its inherent nature are not divisible into separate things, like fire and its heat.

For that reason, the Mother [Perfection of Wisdom sutras] say such things as, “Form is empty; emptiness is form,” and so on.²¹⁴ The honorable Rangjung said:

Mahāmudrā, the abiding nature free of elaboration,
Is empty of all characteristics of conceptual elaboration.
Without fixation on its clarity, this pure inherent nature
Is called the buddha nature.

Concerning this, the dharma lord Sakya Panchen²¹⁵ asserted:

Mahāmudrā is not designated in the tradition of the perfections. The pristine awareness of mahāmudrā only arises from empowerment.

Adhering to this position, the bigshots broadcast much meaningless chatter, but as the master Jñānakīrti stated in *Entry into Suchness*:²¹⁶

The other term for the Mother Perfection of Wisdom is mahāmudrā, because it is the very essence of nondual pristine awareness.

Not only did he explain the use of the term in both the perfection of wisdom taught in the sutras and the mahāmudrā of mantra, he also explained the designations of the names:

Those of the highest faculties who thoroughly exert themselves in the perfections can be truly possessed of mahāmudrā, even as an ordinary person, through meditating on calm abiding and higher insight. With this genuine realization, the signs of irreversibility will manifest.

Sahajavajra also explained it in a similar way, which will come up below.²¹⁷ Dakpo Rinpoché induced the realization of mahāmudrā even in beginners who had not received empowerment. Therefore this is the tradition of the perfections. These are instructions arising primarily from the Kadampa tradition. The esoteric instruction found in the second part of Joined Coemergent Mahāmudrā²¹⁸ written by the lord and those of this present system are similar in all respects. Even the stages of the four yogas are clearly explicated there.²¹⁹

Accordingly, it is said that the majority in a congregation should be guided in the stages of the path as laid out by the Kadampas, while those

who are extraordinary should be guided in the path of method that comes from Lama Mila. It is the former that is meant here. With this in mind, the honorable Lord Mikyö Dorjé said:

The authentic spiritual power of mahāmudrā in the Kagyu, the lineage of the great Nāropa that began with Vajradhara, is only attained by actualizing the example and authentic ultimate pristine awareness by means of the higher three supreme empowerments. The system of guidance in calm abiding and higher insight taught these days that is shared with the causal vehicle of the perfections comes from the lineage of the protector Atīśa. It is the esoteric instruction of *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. Lord Gampopa and the protector Pakmo Drupa have given this the name of “joined coemergent mahāmudrā” (*phyag chen lhan cig skyes sbyor*) just for the sake of those disciples in the degenerate age who would like a “really high” vehicle.

It has been the practice of most of Dakpo’s heart disciples to present the mahāmudrā instructions after having first bestowed the empowerment. This is the position of the customary path held in common by sutra and mantra.

[The Mantra Tradition] [bb]

In general, the conventional designation of the term *mahāmudrā* (*phyag rgya chen po*, “great seal”) is used only in the mantra vehicle. It means this: the state of union is “seal” (*phyag rgya*, Skt. *mudrā*), while its inherent nature that pervades all phenomena is “great” (*chen po*, Skt. *maha[nt]*) because no phenomena are beyond it. Here, the entire extent of outer appearances is the union of appearance and emptiness; the entire extent of inner awareness is the union of awareness and emptiness, and the entire extent of feelings when appearance and awareness meet is the union of bliss and emptiness. Of these, the first two are called “emptiness endowed with the supreme of all aspects” (*rnam kun mchog ldan gyi stong nyid*) and the last is called “supreme and unchanging great bliss” (*mchog tu mi ’gyur ba’i bde ba chen po*). The name *mahāmudrā* is also used to describe emptiness and great bliss individually:

Beyond the reality of subtle particles,
 Of the nature of magical mirror images,
 She who is endowed with the supreme of all aspects,
 To Lady Mahāmudrā I bow.

And:

Mahāmudrā is unchanging bliss.

The total perfect meaning is this: emptiness endowed with all aspects is the object to be known. When the knowledge of this emptiness in its entirety as unchanging great bliss is the knowing subject, then both object and subject are said to blend into one.

From the *Supreme Original Buddha Tantra*.²²⁰

Reflections arising from emptiness are the cause,
 Bliss born from the unchanging is the result.
 The result seals the cause,
 And the cause also seals the result.

And:

The kāya of knower and known as one.

Initially, the time that this is actualized is when the fourth empowerment is received. Ultimately, the realization is when one obtains and consummates the state of Vajradhara endowed with seven aspects.²²¹

Coemergence is twofold: Natural coemergence is the beginningless and endless existence of Vajrasattva in all animate and inanimate things, without any distinction of before or after. The coemergent bliss of melting is produced from the four joys arising successively from the sexual union of method and wisdom. This causes the engagement with the former, actual coemergence, so the same language is used.

The meditation method is not the mere conceptual meditation used on the path of inference, with the nonaffirming negation that is the result of logically analyzing and not finding anything. Rather, it is the path of actual nonconceptual experience, free of thoughts that fixate on

anything in the unhindered [display of] appearance-awareness. Instructions can be found in *Joined Coemergent Mahāmudrā*²²² and the illusory body and luminous clarity yogas from the Six Dharmas. The meaning can be summed up by the phrase “maintain luminous clarity directly upon appearances.” Those skilled in this method will purify conceptual fixation on the reality of appearances and transform all appearance into forms of emptiness. The forms of emptiness—such as smoke and so on that appear during dark retreats and other practices—are merely signs and indications on this path of methods that cause the realization of the abiding nature itself that was not yet realized. What one must actually realize with absolute certainty is that all of these ordinary appearances, right here and now, are themselves forms of emptiness in every respect.

Therefore, the teachings about there being nothing to add to the luminous clarity of buddha nature from the *Highest Continuum*²²³ and the way to meditate on the mahāmudrā of inseparable appearance-emptiness in the mantra tradition must both be the same view of abiding nature as the middle way (*dbu ma*, Skt. *madhyamaka*). The middle way view is expressed as

To say “it exists” is an eternalistic view.
 To say “it doesn’t exist” is a nihilistic view.
 For that reason the wise do not dwell
 In existence or nonexistence.²²⁴

And,

Not existent, not nonexistent, not both,
 Also not the nonexistence of both—
 Totally emancipated from these four extremes:
 Such is the middle way known by followers.

The Eighth Lord, Karmapa Mikyö Dorjé, and his successors maintain “it is just that.”

The Three Practice Traditions [ii]

This has two parts: an overview by means of their names and an extensive explanation by means of describing their characteristics.

Overview [aa]

In general, of the three traditions of Sutra, Mantra, and Essence,

Explanation of Characteristics [bb]

This has three parts: the sutra tradition, the mantra tradition, and the essence tradition.

The Sutra Tradition [1']

This has four parts: an overview of its characteristics, and individual explanations of the ground, the path, and the result of mahāmudrā.

Overview [a']

The first is perfection of wisdom in essence and mahāmudrā in name.

Its aspects are consistent with mantra.

The first of the three traditions is the sutra tradition or what later came to be held as the mahāmudrā that mixes ideas of sutra and mantra. In the *Commentary on the Ten Verses on Suchness*²²⁵ by Master Sahajavajra it says:

In essence it is the perfection.

It is consistent with mantra.

Its name is mahāmudrā.

Thus it is clearly explained as being the pristine awareness realizing suchness endowed with these three special features.

Ground Mahāmudrā, the Basic Abiding Nature of Things [b']

This presentation has three parts: the abiding nature, the mode of delusion, and the way it is.²²⁶

The Abiding Nature of the Ground [i']

The abiding nature of the ground is without bias, free of extremes of elaboration.

Not experiencing delusion or liberation, it pervades everywhere like the sky.

The abiding nature of the basic ground entity does not exist as the essence of either samsara or nirvana. It has no bias in any direction whatsoever and is free from all extremes of elaboration such as existence, nonexistence, eternalism, or nihilism. Therefore it is beyond the object of expression in speech or thought. From the beginning it has not experienced bondage through delusion or liberation through realization. Its vital point, which does not exist as a specifically characterized phenomenon,²²⁷ pervades like space throughout all phenomena of samsara and nirvana. This is the abiding nature—mahāmudrā, the perfection of wisdom, buddha nature, the original buddha, the causal continuum, and so forth—many names are used in the sutras and tantras. It is nondual profundity and clarity, the absolute truth, the totally pure ground of purification, and the very essence of mind that has been explained and will continue to be explained. It is the abiding nature of all that is to be known.

The Mode of Delusion [ii']

The mode of delusion appears but is not real;

Natural, perfectly pure luminous clarity is the vajra of mind. When its natural expressive energy is not aware of its own essence, the afflicted mind stirs from the universal ground. On the strength of that, awareness is taken to be a self and its reflexive appearance is taken to be an object; [this is] the basic subject-object split. Under the power of this dualistic perception, various karmic action and habitual patterns are accumulated, turning into an interlinking chain of delusion and endless drifting in cyclic existence. This mode of delusion is relative truth. It is the incidental stains of the mind that are to be refined away. Since they do not abide as its basic character, they appear and yet are not truly existent. Therefore, one can become liberated through the antidote of self-recognition.

The Way It Is [iii']

... mere appearance itself

Is the great play of three kāyas—arising, abiding, and ceasing.

All of samsara and nirvana comes from the total play of the mind. That itself abides naturally as the union of clarity and emptiness. Therefore, even though it is mere appearance, it is the great play of the three kāyas free from arising, abiding, and ceasing. That is, its unborn basic character is dharmakāya, its unhindered radiance is sambhogakāya, and its expressive energy arising as anything at all is nirmāṇakāya. All three are essentially inseparable and spontaneously present since forever. This is the way it is. By recognizing it, [one realizes that] the native state of all phenomena, suchness free of accepting, rejecting, adopting, or removing anything in the wheel of infinite basic space is the abiding nature of the ground. This is the recognition of the view of mahāmudrā.

Path Mahāmudrā: The Way to Traverse the Levels and Paths through Naturally Occurring Calm Abiding and Higher Insight [c']

This presentation has three parts: a presentation of the meditative absorption of practice, cutting off the treacherous path of strayings and deviations,²²⁸ and a description of the way the stages of the four yogas arise.

Meditative Absorption [i']

At the time of the path, coemergent mind itself is dharmakāya,
Coemergent appearance is dharmakāya's light.

No distraction, no meditation, without fabrication in the native state.

At the time of the path, making the meaning of the view that one has ascertained into yoga is called mahāmudrā meditation. The great charioteers who founded this system laid out this process: in order to give rise to meditation that has not arisen before, one engages in [two sets of] four preliminary practices.²²⁹ Once it has arisen, it is brought to the path by three introductions. Then there are the ways to enhance it and generate good qualities.

[The Preliminaries] [aa']

These are the four thoughts that turn the mind, which is the gradual path common to Kadampa and mahāmudrā traditions, and the practices of refuge, bodhicitta, accumulation, purification, and guru yoga. Training in these until signs of their accomplishment arises, one's mind will turn towards the dharma and dharma will become the path.

[The Introduction to Mind's Nature] [bb']

The *Inconceivable Coemergence Tantra*²³⁰ states:

Mind itself is coemergent with dharmakāya.
 Appearance is coemergent with dharmakāya's light.
 Appearance and mind inseparable are coemergent.

In accordance with the mighty spiritual adepts who commented on the meaning with limitless vajra speech, it is maintained that the introduction to coemergence is subsumed into three:

- (1) Coemergent native mind itself is dharmakāya. That is introduced with calm abiding and higher insight. Calm abiding is practiced both with and without support. In higher insight there are three stages: revealing the essence, recognition, and introduction. These will dispel delusion on the path.
- (2) Mind's own expressive energy is coemergent with thought. The three methods of practicing with the abiding or moving of thoughts, back-to-back thoughts, and cutting through ego-fixation will cause the thought process to blend with dharmakāya.
- (3) Mind's own radiance—appearance—is coemergent with dharmakāya's own light. One conclusively distinguishes the reflexive appearances of uncontrived awareness and the deluded appearances of fixated mind. Realizing reality itself to be the play of the native state, delusion will arise as pristine awareness.

