

*Practices from the Zhang-Zhung Nyan Gyud*

**as transmitted orally by  
Lopon Tenzin Namdak**

**(San Francisco/Oregon, 1989)**



*Compiled and edited by Vajran tha (John Myrdhin Reynolds)*

**Bonpo Translation Project**

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# Chapter 1

## PREFACE

Having first been introduced to the rich heritage of the Bonpo tradition of Dzogchen, and in particular to tine Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud, by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, and then subsequently working on a translation of these same texts with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal, I had the privilege of studying directly under Lopon Tenzin Namdak himself during his first visit to America, April through July, 1989. Lopon Rinpoche was the former teaching master (slob-dpon) at Menri (sman-ri) in Tibet, the principal Bonpo monastery in Central Tibet. After finding himself in exile in India in the 1960's, Lopon Rinpoche undertook to establish the first Bonpo refugee settlement in India, and later he organized a college for the purpose of training the next generation of Bonpo Lamas at Dolang. Moreover, he single-handedly saw to the publication in New Delhi of a large number of very rare Bonpo texts. More than any other individual, Lopon Rinpoche is responsible for the survival and the development of the ancient Bonpo tradition outside of Tibet.

While visiting San Francisco as the guests of Des and Paul Barry on behalf of the Dzogchen Community, May 8 through 14, 1989, at my request, over the course of several evenings Lopon Rinpoche taught from the Nyams rgyud rgyal-ba'i phyag khrid by the illustrious Druchen Gyalwa Yungdrung (Bru-chen rgyal-ba g.yung-drung, 1242- 1290). The portion of the text dealt with during this time covered both the preliminary practices (sngon-'gro) and the principal practices (dngos-gzhi). The latter section bore the title: Zab-mo gnad kyi gdams-pa dngos-gzhi, "the principal practices-instructions on the profound essential points". This collection of texts by the Bonpo polymath Druchen represents a kind of practice manual for the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud (zhang-zhung snyan rgyud) tradition of Dzogchen teachings. This exceedingly ancient tradition is not only valuable in itself as a viable spiritual path to liberation and enlightenment, but is of particular historical interest. Unlike the other Bonpo Dzogchen traditions which are in origin Termas (gter-ma), or hidden treasure texts recovered at later times, the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud is bka'-ma, or a continuous tradition of teaching, passing from master to disciple without interruption to the present day. This tradition is said to derive from the masters Tapihritsa and

Gyerpungpa who lived in Western Tibet, then the independent kingdom of Zhang-zhung, in the eighth century of our era. These matters will be more thoroughly dealt with in my book The Oral Tradition of Zhang-zhung (forthcoming).

In this present volume, the first of a series known as the Bonpo Translation Project, following a biographical sketch of Lopon Tenzin Namdak, there will be found Lopon Rinpoche's teachings on the preliminary practices, drawn from the above text and edited by myself. Most Western students of Tibetan Buddhism are familiar with the famous preliminaries or Ngondro (sngon 'gro), and here we have a Bonpo version in nine sections. As an appendix to this first part of the book, there will be found the Invocation to Tapihritsa from the same text, which may be used for the Guru Yoga practice (bla-ma'i rnal-'byor). A second appendix briefly considers the occult chronology of the Bonpo Tantras, drawing on the bsTan rtsis of Nyima Tenzin, a former Abbott of Menri monastery.

The second part of the book considers the principal practices (dngos-gzhi) of the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud. This series of Dzogchen teachings belongs to the Upadeśa classification (man-ngag gi sde) and so the practices and instructions found therein relate to three areas :

1. Rushan ('khor 'das ru-shan phye-ba) - discriminating between mind and the Nature of Mind;
2. Thegchod (khregs-chod) - cutting through one's bundle of tensions;
3. Thödgal (thod-rgal) - immediate transition through the spontaneous development of vision while in the state of contemplation.

In particular, Thegchod and Thödgal are much mixed up together in these texts and not rigidly separated one from the other, as is the case in many later Terma traditions. Following the text, the Zab-mo gnad kyi gdams-pa dngos-gzhi, Lopon Rinpoche's explanation deals with

1. Fixation on the white letter A,
2. the Dark Retreat - Vision practice in total darkness,
3. Thödgal - sunlight vision practice,
4. Sky Practice - vision practice with empty space,
5. Thödgal practice - positions and gazes,
6. Special Methods,
7. Dream Practice,
8. Development of Meditation, and

## 9. Bardo Teachings.

Other portions of this practice manual (*phyag khrid*) by Druchen Gyalwa Yungdrung will be presented in translation in this series in the future.

For their general hospitality and helpfulness during the time of Lopon Rinpoche's teaching and during the initial preparation of this manuscript, I wish to thank Des and Paula Barry, and also Jim Casilio. And in addition, for the subsequent help and encouragement received, I wish to extend my thanks to Michael Canter, Dennis Waterman, Kyu, Clyde Crawford, David Lutz, and Fred Wingerd, and especially to Rosemary Kohl for extending her hospitality while I was completing this manuscript. But most of all, I wish to thank Lopon Tenzin Namdak for his radiant kindness and inexhaustible patience in transmitting these precious teachings to us benighted and sometimes confused Westerners. May the Yungdrung Bon contribute to the elimination of ignorance and suffering throughout the modern world.

MUTSUG MARO!

Vajranātha (John Myrdhin Reynolds)  
Berkeley, California  
September 1989

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The reprint here, with only minor changes, is of the book 'The Practices from the Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud', which represents Lopon Tenzin Namdak's oral commentary on the original Tibetan texts from the sNyan-rgyud rgyal-ba'i *phyag-khrid* of Druchen Gyalud Yungdrung. The Appendix, here Chapter 5, from the original edition was from Bonpo Bulletin 2. As the editor, I wish to thank Reid Fossey and Robert Knight for their generous help in preparing this second edition.

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**LOPON TENZIN NAMDAK**

# Chapter 2

## LOP ON TENZIN NAMDAK

Lopon Tenzin Namdak (slob-dpon bsTan-'dzin rnam-dag) was born in 1926 in Khyungpo Karro (khyung-po dkar-ro) in Kham province of Eastern Tibet. At the age of seven (1933) he entered Tingchen monastery (gt-ing chen) in the same district and in 1941 he travelled to Yungdrung Ling (g.yung-drung gling), one of the two leading Bonpo monasteries in Central Tibet. Coming from a family famous for its artists, he was largely engaged here in helping to execute a series of wall paintings in the new temple at this monastery. In 1944, he went on pilgrimage to Nepal, including Solu-Khumbu, Kathmandu, Pokhara, and Mustang. In 1945, he returned to Yungdrung Ling to begin his studies in philosophy (mtshan-nyid). From 1945 to 1950, he lived more or less a hermit's existence with his tutor and master Gang-ru Rinpoche (sGang-ru Tshul-khrims rgyal-mtshap) under whom he studied grammar (sgra), poetics (snyan-ngag), monastic discipline ('dul-ba), cosmology (mdzod-phug), and the stages of the path to enlightenment (sa-lam). Following his master's advice, in 1950 he went to Menri monastery (sman-ri), "the medicine mounlain", in Tsang province in Central Tibet, in order to complete his studies in preparation for the Geshe (dge-bshes) degree examination, the Tibetan equivalent to a Doctor of Philosophy. In 1953, he obtained this degree from Menri.

From 1953 until 1957, he was the teaching master or professor (slob-dpon) at Menri. He retired from this position in 1957 as conflict between the native Tibetans and the encroaching Chinese Communists increased in Central Tibet. Until 1960, he remained in retreat at Se-zhig monastery on the Dang-ra lake in northern Tsang. March 10,1959 saw the Lhasa uprising against the Communist Chinese tyranny over Tibet. Many of the most famous Lamas of Tibet, including the Dalai Lama and the Gyalwa Karmapa, were forced to flee their home and and a flood of Tibetan refugees entered India and Nepal. In 1960 Lopon Rinpoche also sought to flee, seeking refuge in India, but he was shot and wounded on the way by Chinese soldiers and was incarcerated in a Chinese prison for ten months. Finally, he was able to make an escape and find his way to safety in Nepal, by way of the small principality of Mustang.

In 1961, while in Kathmandu, Lopon Rinpoche met and was befriended by the celebrated English Tibetologist, David Snellgrove, who invited him to come to London. Thus Lopon came to serve as a visiting scholar at the University of London and receiving a Rockefeller Foundation Grant, he resided for a time at Cambridge University. The collaboration with Professor Snellgrove resulted in the publication of *The Nine Ways of Bon* (Oxford University Press, London 1967), which contains translated extracts from the famous Tibetan *gZi-brjid*, the most extensive hagiography of the Buddha Tonpa Shenrab. This was the first scholarly study of the Bonpo tradition from original sources to be made in the West. Lopon Rinpoche remained in England for some three years from 1961 to 1964. He made a second visit to Europe in 1969, when at the invitation of Professor Helmut Hoffman, he was a visiting scholar at Munich University, contributing to the monumental Tibetan-German-English dictionary being compiled there.

Among the nearly one hundred thousand Tibetan refugees who had fled the Chinese occupation of Tibet, a number belonged to the Bonpo tradition. Escaping from Tsang province, the monks of Menri monastery, which had been totally destroyed by the Communists, found themselves in the Kulu-Manali district of Himachal Pradesh state in northwestern India. impoverished, they were forced to secure a livelihood as road workers. Among their number was Sherab Lodro (Shes-rab blo-gros), the thirty-second Abbott of Menri (1935-1963). Finding the road work hard and exhausting, many of the monks died or suffered from serious illness.

Thus Lopon Tenzin Namdak undertook the task of raising funds and finding land in order to establish a Bonpo settlement in India. With the financial help of the Catholic Relief Service, he purchased a piece of undeveloped forest land at Dolanji, near Solan in Himachal Pradesh. In 1967, the settlement was formally established and registered with the Indian Government under the name of the Tibetan Bonpo Foundation. About seventy families transferred there from Manali and each received a house and a small piece of land, the size depending on the number of people in the family in question. The Tibetan Bonpo Foundation possessed its own constitution and administration, with the Abbot of Menri acting as president. The new settlement at Dolanji was given the name Thobgyal Sarpa (thog-rgyal gsar-pa) after the village of Thobgyal in Tsang province which was located near to Menri Monastery. Most of the Tibetans in the new settlement came from the Mt. Kailash region and from Upper Tsang in the west and from Hor, Kongpo, Derge, Amdo and Gyarong in the east.

After the death of Sherab Lodro, the Abbot of Menri in 1963, the Abbott of Yungdrung Ling became the spiritual head of the Bonpo community in exile. He came to Dolanji with a group of monks and founded a new monastic community, overseeing the erection of some small houses and a small prayer chapel. In 1969 the successor to the deceased Abbot of Menri was chosen by lot. The office fell to Jongdong Sangye Tenzin (lJong-ldong Sangs-rgyas bstan-dzin, 1928-1968), who thus became the thirty-third Abbot of

Menri. Following the death of the Yungdrung Ling Abbott, Sangye Tendzin assumed the spiritual leadership of the Bonpos in exile. More houses were erected, as well as a library, and an Abbot's residence (bla-brang). Monastic life was organized around the ordinances of the Vinaya ('dul-ba). The foundation for a main temple was laid in 1969 and completed in 1978. It was given the name of Pal Shentan Menri Ling (dpal gshenbstan srman-ri gling). The whole complex was designated as the Bonpo Monastic Centre and formed part of the Tibetan Bonpo Foundation.

From 1970 to 1979 Lopon Rinpoche continued teaching and writing while residing at the Bonpo Monastic Centre, and in addition, he was much engaged in the publishing in New Delhi of a large number of important Bonpo texts. From 1967, when the first monks came to Dolanji, the teaching was done by Lopon Sangye Tenzin, the former head teaching master at Menri, assisted by his successor, Lopon Tenzin Namdak, the founder of the settlement at Dolanji. When Sangye Tenzin died in 1968, Lopon Tenzin Namdak was assigned the full responsibility for the education of the younger generation of monks. By 1978, a sufficient number of Bonpo texts had been published, so that classes could be organized around them in a curriculum. Thus a Lama's college (bshad-sgrub) was established in 1978, organized under the guidance of Lopon Rinpoche, who served as one of the two professors at the college. The official name of the college is Yungdrung Bon Shedrup Lobnyer Dude (g.yung-drung bon bshad-sgrub slob gnyer 'dus sde).

Historically, the first Bonpo monastery to be erected in Central Tibet was established under the patronage and the leadership of the Dru family (bru rigs) in 1072 and it was known by the name Yeru Wensakha (g.yas-ru dben-sa-kha). It was destroyed in a disastrous flood in 1386 and was revived in 1405 as Menri (sman-ri), which soon became the foremost Bonpo monastery in Central Tibet. Yungdrung Ling monastery was founded much later in 1834. The purpose of the new Lama's college at Dolanji was to preserve the tradition of education in philosophy (mtshan- nyid) established and developed at Yeru Wensakha, where philosophical analysis and logic were applied to the understanding of the mdo sngags sems gsum, that is to say, the teachings of Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen. Unlike the Nyingmapa tradition, the Bonpos developed a system of logic and debate specifically relating to the Dzogchen teachings. At Menri in Tibet, the monks studied the five scriptural systems (mdo gzhung Inga) in the philosophy college, but all instruction in Tantra and Dzogchen was done in private with individual masters. The five scriptures, actually five collections of texts, are:

- 1- tshad-ma - pramāna or logic and epistemology;
2. phar-phyin - prajnāpāramitā or the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras;
3. dbu-ma - Mādhyamaka philosophy;
4. mdzog-phug - Abhidharma or cosmology, and

## 5. 'dul-ba - Vinaya or monastic discipline.

However, at the revived Menri at Dolanji, students also study Tantra and Dzogchen in the college, as well as the above five scriptural systems which pertain to the Sutra level of teaching. Also included in the course of studies are the secular sciences (rig-gnas), such as grammar, poetics, astrology, medicine, and so on. The college has a nine year program of studies which prepare the student for the Geshe degree examination. The first group of young monks completed the course in 1986. Recently, another Bonpo monastery and college has been established under Lopon Tenzin's direction in Nepal. Known as Norbutse (khri bstan nor-bu rtse), it is located near the famous hill of Swayambhu, to the west of Kathmandu.

In 1989, Lopon Tenzin Namdak made his third visit to the West, this time to England, America, and Italy, at the invitation of the Dzogchen Communities in those countries. During the course of several months, March through August, Lopon Rinpoche presented to interested Western students the Dzogchen teachings according to the Bonpo tradition of the A-khrid and the Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud.

[Note: Sources include T. Skorupski, Tibetan gYung-drung Bon Monastery in India and Krystyna Cech, The History, Teaching and Practice of Dialectics according to the Bon Tradition, both booklets published by the Bonpo Monastic Centre.]



**TONPA SHENRAB MIWO**

# Chapter 3

## PRELIMINARY PRACTICES

There are nine parts to the sngon-'gro or preliminary practice, divided into three sections:

- I.1. Guru Yoga (bla-ma'i rnal-'byor),
2. Impermanence of life (tshe mi rtag-pa),
3. Confession of Sins (sdigs-pa bshag-pa),
- II. 4. Producing the Bodhichitta (sems bskyed),
5. Going to Refuge (skyabs 'gro),
6. Offering the Mandala (mandal 'bul)
- III. 7. Reciting the Mantras (sngags kyi bzlas-pa),
8. Chod or Cutting Off Attachments (gcod),
9. Prayer to the Guru (gsol-'debs).