[Enhancement] [cc']

Always remembering that “renunciation is the foot of meditation,” “devotion is the head of meditation,” and “mindfulness is the body of meditation,”²³¹ the stages arising from skillful methods will produce the good qualities as enhancement of the practice.

Briefly, the absorption of meditative equipoise in this system is summarized into three methods: resting in freshness without distraction, resting loosely without meditation, and resting in the native state, unfabricated natural radiance. Through these ways of resting, all the conceptual elaborations in the three times are naturally liberated and subside into reality. This is the meaning of the three doors of total freedom.

Cutting Off the Treacherous Path of Straying and Deviation [ii']**Liberation from four strayings and three deviations.**

When meditating like this, fixation on the emptiness of all phenomena is to stray in the basic nature. Being satisfied with the attainment of just a little understanding and experience of emptiness, and so discontinuing accumulation of merit and purification, is to stray on the path of emptiness. Once one has made emptiness the path, hope of fruition at some later time without understanding that the thing to reject and its antidote are inseparable is to stray in the antidote. And one can stray in the intellectually fabricated sealing of appearance with emptiness. These are the four areas of straying based on higher insight.

If one gets attached to the three experiences of bliss, clarity, and non-thought, then one will cycle into the three realms respectively and deviate from the spiritual path. These are the three deviations to avoid based on calm abiding. One must also escape the treacherous paths where emptiness, compassion, and cause and effect rise up as enemies.

The Way the Stages of the Four Yogas Arise [iii']

**Beyond the four joys and three conditions, three ways of arising
Make the connection and one traverses the four stages of yoga.**

Since the four joys are just an example of pristine awareness, real pristine awareness goes beyond them. Since the three conditions of bliss, clarity, and nonthought are meditative experiences, the innate countenance of realization transcends them. It is beyond even the objects of the three kinds of wisdom: the understanding from listening, the experience from contemplating, and the experiential perceptions from meditating. Once one has arrived at the vital point of meditation that is untouched by the mind of the big three afflictive emotions, the stages arise in any of three ways: gradually, by leaps and bounds, or all at once. With that connection, one will effortlessly traverse the inner levels and paths by way of the four yogas: one-pointedness, freedom from elaborations, one taste, and nonmeditation—each with the division into lesser, medium, and greater, making twelve in all.²³²

The stages of these four yogas are described in the *Ali Kali Inconceivable Secret Tantra*.²³³

The absorption of the majestic lion²³⁴

Clarifies consciousness as unmoving, one-pointed, and radiant.

Reflexive pristine awareness is awakened from within.

Stabilized patience eliminates the suffering of the lower realms.

Second, by the illusory-like absorption,²³⁵

In the great equipoise free of elaborations,

The inconceivable arises as the creative energy of absorption.

Attaining warmth is gaining control over birth.

Third, by the absorption of heroic behavior,²³⁶

The tenth level realization of the single taste of many arises.

The heirs of the victors of three times act for the welfare of others.

Having attained the peak, progress is uninterrupted.

Fourth, by the vajra-like absorption,²³⁷

Diligence in the practice of nonmeditation

Leads to the pristine awareness of knowledge that sees the buddha realms,

The effortless, spontaneously present state of supreme dharma.

With the same intention, this was also taught extensively in the *Descent to Lañka Sutra*.²³⁸ The meaning has been clearly explained by the great Master Padmasambhava, Śāntipa, Nāropa, and others, with the Lord Dawö Zhönnu²³⁹ (Gampopa) providing extensive elaboration. There are various ways of explanation found among all the extensive and concise arrangements done by the great spiritual adepts who hold the Kagyu lineage. Mainly, by dividing each of the four yogas into the understanding, experience, and realization of mahāmudrā, one gets twelve divisions. Each of those is further divided into lesser, middling, and greater degrees of attaining stability, making thirty-six in all. Alternatively, the four yogas each have mundane and supermundane calm abiding, and mundane and supermundane higher insight, making sixteen divisions. Dividing each of those by greater, medium, and lesser degrees of attaining stability, which become the three categories of excellent, low, and average, it makes forty-eight in all. To wrap up it all up into one, the omniscient Chen-nga Chökyi Drakpa²⁴⁰ said:

In this context the four yogas according to the system of guidance in the mantra tradition of mahāmudrā are explained as the pristine awareness of mahāmudrā that is the essence of the four descending and ascending joys. In terms of the system of guidance common to both sutra and mantra, it refers to the mode of arising of mahāmudrā experiences similar to these four joys.

Concerning the terms “understanding” (*go ba*), “experience” (*nyams*), and “realization” (*rtogs*), the Eighth Lord Mikyö Dorjé stated in his *Hundred Thousand Expressions of Mahāmudrā*.²⁴¹

The view and meditation of whatever is to be realized has three parts: understanding, experience, and realization. *Understanding* occurs when what is to be realized becomes an object of wisdom through hearing and contemplating the terms and concepts. *Experience* occurs when what is to be realized is held as the frame of reference and then becomes the object of wisdom resulting from meditation in the abiding aspect of that mental focus. *Realization* occurs when one transcends the aspect of calm abiding of mere one-pointedness resulting from

meditation that mentally grasps what is to be realized as the object, and instead makes it the object by thorough discrimination of wisdom with or without thought.

Result Mahāmudrā: How the Real Buddha without Stains Manifests [d']

**Understanding the view and gaining experience through meditation,
Realization is perfected and fruition is attained right now.**

The view is that the abiding nature of the ground is both appearance and mind dwelling inherently as the three kāyas. Cutting off all doubts about this meaning, one will reach an irrevocable understanding through the direct introduction. One gains experience of this through the meditation of settling the mind without contrivance directly in its own state, the abiding nature. This is enhanced by the conduct that arises automatically as a result of unhindered emptiness and compassion in union. The realization of the intrinsic nature of the abiding nature manifests, and when it is perfected, that is the fruition. Buddha is found in the mind. By encountering the very face of the three kāyas, dharmakāya mahāmudrā is no longer a wish for the future but is attained right now.

This gradual path accords with Dakpo Rinpoché's dream visions and Milarepa's prophecies. Dakpo Rinpoché said, "With these Kadampa teachings I can benefit many beings," and, "Now whatever bit of good I have done for sentient beings is due to the kindness of the Kadampa lamas." Once he dreamt that by beating a drum many wild deer came to listen and he fed them milk.²⁴² These and other reasons caused him to remain with this system of guidance. This is because we have reached the age where degeneration is rampantly increasing and there are progressively fewer individuals with the fortune to practice the extraordinary vajrayāna. However, those of lesser fortune and duller faculties can be guided by the gradual stages of the path of the three types of individuals and ultimately evolve into disciples of the highest fortune and become worthy recipients of the extraordinary mantra. They can gain liberation in one lifetime or, even if not, a great many of them will see the meaning of mahāmudrā and thereby enter the irreversible path through this method. This is the intention.

Therefore, this method of guidance has been upheld from the reverend lord Gampopa himself until the present time and has been the customary practice for guiding all disciples whether of greater or lesser fortune. In addition, when the fortunate ones are taught mantra’s profound path of method, these instructions are named “instructions at the time of the cause,” or “foundational teachings.” About this, the great reverend one of Jonang²⁴³ said such things as

These days the so-called abiding nature mahāmudrā
Is a meditation sequence in the sutra tradition of the final
turning.
For the different levels of faculties it is congruent with mantra,
And so it becomes like a lamp for beings.
It is similar to the path with result practitioners’ three
appearances.²⁴⁴

The Mantra Tradition [2’]

The mantra tradition arises from the path of skillful methods.

The famous “great bliss mahāmudrā” (*bde chen phyag rgya chen po*) comes from the traditional methods of the highest inner tantras. It arises from the paths of skillful methods, which include the conferral of the supreme empowerment, the self-blessing, the stages of mudra practice, and so on. The mighty Marpa said:

The essence of the completion phase is that great bliss arises
based on bliss.

And from the second chapter [of the *Hevajra Tantra*], “The Examination of Illusion,” it says:²⁴⁵

In this yoga of the completion phase
Bliss is called “great bliss.”

The etymology is that since pristine awareness really arises it is called “completion phase” (*rdzogs rim*). The one from Puṣpahari [Nāropa] said:

It is impossible for pristine awareness not to arise when at this time your body is put in this posture and your mind is focused like this.

These are the divisions: The bases of refining are the waking state with many ordinary thoughts, deep sleep, the dreaming of many dreams, and sexual union with an ordinary person. The refining agents are mahāmudrā based on inner heat, mahāmudrā based on luminous clarity, mahāmudrā based on illusory body, and experience based on action-mudra. Thus according to this teaching it will be realized from the meditation on the instructions of the Six Dharmas of glorious Nāropa, and so forth.

The Essence Tradition [3']

**The essence is the descent of vajra pristine awareness
Simultaneously ripening and liberating those of highest faculties.**

More profound than the previous two, this path to forcefully realize the profound essence is extraordinarily amazing and incredible. Just the descent of blessings in the vajra pristine awareness empowerment bestowed by a realized guru on a fortunate student of the highest and sharpest faculties awakens ordinary mind in his or her innermost heart, causing realization and liberation to occur at the same time. Since it does not depend on elaborate techniques or strenuous training, it is this that really occurs in the prolific²⁴⁶ liberation stories and legends of the great spiritual adepts of the four greater and eight lesser Kagyu lineages who had arrived at the higher levels. And this is the way it is described in Indrabhūti's *Accomplishment of Pristine Awareness*:²⁴⁷

Conferral of the vajra pristine awareness empowerment
That attains the sublime excellent pristine awareness of
Thoroughly abandoning all thought
Brings accomplishment of the supreme spiritual power.

If you have all genuine pristine awarenesses
But still take empowerments elsewhere,
Using mandalas that are drawn,
This will damage your sacred pledge.

The sufferings of damaged pledges
Are that your body and likewise your mind
And all functions will deteriorate
And very quickly death will come.

Once you are dead, you will taste
The suffering of hell for millions of aeons.
Even when you escape from that place
You will be born as an outcaste or in a low caste,

As a deaf person or a mute,
Blind in lifetime after lifetime.
You will take such birth,
Of this there is no doubt.

The pristine awareness of all the tathāgatas
Is explained as “pristine awareness.”
When the wise confer its empowerment,
This is what empowerment is all about.

So it is taught extensively. It is in this way that ripening and liberation arise simultaneously for those of highest faculties in this unsurpassable, supreme path.

Concluding Remarks on the Instructions in Individual Teaching Traditions [iii]

**Pakdru turned the dharma wheel in five practices:
Refuge, bodhicitta, devotion, creation-completion, and
dedication.**

[Pakmo Drupa and Drigung Kagyu] [aa]

The lord of beings Pakmo Drupa,²⁴⁸ who was really the sugata Krakucchanda (“Samsara Destroyer”), condensed all the meanings of the Three Baskets and the tantra collections into five practice systems and taught them publicly to an assembly of five thousand of the most excellent assembly. While the others did not find certainty in the profound mean-



Wild Awakening

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Mahamudra & Dzogchen*

DZOGCHEN PONLOP



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The Path of Instructions

Mahamudra Vipashyana

WHILE IN THE PATH STAGE, we are trying to internalize the view of Mahamudra that we have ascertained by studying the ground and to bring that view into the reality of the path and our experience. As described earlier, there are three basic ways of entering path Mahamudra: the preliminary practices, the pointing-out instructions, and the enhancement practices. Following our discussion of Mahamudra shamatha, we will now examine the three pointing-out instructions and methods of practice in relation to Mahamudra vipashyana.

VIPASHYANA POINTING-OUT

From the Mahamudra point of view, the term “vipashyana” relates to the insight that directly realizes the nature of ordinary mind. Additionally, it refers to meditations that are applications of prajna, which are practiced after we have cultivated some degree of meditative stability through the practice of shamatha. In Tibetan, the word for “vipashyana” is *lhagthong*. The first syllable, *lhag*, means “superior.” It is the same term that we find used in “superior training,” a term that is common to many Buddhist traditions. *Thong* means “seeing” or “sight.” Therefore, *lhagthong* means “superior seeing” or “superior sight.”

The term *vipashyana* is often misunderstood in western Buddhist communities because it is used differently in different meditation traditions. Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhists, as well as some Hindu schools, all speak of “vipashyana meditation.” Even among the various Buddhist schools it is used to mean somewhat different things. However, in the Mahamudra context, vipashyana is connected with the superior realization or experience of the basic nature of mind. Any other understanding of vipashyana is irrelevant to the subject of Mahamudra. Thus, the realization of this ordinary mind is what we call “superior sight” or “superior insight.”

The term “ordinary mind” can be confusing if we understand “ordinary” to mean “mundane.” If that were the case, then “ordinary mind” would mean mundane consciousness, confused mind, klesha mind—a mind that is totally caught up in this world of samsara. However, in this context, “ordinary” means “unfabricated.” When we experience this ordinary mind, we experience buddha mind. Buddha mind is not some special mind that we always seem to be searching for elsewhere. It is simple and ordinary in the sense of being totally free from elaborations, from fabrications, and from all conceptual thinking. It is the best part of mind. Usually, we think of buddha mind as something extraordinary, extra-special, but at this point, we cut through all of these concepts and go back to the fundamental nature of mind, which is the mind of buddha, or the heart of buddha mind. It is ordinary because it is so simple.

Great yogis, such as Milarepa and Gampopa, have said that most people do not or cannot believe this because it seems so ordinary and so natural. Instead, we are searching for something very elaborate, perhaps something like a Tibetan shrine. However, the nature of our mind is not that elaborate or complex. The term “ordinary” itself conveys this sense of naturalness and simplicity. When we say that the nature of our mind is ordinary and basic, this suggests that it is not something that exists outside of us. On the other hand, when we say that the nature of mind is extraordinary or special, this makes us feel that mind’s nature is something external. When we realize the fundamental nature and very simplicity of our mind, we realize ordinary mind.

COEMERGENT MIND: THE DHARMAKAYA

Generally speaking, the practice of vipashyana begins with the pointing-out instructions. There are a number of ways to present this; however, we will look at instruction on Mahamudra vipashyana through the following three stages:

1. Showing the essence of the nature of mind
2. Developing certainty in the nature of mind
3. Receiving the instructions pointing out the true nature of mind

During all of these stages of meditation, we simply rest the mind in a state of freshness. That is the basic characteristic or nature of insight. We are resting in a state of mind that is fresh and without any distractions. We are resting naturally and expansively, in complete comfort, so to speak. We are not trying to generate something fresh or some natural or expansive state. We are simply resting and there is a sense of natural comfort. In contrast, if we are trying to do something, if we are trying to make our meditation natural or fresh, then there is a feeling of tension. There is no sense of comfort or of freely resting. Therefore, in all of our meditation, we should rest naturally and expansively, in such a way that our mind is self-illuminating or self-clear. We are not relying on generating a light from outside. We are not relying on “making” our mind luminous. It is naturally in that state of luminosity and clarity. It is through these methods that we receive the pointing-out instruction that coemergent mind itself is the dharmakaya.

COEMERGENT THOUGHT: THE DISPLAY OF DHARMAKAYA

Through the Mahamudra meditation methods, we are introduced to a progressive path of instructions. Whereas the first instruction points out the nature of mind itself as being the nature of the dharmakaya, the second instruction points out that thoughts themselves are the display of

dharmakaya. There is a direct transmission that points out the nature of mind through stillness and through movement. We train by practicing in both situations: the mind at rest and thoughts in motion. It is here that the vipashyana, or insight, aspect of Mahamudra becomes of foremost importance. We also work with the method of cutting the root of ego-clinging.

The first method is the development of stillness, which means resting in the state of nondistractedness. In the Mahamudra tradition, nondistractedness is known as meditation. When we define meditation as nondistractedness, we can see the difference between the quality of ordinary Hinayana-Mahayana shamatha and vipashyana meditation and the quality of Mahamudra meditation. From the Mahamudra point of view, if we are undistracted, then it does not matter whether our mind is still following our breath or whether it is in a state of conceptual thought or is producing emotions. If our mind is undistracted, then we are in the “gap” experience of meditation.

The second method involves working with mind’s movement. We practice with the full occurrence of thoughts, as well as with the undercurrent of thoughts and thought-chasing thoughts.

The third method is the process of cutting the root of ego-clinging. It is cutting the root of ego self-centeredness through a combination of the direct pointing-out experiences, the direct blessings of the lineage and the guru, and our meditation. At this point, cutting the root of ego-clinging is not very difficult because we are not working alone. We are working with the blessings of the guru and the lineage.

The primary practices are the methods for coming to recognize or apprehend the clarity aspect of the mind. When we have accomplished a state of stillness through the practices of Mahamudra shamatha, then, within that stillness, a thought will arise. When that thought arises, we apply the second practice of vipashyana, which is to look directly at the nature of that thought. If we recognize the nature of that thought—or the nature of mind—directly, then insight, or vipashyana, will arise.

Practically speaking, this means that when we are resting, relaxed in a state of tranquillity, we will need a thought to arise in order to practice this. Either a thought will arise naturally, or we should intentionally generate a thought. It could be any kind of thought, such as a thought of aversion or attachment. Once the thought has arisen, we look directly at its nature and try to see if there is any difference between our awareness within a state of stillness and our awareness within a state of the occurrence of thought. This scrutiny of a thought does not last very long because the scrutiny itself will cause the thought to return to a state of meditation.

Our mind is like the ocean, and the occurrence of thoughts is like the movement of waves on the surface of the ocean. The state of shamatha, or tranquillity, that we cultivate is similar to the depths of the ocean, where there is no motion. Therefore, just as waves are an ornament of the ocean, when a practitioner of Mahamudra can meditate within the arising of a thought, the thoughts and kleshas become an ornament of their practice. In fact, an ocean without waves is quite dull and boring, and waves make an ocean all the more beautiful. However, if we cannot meditate using the arising of a thought, then the waves of thought become dangerous. We might dive into them and drown.

Just as waves arise from and return to the ocean, the thoughts that arise in our mind arise from the mind itself and dissolve back into the mind itself. Even while waves are present, they are nothing other than the contour of the water that makes up the ocean and therefore are nothing other than the ocean itself. In the same way, the thoughts that arise in the mind are nothing other than that mind itself—the coemergent dharmakaya. The nature of these thoughts is no different from the nature of mind itself.

There are two aspects to the occurrence of thought, known as the full occurrence and the undercurrent. A full occurrence of thought is a fully manifested thought. It is a coarse or obvious thought that is easily apprehended. The undercurrent refers to the movement of subtle thought that is very difficult to apprehend because, once apprehended,

it has usually disappeared. Both the full occurrence and the undercurrent of thought need to be closely observed.

A part of this process of examination involves the scrutiny of our thoughts of “I” and “mine.” Scrutiny means pursuing our analysis, trying to find out if this “I” and these instances of “mine” actually exist. Through the direct, experiential scrutiny of thought, we come to determine that this imputed “I” and this imputed “mine”—that which pertains to the imputed “I”—have never existed. We determine that mind in its nature has never been an “I” or a self and therefore has never possessed anything that can be claimed as “mine.” In this way, thoughts come to mix with the dharmakaya. This means we recognize that from the beginning, the nature of mind and the nature of thoughts has been the coemergent dharmakaya. There has never been a self; there has never been something called “mine.”

COEMERGENT APPEARANCE: THE LIGHT OF DHARMAKAYA

The third instruction is the pointing-out that appearances are the light of the mind and in that sense are also coemergent. They are coemergent in the sense that they are the display or projection of the mind. Therefore, they are called the light of the dharmakaya, the idea being that appearances are the gleam or glow of the mind. The instruction involves a two-step process of working with the recognition of unfabricated mind.

The first step of this process is to understand the self-display or self-manifestation of the unfabricated nature of mind, which is to say ordinary mind. We recognize the appearances that arise from unaltered or unfabricated mind. This is called the “self-appearance” or “individual appearance,” which is a pure appearance.

The second step of the process is to recognize the appearances of confusion that arise from grasping mind.

While we experience both the pure and the impure or confused aspects of these so-called outer appearances, there are some differences between the two. In working with these two aspects of appearance, the principal practice is to scrutinize appearances so that we correctly distinguish between the self-appearance of an uncontrived or unaltered

natural cognition and the confused appearances or bewildered projections of a fixated cognition. By means of this scrutiny, we come to recognize that all appearances are the natural play of dharmata. This practice involves meditating upon appearances by directing our awareness to those appearances without fixating on them. This enables us to recognize the nature of appearances as the gleam or glow of the mind.

The specific methods for this technique are given when we receive detailed Mahamudra instruction. At that point, we do not limit our practice to working with conceptual cognition, such as occurs in the arising of thoughts. We also work with the nonconceptual or direct cognition of appearances themselves.¹

Essentially, with this practice, we use a sequential application of this technique to look at the appearances that arise for each of the sense consciousnesses. We begin by looking directly at the forms that are experienced by the visual consciousness, then at sounds as experienced by the auditory consciousness, then at smells as experienced by the olfactory consciousness, and so on.

Although our sense consciousness is directed toward its object—visual form and so forth—we are not looking outward. We are looking inward at the experience of that sense consciousness itself. Perhaps even the word “looking” is misleading, since it implies some kind of outwardly directed attention. Our attention is actually directed at the mind’s experience of a form, sound, smell, and so forth. We are looking or gazing inward, with the condition of an unblocked or unimpeded sense consciousness. However, what we are essentially doing at this stage of the practice is learning to recognize the self-appearance of an unfabricated cognition and thereby dispel the confused projections of a fixated cognition.²

WORKING WITH THE POINTING-OUT INSTRUCTIONS

Pure and Impure Appearances

In order to make a genuine Mahamudra journey, we must commit ourselves to going through the earlier stages of the pointing-out instructions and the preliminary practices. If we travel on this path

diligently and wisely, then we will see the self-expression or self-manifestation of mind, which is an experience of pure appearance. This introduces us to the notion of pure vision. We might say that “the sacred business,” the sacred vision of the Vajrayana world, slips into the picture. We see outer appearance as nothing but a manifestation or expression of this ultimate mind—that is, of emptiness, egolessness. Thus, this expression should be an egoless expression; this manifestation should be a selfless manifestation.

Although these pure appearances do manifest in certain forms, they are nevertheless selfless. When we experience this selfless expression, there is a great sense of spaciousness, unity, and totality. In contrast, if we are not familiar with or successful on the path of meditation and the spiritual journey, then we are stuck with the second aspect of appearance, which is confusion—the manifestation of grasping mind. That expression is an egoistic manifestation; it is a narrow, claustrophobic experience. There is no sense of space because we are clinging to an experience, trying to freeze it and make it permanent. That experience is what we call the experience of mundane consciousness, samsaric consciousness, or samsaric mind—which is right here.

The third pointing-out instruction—appearances are the light of the mind and in that sense are also coemergent—refers to these two very subtle ways of working with appearances.

Working with Mind's Clarity

Previously, we described the nature of mind as the unborn dharma-kaya; the display of the creative energy of mind as the nonabiding sambhogakaya; and the light of mind, or mind's radiant appearances, as the unimpeded nirmanakaya or the nirmanakaya that can appear as anything. To understand what this means, we can contemplate the analogy of a crystal and the displays of rainbows that are produced from it. A rainbow that emerges from a crystal is not simply one thing. It is a sort of fluctuating variety. In the same way, thought is not unitary, nor does it remain. Even as a thought is arising, it is already passing out of existence. In fact, thought by itself, as the display of mind, exemplifies

the qualities of being without birth, without abiding, and without cessation. Therefore, we would have to say that all three aspects of mind—its nature, its display, and its light—perfectly contain the qualities of the three kayas.