### 3.1 GURU YOGA

The first consideration is how to practice the Guru Yoga. That is the beginning of the teaching. We need to find a quiet place to practice. We must find a master who has knowledge and realization of Dzogchen. And before entering into a retreat, we must receive transmission and obtain instructions from him, and then perform a Ganapujā. How do we practice? First sit in the meditation position which has five aspects:

1. sitting cross-legged,
2. the spine straight,
3. the hands in the equipoise position,

4. the neck slightly bent, and
5. the eyes focus beyond the tip of the nose.

Do the nine breathings for purification. Then visualize above one's head the Guru Tapihritsa sitting inside a rainbow sphere (thig-le) of light. He is white in color and naked, sitting in mediation position. Tapihritsa had received the Dzogchen teachings from a lineage of twenty-four Masters, all of whom had realized the Rainbow Body of Light. He was the twenty-fifth in this line and became himself a Rainbow Body. Thereafter the Nirmānakāya Tapihritsa transmitted the Dzogchen teachings to Gyerpung Nangzher Lodro (Gyer-spungs sNang-bzher lod-po) who was a contemporary of the Tibetan king Tisong Detsan in the 8th century CE. Before this time the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud was exclusively an oral transmission. Gyerpungpa was the first to put these teachings down in writing. The lineage of these twenty-four Masters, or august personages, (gang-zag nyi-shu rtsa bzhi) is as follows:

0. Tongpa Shenrab Miwo
1. Yangsu Dagpa (Deva race)
2. Lu-bon Banam (Naga race)
3. Mi-bon Trida Zambu (human race)
4. Banam Kyolpo
5. Trisho Gyalwa
6. Rasang Samdrub
7. Darma Sherab
8. Darma Bodde
9. Zhang-zhung Triphan
10. Muye Lhagyud
11. Mashen Legzang
12. Gyershen Taglha
13. Rasang Yungdrungse
14. Rasang Yungphan
15. Depahar Dondrubpa
16. Gyerpung Gephan

17. Gegyal
18. Zhang-zhung Namgyal
19. Mugyud Karpo
20. Shen Horti Chenpo
21. Donkun Drub[a
22. Rasang Phangyal
23. GuribSega
24. Tsephung Dawa Gyaltsan

Je Tapihritsa

Gyerpung Nangzher Lodpo

Tapihritsa is regarded as the embodiment of all the Dzogchen lineage Gurus. Therefore, we visualize him in the sky before us as the Source of Refuge. We pray to him to release us from suffering. We make offerings to him and then request initiation and receive the blessings of his Body, Speech and Mind from him. At his forehead appears a white syllable A ཨ, at his throat appears a red syllable OM ཨ, and at his heart center appears a blue syllable HUM ཨ. Rays of light white, red, and blue, respectively emanate from his three places and enter our own three places. In this way we unify our own state with the Body, Speech and Mind of Guru Tapihritsa. At the conclusion the visualization of the Guru dissolves into us. All Dzogchen practice begins with the Guru Yoga and Guru Yoga represents the best means to maintain all of the transmissions that we have received. We must have devotion and total trust in the Guru. This Guru Yoga should be done everyday, in the morning and in the evening, or in a retreat situation, at the beginning of each thun or session of practice.

How do we proceed with the Guru Yoga? First we sound "A" and manifest the presence of Guru Tapihritsa in the sky before us. Then we pray to him and receive from him the empowerments of Body, Speech, and Mind as described. For this we can use the following short verses of invocation:

CHI TSUG DE-WA CHEN-PO PHO-DRANG DU  
 "On the crown of my head, in the the palace of the Great  
 Bliss,"

DRIN-CHEN TSA-WE LA-MA LA SOL-WA DEB  
 "I pray to my benevolent Root Guru;"

SANG-GYE SEM SU TON-PA RIN-POCHE  
"O precious Teacher, grant me the blessing"

RANG NGO RANG GI SHE-PAR JYIN GYI LOB  
"To recognize the Buddha as my own Nature of Mind!"

The free version of the invocation would be: "I pray to my benevolent Root Guru sitting above the crown of my head in the palace of the Great Bliss: O precious Teacher, grant me the blessing to recognize the Buddha as my own Nature of Mind!"

The longer invocation of Guru Tapihritsa will be found in the Appendix below.

### **3.2 IMPERMANENCE OF LIFE**

Next there is the meditation on the impermanence of life. We adopt the same body posture. Then we consider the fact that all visible things are impermanent. Everything that we see or create or make will eventually disintegrate. Whatever we save, we will eventually lose. Nothing is eternal because all things are conditioned by causes. Making an examination of everything, we will find that there is nothing that can be relied upon because all things are impermanent.

It is a delusion to think that we can live on and on without dying. We do not know the hour of our death, but it is certain that we will eventually die. Therefore, we should not put off practice until the next day because death may intervene at any time. We must decide right now what is actually useful for us and what is wasteful. We will not be able to carry our possessions with us when we die. Before this present life, we have wandered endlessly in Samsara throughout countless births and deaths. But have we found happiness or satisfaction? Sickness and suffering, frustration and anxiety have been experienced in all those lifetimes. Each time we grow old, sickened and died. What then? But still we think that we are eternal in this present life.

There exist different methods for meditating on the impermanence of all things. For example, visualize that we live in a fine big house in a good town; we have a high seat and many servants - everything is rich, contented, and perfect. But then our servants begin to fight with us and to steal our property. Our kinsmen and relatives become our enemies, coveting our wealth. All our friends desert us and we find ourselves completely alone. What have we left? Only our empty house. Then we loose even that. This misfortune will motivate us to practice and to abandon the worldly life.

Then we should visualize that we are sick, lying in bed and in great pain. Our relatives and our friends come and ask how we are getting on. But we can barely answer them and can do nothing for ourselves. We cry and they cry, but there is nothing to be done. Days pass and months pass and with

the passage of each day, we draw closer and closer to death. What can we do? We think of our relatives and our friends, we think of our property, yet we must leave all behind. We must leave even our body behind. We are so attached to our body and to our property, but now we have no power to keep them. Then we die and our Namshe or consciousness is all alone, and it finds itself caught up in the Bardo experience which is like a dream. We are dead and yet we see our relatives divide up our property. They take it all away with them and forget us after a few months. But we continue on in the Bardo with our karmic traces (bag-chags) - all else we have left behind. We find ourselves alone and naked. We have no friends or helpers; no place to stay and no place certain where we go. Many thoughts and memories arise in our mind, but we cannot do anything about them.

We should consider how many others have died before us and are no longer visible before us. They were once just like us, but now they are gone. We should recall this fact very strongly. We are attached to our worldly life as if it were something permanent. But we should think of all those others who have fallen into poverty and suffering, after having enjoyed great wealth and power. Think of how friends have become enemies and how enemies have become friends. Everything changes from moment to moment: therefore, they cannot be trusted or relied upon. Thus we should not be attached to the worldly life. Think of the four seasons of the year - the seasons are always changing'. Even our own life has changed from infancy to childhood to adolescence and adulthood. Then old age will come and eventually death. We do not know when or how we will die, but our death is certain. We can use medicines and postpone our death, but there is no escape from it. All of the beings who have been born in the past have eventually died. From the very beginning until now there have existed no living beings who have not died. We must think well about all this. Why? So we will detach ourselves from the worldly life and not postpone practice. Next time we may not even be born as a human being - we could be born as an animal or as a restless spirit. But human existence is much better than the other possibilities because it gives us the maximum opportunity for the practice of the teachings. So we should not waste this unique opportunity.

### 3.3 CONFESSiON

The practice of confession here is done according to the teaching of Dranpa Namkha, the prince of Zhang-zhung who was a great master of Dzogchen. Visualize in front of ourselves the Refuge Tree. If this is difficult because the Zhang-zhung Bon possesses many Gurus, Deities, Dākinīs, and Guardians, then just visualize the Nirmānakāya form of Guru Tapihritsa in the sky above us, or else the Sambhogakāya form Shenla Odkar. But be consistent and do not keep changing the visualization, for if we are consistent our visualization will become more and more clear. Shenla Odkar (gshen

lha 'od-dkar) corresponds to Vajrasattva in the Nyingmapa system. He is white in color and is attuned in, [illegible text] garments expressive of the richness and effulgence of the Sambhogakāya.

Throughout our countless lifetimes in Samsāra, we have accumulated a vast amount of karmic traces (bag-chags). So now in front of Guru Tapihritsa (or in front of Shenlha Odkar), the Buddha whose knowledge is pure and all-wise so that he can perceive all that we have done in the past, we feel contrite and confess our sins and obscurations. This is like coming before a wise and all knowing judge, but one who combines mercy equally with justice. In our past lives since beginningless times, we were ignorant and did everything without knowledge or awareness. Now we promise not to do this again. Through practice it is possible for us to purify our obscurations and our karmic traces, so that our knowledge and our awareness grows stronger. Our Dzogchen view will become more clear and stable. In the practice here we evoke the four powers (slobs bzhi) of the Guru to whom we confess feelings of regret over past wrong deeds, the promise and commitment not to do them again, and the one hundred syllable mantra for purification. We can use this mantra if we know it.

We will surely be reborn in hell without any intervening experience in the Bardo for committing the five heinous crimes, such as killing one's parents, killing our root Guru, killing innocent children, and so on. Killing human beings is the heaviest of crimes. Also, harming Bodhisattvas, destroying religious books, statues, and monuments, as well as burning down forests, poisoning lakes and rivers, and so on, are very heavy. Telling lies, spreading slanders, stealing from others, and so on, are also serious. These actions all create negative karmic traces and result in suffering to be experienced in future lives. It is also a bad thing if we agree with and praise the bad actions of others. We will then acquire a similar karmic trace. But if we praise the generosity of others and seek to emulate them, then we will acquire similar merit. In the past, ignorance has obscured the minds of beings, so that they did not know the difference between virtue and sin. So now we confess in front of the Guru and promise to stop all such activity. We feel regret at past sins and now take the responsibility for our actions. We promise that hence forward we will practice the Mahāyāna. We promise to practice virtuous actions and to praise the meritorious deeds for others. If we do not do this, then it will create an obstacle for us regarding the Dzogchen teachings in our next life. It will be like trying to write on paper soaked in oil. So this confession before the Guru is a practice where we can wash away our karmic traces.

In any case, regular practice is very important, such as doing four thuns of practice a day when in retreat. Do this Guru Yoga, impermanence mediation, and confessions of sins - practicing them one after the other, doing each exercise slowly and carefully. This is the way to train and purify the mind (blo sbyong) and thus change our whole attitude toward life, so that we no longer think in the usual deluded way.

### 3.4 BODHICHITTA

The second section also has three parts: producing the Bodhichitta, going to Refuge, and offering the Mandala.

How do we practice and develop Bodhichitta? It is the very basis of the Mahayana. We should think that all other living beings have once been our own loving mother, in some past lifetime or another. In our infinite series of past lives since time without beginning, all other beings, at some time or another, have been our parents. For example, put a single black pea in a vase filled with rice grains and shake the vase. This pea will touch all of the other grains of rice many times. It is the same with beings in Samsara. As we transmigrate in Samsara, we come into contact with all other beings in all possible relationships. In each lifetime we had different parents and our past lives have been infinite in number. Maybe we were connected a long time ago but at that time, nevertheless, our parents were kind to us. Even the fierce lioness is a good mother to her cubs. It is the same way with all beings. They once cared for us like a loving mother cares for her only child. They loved us and did not complain. They were patient with us. But when we do good to some other person and they do not recognize that kindness, but rather ignore or abuse us - how do we feel? So we must remember our mother's great kindness to us. What can we do for our parents to repay this kindness? Now at the present time our mother (all these beings) is suffering and lost in the delusions of Samsāra - what can we do? We want to release her from misery, but how can we do this? Nothing - for all of us are equally powerless in our delusion and suffering. But if we recognize the knowledge and the power of the Buddha, for only a Buddha can remove the suffering of our mother, this will then motivate us to practice the teachings so that we too will come to realize Buddhahood. Having become a Buddha, we will then have the knowledge and the capacity to lead others out of the suffering of Samsāra. That is our motivation for practicing the Dharma.

This intention is called the Bodhichitta. This means thinking about the real significance here and not just repeating the words. The Bodhichitta is the actual essence of the Mahāyāna. If we do not have this Bodhichitta, it will be an obstacle for our Dzogchen view, since compassion is needed, together with wisdom, as the foundation of enlightenment. But even thinking about compassion is not enough - practice is necessary. Our intention should be to attain Buddhahood during this very lifetime. We practice intently, and thus we take vows, recite prayers, and do meditation.

### 3.5 REFUGE

The practice of the going to Refuge may come before or it may come after the practice of producing the Bodhichitta. In the Bon tradition, we practice the Bodhichitta at the very beginning because this produces in us

the intention to attain enlightenment. This is basic to our motivation to practice the spiritual path. According to the Sutra system, it takes countless lifetimes to attain Buddhahood; and there exist many obstacles, both visible and invisible along the way. What should we do? It is for this reason that we go for Refuge to the Buddha Tonpa Shenrab, to the Yungdrung Bon (the Dharma), to the spiritual community of Bodhisattvas (the Sangha), and to the Guru. These represent the four Jewels. Why the Guru? The Buddha lived long, long ago, but the Guru or master (bla-ma) is present with us now. Thus he can transmit to us those initiations which will ripen our stream of consciousness and those secret oral instructions which will liberate our mind. The Nirmānakāya Buddhas propagated the teachings during their respective earthly careers and this teaching (the Yung-drung Bon) remains in the world even today as our guide. But the Guru is the representative of the Buddha here and now. He introduces us to the nature of our own mind. He does this in the same way which the Buddha (Tonpa Shenrab, Sākyamuni, or any other Buddha for that matter) did so originally. It is not necessary to make an examination to see if the Guru has precisely the same qualities as the various historical Buddhas; it is sufficient to think that he is transmitting the teachings in the correct way, as did the previous Buddhas. This is the reason why we go to Refuge in the Guru.

Why do we go for Refuge in the Yungdrung Bon? Historically, there are three periods in the development of Bon: (1) Primitive Bon which existed among the peoples of ancient Central Asia and was akin to Shamanism; (2) Old Bon or Yungdrung Bon per se, which represents the actual teaching of the Buddha Tonpa Shenrab who appeared in Tazig or Central Asia some 18,000 years ago (according to tradition); and (3) New Bon (bon gsar-ma) which is very much mixed up with the Nyingmapa system and greatly reveres Guru Padmasambhava. The Zhang-zhung tradition belongs to Yungdrung Bon. Yungdrung (Tib. g.yung-drung, Skt swastika) means "indestructible", or "eternal". Bon means Dharma. Bon represents the knowledge and wisdom of the Buddha. When we practice the Bodhichitta, the Refuge, the confession, and so on, these are all Bon or Dharma. Also images, pictures, books, temples, stupas, and so on are Bon.