That is the whole point in Mahamudra—it is so profound because just one, simple thought is in the nature of the three kayas. We do not have to say, “Okay, this is dharmakaya, so now where is the sambhogakaya? Okay, we have found the sambhogakaya, so now where is the nirmanakaya?” In the general Mahayana presentation, such a reality seems so distant, whereas in the Mahamudra or Dzogchen approach, all three kayas are present in one simple thought. The nature of that thought is the dharmakaya. The luminosity or the vividness of that thought is the sambhogakaya. The continuity of that vividness is the nirmanakaya.

There is a constant creative energy to the mind, which is the basis for the arising of mind’s radiant appearances—just as the sunlight that reflects through a crystal and creates a prismatic display is always there. Sometimes we actually can experience this cognitive lucidity in a direct way, rather than in what we would normally consider a cognitive way. For example, you may hear a continuous undercurrent of sound, a humming sound, which is called the sound of dharmata.

In the Mahamudra teachings, not much detail is given about what is meant by this lucidity or clarity. It is simply said that there is a clarity or lucidity to the mind, which is extremely intense and becomes the basis for confusion. More detail is given in the Dzogchen presentation, in which this clarity is referred to as the appearances of the ground or the display of the ground. In the Dzogchen presentation, the way in which this clarity arises or develops is divided into what are called the eight gates of the appearances of spontaneous presence. Dzogchen texts also give a more detailed presentation of exactly how this clarity becomes so intense. Nevertheless, from a Mahamudra point of view, the basic idea is that when we look at our mind’s nature, we will perceive an extremely intense cognitive clarity. It has been said by many teachers that we need to look again and again at this cognitive

clarity in our practice. While the emptiness of mind is important, there is a sense in which the cognitive clarity is more important as a basis for practice. This is so because confusion begins when we fail to recognize this clarity for what it is. Therefore, in order to break the chain of confusion, we need to work with the cognitive clarity in particular.

The precise method by which we look at the cognitive clarity of mind is a topic within the context of path Mahamudra. Nevertheless, among the practices of path Mahamudra are two techniques that are particularly helpful for working with the cognitive clarity of mind. One is looking at the mind within appearances, and the other is looking at the mind within the movement or arising of thought. These are important because both the mind experiencing appearances and the mind experiencing thought are situations in which the cognitive clarity of the mind is evident and therefore easily apprehended. For example, when a klesha arises in our mind, there is a greater intensity to the cognitive clarity. In that situation, if we look at the klesha, then we will be looking right at the cognitive clarity. In this case, “looking at” means looking at the klesha or appearance nakedly or directly—without any kind of conceptual overlay or analysis based on discursive thought. We can do this not only when we are looking at kleshas and other thoughts, but also when we are looking at the experience of appearances. For example, if the six senses are directed at external objects, then we look directly at the experience of that object. We do not “think about” or discursively analyze the experience; rather, we look directly at the experience itself.

These two methods, looking at the mind within appearances and looking at the mind within thought or the movement of thought, are methods for working with the cognitive clarity.

If we do this effectively, if we look at this clarity with clarity, then we may be able to actually see the development of the split between the apprehending subject and the apprehended object. This recognition is very significant because, from a Mahamudra point of view, the split is something that is always developing in the present and not something that developed at some point in the past. While we are not par-

ticularly trying to look for this split, it will sometimes appear naturally. What we are doing with our practice is looking directly at the cognitive clarity itself. We are not splitting up the clarity; we are not trying to divide it into a subject and an object. Paradoxically, it is because we are not dividing it that we will see the division.

The cognitive lucidity that is spoken of in the Mahamudra context is the same thing as wisdom, or primordial awareness. If we can rest without fabrication in the experience and recognition of the mind's natural cognitive lucidity, then the display of wisdom will arise within that. This is the very reason that in the Mantrayana in general, and in Mahamudra and Dzogchen in particular, emphasis is placed on the lucidity aspect of mind more than on the emptiness aspect. In the Vajrayana, we practice the visualization of deities, which is really a way of cultivating or familiarizing ourselves with this cognitive lucidity. In Mahamudra, emphasis is placed on the practice of looking at the mind within the occurrence of thought and within appearances. In Dzogchen, we cultivate the practice of *thogal*, or "leap-over." However, all of these practices work with the cognitive lucidity aspect of the mind.

Morning Mist and Space

When we work with these teachings, we are working primarily to gain a sense of confidence—in ourselves, in the teachings, and in the teacher—so that we can click our mind into the gap experience. This experience is not newly produced. It is not produced by any teacher, any buddha, or any power of our own. The gap experience exists in the nature of our mind at all times. That is why, in one of his songs, Milarepa said that between all moments of discursive thought there are gaps of nondual wisdom. Between one moment of thought and the next, there is always a gap experience; it is happening all the time. In our practice, we are trying to "space out" within this gap with a full sense of clarity. That is what vipashyana is all about: clicking into this experience.

Out of our shamatha and vipashyana meditation, we produce experience. That is what we should look for. That is our goal. We should not

look at the amount of time we sit. Sitting for longer and longer periods is not our objective. We should not be concerned with the amount of time we sit nor with the type of feedback we get from people who may say, “You have been sitting really well. You are a great meditator” or “You are a great meditation instructor.” That does not mean anything. We should be very clear about why we are sitting and what we are we looking for. What we are looking for on this path is experience, which is the product of our meditation and inner development.

When we sit properly, various states of experience naturally arise through our practice of shamatha and vipashyana meditation. When we practice meditation, the criterion for determining whether it has been a good or bad practice session is whether we are really doing it—whether we are really sitting in order to meditate or for other reasons, of which we may not even be conscious. Why are we sitting? We may be sitting to pass time, or we may be sitting because we think, “I have to sit one hour every day because my teacher told me to.” That type of sitting is very good and it will help us to accumulate merit, but it will not produce the desired states of experience. Therefore, we will not fulfill our fundamental desire, which is our wish to free ourselves and all other sentient beings. When we sit, we should sit with a sense of absolute clarity about our motivation. If our goals and reasons for sitting are very clear, then our meditation will be clear; and if our meditation becomes clear, then the various experiences will arise.

Nevertheless, working with these experiences is very tricky. They may appear as very pleasing experiences, such as bliss, clarity, and emptiness, or nonthought. These three experiences and countless others can be produced through meditation. However, we must avoid becoming trapped in these experiences. The great yogi Milarepa said that these experiences are like the morning mist. What does this mean? It means that when the sun comes out, the mist will disappear. Before the sun comes out, the morning mist looks very thick and we think, “Oh, it is going to be cloudy all day”; but when the sun rises, the mist slowly disappears.

goal of our meditation because as soon as we think that we have gained something, it will disappear. It is often said that when we need these experiences, they will not be there. It is when we really feel depressed and lost and we think, “Now I need the experiences of bliss, clarity, and nonthought,” that we will not have them. They are gone, just like the morning mist. Therefore, what is the point of clinging to these experiences? There is no point.

The real project of meditation is realization—the direct realization of ordinary mind. Milarepa said that realization is like space, which rests in the state of the unchanging nature. That space never changes; therefore, realizations never change. Our realization is the ultimate achievement of our experience and meditation practice.

Inviting Awakening

These three pointing-out instructions are the skillful means that we use to try to wake ourselves up from this sleepy, dreamy state of samsaric mind. At this point, the Mahamudra instructions are not suggesting that we use an alarm clock to wake ourselves up. They are suggesting that we use a bucket of water. However, in order to do this we need to rely on a friend who is already awake.

When traveling on this path of Mahamudra, through the different stages of profound instructions, methods, and paths of meditation, we must understand that our journey is a mutual effort of the student and the guru. As students, we must exert a certain amount of effort in order to wake ourselves up and to let our spiritual friend wake us up. We must exert a certain amount of effort in order to develop a sense of trust and spaciousness and a willingness to surrender our own ego. We do this by giving our spiritual friend the key to our apartment. Then there is the effort of the guru, who takes the steps of coming into our apartment, opening the door with the key that we have provided, and carrying in a bucket of water in the early morning.

While we are asleep and dreaming, our trusted spiritual friend comes and tries to wake us up by pouring the bucket of water onto our beautiful, samsaric bed and into our samsaric dream. Consequently, we

wake up with a certain sense of shock. At the same time, we totally wake up. This method does not give us a chance to play around by pressing the snooze button on the alarm clock. We cannot say, “I was just kidding.” Whether we like it or not, and whether it worked fully or not, the water is already there, in our bed and on us. We are already awake, and we cannot go back to sleep in that state. Our samsaric bed is no longer snuggly, and so we are left with no choice but to get up and take a hot shower. This is not the same as relying on an alarm clock to wake up. When we use that method, we can still go back to our snuggly sleep because the bed is still warm and we think, “Ooh, I can sleep five or ten minutes more.” So we press the snooze button.

Before we can make use of the bucket of water method for waking ourselves up, we must trust our friend. We must trust that he will not use something, such as a knife, that will kill us as it wakes us up. That is one way of waking up, but it is a very difficult one. We must trust fully in our companion, who is awake and with whom we have a mutual understanding. Such a spiritual friend will know the right time and will say, “Yes, it is four o’clock in the morning now, time for you to get up.” Then he will throw the bucket of water. However, it can happen only when we have opened ourselves fully and can say, “Please wake me up. I would appreciate being awakened by any method at all as long as I totally wake up.” It cannot happen in any other way. The teacher does not kidnap us and wake us up every morning with a bucket of water; we are not hostages. We have total freedom. We express our full confidence and trust by removing any barriers. We give our friend the key to our apartment because otherwise, how can our guru get into our room to pour the bucket of water? However, the moment of handing over the key is determined entirely by our readiness.

Waking up does not have different stages. Waking up is waking up. The problem is that after we wake up, we go back to sleep. That is our habitual problem. There is no problem with waking up. Once the teacher has done the job of waking us up, then it is up to us to stay awake. Do we want to get up from that bed, take a shower, and walk into the world with its fresh scent of morning air? Or do we want to

get up, wipe our body with a dirty samsaric towel, and go lie down on a sofa or some other snuggly place where we can go back to sleep? If we are really lazy, we might even fall back asleep while we are still totally wet.

There is an unfinished dream that we want to continue, so we go back to sleep to dream again. We see no alternative to falling asleep in order to finish the whole story of our dream. It is like seeing one half of a very exciting movie on TV and then being disturbed by a phone call from our friend. Throughout the phone conversation, our mind keeps going back to the movie because we want to watch it through to the ending. That is the kind of thing that is happening here. We feel a strong urge to return to our samsaric dream, which seems so interesting. The strength of that urge pulls us back. Thus, it is our habitual pattern to fall back asleep. Diligence, which is one of the qualities of a precious human birth, becomes very important. We must make an effort to remain awake.

Waking up begins with the pointing-out instructions and continues up to the ultimate level. It is the same process, the same technique, and the same state of waking up. The waking-up process is the heart of the Mahamudra teachings. It is a process that is accomplished through the vipashyana meditation practices and through all of the pointing-out methods. However, determining the most effective methods of waking up is a very individual matter. We cannot generalize. The teacher might appear with a flip-flop sandal, with a bucket of water, or with any number of surprising methods to wake us up, as we can see from the history of these teachings.

We can look, for example, at the relationship of Tilopa and Naropa. Naropa received pointing-out instruction—on and off, on and off, on and off—for many years from Tilopa. Finally, Tilopa said, “You still do not get it, my son!” He took off his flip-flop and whacked Naropa on his forehead. Tilopa was a fisherman on the Ganges in India, so you can imagine how dirty his flip-flop probably was. The whole scenario must have been quite crazy. In any case, at this moment, when Tilopa took off his flip-flop and gave Naropa a really good hit on his

forehead, Naropa got it. At that point, there was no longer a need for words or for any explanation. Naropa did not have any more questions. For example, he did not say, “How did you do that?” He did not question why Tilopa used his sandal instead of a golden vase, which would have looked much more sacred. It is difficult for us to imagine Mahamudra instruction being given with an Indian sandal; nevertheless, that is how the pointing-out instructions work.

From this story, we can also see that pointing-out instructions are repeated again and again. However, it is recommended that students do not receive them too often—for example, every month or every year. That does not work because the experience loses its quality of freshness. We can become jaded by pointing-out instructions, and at that point nothing will help us. In the Dharma of the Practice Lineage, we have a saying: “If your mind is distracted by ordinary, mundane disturbances, that is very easy to work out through the Dharma, the path, and with meditation. But if your mind is jaded by the Dharma, then there is no antidote.” That is a very dangerous situation and the reason there is so much emphasis on avoiding spiritual materialism.

The Mahamudra path is a very individual path, and the connection to the teacher is a very individual connection. Whether or not we want to be woken up with a bucket of water, we must trust in the awakened person. That trust is our devotion. Whether or not we have that trust is what determines whether our friend will take the initiative to wake us up. The bucket of water does not come at the beginning of our relationship with our friend. It comes only after teacher and student have developed a sense of confidence in each other, and only after we have given away our key. The Mahamudra path is a very profound journey that is based on our individual connection to the spiritual friend, the method, and our prajna related to the teachings. Accordingly, the instructions that point out mind’s nature must be received from one’s own teachers. What they are pointing out is the ordinary mind, and how they will point that out—you will see.

Our spiritual journey is a mutual effort. We cannot say that it is only the guru’s job, even if we have handed over our key and the guru

has used it to transmit a certain method of awakening. We must put effort into awakening our own enlightened heart that has been within our own mind from beginningless time. Ultimately, enlightenment is not something new that we gain through the teacher, through the path, or through any outer wisdom. It is something we discover within our own hearts.

MAHĀMUDRĀ
— THE MOONLIGHT —
*Quintessence of Mind
and Meditation*

DAKPO TASHI NAMGYAL

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*Foreword by His Holiness the
Fourteenth Dalai Lama*



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CHAPTER FOUR

The Stages of Tranquility and Insight: Part Three, Clearing Doubts Regarding the Methods for Maintaining the View of Reality and Meditative Absorption

[Clearing doubts has four aspects:]

1. Distinction between analytical meditation and concentrative meditation [fixed attentiveness]
- 62 B 2. Application of analysis and concentration to tranquility and insight
3. Analysis and concentration on the view of reality
4. Elimination of doubts about the essential view of reality

1. Distinction Between Analytical Meditation and Concentrative Meditation [Fixed Attentiveness]

Some consider the meditation of the learned teachers to be solely analytical and that of the mendicant seekers to be exclusively that of concentration. Others think Buddhist scholars only study and investigate through reliance on doctrinal texts, whereas seekers practice tranquil absorption through the sole reliance on practical instructions. This is not so.

Scholars need the fixed attentiveness of tranquil absorption, which concentrates on the subject of meditation, while seekers need analytical meditation in order to purify their view of distortion and scepticism. Otherwise the view of inherent reality attained solely through analytical investigation reduces that view to an intellectual exercise, whereas the view achieved only through fixed attentiveness is a mere experience of the mind. Without both – fixed attentiveness and analytical investigation – the essence of meditation will be difficult to realize.

- 63 F What are the determining and differentiating factors of fixed attentiveness and analytical investigation? Fixed attentiveness and analytical investigation are designated according to their greater or lesser degree. Analytical investigation is

a meditational stage that seeks to establish the view of inherent reality through inferential examination and authoritative exposition. Fixed attentiveness is a meditational stage in which the view of intrinsic reality is determined essentially through valid cognition leading to meditation on tranquil equipoise of the ultimate reality. The school of analytical investigation concerns itself with the meditational systems based principally upon inferential investigation and the authoritative expositions embodied in the works of Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna. The meditational system of fixed attentiveness seeks perfect view through initial contemplation on the valid cognition and then through main absorptive meditation on the mind's ultimate nature. This system was handed down by the great sages Saraha and Śavari. The perfect view arrived at by these two schools must necessarily be identical, insofar as the void being the ultimate nature is concerned.

63 B Je Götsangpa⁵⁹ comments on these systems:

The ultimate object of the analytical school of Buddhist savants and the school of fixed attentiveness of the mendicant yogins is one and the same. The latter is regarded as being the more rapid path.

The realization of perfect view solely through reliance on authoritative exposition and inferential logic is difficult. As master Chandrakīrti reasons, "Investigation through authoritative exposition and inferential logic is analysis through concepts, which is incapable of determining valid cognition." According to the Buddhist tradition many of the great Buddhist savants such as "the two great chariots," Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga, attained liberation through their adherence to the pithy instructions of Buddhist esotericism. Other great savants such as Nāropa and Maitrīpa have achieved liberation by following the pithy instructions of the ultimate truth, though not without having first attempted to do so through the path of authoritative exposition and inferential logic. Most of the great saints of Tibet and ancient India have achieved liberation by following the pithy instructions of Buddhist esotericism.

64 F There are those who hold that perfect view cannot be realized without the general application of authoritative exposition and inferential logic and particularly the application of this logic according to the Madhyamaka of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, the spiritual father and son. This view seems to be a personal indulgence and is not quite correct. If this assertion were valid, it would follow that, prior to their composing texts on Madhyamaka logic, Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva had not realized perfect view. Such a view further implies that the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas, and most of the great awakened ones of Tibet had not realized the perfect view either.

From the etymological standpoint, the terms “investigation” and “attentiveness” denote analysis and quietening of the mind. Difficulty would arise if one were to differ from these definitions. Analytical meditation encompasses the entire doctrine – from the rarity of obtaining a blessed human state, to impermanence, and to the determination of the two types of selflessness – as the subject of investigation. Meditation on fixed attentiveness embraces all absorptive meditations on the determination made through preceding investigations. Such concentration is maintained through single-minded attention and vigilance.

64 B There are some who consider analytical investigation and fixed attentiveness to be mutually exclusive. They contend that the mind cannot be settled in tranquility while concurrently investigating with penetrating intellect. Similarly they hold that analysis is impossible while the mind remains settled in tranquility, which is a nonconceptual state.

The first *Gomrim* (*Bhāvanākrama*) states:

While the mind is settled in tranquility, one investigates it through intellectual discernment. The intellect in absorptive equipoise should examine itself [the nature of mind].

The master Vasubandhu, in his commentary on the *Sūtrālamkāra*, refers to the varieties of meditation on insight: meditations with or without both general examination and penetrating analysis, and those engaging only in penetrating analysis. Many of the analytical meditations are to be practiced without disturbing the state of fixed attentiveness. The application of vigilance in a settled tranquility is a form of examination [if only to detect the emergence of sensual incitement or dullness]. Many similar instances exist.

2. *Application of Analysis and Concentration to Tranquility and Insight*

Some people assume that by alternating the meditation of fixed attentiveness with investigation, tranquility cannot possibly be realized. They insist that meditation on tranquility must always be a fixed state and hold that analysis through discerning wisdom – during the meditation on insight – might cause that insight to cease. These views are misconceived.

65 F If the aforementioned view of fixed attentiveness expressed by some people were correct, such meditations as “exhaustive analysis”⁶⁰ and “the inward examination for the elimination of defilement”⁶¹ etc. could not be used as objects of tranquil meditation. By extension, the application of discerning wisdom and strong vigilance in mastering tranquility would be wrong, too. This view of an exponent on insight would contradict the traditional viewpoint that upon com-

65 B pleting the analysis, the analyzing intellect finally quietens itself [into a tranquil state]. According to his position, the nonconceptual and imperturbable insight mentioned in the *Bhāvanākrama* would not be possible. Moreover, he maintains that meditational analysis and tranquility, insight and fixed attentiveness are mutually exclusive. This view assumes analysis to be completely intellectual discrimination, and tranquility to be totally nonconceptual. It holds that the state of insight ceases when meditation on fixed attentiveness progresses. Therefore, insight must always remain attached to the discerning intellect. These assertions would render impossible the integration of tranquility and insight, and would negate the similarity between nonconceptual perception and insight. This is a great fallacy.

How then does one practice? At the stage of tranquility one meditates mainly on fixed attentiveness, according to the methods laid down in the nine stages of settling the mind. Even so, analysis must be applied once tranquil equipoise is stabilized.

The first *Bhāvanākrama* states:

When complete quietude of mind prevails, apply extensive analysis to all the psychophysical aggregates and elements [of one's stream of being].

66 F There are many analytical methods recommended to be practiced during a stage of tranquility. These are contemplation upon ugliness as an antidote to lust, upon love against hatred, and upon the law of interdependent arising against ignorance. Similarly, investigation through three or four methods are predominant in the meditation on insight. Insight is not lost when the analyzing intellect finally quietens itself so that no trace of duality remains. This quietening of the analytical intellect is the stage of pure insight when one remains in nondual awareness.

The *Kāśyapaparivarta-sūtra* says:

Fire produced by rubbing together two sticks of wood
Then consumes both sticks;
Likewise, discernment of dualism engenders wisdom,
Which then destroys the two [dualistic notions].

The *Madhyamakāvatāra* explains:

Human individuals are bound by dualistic conceptions;
Yogins who overcome dualism achieve liberation.
The fruit of perfect analysis
Is the reversal of discrimination.
So proclaim the wise ones.

Once integrated tranquility and insight are attained, the principal meditative effort must be on fixed attentiveness, with occasional alternations to analytical investigation.⁶² The authoritative expositions will be quoted below. The following methods are recommended for ordinary aspirants: Meditate on tranquility, if overcome by inner diversion⁶³ arising from excessive analysis; meditate on insight, if overcome by depression due to excessive meditation on fixed attentiveness and tranquility; meditate on effortless equanimity when harmonizing tranquility and insight.

The first *Bhāvanākrama* states:

Dullness, if not eliminated, will completely engulf the mind, turning it into a dark realm devoid of insight. The moment the mind sinks into dullness, it must be cleared. At times the intellect attains great sensitivity through insightful meditation; this causes the mind to become very restless. Its perception of true reality becomes shaky, like a butter lamp flickering in the wind. This mind is not capable of perceiving intrinsic reality. The remedy for this condition is the meditation of tranquility. As this tranquility stabilizes itself, meditation on discerning wisdom must resume.

Once the meditator has harmoniously blended tranquility and insight, he must maintain it without undue exertion for as long as the body and mind can endure it. Once tranquility and insight are unified, the mind must settle in concentrative equipoise, instead of alternating this with investigation.

The *Samḍhinirmochana-sūtra* comments:

Maitreya: At what stage do the blending of tranquility and insight and their harmonious union take place?

Buddha: This takes place when the mind is settled in one-pointed concentration.

Maitreya: What is the one-pointed mind?

Buddha: It is a simple awareness of the perceived image of absorption, which is to be sustained.

Master Jñānagarbha,⁶⁴ in his commentary on the *Samḍhinirmochana*, explains:

The path of tranquility is not separate from the path of insight, since the former is concentration on the mind, which then becomes the object of investigation for the latter. The mind is the only object for both these visualized meditations. When tranquil meditation stabilizes the mind,

insightful meditation analyzes it. Both the visualization and visualizer are just identical characteristics of the mind. Hence they are not separate entities.

67 B 3. *Analysis and Concentration on the View of Reality*

Some teachers have expounded the following methods, which I consider to be wrong: To maintain perfect view a meditator should first investigate the ultimate reality, using the authoritative doctrinal expositions and logic. This should bring about a firm determinate awareness of the nonsubstantiality of dualism.⁶⁵ The meditator should focus his concentration on it for a short while. They contend that an extended concentration will reduce its determinate awareness to mere tranquility with the resultant loss of insight. Not only is the meditator to practice investigation in this manner, but he is urged to alternate the meditation of fixed attentiveness with that of investigation.