Why do we go for Refuge to the community of Bodhisattvas? At the commencement of their spiritual careers they had made vows to help all living beings and to guide them to liberation from the prison of Samsara. Because of innumerable lifetimes of practice of the Teachings, they have developed the knowledge and capacity to do just this. These Bodhisattvas form a great spiritual brotherhood or hierarchy, the purpose of which is to stimulate and guide the spiritual evolution of this planet. They guide all beings toward the realization of Buddhahood which is the ultimate goal of all evolution. For this reason, we go for Refuge to the great Bodhisattvas. Since in the Bon system, the term Yungdrung (swastika) corresponds to the usual Buddhist technical term Vajra (rdo-rje) with much the same meaning, in Bonpo texts the Bodhisattva is called a Swastikasattva (g.yung-drung

sems-dpa').

But the going to Refuge is not just repeating some formula or reading some pious words. Refuge means having total and absolute trust in the Buddhas, the Teachings, and the Spiritual Community. This going to Refuge all depends on our devotion. If we have a strong and genuine devotion, then our Refuge will be very strong. All of this depends on our decision, our trust, and our devotion. We should recite and think about the Refuge and the Bodhichitta every day, and also make the prostrations when doing this. The texts for recitation vary, but we can also use the OM MATRI mantra for this purpose:

OM MA TRI MU YE SA KE DU

Each of the syllables of the Great Mantra has its significance. OM signifies the Buddha Tonpa Shenrab, while MA is the Great Goddess Jyamma (byams-ma), the Holy Perfection of Wisdom, who is the Mother of all the Buddhas of the three times. The remaining six syllables represent the six emanations ('dul gshen drug) of Tonpa Shenrab who appear in the six destinies of rebirth in order to lead beings to liberation.

And what is most important here is to have perfect trust in the Buddha. In that event, we no longer put any trust in the worldly gods or in evil spirits, for there is nothing higher than the Buddha who totally transcends Samsāra which is conditioned existence. We should not trust the worldly gods in fortune telling and divination over the word and the power of the Buddha. Since we go to Refuge in the teachings, we should also respect books and the symbols of the Dharma. We go to Refuge in the Bodhisattvas, and so they will continue to benefit living beings and lead them to liberation. These are the vows of Refuge.

### 3.6 MANDALA OFFERING

First we must consider to whom we offer and what we offer. Here the term mandala has two meanings. First there is the mandala which is like a celestial palace of all the gods and this we visualize in the sky before us, just as we had done previously with the Refuge Tree. Second there is the mandala that we offer to the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas, and this mandala is symbolic of the whole world and its riches. It is represented by a round metal plate and the three rings on top of it. These are filled with rice and stacked one above the other. These three rings signify the three-thousandfold universe, that is to say, a universe having 1000 x 1000 x 1000 world systems inhabited by intelligent beings in which Buddhas manifest. The first ring represents the first one thousand worlds the second ring the second thousand, and so on. Thus there exist a myriad of inhabited worlds ('jig-rtan bye-ma) within our universe, or more properly speaking, our galaxy of stars. All this we offer to the Guru and the Triratna who

appear in the sky before us. We offer to them all of the precious things belonging to Devas, humans, and Nāgas. First rub the metal plate with our hand while visualizing that we are purifying all our karmic traces and obscurations. Then add the rice and pile each ring upon the other as each becomes filled with rice in turn. All the time we are doing this, we should think that this mandala representing our entire universe not only possesses all of the treasures and riches of Devas, humans and Nāgas, but also the eight auspicious signs and the seven emblems of royalty.

Not only we ourselves, but all others as well are simultaneously offering mandalas to the Guru and the Refuge Tree - all of these figures are emanations like ourselves. We all together as one group make offerings in the same way to the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. The purpose of offering the mandala is to accumulate merit or positive karma. We offer everything in the world which is precious and valuable. Although we do not actually possess the capacity to do this, we have this intention and do so with our mind. Dāna or generosity is the best method to accumulate merit. Also the practice of offering overcomes our attachment to possessions. When we offer our own property, we normally expect something in return by way of payment. This is an impure offering. It is like Tibetans who offer old and rancid butter for lamps in the temple because it is no longer edible. If we humans cannot eat it, then we offer it to the Buddhas. But the Buddhas cannot be tricked or hoodwinked. So our mandala offering must be made with a pure intention. We offer everything found here in this world which is clean and of best quality, and we are in no way attached to what we offer. We give it freely, holding nothing back. Confession is also necessary for the purification of obscurations. The mandala is offered for the purpose of accumulating merit. This preparation, that is, confession and offering, transforms us into a suitable vessel for the receiving of the pure wisdom of the teachings. Before putting in the nectar, the vase must be clean, or otherwise, the nectar will be spoiled. The offerings we make may be material or they may be visualized by the mind. These are equally appropriate because what really counts here is our intention, and so we offer everything. This offering can be made in the morning and in the evening.

### **3.7 RECITING THE MANTRAS**

Here again the practice is divided into three sections. First, there is the recitation of the mantra in order to purify our karmic traces, then the offering of our own body, and finally the prayer to the Buddha in order to invoke His blessings upon us.

Visualize the Refuge Tree in the sky above us, as we have done previously. In the center of the tree is our Root Guru in the form of the Sambhogakāya Buddha Shenlha Odkar. He is white in color, attired in jewels and silks, sitting cross-legged, and His hands are held in the samādhi- mudrā. He

is surrounded by thousands of Bodhisattvas and by all of the Yidam deities of the Tantras, both the outer and inner Tantras. Beyond them come the Vidyādhara or Rigdzin of the four classes. Then there are the great Bodhisattvas and all the lineage Gurus for the Sutras, the Tantras, and the Upadesas. Also the Dākinīs and the Guardians of the Teachings appear. Thus in the sky before us are all the manifestations of the Dharmakāya, the Sambhogakāya, and the Nirmānakāya. They fill all of space and we pray to them with [all] [illegible text] can [illegible text] there exist many different invocations found in the different prayer books. The Buddhas actually see who is praying to them and their blessings or energies (byin-rlabs) are evoked in the form of Wisdom Beings or Yeshepas (ye-shes sems-dpa') which descend as miniature images like so many snow-flakes, and these are absorbed into the visualization of the Refuge Tree in the sky before us. This visualization which is created by our mind is known as the Symbolic Being or Damtsigpa (dam-tshig sems-dpa'). These two, the Wisdom Beings and the Symbolic Beings, unite, becoming one and inseparable, like pouring water into water. Thus the visualization is infused with a life and intelligence of its own, and it is no longer merely something created by your own mind and imagination.

We sound HUM... very slowly. From those visualized beings in the sky before us, rays of light like sunbeams go out in all directions and they touch all beings in the six realms of rebirth, transforming them into Rainbow Bodies. Those beings, in turn, dissolve into the formless light and so only their Namshe (rnam-shes), or streams of consciousness, remain. These disincarnate consciousnesses are then absorbed into our own body. Next, the entire external universe dissolves into light and this is absorbed into our body. We sound PHAT! and our own body emanates, multiplying and increasing itself, until it fills the entire space of the universe. Each of our forms in turn transforms into a universe with its sun, moon, and stars. And in each of these worlds there exist countless living beings, all of whom recite the mantras and invocations together with us.

We should think of all the suffering these beings have experienced. Then from the hearts of the Buddhas and Wisdom Deities in the sky before us, fires come out and touch all these living beings. These wisdom fires consume all of their negativities, obscurations, and karmic traces. Again from the hearts of all the Buddhas come the wisdom winds which scatter the ashes of all these negativities, obscurations, and karmic traces which have been consumed by the wisdom fires. Again from the hearts of all the Buddhas come the wisdom waters which wash away all traces of these ashes which have been scattered about by the wisdom winds. Thus, in this way, all beings have become completely purified by fire and water and wind.

Then from the hearts of all the Buddhas come an infinite series of white A syllables, which represent the wisdom or gnosis of the Buddhas, and each being receives one of these A syllables. They touch the tops of the heads of these beings and dissolve into them. Thus, they are all transformed into

the form of Shenlha Odkar. Again rays of light go out into all directions, transforming all dimensions into magnificent Buddha mandalas. All sounds become mantra and all thoughts become contemplation. And thus all beings come to realize the Body, Speech, and Mind of the Buddha. The Natural State of each being is realized to be the Primordial State of Samantabhadra.

There exist three mantras which are very widely spread in practice among the Bonpos, and they can be used here for this purpose of purification and transformation. The mantras should be recited as much as possible, or at least one hundred thousand times each over the entire course of the retreat. We should not talk nor eat while engaged in a session of mantra recitation. These mantras are as follows:

**OM MA TRI MU YE SA LE DU**

is the mantra for purifying the six realms or destinies of rebirth.

**AA KAR SA LE OD A YAM OM DU**

is the mantra especially associated with the Sambhogakāya Shenlha Odkar and also for developing the Dzogchen view in relation to Thegchöd and Thödgal.

**A KAR A ME DU TRI SU NAGPO ZHI ZHI MAL MAL**

is the mantra for purifying the six realms, for confession of negative actions, and for purification generally.

Thus in this way we purify all negativities and during the mantra recitations we keep this purpose in mind. At the conclusion, dedicate the merit.

### **3.8 CHOD**

Next there is the practice of offering one's own physical body. This is generally known as Chod (gcod), "cutting off" attachment to the ego. Again we visualize the Refuge Tree before us in the sky. Also the worldly Guardians (srung-ma) and the eight classes of spirits (sde brgyad) are present. In addition, there are present all the beings of the six realms and all those beings to whom we owe karmic debts. Thus the four Guests (mgon-po bzhi) are fully in attendance in the space before us. Then we visualize that our body is a corpse with a huge hole in its chest. When we sound PHAT!, our Namshe, or consciousness leaps out of this hole as a tiny sphere (thig-le), brilliant like a spark. This spark dissolves into space and transforms into a Krodha or wrathful deity (whether male or female). This terrifying wrathful deity has a sword in his right hand and a skull cup in his left. He comes to our corpse and butchers it with his sword, chopping off the four limbs first. He constructs a hearth of human heads, and cutting off the top of our skull, he places this on top of the hearth as a cauldron for cooking. This cauldron becomes as big as the world. Having butchered all of the flesh of our corpse, he puts this meat into the cauldron so that it is completely filled. Now the flesh and the blood are cooked over a fire until they turn into amrita or wisdom nectar.

Then many pujādevīs or offering goddesses appear and, with the skull-cups they hold, they scoop up the nectar and offer this to the invited guests. No matter how much of the nectar is doled out, it is never exhausted and the cauldron is never empty. This delicious nectar of wisdom is offered to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and to all the Guardians of the Teachings. They all become satisfied and content. Then it is offered to the eight classes of spirits and finally to all the sentient beings inhabiting the six realms. Thus both the higher guests and the lower guests become entirely satisfied. In this way we repay in full all of the karmic debts we have accumulated up until the present. We have repaid our debts and so we have purified the causes of illness and suffering. And due to this act of impartial generosity, we also accumulate merit. And having delighted our guests, we then receive the blessings of all the Buddhas and the Lineage Gurus. What merit we may have accumulated, we dedicate to the benefit of all sentient beings. And moreover, by the partaking of our flesh, we have established in all these worldly beings the cause for attaining Buddhahood.

All beings are attached to their bodies, but this practice of Chod lessens attachment to the body. So this is of much benefit when we die - because we will not have much desire or attachment remaining. Chod practice is not just a matter of subjugating the spirits.

### **3.9 PRAYER**

This practice is similar to the initial Guru Yoga; but traditionally the Guru Yoga also comes at the end of the preliminary practices as their culmination. Again we visualize the Refuge Tree in the sky before us. Tapihritsa alone maybe used instead, as with the shorter form of this practice. Or we may use Shen-lha Od-kar in the center of the Tree. Above Him are all the Gurus of the Dzogchen Lineages, and surrounding Him are all the Yidams of the Tantras, both outer and inner. Gathered here also are all the Vidyādhara, Siddhas, Dākinīs, Guardians, and practitioners of Yungdrung Bon. We are sitting in front of them. They see us and we pray to them with great devotion. We have promised to strive ceaselessly to attain Buddhahood for the sake of benefiting and liberating all beings from the sufferings experienced in Samsāra. Now we ask for their help to reveal to us the short path to liberation in a single lifetime, which is Dzogchen. We request the blessings of their wisdom, knowledge and inspiration. We make offerings to them and then make this request.

This is not just a reciting of words, for we have a firm conviction that those august beings in the Refuge Tree are actually present in front of us and we have a total trust in them. Thus they will help us and look after us, like a mother looks after her only child. Then, in response to our heart-felt devotion, like the arising of the sun in the sky, rays of light come forth from all of the Buddhas and the Deities in the Refuge Tree and go out to touch all

beings inhabiting the six realms of rebirth. These rays become lustral waters which descend on to the crowns of the heads of all beings and purify them of all their sins, obscurations, and karmic traces. These are all washed away. Thus all these beings become suitable vessels fore receiving the blessings and the powers of the Body, Speech, and Mind of all the Buddhas. Then from the syllables A Om Hum in the three secret places of all the Deities come rays of light white, red, and blue, respectively. These lights dissolve into our own three centers and thus we receive the blessings of the Body, Speech, and Mind of all the Buddhas. Now we are inseparably linked to the lineage of transmission and thus we have received the wisdoms (ye-shes) of all the Buddhas. We are not just saying this, but we think this and we feel this intensely. This Guru Yoga should be done four times a day during the retreat. This Guru Yoga represents the actual process for taking initiation and for receiving the blessing by oneself alone and without depending on another. This is a much better method than asking someone else to do this for us.

According to the Bonpo tradition, it usually takes a retreat of three months to complete all of these preliminary practices, each one being done one hundred thousand times. This is known as the 'bum dgu'. But in terms of daily practice, one can do all nine sections in sequence during the early morning thun, or session. Sitting down in the fivefold posture, we run through each exercise in turn. Each is repeated three times or five times. At the conclusion, we make the dedication of merit and the commitment to attain Buddhahood as soon as possible. During the midday session, the mantras are again recited.

We should always observe what is in need of purification; avoid gossip and fighting with others. If we do not neglect to practice regularly, we will not fail to create a cause for the realization of the Fruit. In a retreat situation, we should do four sessions of practice per day.

Then the signs of practice will surely arise. In dreams, such signs of success in practice are to dream of bathing oneself, flying in the sky, climbing mountains, picking flowers, sitting in a flower garden, hearing the teachings from a Yidam, seeing the face of one's Yidam, eating good food or drinking fine wine, vomiting blood, expelling worms, hearing prophesies, and so on. Then our body will feel lighter and our mind will be clearer. There will arise many nyams or experiences in mediation.

This is the preparation for receiving the Dzogchen teachings.



TAPIHRITSA

### 3.10 APPENDIX

## INVOCATION OF TAPHIHRITSA

EMAHO

O Emanation of the Mind of Samantabhadra: Your body color is luminous white, like crystal,

Immaculate and of clear lustre; and rays of light emanate from You in the ten directions.

You are naked and without ornaments, signifying that You are the essence of the Primordial State.

By virtue of Your compassion and by means of the two knowledges, You continuously contemplate the welfare of all beings.

The nectar from the Hearts of all the Sugatas is Dzogchen, "the Great Perfection", which is supreme among all (teachings).

The highest peak among all the ways (to enlightenment), and the essence of all Tantras, Agamas, and Upadesas:

From the Natural State which is the Base (originates both) liberation which is Nirvāna and delusion which is Samsāra;

Whereupon as sounds, lights and rays all the defects (of Samsāra) and all the virtues (of Nirvāna) become very clearly visible.

But once having cleared away all the darkness (obscuring) the minds of living beings,

Then the Base which is empty and without a source is decisively understood to be the Sole Path.