I shall explain why the determinate awareness of nonsubstantial reality, so engendered through the examination of the authoritative doctrinal expositions and logic, is, regardless of the explanations, nothing but the mind grasping at emptiness. Such a view is not endowed with perfect insight, and it cannot be perfected through the meditation of fixed attentiveness either. This system may not result in the attainment of an absorptive equipoise endowed with perfect view, since these teachers hold tranquility to be unattainable through the alternating meditation of fixed attentiveness and investigation. The reason for settling the mind in tranquility and insightful view is the same. To settle the mind in fixed attentiveness after investigation is also wrong, as they maintain insight vanishes once the mind is settled in tranquility. With insight so vanished, a concentration on the perfect view [of reality] cannot render the meditation perfect. It is also incorrect to say that the union of tranquility and insight will degenerate into mere tranquility without the benefit of repeated examinations. When the view of such a union emerges, a single-minded concentration on that view will encompass both tranquility and insight. This is indeed the union of the two. It is incorrect to repeatedly continue the examination after settling the mind in the attained view, because such an examination through authoritative doctrine and logic still remains within the conceptual domain. This is deluded discrimination and is to be eliminated through the dawning of nonconceptual awareness.⁶⁶ The reference in the *Kāśyapaparivarta* and the *Bhāvanākrama* to nonconceptual awareness arising from analytical intellect merely indicates the initial need for wisdom to establish the perfect view. They do not show the need for repeated examinations to maintain the attained view.

68 B Since most forms of determinate awareness⁶⁷ are nothing more than inferential judgement⁶⁸ based on a rational intellect, they cannot be accepted as nonconceptual awareness. It is also incorrect [for these teachers] to assume a concentration on perfect view and a contemplative tranquility as being the same. A vast difference exists between the two. Tranquility merely maintains the stream of nondiscriminating mindfulness⁶⁹ of the visualized image,⁷⁰ whereas mind focused on the perfect view is the stream of nonconceptual awareness, which is in harmony with the determinate certainty of the void nature [of duality].

How then are analytical investigation and fixed attentiveness to be practiced in order to maintain the perfect view? At first, when seeking the view of reality, development of a determinate awareness can be helped by discarding all doubts and assumptions about the criteria of the individual marks of reality and their generalized marks through the intellect born of acquired knowledge. This is like the training of a new horse on a track. For the realization of perfect view a discerning wisdom⁷¹ arising from meditation is essential. While not dependent
69 F upon inferential judgement, this wisdom is capable of directly establishing all realities to be devoid of true essence or inborn nature. It will cause the meditator to experience the analytical intellect itself as being without identifiable appearance or essence. This is the fundamental tenet of perfect view. Observations and examinations must be practiced through the contemplative wisdom with unceasing mindfulness of the tranquil meditation, and not through conceptual analysis.

The first *Bhāvanākrama* states:

When the mental focus on the visualized image of tranquility becomes firm, if at that moment one examines it through wisdom, an illumination of pure awareness will emerge, like light clearing the darkness. Pure awareness arises when the harmony between the two [tranquility and insight] is achieved. This harmony arises in the same way as one's eyes and light harmonize to produce a visual perception, without the conflicting characteristics of light and darkness. This absorptive trance is,
69 B by its nature, devoid of darkness, its essential characteristic being single-mindedness. By such meditational equipoise⁷² ultimate reality can be perceived as it is. Not only is this meditation compatible with wisdom, but it is in perfect harmony with it. Therefore, the inconceivable nature of all phenomena, established through analytical wisdom obtained in absorptive meditation, is the ultimate reality beyond conception. It is the criterion of the subliminal purity [of awareness], which is spontaneous perfection. There is nothing more to be observed beyond that.

As discerning intellect finally quietens itself [when primal awareness emerges], all realities are cognized as being empty of absolute self-nature. This is the meaning of perceiving the true reality.

The first *Bhāvanākrama* continues:

What does the perception of ultimate reality signify? It signifies the non-cognition [of any absolute self-nature] of all realities. The term “noncognition of all realities” should not be construed to be the same as the dark void experienced by a blind man, a person with his eyes shut, or someone lacking in mental application.

As the text states:

The inconceivable nature of all phenomena, established through analytical wisdom obtained in absorptive meditation, is the ultimate reality beyond conception.⁷³

70 F

Therefore, a meditator seeking the perfect view must first settle the mind in absorptive equipoise and then conduct meditational investigation through discerning wisdom. Having attained this view, the meditator should repeat his investigation whenever the mind is overcome by nonvirtuous thoughts caused by its attachment to duality. Once the unerring awareness of perfect view is established, meditation with fixed attentiveness alone, rather than alternating it with investigation, should be the practice followed, until that view is mastered. This will be illustrated through doctrinal expositions later.

4. *Elimination of Doubts About the Essential View of Reality*

There are two sections:

1. Review of other Buddhist schools
2. Establishing the meditational system of our school

1. *Review of Other Buddhist Schools*

It was not correct on the part of some earlier Tibetan teachers to have assumed the view that intrinsic reality consists of abandonment not only of attachment to duality, but also of virtuous thoughts. Some have regarded this line of thought to be identical to that of the Hwashang school,⁷⁴ as both are lacking in determinate awareness that comprehends the intrinsic reality. This is considered to be either due to a confused mind or to indifference.

70 B

Other earlier Tibetan scholars assumed “perfect view” to be the stream of determinate awareness arising from their recognition of the nonexistence of duality, as a result of expositional and inferential investigation based on the three marks of syllogism.⁷⁵ This is incorrect. Master Gampopa described such a system as the abnegated concept of nonarising [void], because it is an intellectualized and superficial void based on inferential judgements.

The *Pramāṇasamucchaya* says:

If one is led to the truth
 Along the path of dialectics,⁷⁶
 It debases the teaching of Buddha.

Master Atiśa says:

Through the two forms of awareness,
 Primal cognition⁷⁷ and inferential judgement,
 One will perceive the void.
 So say those people
 Confused by duality.⁷⁸

Still other early Tibetans have assumed intrinsic reality to be the void of absolute nothingness, determined by examining the self and the psychophysical aggregates through the logic of the Madhyamaka. This is also incorrect. The *Kālachakra* places this assumption closer to nihilism. It therefore cannot be accepted as being identical with the void of supreme form.⁷⁹

71 F

Some [teachers] propounded that one can establish an undeviated view, free from any extreme theories, through authoritative exposition, logical inference, or practical instruction, and then settle the mind in a nondiscriminating awareness. Such is the nature of view and meditation. And when the mind is in tranquil equipoise, there emerges a union of awareness and void that is vivid, transparent, and unblemished. This is the nonconceptual awareness of intrinsic reality.

Some others stated that the above-mentioned scholars criticized Hwashang’s contemplative approach, yet practiced a similar contemplation themselves. However, I find that their position with respect to the view of reality and the method of attaining tranquility is in accord with the treatises of the Buddhist scholars and saints. Nonetheless, these very exponents identify blissful experience, gained through control of the complex neuropsychical system⁸⁰ and the creative elements, with nonconceptual awareness. This should not be confused with real nonconceptual awareness. No matter how good the awareness, when it is not separated from the moisture of sensations and experiences, it is nothing more than an appearance arising from either a subjective or objective dimension.

71 B Also, some savants – while refuting all other views of intrinsic reality – content themselves with not having any formulation. Such a position is not only hypocritical, but a nonacceptance of the classical treatises of the Madhyamaka of which they are professed followers. It is an expedient substitute for a definite awareness of the “thatness” [of ultimate reality].

Some assume that even though one does not discover the view of intrinsic reality through examination of doctrine and logic, meditation on the meaning of true reality is fulfilled if the mind is settled in its primal state, detached from the notion of objective reality and from the process of discrimination. They assert that since the void of true reality is devoid of all identity, there must be such a method for settling the mind. Others have refuted this approach by identifying it with the nihilistic system of Hwashang. Though such practice is without error, the manner of its description might well be incompetent. My own observation of this system is that a meditator can use this to discover the proper view, provided he is aware of the inherent limitations of nonsubstantial objective reality and the essential significance of the void nature of true reality, which is beyond all identity.

72 F Even without comprehending these essential points, if one begins to settle the mind in a simple, nonconceptual state by first examining it through wisdom, and then maintaining that quietude through vigilance and mindfulness, one is adopting a method prescribed for new meditators to practice tranquility and insight. It is somewhat close to the method for maintaining a view of intrinsic reality, though not the same employed by those competent meditators who have eliminated all doubts and exaggeration. Even a nonconceptual meditation accompanied by mindfulness and vigilance will serve to maintain nonconceptual tranquility. Yet such a tranquil state can be flawed by the lack of mindfulness and vigilance and clouded by a deep dullness and sluggishness. This is recognized as depressed thoughtlessness.

72 B Other exponents, while admitting the need for perfect view through analysis of doctrine and logic, assert that once perfect view is attained, the mind settled in a completely nonconceptual state constitutes the meditation of that perfect view. Opponents of this hold that if this position were true, then all dimensions of thoughtlessness – such as deep sleep or the meditation on simple tranquility – should represent meditation on the perfect view. The question as to whether a meditation deals with perfect view can be answered by determining the presence or absence of vigilance and mindfulness, reinforced by a determinate awareness of that view, in the nonconceptual state in question. My previous comments on the value of simple nonconceptual meditation have application in this instance.

It has been asserted by some that once the true view is achieved, all subsequent meditation should begin with an examination of the view through discerning

wisdom. After that, the mind should be settled in a nonconceptual state. They hold this to be the meditation on the true view. This has been refuted by some on the same grounds as the preceding case; they argued that the mere settling of the mind in a nonconceptual state is similar to a deep sleep. On the criteria for determining whether a meditation is that of perfect view, I refer to my observations above.

73 F

Some exponents do not accept the three above-mentioned meditational systems. To them meditation on the perfect view is forming a determinate awareness of its void nature and then firmly fixing attention on the significance of it. They, however, point out that the first system is not without any intellectual inclination toward the void, and the second does not lack mindfulness of the perfect view when settling the mind in a nonconceptual equipoise. The third system is not without fixed attention on the view of perfect reality after the initial investigation.

However, their approach has drawn criticism on the grounds that the meditation prescribed in contradistinction to the three consists solely of fixing the mental focus on the perfect view through recollection of its previous understanding of that view. It is held by critics to be simply tranquil meditation on the void and therefore lacking in insight that arises from investigation. Holistic meditation must consist of tranquility and insight; this practice is incomplete, as it contains only tranquility. This criticism cannot be valid if the meditation in question is basically a concentration [as these critics pointed out] on insight attained earlier through analysis. Therefore, there is no need to repeat the analysis [in the same practice]. I find the approach to be well presented, though there may be some basis for doubt concerning the existence of attachment to the experience of the view.

73 B

A Tibetan savant asserts that in order to establish the view of reality, the meditator should first eliminate the mind's grasping of dualism born of ignorance and then, as a counterbalance, produce a powerful awareness of the void [nature of mind] through meditation. Merely to master concentration of the mind on the awareness of that view is only to maintain tranquility. Instead, there must be repeated examination and creation of a powerful awareness of certainty. Any comprehension of the meaning of intrinsic reality does not necessarily constitute a clinging to substantive dualism. All nonconceptual states, detached from discerning intellect, are similar to the meditational system of Hwashang.

Followers of this savant hold that in the emptiness of true dualism, established through the logical investigation of the Middle Way [Madhyamaka], lies the meaning of nonselfhood. The powerful certainty of selflessness or emptiness of true reality, produced by an intellect inclined toward that position, is the

definite awareness of the perfect view. Seating that awareness of certainty on the horse of tranquility and thereby settling it in absorptive equipoise is regarded to be the true view in meditation.⁸¹ The rest is as I have said before.

74 F I shall now examine the preceding assertion that creating a powerful awareness of the emptiness of innate nature involves conceptualizing the nonexistent self-nature or nonsubstance; this is not different from clinging to that emptiness. It is similar to the other position following it, according to which the intellectual grasping of the selflessness of phenomena or of the emptiness of true reality is but mental attachment. The greater the grasping, the stronger the clinging. Though the existence of the self is negated, the intellectual grasping of nonselfhood still persists; though clinging to substantive reality is negated, an attachment to that reality still persists. These are recognized as the great fallacies.