Experiences and understanding become manifest (on the Path) and both Samsāra and Nirvāna are liberated into the Nature of Mind.

And thus the Trikāya of the Fruit becomes visibly arrayed (before us) in Space.

To you, O Tapihrita, the protector of beings, We pray in single-

minded devotion

To grant the blessing of conferring initiation upon us and upon all other beings,

And of pacifying all obscurations outer, inner, and secret.

When we are liberated from ignorance and from all grasping at the reality of delusions,

Our own intrinsic Awareness will become manifest; and having finally realized the view and conduct,

At that very moment, please bestow upon us (the realization of)

The Actual meaning of the Primordial State which is empty, without a source, and totally transcending the intellect.

To You, O Tapihritsa,, our Lord who is the protector of all beings,

We pray: By virtue of Your compassion, may You liberate our mind-streams from all entanglements in the six destinies of rebirth!

[Thus Gyerpung Nangzher Lodpo prayed to the Nirmānakāya Tapihritsa who is the visible embodiment (of all the Lineage Gurus). Good fortune - rejoice!]

This invocation of the Lord Tapihritsa, composed by Gyerpung Nangzher Lodpo, is found in the rDzog-chen nyams rgyud rgyal-ba'i by Dru-chen Gyalwa Yungdrung (1242-1290).

Translated by Vajranātha

Conway, Massachusetts. April 1989.

# PRONUNCIATION AND INTERLINEAR TRANSLATION

EMAHO  
KUNG-ZANG THUG-KU DOG SHEL KAR OD

O Emanation of the Mind of Samantabhadra: Your body color is  
luminous white like crystal,

DRI MED DANG SAL ÖD ZER CHOG CHUR TRO

Immaculate and of clear lustre; and rays of light emanate from  
You into the ten directions

GYÄN MED CHER-BU YE-NYID NYING-PO DÖN

You are naked and without ornaments, signifying that You are  
the essence of the Primordial State.

KHYEN NYI THUG-JE DRO-WE DÖN LA GONG

By virtue of Your compassion and by means of the two knowl-  
edges, You continuously contemplate the welfare of all beings.

DE-SHEK THUG CHUD DZOG-CHEN KUN GYI CHOG

The nectar of the Hearts of all the Sugatas is Dzogchen, "the  
Great Perfection", which is supreme among; all (teachings),

THEG-PE YANG TSE GYUD LUNG MAN-NGAG NYING

The highest peak among all the ways (to enlightenment), and the  
essence of all Tantras, Agamas, and Upadesas:

ZHI YI NE-LUG KHOR-DE DROL TRUL DANG

From the Natural Stale which is the Base (originates both) liber-  
ation which is Nirvāna and delusion which is Samsara;

DRA ÖD ZER SUM KYON YÖN RAB SAL ZHING

Whereupon as sounds, lights, and rays, all the defects (of Samsara) and all the virtues (of Nirvāna) become very clearly visible.

DRO-WA LO YI MUN-PA KUN SAL NE

But once having cleared away all the darkness (obscuring) the minds of beings,

ZHI TONG TSA-DRAL-WA LAM CHIG CHOD TOG

Then the Base which is empty and without a source is decisively understood to be the Sole Path.

NYAM TOG NGON-GYUR KHOR DE SEM SU DROL

Experiences and understanding become manifest (on the Path) and Samsāra and Nirvāna are liberated into the Nature of Mind.

DRE-BU KU SUM YING SU GOD DZÄD-PA

And thus the Trikaya of the Fruit becomes visibly arrayed (before us) in space.

DRO-WE GON-PO TAPIHRITS A LA

To You, O Tapihrita, the protector of beings

DAG LO TSE-CH1G MOPE SOL-WA DEB

We pray with single-minded devotion

DAG SOG DRO LA WANG-KUR JYIN GYI LOB

To grant the blessing of conferring initiation upon us and upon all other beings,

CHI NANG SANG-WE BAR-CHÄD ZHI-WA DANG

And of pacifying all obstructions outer, inner, and secret.

MA RIG TRUL-WE DAG DZIN DROL-WE KYANG

When we are liberated from ignorance and from all grasping at the reality of delusions,

RANG RIG NGÖN-GYUR TA CHÖD THAR-CHIN NE

Our own intrinsic Awareness will become manifest; and having finally realized the view and the conduct,

YE TONG TSA-DRAL LO-DE CHEN-PÖ DÖN

The actual meaning of the Primordial State which is empty, without a source, and totally transcends the mind,

DÄN-TA NYID DU DAG LA TSAL DU SOL

At the very moment, please bestow on us (the realization of this!)

JE DROW-E GÖN-PO TAPIHRITSA LA

To You, O Tapihrita, our Lord who is the protector of all beings,

SOL-WA DEB-SO DRO DRUG THUG-JE ZUNG LA DAG GYUD TROL

We pray: By virtue of Your compassion, may You liberate our mind streams from all entanglements in the six destinies of rebirth!

# Chapter 4

## PRINCIPAL PRACTICES

Having considered the preliminary practices (sngon 'gro), we now come to the principal practices (dngos-gzhi). These Tibetan terms are pronounced ngondro and ngozhi respectively. The text here, the second in the Nyams rgyud rgyal-ba'i phyag khrid collection by Druchen Gyalwa Yung-drung (Bru-chen rGyal-ba g.yung-drung) is entitled the Zab-mo gnad kyi gdams-pa dngos-gzhi, "The Principal Practices: instructions on the profound essential points." The text opens with the invocation "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo (Samantabhadra), our own intrinsic Awareness become manifest, who is the all-pervading guide of living beings." (kun tu bzang-po khyab gdal 'gro-ba dren/rang rig mngon du gyur la phyag 'tshai-lo).

The preliminary practices found in the previous text are concerned with the purification of our body, speech and mind, whereas the principal practices found in the present text are concerned with the liberating of our mind. Here there are three parts to this:

1. At first, without grasping at thoughts, open employs fixation in a Natural manner (thog-mar sems ma zin-pa zin-par byed-pa);
2. In the middle, mindfulness may not be stable, but one employs various methods to stabilize it (bar du dran-pa mi gnas-pa gnas-par byed-pa); and
3. Finally, one's own Natural Awareness may not be clear, but one employs various methods to make it clear (tha-rna rang mi gsal-ba gsal-bar bya-ba).

Then there occurs a quote from the sGron-ma drug, "As for the thought to be remembered, one should fixate on the light." And according to the mThing shog, "The cycles of the mansion of light should be clearly explained."

## 4.1 FIXATION ON THE WHITE A

With respect to the first of these considerations above, there are three relevant points:

1. The essential point of the body (lus kyi gnad);
2. The essential point of the gaze (lta stangs kyi gnad); and
3. The essential point of mind training (bslab bya'i gnad).

1. The essential point of the body: The bodily posture has the same five aspects mentioned previously - sitting cross-legged, spine straight, hands in the equipoise gesture (samādhi mudrā), neck bent slightly, eyes gazing straight ahead towards the tip of the nose. The left hand lies on top of the right hand; the thumbs of both hands press the join where the ring finger joins the palm. This closes the kleśa-nādī, which passes through this point and thus prevents the entering of negative energies by way of this channel (nādī) which runs from the tip of the ring finger to the heart. The four limbs of the body are kept tight, not loose or flaccid.

2. The essential point of the gaze: Make a drawing of a white Tibetan letter A on a black background and affix this card to a stick and set the



stick upright in front of oneself. The white letter A should not be too high or too low, not too close or too distant. This card with the white A may be used for the practice of fixation with an object (mtshan bcas), although later we will practice fixation without an object (mtshan med). If we continually change the object of fixation, then we will not gain any stability in fixation practice. So we fixate on the white A and this is the practice for beginners. The purpose of the practice is to control the mind. An experienced practitioner need not begin with this. We can go straight to fixation without an object - but this depends on the capacity of the individual practitioner. Do not look to the left or the right or blink the eyes. Just fix the gaze at the level of the nose. We practice fixation like putting a thread through the eye of a needle. If we are distracted, the thread will not go into the eye. Or again, we should fixate like aiming an arrow at a target with a drawn bow.

3. The essential point of mind training: Do not speak and do not think. Do not follow after thoughts which may arise. Do not develop them, do not lay plans for the future. Just keep in hrig-ge-ba, a state of being aware and present. Do not try to change anything, but just keep things exactly as they are. In this way, thoughts will dissolve of themselves back into the Natural State. They arise out of the Natural State and they dissolve again into the Natural State. We cannot find where they came from and we cannot find where they go. We simply observe these thoughts without trying to change or correct anything (ma bcos-pa). If we try to change or modify them, this

effect will only develop thoughts further - so just leave them as they are. First practice this.

Yet we do not fall into unconsciousness. We are totally aware, aware and relaxed. To do this is to discover the Natural State (rig-pa) for ourselves. Keep everything as it is for as long as possible. This moment of pristine awareness is called by many different names, such as hrig-ge-ba and so on. This is very different from practicing visualization because with visualization the mind is still working. It is not just a naked awareness (rig-pa rjen-pa) in this case. So we must discover in our own personal experience just what and how this Natural State exists. In this way we are introduced to it (rig-pa ngo-sprod). After we have had this experience and are familiar with it, it is no longer necessary to watch thoughts arise. This is like being well acquainted with a man, so that every time we meet him on the street, we do not need to ask his name, origin, destination, and so on. Thus we let thoughts arise and dissolve again of their own accord. We just keep them as they are and they return to their own original condition (rang sar zin). But the Natural State is not just the dissolving of thoughts.

We should not allow our body posture to become loose and flaccid, nor allow our gaze to wander. Nor do we allow our attention to follow after thoughts. How long should we practice this state of contemplation? Light an incense stick and observe the time it takes to recite the MATRI mantra 200 times and mark that length on another incense stick. This is the measure of time. First practice remaining in contemplation for the time it takes for 100 recitations, then 200 recitations, and even later for 300 recitations. Then during the intervals between contemplation or remaining in Rigpa, think of the sufferings of beings and the means to win enlightenment. Finally we come to realize that everything is made up of our thoughts and these thoughts have no inherent nature - no color, no shape, no form, etc. They merely arise and dissolve again. What then really exists? Just keep everything as it is. This is the first step in searching for the mind.

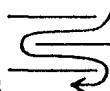
Second, look for where thoughts arise, where they stay, and where they go. Search for their source. Is this inside the body or outside? Do they arise in the brain or in the heart? We may think they come from outside or that they arise from some organ inside the body, but when we look we cannot find their source anywhere. Continuing to observe and search, we cannot find any place where they stay, whether inside or outside. Nor can we find any place where they go. Finally we become exhausted by this effort, since we cannot find anything anywhere. Then comes hrig-ge-ba (a moment of presence) or had-de-ba (a moment of startled awareness) following this complete exhaustion when the mind temporarily stops functioning.

There are two methods for training the mind: fixation with an object (mtshan bcas) and fixation without an object (mtshan med). We can do fixation on the white A first, but we may also use an image or picture. Or we can look to see who it is who is making the visualization of the white A in space, or look to find who is doing the fixation on it. But we do not

find anyone there, not a trace. We look and we search, but we should not develop or invent anything. We do not speculate or philosophize - for these are all activities of the mind and the Natural State lies beyond the mind. Just leave everything as it is and thoughts will dissolve by themselves. Maybe changes will occur spontaneously on the white A after a time; all of this depends on the individual. Yet we are not unconscious but globally aware, if we observe thoughts and they dissolve and we do not find anything, we will discover in this way an inexpressible state and we just remain in that. Do not try to grasp it. This is a method for stabilizing the mind. This state of presence or immediate awareness is the Natural State. Thoughts may arise, but we do not follow them or develop them or judge them. We simply observe the thoughts and they dissolve again. New thoughts may arise, but it is not necessary to try to stop them. Just leave them alone. Do not be distracted and do not follow after them. This is the way to practise.

## 4.2 DARK RETREAT

If we practice in a dark room in a retreat house, this will be much better for our practice. Seeing too many things with our eyes stimulates the production of thoughts, so it is better not to see too much. There are two methods for practicing in the dark: (1) practice to keep ourselves in the Natural State (rig-pa), to familiarize ourselves with it and to stabilize it; and (2) to develop the Thödgal visions. This is the beginning of mind training. We can use a cave or a thatched hut for practice, but the interior should have a floor which is higher than the ground to prevent dampness from seeping inside. Plaster can be used on the inside to keep out the light. Proper ventilation is very important. Access is provided through double doors with an intervening space. The food slot has double panels. This prevents the light from coming into the mun-khang or dark retreat house. Stagger the



openings three times for ventilation thus This dark retreat is used for stabilizing our Rigpa by minimizing distractions to the senses.

In the beginning we fixated the mind which had not been fixated previously (thog-mar sems ma zin zin-par byed-pa) and this had been accomplished by means of the essential point of the body (lus kyi gnad), the essential point of the gaze (lta stangs kyi gnad) and the essential point of mind training (bslab bya'i gnad) described above in the text. This practice involved the fixating of the mind on the Tibetan letter A. Through this procedure we were introduced to Rigpa (rig-pa ngo-sprod) or the state of contemplation. Thus, now being somewhat familiar with the Natural State, we are prepared to enter into a dark retreat and this dark retreat has the effect of stabilizing the Natural State. Thus, in the middle interval, mindfulness which had not been previously stabilized is made stable (bar du dran-pa mi

gnas-pa gnas-par bya- ba).

Here there are three considerations:

1. Having suppressed the movements of the body, we relax without moving (lus kyi bya-ba sdams nas byar med du glod-pa). In other words, we just keep ourselves in the usual meditation posture without any special activities, but we are completely relaxed (glod-pa).
2. Having suppressed the expression of speech, we relax without speaking (ngag gi brjod-pa sdams nas brjod med du glod-pa). In other words, no talking or reading while in retreat.
3. Having suppressed the thoughts and memories in the mind, we relax, transcending all thoughts (sems kyi dran bsam sdams nas bsam 'das su glod-pa). We suppress attachments to thoughts by fixating on space and simply observe the mind. Thoughts which do arise are allowed to dissolve into the Natural State and we do not follow after them.

At first, merely watch thoughts arise and then dissolve again, while remaining in the Natural State (rig-pa). There is nothing special to do in the dark. If we practice in this way continuously, our contemplation develops. In the beginning many thoughts will seem to arise. This may not be actually so, but now since we are staying in a quiet place and our senses are deprived of stimulation, we notice thoughts more than is usually the case. But there is nothing to create nor invent nor to correct (ma bcos-pa).

While remaining in this condition inside the dark retreat, we may experience a desire more than once to come out of the dark retreat in order to seek gossip and social contact and other entertainments. At this time we should think - since beginningless time in Samsāra we have experienced death and rebirth. Yet in all of these lifetimes we never heard of the Dzogchen teachings or even heard of the name Dzogchen. So from these countless rebirths up until now, what has been the result? Have we been happy or satisfied? What qualities did we develop and what fruits did we realize? We do not want to be carried along in the current of the inevitable suffering experienced in Samsāra, but we possess no power or capacity to overcome this because the power of the karmic traces inherited from our past lives is too great. We cannot stop it because we do not have the knowledge and the capacity. But on the other hand, we are not animals who in their ignorance are the helpless victims of their karma. We are human beings, and therefore we can examine the aim and purpose of our lives. What else might we do? Where is our worldly life going? Will this bring satisfaction? We amass wealth only to lose it with the onset of sickness and death. What remains for us when we die? Examine what we did in the past and see what the results are now.

Domestic animals are born, eat, drink, fornicate - and then are fed to slaughter. Yet even an animal knows enough to get out of the hot sun, or

to come in out of the cold rain to a warm place. Can we do less? Look at the condition of all living beings. Human existence provides a maximum opportunity to accumulate merit which is the karmic cause for a better rebirth. Do not waste this unique opportunity. Maybe half our life is now gone - how much longer will we live? What we need to do now is prepare for our future life. We cannot claim that we are too busy with something important and so we do not have time for this preparation. What is more important than death or rebirth? If we want a human rebirth in the future, then we must practice the ten virtues and avoid the ten sins. Killing, stealing and rape - these are the sins of the body. Lying, slander, harsh speech and gossiping - these are the sins of speech. Ill will, covetous thoughts and wrong views - these are the sins of the mind. The ten virtues are refraining from all these. We must be aware of all this and accumulate in this present life the causes for future human rebirth. But there are many kinds of human rebirth. There are humans with their senses impaired or their bodies deformed. Thus we must develop bzod-pa - patience, endurance, forbearance. In that way we will be reborn with our faculties complete and unimpaired. But we could find ourselves reborn in the condition of a slave or a servant. Therefore, we must practice sbyin-pa or generosity, and then we will not find ourselves reborn in a condition of poverty or servitude in a future life. These three virtues of morality (sīla or avoiding the ten sins), patience (kshānti), and generosity (dāna) are very important. If we neglect them in our lives, then we will waste the opportunity this human existence provides.

When we are trying to keep in the Natural State, comfortably and continuously, but we become distracted by desires for entertainments, social life and so on, then we should practice the meditation described above. If we continue to practice, we will easily remain in contemplation without thoughts (mi rtog-pa). But we do not practice visualizations, mantras, breathings and so on, in the dark because they will disturb our energy and cause thoughts to arise. Thus it will become more difficult to remain in the Natural State. Let thoughts be as they are - have no plans nor expectations nor worries. Simply keep everything just as it is.

However, if we remain in this condition for some time, then the problems of agitation (rgod-pa), drowsiness ('bying-pa) and dullness (smug-pa) may arise. So we must keep track of how long we remain in contemplation. We begin with very short periods of practice and then we gradually increase the length of time. Generally, in retreat one does for thuns or sessions of practice per day. In between these sessions we should examine our motivations and develop the Bodhichitta, thinking "All beings were once our mother" and so on. We may not at present possess the capacity to liberate them - only a Buddha can do this, and so we must make haste to attain Buddhahood. Do not eat or drink too much in the retreat, especially avoid garlic and fried food. These foods tend to unbalance our elements, so we must be careful of this. Do not let ourselves become too warm or too cold. At midday

and at midnight we must rest. Sometimes our mind might be afflicted by unbearable thoughts. What can we do then? That is why we need a qualified master near at hand. If we become tired or discouraged, we must remember our promises and why we have made them. In the bad weather which occurs in the summer we can still at times see the sun between the clouds. So do not waste this opportunity! have regret for the wrong and stupid actions we have committed in the past. Our mind may initially develop, but later it may decline and we find ourselves depressed. So do not judge ourselves - do not become delighted at our supposed progress or depressed at our supposed lack of progress. Our meditation will come and go like the weather - so just relax and do not pass judgements.

Then the signs of progress will arise from our zhine (zhi-gnas) or śamatha practice. When the zhine develops naturally, then lhaghong or *vipaśyanā* will develop simultaneously. There is no special practice for this, but zhine will develop naturally. So we will find that we are able to remain in the Natural State for a long time. If we do this, then gradually thoughts will arise less and less because our Rigpa has become more stable. Then we will experience fewer doubts because our Rigpa is more clear. Then our thoughts will be like clouds which dissolve into the sky, so that the sky becomes clear and unobstructed. These thoughts do not go anywhere else other than the Natural State. They come from the Natural State and they dissolve again into the Natural State. It is like very pure water in which we can see reflections. There will not be many thoughts to disturb us. This is kun-ghzi rang-byung gnas-pa, a self-originated state of calm. Then our dark retreat will become filled with light naturally. This is not because of our eyes, but it seems to us that we can see outside the retreat. That is a sign of the balancing of our elements. Then we experience mi rtog-pa, a state without thoughts, at times. These are nyams or experiences in meditation of clarity and of thoughtlessness. There is nothing to do about this - it happens naturally.

This practice is called Thegchod (khregs-chod); it is not Thödgal (thod-rgal). This Thegchod section is the foundation for the Dzogchen view. Thus, before practicing Thödgal, our Thegchod must become stable.

## 4.3 THÖDGAL

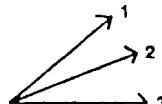
Now we come to the methods for making clear the Natural State, that is to say, the method for developing vision known as Thödgal. Listening and taking notes are not enough in order to understand this. It is not enough just to read a book because we are still caught up in Samsāra. Do not cling personally to the doubts which arise during practice in retreat, but bring them to our master and express them.

Now as for the practice of Thödgal: If our Natural State is not clear, then there exist certain methods to bring this about. Thödgal refers to the

nature of the state of Rigpa. It is possible to practice its development both in the dark retreat and in the sunlight. Thegchod and Thödgal must be linked together. With respect to developing clarity in one's own Rigpa where clarity did not exist previously (tha-ma rang rig mi gsal-ba gsal-bar bya-ba), there are three considerations:

1. The very essential point of stabilizing the meditation (bsgom-pa'i gnas shin tu gnad che);
2. The full measure of a session of practice (thun tshad) and,
3. the practice itself (de ltar nyams su blangs-pa).

In the dark retreat there are five aspects to the position of the body. If we do not do this position, then the visions will not come quickly and easily. The feel are together. Hold the knees and lift up the big toes. The left hand is on top. The thumbs press against the joint where the ring fingers join the palms. The big toes are bent up a little. The tongue also turns up and touches the palette. The mouth is open. The neck is bent slightly and the head is back. The spine is straight. Hunch the shoulders. The left foot is over the right foot. The sole of the left foot is on the right foot. Pull in the stomach as much as possible. The eyes turn upwards and the gaze is as high as possible. If we do this, the visions will come naturally.



Here three gazes are described:

1. the wheel gaze ('khor-lo 'gying-ba'i lta-stangs),
2. the lion gaze (seng-ge 'gying-ba'i lta-stangs), and
3. the secret gaze (gsang-ba 'gying-ba'i lta-stangs).

With the wheel gaze we look upward as much as possible, as described above. This is done in the early morning and in the afternoon or evening. Although used in Thödgal or vision practice with sunlight, it can also be used in the dark retreat. Just before midday and in the early afternoon, the gaze is lowered somewhat, about sixteen digits down from that gaze which is as high as possible. This is the gaze of the lion. Then the secret gaze is ahead and level.

In the dark retreat we can estimate the time from the meal schedule. But what is most important is to keep ourselves in the Natural State. If it is convenient, we can use a cushion and a meditation belt (sgom thag). Breathe naturally. If we do not keep in the Natural State, then the visions will not be qualified. Do not follow after thoughts and do not develop them. Just let them go without judgement. And do not lose the acuteness or sharpness of our energy, so that hrig-ge-ba or the sense of presence is kept strong. Before

a session of practice do the nine breathings for purification. Also recite the short prayer of invoking the Guru, and this can be sung, accompanied by the dāmaru.

While in the dark retreat breathe in the normal way. Normally the breath is inhaled either through the right or left nostril. When both nostrils are open, then the wisdom airs (ye-shes rlung, jnāna-vāyu) move through the channels. But when we are in the dark retreat or when we are going to sleep, we should keep the right nostril down and the left nostril up. This is because the passion winds (nyon-mongs rlung, kleśa-vāyu) go in through the right nostril. The text does not say so, but it is probably different for men and women, since the channels or nādīs are the reverse in males and females. Thus the male lies on his right side and the female on her left side before beginning practice or before going to sleep.

Here in the text, at this point, only the dark retreat is described. Then if we practice continuously, our Natural State will become more clear. The posture and breathing serve to open our channels. It is like when we make a fire. The wind comes and the fire blazes up. So in this way the visions become clear. They develop from the Natural State and do not arise from somewhere outside of ourselves. Visions arise out of the Natural State like butter arises from out of the milk when it is churned. Visions may also arise, for example, in a state of sensory deprivation similar to the dark retreat, or from taking certain drugs, but they are chaotic and not clear. What differentiates these hallucinations from the Thödgal visions is that the latter arise when we are in contemplation, resting in the Natural State of Rigpa. For this reason, Thegchöd or remaining in the state must first become stabilized before we can practice Thödgal. Otherwise, there is the danger of becoming attached to the visions which arise. And entering into judgement, we then become even more caught up in Samsara, instead of realizing liberation from delusion.

How do these visions arise? They come from inside us and not from some external force, as is the case with normal vision. These visions are manifestations of our own interior light, the Clear Light of Reality (bon nyid 'od gsal). The Natural State pervades our entire physical body, but is especially concentrated in the hollow cavity inside of our physical heart. Thus the Dzogchen teachings speak of six lights known as the Six Lamps (sgron-ma drug):

1. the Lamp of the Base which is the Natural State  
(gnas-pa gzhi'i sgron-ma),
2. the Lamp of the fleshly Heart  
(tsita'i sha'i sgron-ma),
3. the Lamp of the smooth white nerve  
(dkar 'jam rtsa'i sgron-ma),

4. the Lamp of the water (filled eyeball) which lassoes at a distance  
(rgyang zhags chu'i sgron-ma),
5. the Lamp that introduces the pure Buddha realms  
(zhing-khams ngo-sprod kyi sgron-ma),
6. the Lamp of the time of the Bardo  
(bar-do dus kyi sgron-ma).

(see the translation of the sGron-mn drug and its commentary by Vajranātha, elsewhere.)

The Natural Clear Light is concentrated in the hollow cavity in our physical heart and then it overflows up the Kati channel or smooth white nerve that is like a hollow tube of crystal. Originating in the physical heart, it passes up the membrane of the brain and dividing into two, it terminates in the two eyeballs. This Kati channel and the eyeballs represent the third and fourth lamps, whereas the heart is the second lamp and the Natural Clear Light is the first. This inner light overflowing by way of the Kati, emerges through the two doorways of the eyeballs. These doorways at the end of the channel are shaped like the flowers of the flax plant (zar-ma). This is not the usual vision apparatus of our optic nerves and retina, etc. Although visions come through the Kati channel and appear to manifest in front of us, they actually arise from our interior natural light. These visions are not perceived with the normal physical eye. This is inner vision, but it manifests to us as an external vision.

The visions usually come forth like the colors in a peacock's feather. If we remain in the dark retreat and our vision develops, the visions will emerge as visions of the realms of Clear Light. These visions are unlimited and countless, but for beginners they might appear as smokey, like the movement of smoke in the dark. Then after that there may arise signs of the earth element or of the air element. Then after that there may come mirages, or manifestations like fire-flies or like moonlight near at hand or dawn. Depending on our health and the condition of our channels, sometimes they may shine like sunlight. Or they may seem that everything has become absorbed in the sky. This represents the beginning of the arising of visions. When we perceive signs like smoke, for example, it means that our state is stable and we will have little problem settling down. Then our remaining in the Natural State will be very comfortable. But later thoughts may become rough like the wind, and thus we will feel agitated. But finally things will become clear. Our body may seem to be covered with a net. It does not matter whether we are having visions in the dark retreat or in sunlight practice, these visions have the same quality, although the base for training may differ. When the visions come, we should not let ourselves become excited. On the other hand, if they do not come, we should not feel depressed or frustrated. We remain in the Natural State.

The purpose of the dark retreat practice is to stabilize our Rigpa of the Natural State. Then we apply methods for developing the Thödgal visions. Visions may come a bit more quickly with the sunlight practice, but generally they develop much more by way of the dark retreat practice. This has been a discussion in general of the dark retreat teaching. Customarily we do the Thödgal practice in the dark retreat for forty nine days. Here we have body posture, breathing, and visualizations for each seven day cycle of this retreat. (See the translation of the 'Od-gsal bdun skor' by Vajranātha, elsewhere.) This completes the dark retreat teaching.

Next we must consider Thödgal teaching in the sunlight, in the moonlight and in empty space. But we must ask what is the purpose of the dark retreat and in seeking these visions in the dark? And where do these visions which arise come from? They arise out of our Natural State which is the Nature of Mind (sems nyid), and its inherent capacity for awareness (rig-pa). These visions arise from the Natural State and dissolve again into the Natural State. We come to realize that our visions seen in the darkness are empty of any inherent existence and that they are illusions. Because of our practice, we experience this first hand for ourselves. This is not just intellectual knowledge gained from reading some book, but direct personal experience. And in this way we come to realize and understand that our normal everyday vision during the waking state has precisely the same quality, although we have not recognised this previously. Our normal everyday waking state vision and our visions in the dark retreat, like the visions in dreams, are equally insubstantial and unreal - although due to habit we assume that waking state vision is real and solid. In this way, we overcome our attachment to our visions and realize that everything is like an illusion.

Observing our thoughts, how they arise and so on, that represents the introduction to Thegchod; then remaining in the Natural State is Thegchod itself - just remaining in the state of contemplation. But without Thegchod, Thödgal will not be of much use. Remaining in the Natural State is Thegchod and without this state of contemplation there is not much sense in either sunlight practice or dark retreat.

Now with respect to Thödgal, we may consider three possibilities for our practice: (1) first there is the dark retreat practice (mun mtsham) in a dark retreat house (mun khang) as has been described above. Here we have spoken in general, but the specific forty-nine day dark retreat is described in the text "the Sevenfold Cycle of the Clear Light" ('od-gsal bdun skor). Basically there are two systems for the dark retreat: first, that described in the Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud of which we speak here, and second, that described by Shardza Rinpoche which is actually a mixture of Tantra and Dzogchen. (2) Second there is the practice with space or the clear open sky. (3) And third, there is practice with sunlight. However, there also exist practices with moonlight and with candle light not described here in the text.

## 4.4 SPACE PRACTICE

How is one to do the practice with space? This represents purification practice with respect to the contemplation of space (i.e., the empty sky) which is clear and visible (snang gsal nam-mkha'i ting-nge 'dzin la sbyangs-pa). Here there exist four considerations:

1. where to practice (gnas gang du nyams su blangs-pa)
2. when to practice (dus nam gyi tshe nyams su blangs-pa)
3. how visions arise in the practice (tshul ji-ltar nyams su blangs-pa)
4. what experiences and visions of the Clear Light arise (nyams snang 'od gsal gyi 'char tshul).

First, where do we practice? We need some place where we can see a large vast expanse of space for a great distance. This would be some place like a site in the high mountains, or a great open plain, or a view across the open sea, or the roof of a house or a tall building, or a house that is open on one side having a clear unobstructed view. The place should not be too hot nor too cold, because this could create physical problems. Wherever we practice, we should try to keep our body and head out of the bright sunlight, that is, we stay in the shade. A house that is open on one side, but otherwise enclosed, would be very good. It should be some place where we are comfortable, protected from the sun and the wind. The best place, of course, is found high in the mountains in a country with an arid climate.