The *Bhāvanākrama* explains:

Contemplate all things as devoid of self-nature; abandon even the idea of nonexistent self-nature through transcending wisdom.

The *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* states:

74 B He who views his nature and that of others
As being substantive or nihilistic
Does not perceive the true nature
According to the Buddha's doctrine.

And the same text adds:

To affirm reality is to concede eternalism;
To deny reality completely is to accept nihilism.

The *Bodhichittavivaraṇa* expounds:

This is nonarising or emptiness,
This is nonselfhood.
Such is the meditation of an inferior mind.
This is not the meditation on the void.

These expositions contradict the position of the scholars mentioned earlier. The *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* states:

By their erroneous perceptions of emptiness
The less intelligent will come to grief.

The *Uma Tshiksel* (*Mūlamadhyamaka-vṛttih Prasannapadā*) explains:

The moment all phenomena are conceived as nihility
A distortion of the view occurs.

There is a possibility of this risk. However, should such clinging [to nihility] persist, choose a positive view of reality, which is the better of the two evils.

The *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* asserts:

He who affirms [substantiality] will go to the realm of peace;
He who denies everything will go to the realm of affliction.⁸²

75 F It is incorrect to regard as simple tranquility the state in which the mind is focused on a memory of perfect view. The mind settled in a tranquil state contains insight; thus a union of the two exists. A view without the two cannot be said to be a perfect view. To designate every insight as conceptual and every tranquility as nonconceptual is to deny the harmony between the two. Such designation precludes the possibility of a synthesis of tranquility and insight. In light of this approach, the following might also be incorrect. Concerning the unity of tranquility and insight master Jñānagarbha, in his commentary on the *Samdhi-nirmochana-sūtra*, writes:

Since the path of tranquility concentrates primarily on the mind, which is at the same time the object of insight, the perception and perceiver are not separate entities but the complete state of the mind. With regard to the mind's grasping of emptiness or nihility, no other exponents of the ultimate doctrine, Tibetan or Indian, have accepted this as being valid.

This approach contradicts many authoritative positions. For example, the *Dharmadhātu-stava*⁸³ states:

75 B Abandon discrimination and conceptualization
Of all phenomena projected by mind;
Meditate on the inner expanse of reality
For in reality they are devoid of innate essence.

The Great Saraha elucidates:

The true essence of reality is unblemished
By extreme concepts and impurities [prejudices];
Pure from the beginning, it is beyond determination;
To discriminate it is to arouse a poisonous snake.

Since conceptual discrimination or investigation is but the exercise of a conditioned and deluded mind, the conceptual discrimination of the ultimate reality is refuted.

Nāgārjuna says:

The ultimate reality is beyond
The realm of the mind's discrimination,
For the mind is recognized as being conditioned.

It is incorrect to assume that grasping the true nature of reality does not represent a clinging to conceptual reality.

The *Prajñāpāramitā-samchayaḡāthā* elaborates:

If a Bodhisattva considers
The psychophysical aggregates as being “void,”
He is grasping a conceptual reality,⁸⁴
Thus showing little reverence toward that which is “unborn.”

The *Prajñāpāramitā* comments that to dualize all phenomena, from psychophysical aggregates to perfect knowledge, as being eternal or impermanent, empty or not empty, possessed of self or without a self, is to indulge in conceptual duality.

76 F

Saraha says:

When the mind is enchanted [by the senses]
And indulges in them with a passionate heart,
Then even a pain as small as the husk of a sesame seed
Is sure to cause constant affliction.

And he concludes:

Abandon attachment to objects, whatever they may be.

There have been many statements to the same effect.

It is a little too audacious to say that all nonconceptual states, devoid of analytical investigation, are identical with the meditational system of Hwashang.

The *Bodhichittavivaraṇa* asserts:

Nondiscrimination is emptiness.
How can there be emptiness
Where discrimination exists?

The *Madhyamakāvatāra* explains:

Erroneous concepts are the results of discrimination –
So proclaims the Wise One.

Atiśa, in elucidating the technique of settling the mind according to special Madhyamaka instruction, says:

In the midst of meditation one does not discriminate nor cling to anything.

All such statements, which urge the settling of the mind in a nonconceptual state, might well be the meditational system of Hwashang [according to the critic of nonconceptual meditation].

76 B

The teachings of Maitreya⁸⁵ refer to the wisdom that grasps at the emptiness of reality as the concept of eternalism. Since this concept is to be abandoned

through nonconceptual awareness, it cannot be the perfect view. Even if, as advocated, it is seated on the horse of tranquility, it would not be the perfect view in meditation. According to his system, tranquility must necessarily be nonconceptual, whereas the tranquil mind, detached from discrimination, causes the loss of insight. The analogy of a horse and its burden is incompatible. It has been affirmed that analytical investigation itself must finally cease [in samādhi]. When this occurs, [if the critic is right] insight is lost and the meditation becomes similar to that propounded by the Hwashang school. Buddhist logic and doctrine can be used to counter this position; however, I will not elucidate here for fear of overelaboration.

2. Establishing the Meditational System of Our School

77 F Much can be understood from the previous explanations on insight, the identification of the view of reality and its maintenance, and also from the commentaries on the doctrine and logic. The realization of the view of the void is said to occur upon achieving the stage of illumination. Here I shall only deal with the view appropriate to the intellectual level of ordinary human beings. It is of the utmost importance to establish the view of the void, whether through analytical or concentrative meditation. The sūtras state that nonrealized view and meditation cannot destroy the roots of existence [saṃsāra].

The *Bodhicittavivaraṇa* remarks:

Those who are ignorant of the void
 Cannot achieve liberation.
 These confused minds wander
 In the prison of the six realms.

It is futile to practice without discovering the unerring view of reality. Nāropa, in his *Drṣṭisaṃkṣipta*, comments:

77 B Through unerring view,
 Meditation and action well-harmonized,
 Enlightenment is achieved,
 Like a trained horse skillfully negotiating a course.
 If the view is not truly in accord [with intrinsic reality],
 Meditation and action will take the wrong course,
 And nothing of any worth will be achieved.
 That is like the groping of a blind man without a guide.

The attainment of awareness through meditation is essential for a successful determination of the true view. Mere intellectual understanding arising from

hearing and examining will not suffice. All the sūtras, tantras, and illuminating instructions agree that the ultimate meditation is one that concentrates on the mind and culminates in realization.

The *Guhyasamāja-tantra* states:

When fully examined,
The mind is found to be the source of all realities.
This phenomenon is the space of indestructibility
In which the duality of phenomena and their intrinsic nature is absent.

The *Vajrapañjara-tantra* sets forth:

The precious mind is a dynamic force; the mind attuned to meditation
attains enlightenment.

The *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* elucidates:

78 F Do not determine the external reality through mere reliance on the mind.
Transcend the confines of the mind, by focusing on the suchness [of the void].
Settle the mind on the unreality of phenomenal appearance.
A yogin who has realized the unreality of appearance will truly understand
the Great Vehicle.

The *Sūtrālaṅkāra* summarizes:

Know that nothing exists apart from the mind.
Realize the mind itself is devoid of true reality.

Saraha says:

The mind is in bondage, if tied by attachment;
If this tie is broken, the source of confusion is eliminated.

Based on the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, the system of the Two Great Chariots,⁸⁶ “the stages of meditation” and “the instructions on the wisdom-gone-beyond” prescribe practices for attaining the nonconceptual state by focusing (1) on the mind, (2) on the awareness of the suchness [of the void], or (3) on the perception of the unreality of phenomena. When establishing the view of reality through meditation according to the sūtras or tantras with elucidating instructions, discerning wisdom is indispensable. This is stated in the third *Bhāvanākrama*:

78 B All realities in their essence are void, which cannot be understood without analytical intellect.

However, this intellect itself must finally be quietened, ushering in the emergence of a nonconceptual state.

The *Kāśyapaparivarta* states:

Buddha: Kāśyapa, when two wind-blown trees strike each other, fire is produced. This fire then consumes the trees. Similarly, Kāśyapa, from the perfect analytical intellect is born the wisdom of the awakened ones, whose flames then consume the intellect.

The second *Bhāvanākrama* explains:

The fire of the true understanding of ultimate reality emerges from the discerning intellect. This fire consumes the intellect, the way the flames consumed the trees. Such were the words of the Illuminated Conqueror.

79 F Analysis [of insight] – not of conceptual views – should be done while dwelling in a meditative absorption. A sūtra affirms this approach:

Understanding of the pure truth can only be attained through absorptive meditation.

The *Bhāvanākrama* agrees:

Perfect awareness will dawn only when the mind – firmly settled in tranquility – applies wisdom and investigates it.

At this level, the true view of intrinsic reality is the dawning of nonconceptual awareness devoid of any entity. This occurs when the discriminating faculties become quiet. A sūtra says in support:

Perfect insight is the nonperception of all phenomena.

The *Bhāvanākrama* adds:

What is the insight into true reality?

It is the nonperception of all phenomena.

At this stage the mind should be quietened in a nonconceptual, nonperceiving state, free from any dualistic thought or consciousness, undisturbed by the cloud of dullness or sensual incitement.

A sūtra declares:

79 B When the mind with its pristine purity focuses upon intrinsic reality, an indefinable experience will illuminate one. This is described as absorptive equipoise.

Atiśa says:

Settle the mind without discrimination in the nonconceptual expanse of reality.

And he adds:

The infinity of reality is without center or horizon. Observe it with a deep nonconceptual mind, unobscured by any shadow of dullness or sensual incitement.

The *Madhyamakopadeśa* of Atiśa concludes:

Thus, past thought has ceased, the future is yet to emerge, and the present is difficult to penetrate. Being nonsubstantive and spacelike, the mind is colorless and shapeless. It is neither one nor many entities. Its nature is the unborn [void] and luminous awareness. By examining the mind with the weapon of logic, one will comprehend its nonreality.

Neither the twin aspects of the mind [awareness and its void nature] nor the discerning intellect are composed of any essence. For example, the fire that results from the friction of two pieces of wood consumes the wood that begot it; when the wood is burnt, the fire dies. The moment wisdom establishes the unreality of all perceptive and conceptual dualism, the meditator will realize the wisdom itself as being lucid and void, unobscured by perceptive duality and undistracted by dullness or sensual incitement. The mind should be rid of flaws such as dullness, sensual incitement, clinging, memory, and other mental activities. The meditator should maintain a nonconceptual state until interrupted by stealthy thieflike perception or discrimination.

This can be explained in a simpler way. When, at first, the meditator seeks perfect view, he establishes the mind as being the source of all duality. The mind is then discovered to be without essence. These investigations are carried out through logical formulae known as: the three entrances of time; the mutual exclusion of the one and many; the nonexistence of absolute arising, cessation and duration; and the lucid, void nature of the mind. One establishes the mind to be devoid of any substantiality whatsoever through the [above-mentioned] logical investigation. Even the analytical intellect is [established to be] unreal. The analytical intellect dissolves itself finally into the nondual, luminous state in the way wood is consumed by fire.

This is the attainment of the perfect view. Once this occurs, the mind should concentrate totally on the realized view unless interrupted by perceptions or discrimination. During the absorptive period the mind should be cleared of any creeping dullness or sensual incitement. It should not allow discrimination, attachment, consciousness of duality, or other mental activities.

The *Bhāvanākrama* advises:

Contemplate the nonsubstantiality of all phenomena. Eliminate even the very notion of nonsubstantiality through nonconceptual wisdom.

Meditate on such a nonconceptual state that transcends dualism, both existence and nonexistence.

81 F There are those who seek to maintain the view of reality through meditation and who thereby wish to harmonize the tranquil state with analytical insight into the void nature of phenomena, the nonexistence of an essence, or the nonexistence of the self. They will gain a definite understanding by contemplating the meaning of these quotations.