When do we practice? In the early morning we should face west and in the afternoon we should face east. Thus the sun is always to our back. In the early morning while looking into the western sky devoid of clouds and with our mind free of thoughts, we simply gaze and integrate into open empty space. In the late afternoon before the sun has set, while facing to the east, we simply gaze into the cloudless sky and with our mind free of thoughts, we integrate into space. At midday we rest. But at other times we practice continually - we practice as long as we can according to our capacity. According to the sGron-ma drug, "In the early morning we face west, in the afternoon we face east, and at midday we rest. Thus the mirror of awareness which is the Natural State is revealed as being space."

With respect to the essential point of the body, there are the five aspects described previously and this is the same as the dark retreat. Then as for the gaze, there are (1) the wheel gaze where we look upward as much as possible, (2) the lion gaze which is intermediate, (3) the secret gaze (i.e. the Siddha watching the sky) where our gaze is level. We can use whichever of these is more comfortable.

But here, in the sky practice, it is necessary to unite and integrate the three spaces (dbyings gsum). The external space (phyi dbyings) is the sky, the internal space (nang dbyings) are the empty channels, and the secret

space (gsang dbyings) is the emptiness of the Natural State. How do we unite and integrate these three? Gaze into the empty sky and keep the mind in the Natural State. The Kati nerve is a tube like hollow channel. By means of the wisdom winds (ye-shes kyi rlung), the Natural State (rig-pa) comes up through the channel from the heart - but this is not ordinary psychic energy (rlung). The eyes are kept fixed on empty space. We can no longer distinguish external and internal space. We do not have to do anything special, just keep in the Natural State and be stable in this. There is no visualizing anything or thinking anything. By just keeping in the Natural State we integrate internal and external space.

When we feel that our Natural State is stable, then recite or chant something. We may even be able to do something with our thoughts and this will not disturb the Natural State. But if we do these things before our Natural State becomes stable, then we will lose our contemplation. When making a retreat, divide the day into four sessions. In between sessions we should do other practices such as mantra recitation and accumulating merit. This is the way to proceed with the practice for integrating the three spaces.

According to the gZer-bu, just keep breathing normally and do not change anything nor do anything special. To do so will disturb our energy (rlung) and the stability of our Natural State. Breathing should be even and level as much as possible. Moreover, when we are gazing into the sky, do not blink, but remain fixated in space. In this way, the visions will not be impeded nor stopped and our Natural State blends with space and there is no separation nor distinction between external and internal space. In this situation it is much easier to recognize the Natural State. Keep the posture and do not move overly much. If the body is unmoving, then the nādīs or channels will not move. If the nādīs do not move, then the winds or energies (rlung, vāyu) will not shake and then the mind will be easier to control. Our thoughts (rnam-rtog) are always linked with these internal winds (rlung).

This represents an important method: the Natural State (rig-pa) comes up out of the heart, moves along the Kati nerve and goes out through the eyes. This Natural State shines through the eyes, that is, it comes up through the channels and goes out through the eyes, although actually the Natural State is immovable. Between our internal space and external space beyond, we have a window or door. If we did not have a door in our house, we would not easily be able to go in or out. Space itself is immovable, but there is a door which connects the exterior to the interior. Thus there is an apparent contradiction in saying that the Natural State moves up through the channels and comes out the eyes. The physical eye does not see the Natural State which is like space - the eyes only see colors, shapes and so on. The Kati is connected with the eyes, but it is not the ordinary optic nerve.

Sometimes we have to remember to keep in the Natural State, but when we enter the Natural State, this memory dissolves. This memory cannot see the Natural State because it is a thought. So memory or remembering on its own cannot see the Natural State. When one attains Buddhahood,

then one no longer possesses any reminder to keep in the Natural State - and thoughts do not return. Buddhas do not have any discursive thoughts (rnam-rtog); they have primal awareness or gnosis (ye-shes). Thoughts are always mixed up with negativities and obscurations. Thoughts represent obscuration. Thus we keep in a thoughtless state (mi rtog-pa). When we keep in the Natural State and everything dissolves, then we do not need to do or change anything. We just let things be, just let thoughts go. We let everything remain just as it is.

What visions arise ('char tshul)? According to the text, "In space we will find what is like a spider web or like a mountain." If we practice continuously, these visions will develop. How they will develop and what qualities they manifest will be discussed here. Due to secondary causes such as the dark, empty space, sunlight and so on, from the Natural State the visions arise spontaneously. Their source is the Natural State. They come up through the Kati and they shine out through the eyes into space. These visions will dissolve again into the Natural State and they cannot go beyond the Natural State. Their source is the Natural State, they shine in the Natural State and they will dissolve again into the Natural State. So we should not get excited if we see strange and exotic landscapes, or other delightful and pleasant sights.

Visions arise by themselves and they change by themselves. Why? Because they are connected to the five elements. The five elements are also linked to the Natural State. When we practice for a time, then signs will come. Something like mist or clouds may arise in space. Then it may seem like threads moving. Then like lightening, then like a mirror, or like bees wings, or like eyes, or like smoke, or like a mirage, or like figures in the water - like ripples. Such visions may arise. When we gaze into the sky, then it may seem as if there is a mountain, a white dome may appear which is completely dark in the center. This is in the foreground between the sky and the horizon. In the gap between sky and earth there is this dome and this gap is called the internal space and the external space is the dome. Visions shine in the dark portion. Then according to the balance of the elements, we see colors. If we have high blood pressure, then instead of a black space, it will be red. Also this may change according to our body. Then in this dark space, visions appear like rainbows, or like silk brocades, or like nets, or as patterns of lines: square, triangular, semi-circle, etc. Even flowers, trees, stupas, etc. may appear, or people and animals may shine there. These may become deities.

There may be a tiny sphere of awareness, (rig-pa'i thig-le) like mercury or quicksilver. At first it is highly mobile, but then it becomes more stable. It may have different colors, then rainbow colors. Then rays come out like threads of silver which are long or short, and having different shapes like iron bars, beads, umbrella spokes, or hairs thrown into space. Countless visions may arise. But whatever visions arise, they are signs that the wisdom winds (ye-shes rlung) are moving into the central channel. This method

gradually brings these energies of prāna into the central channel and they gradually open up this channel. This makes for separation of thoughts and the Natural State. These visions are all signs of this occurring, but we should remember that not every vision is a sign of practice (sgrub rtags). So this is the meaning of the Thödgal visions. Our Natural State begins to stabilize. Our knowledge develops ever more quickly. Our defilements are removed. At this time, diligence in practice is necessary. This is the teaching relating to space practice.

## 4.5 THÖDGAL PRACTICE

How do we practice Thodgal with sunlight? With respect to the practice of the contemplation of the inherently clear lamps, (rang gsal sgron-ma'i ting-nge 'dzin nyams su blangs pa), there are four considerations:

1. where to practice (gnas gang du nyams su blangs pa),
2. when to practice (dus nam gyi tshe nyams su blangs pa),
3. how to practice (tshul ji-ltar nyams su blangs pa),
4. how the qualities of the practice will eventually arise (nyams su blangs-pa'i yon-tan 'char tshul) that is, what visions will arise.

The place where we should practice Thödgal has been explained above with regard to the space practice. First we practice in a dark retreat for forty nine days or otherwise, then we practice with the open sky also for forty nine days or otherwise, and certain signs will arise as described above. Then we practice for forty nine days with the sunlight. This is the tradition that comes from Zhang-zhung. For Thödgal, we must practice in solitude in a quiet place. What is necessary? We may use a house which is completely open on one side, so that our body will be out of the hot sun. Although we use the sunlight for practice, we ourselves must stay in the shade. Again, a high place, especially one open to the southeast with a wide spacious view would be best. Alternatively, we can use a cave or sit under a tree, whatever is suitable, so long as it is easy to gaze into the sunlight. As for the time of practice, we can use the morning and late afternoon, this time facing into the east in the morning and into the west in the afternoon. At midday we take rest because the sun is too bright and glaring. The sky should be without clouds and wind because these disturb the eyes.

It is also possible to build a special house for the practice. In the east wall of the house there is a round window, not too high or too low, not too big or too small - but large enough so that we can see the sun and look one cubit below the orb of the sun. We gaze at the spot and our eyes are a little closed. If the east window is too big, the bright sunlight will disturb our body. Usually it is 2 1/2 feet round. On the north side there is a small

square window half this size. In the south wall there is a triangular window and in the west wall a semi-circular window. In the morning we use the sunlight coming in through the round window in the east. At midday we stop the practice. In the afternoon we use the south and west windows. The north window is not used for gazing. The west window is best for the very late afternoon. The height of the windows are according to the height of our body. The north window is lowest, a little up from the floor. The east window is lower than the west one. This is a practice house according to the oral tradition. But one could also combine the dark retreat and the Thödgal functions in a single hermitage. It would only be necessary to close and seal the windows in order to make it function as a dark retreat. But we must be careful how we orientate the house. The door is situated in the corner, or else in the north side.

The time for practice is from sunrise onwards and we cease practicing by midday. The morning is excellent for sunlight practice, but the sky must have no clouds. The west window may be used before sunset. We can use the light of the cloudless sky anytime, except at midday when it is too hot and bright. But never look directly at the sun, only below it and with eyes partially closed.

How are we to practice? Fortunate individuals possessing the good karma to come into contact with the teachings, who are linked to the master and who are devoted to Dzogchen, who have done preliminary purification practices, and whose delusions have been eradicated - they are suitable for Thödgal practice. We must consider the essential points of body or position (lus gnad), of breathing (rlung gnad) and of mind (sems gnad). There are five positions of the body:

1. the position of the dignified lion (seng-ge 'gying stabs)
2. the position of the sitting elephant (glang-chen rkyang thabs)
3. the position of the crouching Rishi or sage (dge-sbyor cog-bu)
4. the position of the waddling goose (ngang-mo'i zur gros)
5. the position of the crystal antelope climbing on the rock (shel gyi rna pho brag la 'dzeg-pa'i tshul).

The position of the dignified lion: The balls of the feet are on the ground and also the palms of the hands are on the ground. Crouch in this position, and the arms are inside of the knees. The neck and the chin are up. One can gaze high, medium or level. This sitting lion position is for the sunlight practice, especially for the morning and for gazing through the east window. The stomach is pulled in and the breathing is normal.

The position of the sitting elephant: Crouch with the elbows on the ground and the chin supported by one's hands. But the knees do not touch the ground. When we gaze to the south the window is low. The

northern window is lowest, while the west window is lower than the east window. If we adopt the postures here, our prāna energy (rlung) will become less disturbed and the central channel will be gradually opened. Thus the visions will come quickly. The Natural State will soon reach the eyes - the karmic winds, desires and attachments will all become less and our body will become more healthy. Visions will become more quickly and be more perfect. These visions may be of the Buddha realms and our Awareness (rig-pa) will become stronger and develop.

The position of the crouching Rishi: We crouch in the same way as the Indian sadhu. Bind the knees with the arms, the hands holding the arms. Feet together. Dokumbhaka. The feet support the whole weight of the body and are flat on the ground. We can use the high, medium or level gaze as we choose. We develop head (drod) in this position. Thoughts are quickly dissolved. Visions develop quickly, especially Nirmānakāya visions. This position may be used in the morning or in the afternoon, but not at midday. This is the normal position used in Thödgal practice, although we can use the others on occasion, as we choose. Also a meditation belt (sgom-thag) will be useful.

The position of the waddling goose: Lie down with the right side on the ground. The right hand cradles the right side of the face. The legs are straight. Support the head with the hand. The left hand rests on the thigh. Gaze at the sunlight. This position is the same for both males and females. Its quality is that the visions change much more quickly.

The position of the crystal antelope climbing the rock: It is similar to the lion position. The arms are under the legs and hold the cars. Cup the hands. Sit on the ground. This position opens the left channel.

Generally when we do the lion position, our gaze is the highest, with the elephant position our gaze is medium, and with the crouching Rishi position our gaze is level. But the eyelids are half closed in each case. With the goose position we gaze to the right side. The sunlight comes from our right side and the sun comes over the top of the head. In the antelope position we gaze to the left side, the light coming from the left side.

During those times when we adopt these positions, the three lamps unite. Always fixate the gaze on the target, whether sunlight or moonlight or starlight or candle light. Do not look directly at the light source, but below it or to the side. If we look directly at the light source, the visions will not come. This includes gazing at a candle. Look to the side. As for the target upon which we fix our gaze, whether sunlight or moonlight or candle light, this represents the outer lamp. The eye which is fixed upon it is the inner lamp. Always keeping in the Natural State (rig-pa), that is the secret lamp. And we must keep our awareness sharp and acute, otherwise drowsiness comes.

Thus there are three important matters considered here: First, there is the correct body posture assumed because this keeps the psychic channels and winds in the right position. Then the visions will come. Second, there is

the gaze and this is very important. When done in a certain way, the visions will come spontaneously. And if done conscientiously, the visions will come quickly. Third, there is the mind and this is also very important. Everything depends on the mind. So keep in the Natural State and do not lose it.

What visions will arise? Our natural awareness arises spontaneously as five colors. Our channels open and we keep gazing into the sunlight - these two factors unite and visions arise. These visions may move and change. The visions may become big enough to fill all of space or they may become as small as a mustard seed. But no matter what appears, do not give way to the arising of any thoughts or judgements, for that would bring the mind into play. If there is no interference on the part of the mind, then everything self liberates of its own accord. Our Natural State will become very clear and very stable. We come to realize a true understanding. Both the dark retreat and the space practice represent preparations for this Thödgal practice. We can mix light and space in our practice. With the sunlight practice, the visions come very quickly, but do not do this practice for too long because it might damage the eyes. We can use these three practices - the dark, space and sunlight - to reinforce and help each other. Use them according to our own judgement, need and capacity.

Also we can use a blue cloth or curtain and put this over our head and do the sunlight practice this way. We can see the sunlight through the holes in the weave of the fabric and this may bring the visions more quickly. We can also just gaze at the sunlight through a hanging blue curtain, keeping our face close to this blue curtain. We can also do the space practice indoors, by just gazing at a blank wall across the room, but this is not as satisfactory as outdoor sky practice. But most of all it is important to remember never to look directly at the orb of the sun, but below it or to the side.

## **4.6 SPECIAL METHODS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

This section also relates to the Thödgal practice. We can do Thödgal practice in the dark, with the empty sky, or with the sunlight. Now we must consider some special points connected with the methods or Thödgal (khyad-par gnad kyi gdams-pas bogs 'don-pa) - these are three:

1. Development by means of the essential point of the method (thabs lam gnad gyis bogs 'don pa)
2. Development by means of purification of the vital energy and of the mind (rlung sems kyi sbyong-basbogs 'don-pa)
3. Development by means of the instruction concerning the visions in the night (mtshan snang gi gdams-pas bogs 'don-pa).

First, there are special methods for developing the dark retreat. In the darkness there will arise lights and rays. The colors are mostly white and the shapes round. This represents a manifestation of our vital energy, specifically the energy of space (nam-mkha'i rlung) within our body. This energy is entering into the vital channel and this vision is a sign of this. So in this case, gaze as high as possible. When shapes are narrow and colors are mostly red, this is a sign that we are starting to control the energy of fire (me'i rlung) within our body. This energy is entering into the central channel and we should lower our gaze. When shapes are square and colors are mostly yellow, this is a sign that our earth energy (sa'i rlung) is coming under control. Gaze to the right side. When shapes are round and colors are green, it is a sign that our air energy (rlung gi rlung) is coming under control. Gaze mainly to the left. When shapes are triangular and colors are mainly blue, this means that our water energy (chu'i rlung) is coming under control. Gaze straight ahead and level. When the rays and the thiglays are equally all different colors and there is a mixture of shapes and equal in their variety, this is a sign that at that time all five elements are coming under our control. Then we can choose the level or our gaze, whether high, medium or level. Here the reference is to the dark retreat practice and light practice, but not to space practice.