Many discourses refer to the need for nonconceptual meditation once the perfect way has been established. The *Samādhirāja* states:

Wise understanding of the conditioned and unconditioned reality,
Elimination of all perceptive duality,
And the quietening of the mind in a nondual state
Will bring about insight into the void nature of all phenomena.

The *Bhāvanākrama* quotes the *Ārya Ratnamegha*:

81 B A thorough examination of the understanding of the mind will bring about a realization of its emptiness. With this knowledge, the meditator should withdraw into the pure state of nonduality. Understanding the mind's nonexistent essence through analytical insight is absorption in the state of nonduality.

The second *Bhāvanākrama* continues:

When a seeker of the truth fully examines [the mind] through wisdom and refrains from clinging to its intrinsic nature as being the ultimate essence, he then reaches nonconceptual absorption.

Kamalaśīla in his commentary on the *Avikalpapraveśa-dhāraṇī* explains:

At the conclusion of the examination, the mind should be quietened into a nonconceptual state.

The *Bodhipathapradīpa* supports this:

First establish all phenomena
As being devoid of self-nature and absolute condition
Through doctrine and logic.
Then meditate on the perfect nonconceptuality.

This completes the general elucidation on the removal of doubts concerning view and meditation. This has been written as a general exegesis, to serve as a guide for the many methods of realizing the absorptive state in accordance with the sūtras, tantras, and illuminating instructions.

196 B The *Chökyi Gyalpoi Dho* (*Dharmarāja-sūtra*) elaborates:

[Buddha:] O virtuous son, if you aspire to achieve release and liberation, you should detach yourself from any sensual indulgence and should contemplate the mind, not as dualistic phenomena, but as being one. The mind that contemplates its own reality is empty of any reality. The emptiness of essence constitutes the essential nature of the mind. It is devoid of any movement, projection, or achievement; hence it has been characterized as enlightenment.

[The disciple:] Since mental cognitions are of an inconceivable extent, how could they be designated as being empty of movement, projection, or achievement?

[Buddha:] If one enters a fully concentrated state observing and examining inwardly, one will achieve the state of purity that is nonarising [emptiness].

The *Dampaichö Yongsuzinpai Dho* (*Saddharmaparigraha-sūtra*) teaches:

... for that reason you should understand the mind to be empty of any essence and to be undependable and unreal. You should not grasp the mind as being immanent with an essence because it is empty of essence. Phenomena, which are empty of essence, do not have a true existence of their own. All phenomena are conceptually designated. Such is their intrinsic nature and has been so revealed. The wise abandon the two extreme views [absolute reality and total nihilism] and explore the middle path. Things that are empty of essence constitute the path of enlightenment. I, too, have revealed this path.

197 F

Many similar passages are to be found in both the collection of the sūtras and the tantras.

5. *The Characteristics of Emerging Insight*

Concerning the analytical meditation on insight through discerning wisdom, some meditators could not gain definite insight into intrinsic reality – despite their persistence in their investigation – due to their excessive strengthening of tranquil mind. However many analyses they conducted, they nevertheless found themselves in an absorptive tranquility. While doing so a sense of certainty dawned on them that the significance of the analyses was revealed through the tranquil state. They mistakenly identified this experience with the gaining of

insight into the intrinsic nature of mind. Some meditators experienced in their meditation on tranquility a strong sense of unreality about the essencelessness of all phenomena, which they mistook to be the insight into the intrinsic nature of the mind. In such cases the meditator should immediately use the methods prescribed [by the teacher] to clear the sensation and experience of tranquility and the mind's clinging to it. By removing the moisture of such a sensation from his inmost awareness and by meditating on insight, he will achieve the result.

197 B However, some people with a deep mental defilement and low intelligence may not gain the insight into the mind no matter how much they may examine it. They should devote themselves, for a while, to the practice of expanding virtues and eliminating defilements, and then to the meditation on tranquility with an increased clarity. Only thereafter should they resume the meditation on insight. Some intelligent [meditators] mistake an intellectual comprehension of the mind's ultimate nature as the dawning of insight. Others who are learned and eloquent in imparting a discourse on the doctrine lack illuminating experience. Still some others, who lack an aptitude for eloquent speeches, gain experience commensurate with the appropriate level of meditation. For meditators such differentiation is very essential.

However good a meditation may be, without insight it will be nothing more than the ordinary meditations known to the adherents of the dogma¹¹⁷ or to lay Buddhists. If this kind of meditation does not match the meditation of the Primary Vehicle [Hīnayāna], it is needless to say that it cannot be comparable with the middle-path meditation of the Mahāyāna, particularly with that of Mahāmudrā [the Great Seal]. For all these reasons an emphasis on meditation on insight is of utmost importance.

198 F How then does one determine the level of insight that has dawned in oneself? An infallible insight,¹¹⁸ which directly perceives the truth of the all-encompassing expanse of reality, cannot be realized except on the great level of the nondiscriminating state. The insight being referred to here is simply an approximate insight, which dawns in the mind of an ordinary individual. This insight is compared to the waxing moon, which, in effect, fulfills the same function as the moon; hence the designation of moon is applicable to both. Insight, at this stage, must consist of (1) the understanding that all dualities including the mind, its manifest thoughts, and appearances are in an ultimate sense empty of any absolute mode of arising, settling, or cessation, and (2) the awareness with a deep certainty that all these dualities are empty of true essence or self-nature.

198 B The authoritative sayings about this either have been or will be quoted. Should a meditator fail to achieve [even this simple insight], he would do well

to seek an understanding of what the masters of this meditational order consider to be the beginner's insight. Such an insight should consist of a harmonious blend of the mind's intrinsic characteristics: self-comprehending, self-crystallized awareness and its innate emptiness of any essence. Thus, by attaining such an insight first, the meditator will gradually achieve the infallible insight as well.

Regarding the standard level of realized insight, the meditative tradition of the sūtras holds that the ideal insight is achieved when the meditation on insight brings about a greater perfection of ease, already achieved earlier during the meditation on tranquility. Insight on the lower level means approximate insight. However, our meditational order does not maintain such a differentiation. Most systems of the vital instructions hold that just as one-pointed concentration – before attaining perfect ease – constitutes meditation on tranquility, so the general detailed analysis of the meditation on insight – before it has achieved perfect ease – falls within the fold of insight. Besides, it is relevant to incorporate into the subject matter of insight its varied categories such as the differentiated types of insight: the insight arising from a perfect differentiation of things; the three other types, such as the insight arising from the analyses of perceptive marks; and so on.

The *Śrāvakabhūmi* states that the fourfold mental applications elucidated in the section on tranquility are applied to the meditation on insight. It is, therefore, not contradictory to regard [the four mental applications], from the uninterrupted exertion downward, as belonging to the realm of insight, because at this stage the meditator achieves an uninterrupted state of insight. This elucidation on the methods for attaining tranquility and insight, identifying their characteristics and harmonizing the two meditative states, is based on the system of the vital instructions as opposed to the various other methods detailed in the sūtras and tantras.

199 B 6. *The Blending of Insight with Other Systems of Insight*

The insight [of this meditational order] may be described in light of the four kinds of insight, such as the insight arising from the perfect differentiation of things stated in the *Samdhinirmochana-sūtra* and other sūtras. According to this order, the intellectual determination of all dualities – embodied in one's thoughts and appearances that originate from the innate power of mind – represents (1) the insight arising from such determination of things, because with analytical penetration the intellect determines all objects of knowledge. Perceiving dualistic reality as being empty of any innate essence represents (2) the insight arising

from the perfect determination of things, because with analytical penetration the intellect differentiates the significance of the exactness of all knowledge. 200 F Determining in general these two kinds of significance with a grasping of the perceptive mark [image] represents (3) the insight arising from a general investigation, because with the support of the perceptive mark, the discerning intellect investigates the broad significance of the exactness and the extent of all phenomena. Investigating with a penetrating precision the two kinds of significance represents (4) the consummate, analytical insight, because this investigation is directed toward the subtlest significance of the exactness and the extent of all things. Such being the case, the *Śrāvakabhūmi* explains:

How does one differentiate between [the two aspects of things]? One may differentiate by such means as perfect analysis, skillful discernment, and thorough examination, which is designed to eliminate mental defilements. Besides, one differentiates exactly the specific characteristics of phenomena. One examines through a discerning intellect the mind that grasps any perceptive marks. One also examines with penetrating discernment all dualistic thoughts.

Furthermore, our system of insight may be explained in light of the three kinds of insight, such as the insight arising from the analysis of perceptive 200 B marks, etc., as stated in the *Samādhinirmochana-sūtra*. According to this meditational order the methods of examining all perceptions as the object of analytical insight represent (1) the insight arising from any perceptive marks, because the investigating intellect focuses completely on the dualistic thoughts, since they form the object of insight. The methods for determining [these dualistic thoughts] as being empty of any essence represent (2) the insight that emerges from a thorough investigation, because this exercise of intellect enables the meditator to realize the object of realization, which has thus far remained unknown to him. The methods through which one achieves self-deliverance with the realization of the essencelessness of all phenomena and which help one to stabilize this experience represent (3) the insight arising from the discerning intellect, for 201 F through such an intellect one realizes the abiding nature of all phenomena, and through consolidating that realization one will achieve inner peace and self-release as well. The *Samādhinirmochana-sūtra* explains:

What is that [insight] which emerges from the perceptive mark? It is an insight that focuses mainly on discriminating thoughts as the object of tranquil absorption.

What is that [insight] which emerges from complete inquiry? It is an insight arising from intellectual appreciation and realizing perfectly the aspects of phenomena that the mind has not fully realized.

What is that [insight] which arises from an analytical intellect? It is an insight arising from a discerning intellect that seeks to achieve inner peace and deliverance through perfecting a good comprehension of phenomena.

201 B The sūtras and the commentaries expound on the types of insight but the treatises on meditation do not explain the methods of differentiating every insight.

Our intellectual system of determining the two kinds of selfhood may now be summarized here in comparison with the sūtric system that was widely known in Tibet and [ancient] India. Our way of determining the intrinsic nature of the mind is similar to the sūtric way of determining selflessness of personality. The sūtras consider that a sustained consciousness of the stream of life's aggregates constitutes the personality; that a consciousness clinging to the notion of an eternal and independent entity of "I" or "self" constitutes the self of personality; and that understanding the unreality of such a self represents the selflessness of personality. Similarly, our meditational order establishes that it is the mind that not only holds the self to be an eternal and independent entity, but also clings to it as "I" or "self" and that such a mind should be determined to be empty of any self-nature. The method of this order for determining thoughts and appearances
202 F is similar to the sūtric method of establishing the selflessness of phenomena (dharmanairātmya). According to the sūtra tradition, the self of an individual holds to the psychophysical aggregates, elements, and so on, as realities [dharmanas], and clings to these valid cognitions as substantially real. This is grasping the self of phenomena (dharmātman). The understanding of these phenomenal realities as empty of self-nature means the selflessness of phenomena. Similarly, our meditational order establishes all categories of thought, which the mind has so designated, and the reality of appearances, such as external form, sound, etc., as being devoid of any innate self-nature.

However, [the two systems] differ on the sequential order of determining the nature of subject and object. The sūtras hold that the mind that perceives sensory objects cannot, itself, be determined without first determining these objects. Dharmakīrti affirms this:

Without first challenging sensory objects

One cannot eliminate [the self].

Āryadeva agrees:

202 B

Only upon perceiving sense objects as being empty of self
Can one terminate the seed of the existential circle.

If our meditational order follows the sūtric approach, it could make any subsequent determination of the perceiving mind very difficult. It has therefore established that the determination of the mind first can easily make the determination of sense objects a spontaneous self-release. This process of nullifying [the mind's clinging to the self of personality] was compared by Tilopa to the analogy of a tree. By cutting the roots of a tree first, its leaves and branches will dry up automatically. The same approach is found in the vital instructions on the significance of the quintessential doctrine [Mahāmudrā].

This completes the discussion of the methods of guiding [meditators] toward insight.