We now come to the question of how to practice the breathing and the visualization. As for the central channel from the heart to the crown of the head, this is the path of Nirvana (this refers to the method). This is explained in the sGrom-ma drug. The central channel which goes from the heart down to the spine - this is the path of Samsara. The white channel (ro-ma) on the right side of the male originates four fingers below the navel and going up the other way it terminates in the right nostril. This is the path of the passions and of rough breathing and is related to negative thoughts. The red channel (rkyang-ma) on the left side in males also originates four fingers below the navel and terminates this time at the left nostril. This is the path of virtuous qualities and here the breathing is mixed. These two channels are the reverse in females. This, when we sleep, keep the left side of the body up and the right side down because this closes the right channel. Women should do the reverse. These channels branch into 84,000 nerves. In these channels and nerves the winds or psychic energies (rlung) come and go and are mixed with mind (sems). Thus breathing and mind are linked. There are many types of these energies. They are both kleśa-vāyu and jnāna-vāyu energies. We speak of vāyu or wind (rlung) as being rough when it is mixed up with negativity (kleśa). Therefore, we want to expel that wind and try to retain wisdom wind and practice with this in order to develop it. This is very important in Tantra. Then there is bindu or thiglay, which may be pure or impure. The impure thiglay can be purified through understanding.

Then, as for the practice of the thiglay: the purpose of the visualization, breathing and posture is to insert the wisdom wind into the central channel. If we bring the wisdom wind and the natural thiglay into the central channel,

this leads to the development of vision and the visions will come more quickly and the meditation will be more powerful. This is the point of Tsa-lung (rtsa lung) practice. If we do this correctly, it is of great benefit. The Natural State resides in the heart and it comes and goes through the Kati channel and through the doorways of the eyes. Here we can find the unification of energy and awareness. Unification of these two exists equally everywhere from the top of the head down to the feet, but normally this situation is covered over with obscurations, and we do not see it clearly. But it is clear in the Kati channel and here it is like the sky without clouds. This is an indestructible gnosis or knowledge.

There are three kinds of breathing to be considered here:

1. smooth or gentle breathing ('jam rlung)
2. rough breathing (rtsab rlung)
3. natural breathing (rang rlung).

How are we to practice the smooth breathing? The two suitable times are early in the morning and in the afternoon, but do not practice it at midday or at midnight. Also, if we practice it continuously, we may experience drowsiness (bying-ba). So do not assume the smooth breathing at these times. This was the advice of Dranpa Namkha. Where do we practice? Especially if we are in the dark retreat, with this kind of breathing we can stabilize and keep in the Natural State. It will not disturb our mind or harm our body or agitate our elements. The body posture has the usual five aspects: sitting cross-legged, spine straight, with hands equipoised, pulling in the stomach, neck bent and tongue up against the palate. Do this strictly, not loosely.

Visualize that inside the body the three channels ascend upward from the secret place four fingers below the navel and that the Avadhūtī or central channel reaches the crown of the head. At the secret place they unite into a single channel, but the right and left channels terminate at the nostrils. These right and left channels, known as Rasānā and Lalanā respectively, twist around the central one and then proceed to the respective nostrils. At



the crown of the head is a center or chakra with four spokes. In the throat and in the heart are also found chakras with four spokes. From these branch various upanādīs or subsidiary channels. The Avadhūtī penetrates the centers of these three chakras. This is how we visualize the channels or nādīs. We begin by inhaling through the left nostril. First check to see which nostril we are breathing through at the moment. If the breathing is strong through the right nostril and the left nostril is blocked, then lie down on the right side and do the Chinese lady mantra. Slowly exhale. Do this several

times and after that the breathing will be equal in both nostrils. Otherwise, repeat this nine times. If the left nostril is clear right from the beginning, then we do not need to do the yantra. Sitting up again, do the breathing exercise as follows: Inhale with OM through the left nostril (not vocalizing the syllable but visualizing it.) This OM goes down the left channel to where three channels join and at this junction it becomes the syllable ĀH. Hold the breath momentarily and when we exhale, this transforms into the syllable HUM and goes up to the right channel and is expelled through the right nostril. Blow it out. Do this several times. Inhale OM on the left side, hold with ĀH, and exhale with HŪM on the right side. Then reverse: inhale with OM on the right side, hold with HŪM, and exhale with ĀH on the left side. The inhalation is short, not long. Begin smoothly. Slowly this process will open the channels and nerves. That is the purpose of the exercise. We can close and control the nostrils with the thumb and forefinger. It is a gentle inhaling and exhaling - do not do it strongly. Women should do this exercise the opposite way. No particular number of breaths is specified, but we must keep checking our nostrils. Again, if the left nostril is open we do not need to do the yantra.

If dizziness or drowsiness arises, then do not do this smooth breathing. Check the breath to see if it comes naturally from the left or the right nostril. If it is coming mostly from the right nostril, then it is good to do this gentle breathing - it has the purpose to make us rely more in the left nostril than on the right nostril.

The purpose of the rough breathing is to develop more clarity and sharpness. The position and visualization are the same. At the point of the junction of the three channels, visualize inside the central channel the green syllable YAM. Four fingers above it (in the navel center) is a dark red syllable RAM. Then at the level of the heart, inside the central channel, is a five colored syllable A which has the nature of Rigpa. It is wrapped up in rainbow colors, but we can see the syllable A inside. This is the size of a small bird's egg and it is very bright. First do the purification breathings nine times. (In general, we do the refuge and the Bodhichitta first before any practice, then the Guru invocation, then proceed to the principal practice. The visualization should be very clear. Then inhale through both nostrils. See the air go down through the two side channels and at the bottom where the three channels join the air enters into the central channel and strikes the syllable YAM. This YAM becomes a strong wind and this wind rises up the central channel and strikes the syllable RAM at the level of the navel. This becomes a fire in the form of a red hot glowing needle. It burns and when very hot, it rises up the Avadhūtī channel, opening it more and more. In the chakra at the crown of the head is a white syllable HAM hanging upside down. The fire goes up the central channel, opening it, and the fire burns more and more. It goes all the way up to the HAM and melts it like butter. The drops of nectar descend the central channel to the bottom and then fill it up to the level of the heart. From there the luminous nectar of the HAM

spreads out through all the upanādīs, filling the entire body. Focus upon this.

Inhale a white syllable HŪM through the white right channel and a red syllable HŪM through the red left channel. These syllables descend to the bottom and at the place of juncture, they meet and hook onto each other. Focus the visualization at that point.

Then put the hands on the ground and lift up one's buttocks a bit and sound HŪM forcefully and long. Visualize that all of the luminous nectar in the central channel goes up to the head chakra, then it overflows into all the upanādīs. Do this nine times. The stomach is pulled in and the buttocks are pushed off the ground. Sound PHAT! nine times. Then shake the upper body forcefully and the luminous nectar flows through all the nerves (nādl). Sound PHAT and shake at the same time. The gaze is high or medium as in the lion gaze.

Smooth breathing (jam rlung) and rough breathing (rtsab rlung) are to be used to develop the Thödgal visions and not for some other purpose. At all other times we keep in the Natural State when we are doing the dark practice or the sunlight practice.

If we become drowsy ('bying-ba) or restless (rgod-pa), we should stop practicing for a while and refresh ourselves. But we should always be checking on ourselves, like a doctor checks on a patient in a hospital. The smooth breathing will move breathing to the left side and the rough breathing will combat drowsiness and we exhale more from the left nostril. These breathings aid the Natural State to remain clear. If rough breathing disturbs our Natural State, do not do it. When we bring down the lurrtinous nectar in the rough breathing exercise, be careful to check that pains are not caused anywhere. If it is painful or uncomfortable, then do not do it, but do body massage, etc. But never do rough breathing as a continuous practice.

## 4.7 DREAM PRACTICE

Now we come to development by means of the instructions for visions at night, that is, in dreams, (mtshan snang gi gdams-pas bogs 'don-pa). More than a third of our life is spent in sleep and this is a time which can be used for practice. But How? Here there are found three considerations:

1. integrating sleep with the Clear light Cod gsal gnyid dang bsre-ba),
2. how faults and virtues arise with regard to that (de'i skyon yon 'char tshul),
3. . the essential point for controlling sleep (gnad bzung ar la gtad).

When we fall asleep, we have dreams, whether we remember them or not. The source of these dreams are karmic traces. During the day we have

many experiences and sensations since all five senses are operating. Then, when we are asleep, they arise again from the Kunzhi (kun-gzhi rnam-shes) or unconscious psyche. Traces of past experiences remain in the Kunzhi and are again presented to the mind when we are asleep. Traces of our emotions also remain in the Kunzhi, even though we have calmed down and forgotten about our passion. These traces remain in the mind. During the waking state, the senses go out to different external objects, but when we fall asleep, our senses are absorbed into the Kunzhi like a turtle drawing its limbs into its shell. So during sleep dreams arise from the traces hidden in the Kunzhi.

How are we to practice, to integrate the dream state with meditation? Use a high pillow and a comfortable bed. Taking the position of the sleeping lion, lie on the right side with the left side of the body up, the right hand under the head and the left hand on the thigh. Visualize that our bed is the lotus, sun and moon. It is supported by four animals - the lion, the elephant, the horse and the garuda - that is, we subdue passions of anger (lion), confusion (elephant), desire (garuda), and so on. Then do purification breathing: inhale three times smoothly. The first time, expel anger - inhale light blue air thought the left nostril and exhale anger through the right nostril. Then inhale light red air through the right nostril and exhale desire through the left nostril. Then inhale smokey colored air through both nostrils and exhale confusion through both nostrils. Do each once. In the usual breathing purification, we do it nine times, but not here. Because we are lying in bed, do this gently. Then visualize in the throat center a chakra with four spokes. At its center is a ball of light, luminous in five colors, like the egg of a peacock. Focus on that point. Do not allow thoughts of the past or the future to intervene, and then fall asleep while in the Natural State.

If one does this practice continually, the practitioner of superior capacity will have dreams of clarity. He will remain in the Natural State and not wake prematurely. He will have clear visions and his dream state may be used for practice. If he does not lose the Natural State and falls into a deep sleep, then this will be a deep meditation. A light sleep will be a light meditation.

An individual of intermediate capacity, practicing in this way, will have dreams and he will recognize them as dreams. He will recall that he is asleep and will want to remain in the Natural State.

An individual of inferior capacity, if he practices continually, will not waste his life and it will be easier for him to find himself in the Natural State. If diligent in practice, he will have positive dreams and sometimes lucid dreams.

If we have no success in dream practice, it may mean that we lack devotion to the teaching. If we cannot control deep sleep, it may mean that we eat or drink too much or are overtired from working too much. Or it may mean that our elements are out of balance. In that case, wake up and try to keep in the Natural State. When we awaken, if we can remember our dreams, compare them with the waking state. We will see that dreams

and the waking state have much the same quality. In the Tantras, there are found many practices relating to the dream state, such as transforming into deities, and so on, but this is discussed elsewhere.

## 4.8 DEVELOPMENT OF MEDITATION

How do we develop our meditation? We do not need material things for this, practicing fixation on the white A will help us in the Natural State. There are several methods for controlling the mind, such as breathing, etc. Focus our attention on our breathing - this will give control over our thoughts. Then we become aware whether thoughts are moving or not. Fix on this one-pointedly. We may do this continuously, but there exist a number of other methods. However, do not become distracted. If we are distracted, then it does not matter whether or not thoughts arise. Before doing any practice we should reflect on the Refuge and the Bodhichitta - on having trust in the Triratna. The Triratna has power and knowledge. They can help us. Also compassion is very important. We must keep this as part of our meditation. Then our meditation will remain one-pointed fixation of awareness.

But our meditation can become afflicted with drowsiness (cbying-ba), with dullness (rmug-pa), or with agitation (rgod-pa). When we meditate, sometimes the object is clear and sharp, and then we should continue as long as possible. But if we lose clarity and energy, this is drowsiness. Then shake our body and get up for a short while. Do some breathing and do not fixate on the object. Then the sharpness will return. We can also use smooth breathing and yantra for this.

Or dullness (rmug-pa) may arise - the object is not clear but dull, yet our mind is still aware, unlike the situation with drowsiness. Shake the body and change position. Breathe strongly and get some fresh air. We can also use the rough breathing described above. But we have to check our own condition and our meditation. No one else can do that for us. Therefore it is better to practice in high places where we get more fresh clean air.

Agitation (rgod-pa) is of two types. With the first type, the thoughts come very smoothly, they just come and go. This may be difficult to recognize. But if we continue in this subtle or subliminal agitation, it will definitely come to disturb us. Then with the second type, there exists a rough agitation and this is easy to recognize. Eating better food will help us calm down. Also doing breathing and changing our position. Only we can be the judge.

If we practice for a time, the Natural State will become familiar and stable. It does not matter what object we fixate upon. Thereafter the signs will arise, such as smoke or mist or mirages. We will see visions. They indicate the beginning of our control of the mind. Then the state becomes more and more stable. Second, our body will have shinjong (shin sbyong) - it will not feel any difficulties, but will feel very comfortable. Third, the

mind will no longer experience suffering. Everything will be fine and easy - blissful.

There exist several methods for keeping in the state continuously. We can go on for years without distraction. This is zhine or śamatha. This will also help our karunā or compassion - spontaneously we will want to help others and relieve their suffering. Karunā is blended with our śamatha. Then together with this śamatha or calm state there comesvipaśyanā or higher insight. According to the Sūtra system, this unification of śamatha andvipaśyanā this unification of śamatha and vipaśyanā occurs on the second path, the path of application (sbyor lam). But according to the Tantra system, it occurs in the Kyerim (bskyed-rim) or Generation Process. For the practice of the visualizations for the Generation Process, śamatha or a calm state of concentration of mind is the basic requirement, but here it is not necessary to practice śamatha and vipaśyanā separately as is done in the Sūtra system. Rather, a visualization process which combines the calm state (śamatha) with higher insight (vipaśyanā) is what is required for any tantric practice. Then we have to experience of shinjong (shin tu sbyong-ba) - the feeling of comfortableness and ease. We feel that there exist no problems. Śamatha or zhine is the first step in controlling the mind. Then we come tovipaśyanā or lhagthong (lhag-mthong), we have a choice regarding what movements of thought or speech or body we may integrate with our state of calm. According to the Sūtra system, we should first integrate karunā (compassion) into our śamatha. In the Tantra system we have visualization or kyerim.

The result of our mastering this state of calm and concentration is that we may be reborn in a body of light in the Rūpadhātu or Form World. The four dhyanas or levels of concentration correspond to the seventeen places of the Rupadhatu. This is not just a pious story - meditation can create concrete results when we practice. For example, there is the story of the Bonpo yogi Phuntsok Tsultrin (phun-tsogs tshul-khrims) who lived for four years in a cave without any food or water. Tibetan hunters came there and found him in a state of suspended animation, ('gog-pa). They tried to awaken him and then carried him to the Chinese police who put him in prison and gave him no food for seven days. He did not change at all. When they tried to force feed him, he became sick. So they let him go after sixteen days imprisonment. He was a Dzogchen practitioner and before the Cultural Revolution he was a monk. He died in 1987. This is something very concrete.

And another example: The monastic lineage of the Bonpos began in the time of the Buddha Tonpa Shenrab. But this lineage was broken at the time of the persecution of the Bonpos by the Tibetan king Drigum Tsanpo (gri-gum btsan-po) in 683 BC. From then on until the 10th century CE there were no Bonpo monks. Only one monk escaped the persecution and he retired to a cave in Kham (eastern Tibet) and remained there in a condition of suspended animation until the 10 century CE. Then a Mongolian man

who was tending his horses nearby came into the cave and saw a man who looked like a monk, but his hair had grown down to the ground in coils. The Mongol awoke the monk. During all these centuries, his Namshe (rnam-shes) remained in his body, but since all of its life processes had been in suspension, his body did not decay. From this monk the Mongol received the monastic vows and he received the name of Tribar Tsultrim. That monk was named Muzi Tsultrim and this event occurred in 888 CE. Similarly, one may practice Chudlen, (bcud-len) which keeps the mind under control and prolongs life.

If we practice consistently, we will realize Ngonshe (mngon-shes) or the clairvoyant powers. Even if we just practice ordinary śamatha, as the Hindus and others do, we will realize these powers. But this clairvoyance is limited, whereas in Tantra and Dzogchen, the clairvoyant powers will be very vast. We will also develop clairaudience. This is the result of purification and of śamatha and we attain these clairvoyant powers on the part of application (sbyor lam) which is subsequent to the first path known as the path of accumulation (tshogs lam). Then when we attain the third path, the path of vision (mthong lam), we will be able to emanate apparitional forms from our body and produce other psychokinetic effects (rdzu 'phrul). For example, one disciple of Tonpa Shenrab, who was practicing the Mahāyāna, went to a cave in order to meditate. One day he wanted to visit Tonpa Shenrab and invite him to his cave, so he needed to send a messenger. Thus he emanated the forms of 25 monks and sent five of them as messengers with the invitation. Then other 20 monks remained behind to make preparations. This is an example of riddhipāda (rdzu 'phrul rkyang) or psychokinetic power. By means of the practice of Tantra, even more powerful siddhis may be realized, for Tantra does not place the limitations on practice that Sutra does. For example, at the lake of Da-rog there lived in a cave a yogi by the name of Sad-ne-gau. The sheep of a shepherd came to graze near his cave. One day the yogi gave something from his Ganapūjā to the shepherd. The next day, receiving some wages from his employer, the shepherds brought some supplies to the yogi's cave. Looking inside, he saw a Siddha with a bow and arrow performing Ganapūjā together with the yogi. Looking up at the shepherd, the Siddha took aim with his bow and arrow and shot him. Thereafter he was unconscious for three days, but when the shepherd awoke, he had realized the Natural State. This Sad-ne-gau was one of the masters in the Zhang-zhung lineage for the Dzogchen teachings.

## 4.9 BARDO TEACHINGS

The dream practice has been discussed above. Then during the time of the Bardo after death, we will remember what we have learned in the Dzogchen teachings that relate to the waking state and to the dream state. The purpose of doing dream practice is so that we can use this knowledge at

the time of the Bardo. Moreover, the process of falling asleep and dreaming is very similar to the process of dying and finding ourselves in the Bardo. The experience of falling asleep is like the Bardo of Dying ('chi-kha-'ibar-do) and the dream state is like the Bardo of Existence (srid-pa'i bar-do). Also, when we fall asleep, we have a momentary experience of the Clear Light ('od gsal) whether we are aware of this or not, and this corresponds to the Bardo of the Clear Light ('od gsal bar-do). This experience occurs before the onset of dreaming. Thus dream practice is very important.

Our physical body may be lying on the bed, but in our dreams we possess a mind-made dream body and we can go about this to different places just as we do in the daytime. But through the practice given above we will come to recognize our dreams as dreams while we are still asleep. When we are aware inside our dreams, then we can do many dream practices. We can change the dream and emanate many different forms. We can change our own body and manifest as our Yidam or meditation deity.

This is very important in Tantric practice. Then, when we find ourselves in the Bardo, we will be able to practice and to transform ourselves into our Yidam because we have already done so in dreams. And while we are in the Bardo, we will come to recognize that it is the Bardo, just as was the case in our dreams. In our dreams, as well as in the Bardo, we can go into the Natural State - thoughts will not be able to stop this. So this is why we do the dream practice as a preparation for the Bardo.

When lying down, in order to help control our dreams and remain in the Natural State, with the right hand press on the channel on the left side of the neck. We can do this if there is difficulty in controlling dreams. But do not do this too much. And when we awaken, remain awhile as if we were still sleeping and try to be in the Natural State.

If we do the practices, but do not realize enlightenment in this lifetime, then it is necessary to do the practice of Phowa or the transference of consciousness. Not much is said here in the text about Phowa, so see elsewhere where it is explained more extensively, such as in the A-khrid text.

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# Chapter 5

## OCCULT CHRONOLOGY ACCORDING TO THE BONPO TANTRAS

According to the prophecies, some 1002 Buddhas will appear on earth during this Bhadrakalpa or "auspicious aeon." Of the Buddhas who appeared in Central Asia in ancient times, Tonpa Shenrab was the eighth.

At the beginning of the Kalpa, in the age called the Satya Yuga (rdzogs-l丹), when humans had attained a life-span of 100,000 years, the Buddha known as Tonpa Nangwa Rangjung Thugje (ston-pa snang-ba rang-byung thugs-rje) appeared. He was the first in this cycle.

In the second age, the Tretā Yuga (gsum-l丹), when human beings lived 80,000 years, the Buddha known as Tonpa Khorwa Kundren (ston-pa 'khor-ba kun-'dren) appeared. And when human beings lived for 60,000 years, the Buddha known as Tonpa Kunshe Nyonmong Dugsek (ston-pa kun-shes nyon-mongs dug-sreg) appeared. Thus two Buddhas appeared in this second age.

In the third age, the Dvapara Yugā (gnyis-l丹), when human beings lived for 40,000 years, the Buddha known as Tonpa Legpar Tsadmed Thugje (ston-pa legs-par tshad-med thugs-rje) appeared. When human beings lived 20,000 years, the Buddha known as Tonpa Thamchad Khyenzig (ston-pa thams-chad mkhyen-gzigs) appeared. When human beings lived for 10,000 years, the Buddha known as Tonpa Trigyal Khugpa (ston-pa khri-rgyal khug-pa) appeared. And when humans lived until 1000 years, the Buddha known as Tonpa Togyal Yekhyen (ston-pa gto-rgyal ye-mkhyen) appeared. Thus in this third age four Buddhas appeared.

Now in the final age, this degenerate era called the Kali Yuga, when human beings live barely to 100 years, the Buddha known as Tonpa Shenrab Miwo (ston-pa gshen-rab mi-bo) appeared. And in this same age, at some time in the future, a Buddha who is known as Tonpa Thangma Medron (ston-pa thang-ma me-sgron) will appear. The names of all the 1002 Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa (bskal bzang) will be found in the kLong-rgyas rite recited

at every Bonpo funeral ceremony.

The Lord Tonpa Shenrab appeared on earth when the human lifespan had declined to a mere 100 years. In his previous life he had been one of three brothers born in a heaven world among the stars. The eldest brother, Dagpa (dag-pa, purity) was the first among these brothers to descend to earth and incarnate among human beings as the Buddha of the past age Togyal Yekhyen. The second brother Salwa (gsal-ba, clarity) took up incarnation among humanity as the Buddha of the present age Tonpa Shenrab. The youngest brother, Shepa, (shes-pa, knowledge) will be the Buddha of the future Thangma Medron, otherwise known as Maitreya. When, in his previous existence in the star world of Sidpa Yesang (srid-pa ye-sangs), Tonpa Shenrab was a prince of this star race and as Chimed Tsugphud ('chi-med gtsug-phud) he revealed the teachings of Tantra and Dzogchen to the sage Sangwa Dupa (sang-ba 'dus-pa, Skt. Guhyasamāja) who later incarnated on earth among humanity on Northern India as Prince Siddhārtha Gautama of the Śākyā tribe, who subsequently became known as Śākyamuni Buddha.

Descending from the heavens to earth, Tonpa Shenrab was reborn among the dMu-shen (dmu-gshen) that race of celestial origin which had mated with human beings and became the ancestors to various dynasties of kings in Central Asia. Tonpa Shenrab was born in the country of Olmo Lung-ring, otherwise known as Shambala, in the city of Yangpachan. Shambala was located in Central Asia or Tazig (stag-gzig) which lies to the west of modern day Tibet. It was from Tazig in prehistoric times that the Bon teachings were first brought to Zhang-zhung, the country around Mount KaiJash, and later to Tibet, India, and China. According to the traditional chronology, Tonpa Shenrab was born some 18,000 years ago in the year 16,016 BC. He lived on earth for some 8200 years and passed into Nirvāna in the year 7816 BC.

According to the same chronology, the first king of Central Tibet, Nyatri Tsanpo (gnya'-khri btsan-po), was born in the year 1136 BC. At that time the kings of the Jyaruchan dynasty (by-ru-can), "those of the horned bird or garuda" ruled from the country of Zhang-shung in the ancient capital of Khyung-lung, "the garuda valley". In 1076 the Master of Wisdom Manjuśrī, known in the Bonpo tradition as Mawe Senge (smra-ba'i seng-ge), taught astrology and geomancy on the sacred mountain of Wu T'ai Shan in Northern China. In 1074 BC Mutri Tsanpo (mu-khri btsan-po), the second king of Tibet was born. The Bon teaching was first established in Tibet in the reign of his father Nyatri Tsanpo, who, according to tradition, descended from the sky. Later Buddhist tradition made it out that he had come across the Himalayas from India and belonged to the Śākyā tribe. Never the less, this king received the teachings of the Chipung cycle of Tantras (spyi-spungs skor) which Sangwa Dupa had revealed in Tazig. Practicing these Tantras with his consort, the king attained liberation.

In 960 BC Śākyamuni Buddha, the reincarnation of the sage Sangwa Dupa (Guhyasamāja), was born in Northern India (present day Nepal) and in 926 BC he first turned the Wheel of the Dharma at the Deer Park near

Varanasi. The Zhang-zhung prince Dranpa Namkha (dran-pa nam-mkha) was born in 914 BC at Kyung-lung in Zhang-zhung. He is the source of many teachings and commentaries found in the Bonpo tradition and was the greatest Dzogchen master of his time. He should not be confused with the Tibetan Dranpa Namkha who lived in the eighth century of our era and who became a disciple of the Guru Padmasambhava. That later Dranpa Namkha was simultaneously a Bonpo and a Buddhist.

The twin sons of this earlier Zhang-zhung prince, Tsewang Rigdzin (tshe-dbang rig-'dzin) and Padma Thongdrol (padma mthong-grol), were born in 888 BC. The latter later appeared in Uddiyāna and in India as the great Tantric master Padmasambhava, according to the account found in the Rig'dzin 'dus-pa. In the year 880 BC the Buddha Śākyamuni went to the country of Shambala and subsequently revealed the Kālachakra Tantra at the great Stupa of Dhyakataka in South India. And in the same year he manifested his Parinirvāna. In 876 BC Padmasambhava was found by king Indrabodhi inside of a lotus blossom in the Dhanakośa lake in the country of Uddiyāna.

Then in the year 683 BC the seventh king of Tibet, Drigum Tsanpo (gri-gumbtsan-po) inaugurated a persecution of Bon, expelling all Bonpo practitioners from his kingdom, fearing that they were becoming too powerful and threaten his rule. Meeting in a secret cave in Western Tibet, at the urging of Prince Dranpa Namkha, the Bonpos decided to conceal their books as Terma or hidden treasure texts at different sites in Tibet. Many of these Terma texts were rediscovered long later, principally in the tenth and eleventh centuries of our own era. In 680 BC the evil king Drigum Tsanpo was slain by his own minister Lo-ngam who tricked him into cutting his own dmu-thag. This dmu-thag was a luminous cord of rainbow light with its lower end attached to the crown of the king's head and the upper end extending into the heavens. Each of the ancient kings of the dMu-shen race possessed such a pathway of rainbow light which directly linked them to their celestial homeland among the stars. At the time of each king's death, his physical body dissolved into pure radiant energy and as light his consciousness returned along this rainbow pathway to the world of the celestial origin of his race. But now that Drigum's dmu'thag had been severed and he could not return to the heavens. Thus his corpse remained on the earth. Thereafter, the kings of Tibet required tombs for their bodies and funerary rites, such as 'dur, in order to allay their restless spirits before they proceeded to their next rebirth. In 667 BC prince Pude Gungyal (spu-lde gung-rgyal), the son of the slain king Drigum Tsanpo, overthrew Lo-ngam and seized the throne. Since there was no one in the country who knew how to perform funeral rites for his deceased father, he invited Bonpo experts from Zhang-zhung, Drusha (Gilgit), and Kache (Kashmir) to do so. This led to the re-establishment of Bon in Tibet and its patronage by the Yarlung kings of Central Tibet. And in 552 BC the Bonpo master Nyachen Lishu Tag-ring (sny-a-chen li-shu stag-ring) came from Tazig to Tibet, bringing with him some ten thousand Bon

texts.

Coming to our own era, in 254 CE the Tibetan king Lhathothori was born. He has the first direct contact with Indian Buddhism, but he did not understand the import of the Buddhist texts which were given to him by some itinerant monks from Khotan. In 569 CE Songtsan Gampo (srong-btsan sgam-po), the first Buddhist king of Tibet, was born. His father, Namri Tsanpo (gnam-ri btsan-po), had established the hegemony of the Yarlung dynasty, thus laying the foundation for the Tibetan empire. Previously Tibet had been subordinate to the Zhang-zhung kingdom in Western Tibet, now ruled by Ligmingya (lig-mi-rgya) dynasty. Through treachery, Songtsan Gampo had the Zhang-zhung king assassinated somewhere to the east of mount Kailash. Marrying a Buddhist princess from China and Nepal, this king built the first Indian Buddhist temples at Rasa, later known as Lhasa. But it was not until the next century that the Tibetan king Tisong Detsan (khri-srong lde'u-btsan) in 738 CE established the first Indian Buddhist monastery in Tibet at Samye and invited the scholar-monk Śāntirakshita and the Tantric master Padmasnmbhava to Tibet from India. Wrongly advised, this king inaugurated the second persecution of the Bon teachings in Tibet. The third persecution was that brought about by the Red Guards following the Chinese invasion and conquest of Tibet in this century. Again as the result of treachery, the last king of Zhang-zhung, also named Ligmingya, was killed in ambush while on route to the east from his castle at the Dong-ra lake in Western Tibet.

However, at the urging of the widowed Zhang-zhung queen, the Dzogchen master Gyerpung Nangzher Lodpo (gyer-spungs snang-bzher lod-po) subdued the king with his magic and so the king exempted from proscription the Dzogchen teachings now known as the Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud, "the oral tradition from the land of Zhang-zhung." For this reason these Zhang-zhung teachings remained a continuous tradition (bka'-ma) from the eighth century until the present day and were never concealed as Terma.

This partial chronology was taken from the *bsTan rtsis*, "the Chronology of the Bon teachings", composed in 1842 by the Abbot of Manri Monastery in Central Tibet, Nyima Tenzin (b. 1813)

-Vajranātha  
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