

The Third Dzogchen Rinpoche

Great Perfection

Volume II: Separation and Breakthrough



Foreword by Dzogchen Ponlop

Translated by Cortland Dahl

GREAT PERFECTION

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by the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche
Foreword by The Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche
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Restriction: This text is to be read only by those who have completed the preliminary practices and received pointing out instructions from a qualified lineage holder.

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Foreword

ALL OF THE BUDDHA'S teachings are designed to free us from suffering. There are, however, many ways to arrive at this point of fruition. What, then, is the difference between them? Which path is the highest and best? The difference between the various paths lies in the methods they utilize, how long the journey takes, and how difficult it is. From one point of view, the most profound path is simply the one that works best, the one that makes the greatest impact on our minds. Generally speaking, however, it is in the Great Perfection that we find the pinnacle of all the Buddha's teachings. These profound instructions, known as Atiyoga or Dzogchen, bring the practitioner swiftly and effortlessly to liberation, to the realization of primordial buddhahood.

To access the incomparable path of the Great Perfection, we begin our journey with the process of empowerment. The most important empowerment in this tradition is called the *empowerment of awareness*, in which one is empowered into the display or expression of *rigpa*—the play of basic awareness. This empowerment must be received without effort. Whenever we think, “I want to get it right!” that very effort becomes an obstruction. When we relax naturally, however, when we are totally open to inconceivable dimensions of experience, we have a genuine opportunity to receive the blessings of the lineage and recognize the reality that is being pointed out to us.

The Great Perfection must be entered with a sense of total openness and genuine devotion: devotion to the primordial state of buddhahood; devotion to the inconceivable truth; devotion to our own awakened heart; and devotion to the instructions and lineage masters who show us this reality and symbolize its realization. Our masters and the instructions they give us can be likened to a mirror. What is reflected back to us is our own

face, the true nature of mind. Devotion is like light that illuminates the space around us so we can see this reflection. What we see in this mirror, however, is not something outside of us—it is our own genuine heart of enlightenment.

THE THREE CLASSES

OF THE GREAT PERFECTION

There are three categories of instructions within the Great Perfection: the Outer Mind Class, the Inner Space Class, and the Secret Key Instruction Class. These three classes are progressive stages of meditation through which we may realize absolute reality. The breakthrough of original purity and the direct leap of spontaneous presence, two stages that are often regarded as the main practices of Dzogchen, are found in the Key Instruction Class. The teachings found in this book pertain primarily to the first of these practices, the breakthrough of original purity.

MIND CLASS

According to the view of the Mind Class, all phenomena of samsara and nirvana, all appearances, are the display or creative energy of the true nature of mind. Everything arises from this nature and everything dissolves back into it. For this reason, it is said that we should see all phenomena as dreamlike. We normally fixate on subject and object as being solid and real, clinging to the idea that they truly exist. This constitutes our basic experience of duality.

To transcend this fixation, we train in the Mind Class. In this training, we view appearances, in all their variety, as the play of the mind, like images reflected in a mirror. We see that they do not have any true or genuine existence of their own, that they are all simply the wondrous display of the mind itself. The impure appearances of samsara are the deluded appearances of our own minds, just as the pure appearances of nirvana are the undeluded appearances of the mind.

This is the basic idea of the Mind Class: we must break through our conceptual clinging to the true existence of samsara and nirvana, to the duality of subject and object. Since all appearances are the play of self-occurring, spontaneously existing wisdom, in truth there is no duality

to overcome; there is no “bad” samsara and no “good” nirvana that truly exist. All appearances are, therefore, perfectly complete and abide in a great expanse free from all extremes.

The Mind Class shows us that things do not exist in any true, ultimate sense. They appear, yet are empty at the same time; they are appearance-emptiness. When we gain certainty in this view, we are freed from the idea that there is something to be abandoned. We usually think that in order to achieve enlightenment, to get to the state of freedom, we must abandon samsara. This is transformed through the view and practice of the Mind Class. Because appearances are the expression of mind, and mind’s nature is original wisdom, meditation in the Mind Class consists of resting naturally in appearance-emptiness, the dharmakaya.

SPACE CLASS

While the Mind Class emphasizes clarity, the apparent aspect of phenomena, the Space Class emphasizes emptiness, self-liberation, and purity. Whatever manifests as the play of mind’s true nature is primordially free and naturally pure. Therefore, regardless of how it may appear, it is already liberated; its appearance and liberation are simultaneous. Moreover, whatever appears does not waver from the expanse of the true nature of mind.

If we become attached to the view of the Mind Class, the great expanse free from all extremes, in which there is nothing to be abandoned, we need to train in the view and practice of the Space Class. To transcend any subtle clinging to the nondual state, the view of the Space Class teaches that there has never been any existence or nonexistence. The nature of all phenomena is primordial freedom, and it has been right from the beginning.

This great space of original wisdom, personified as the female buddha *Samantabhadri*, is the vast expanse of awareness, or rigpa, from which all appearances manifest. At this point, appearances are not even seen as the play or energy of the mind. From the viewpoint of the expanse, they have no true existence from the very moment they appear. Appearances are primordially liberated—free from all concepts of existence, nonexistence, both, and neither.

The word “space,” here, is an experiential term. It means more than our ordinary concept of space. In this context, it has the sense of being in the midst of space, rather than simply observing it. In other words, it is being

immersed in space; experiencing the quality of space without concepts or any particular point of view. It also conveys a sense of union, meaning the union of space and awareness that we experience fully, without any subject-object duality.

In the Mind Class, we uncover our clinging to dualistic existence, and then apply the view of nonexistence, or nonduality, as the antidote to that clinging. We adopt the view that everything is in the great expanse of freedom from all extremes. We may, however, become attached to the view that appearances do not truly exist, as taught in the Mind Class. To go further, we then utilize the instructions of the Space Class to understand that there is not and never has been any such thing as nonexistence either.

The fact that this view is used as an antidote does not alter the true nature of reality; it does not make any difference. Why? Because this very effort is based on another form of confusion. This is like being bitten by a poisonous snake in a dream. If you don't know you're dreaming, you may race to a hospital for an antidote to the poison, then take it and recover. Nevertheless, there never was a snake, nor a snake bite; it was all just a dream. You were never in that situation to begin with, so why would you need an antidote? Even the antidote in the dream never existed.

In the same way, all our efforts to remedy clinging to existence are like make-believe from the point of view of absolute reality. We are still confused when we think an antidote is necessary, when we believe it will change us in some way. In other words, we are not awake yet.

When meditating on the Space Class, there is nothing to do. We just rest and relax freely, without trying to alter the phenomena that are dancing in front of our senses.

KEY INSTRUCTION CLASS

In the first two classes, we looked at the nature of mind and phenomena from two perspectives: from the angle of appearance and from the angle of emptiness. Said differently, in the Mind Class, radiant, luminous wisdom is emphasized, while in the Space Class the focal point is the vast expanse of reality itself. In reality, however, the nature of mind goes beyond both. The view of the Secret Key Instruction Class shows the true nature of mind to be the perfect union of appearance and emptiness.

In the Key Instruction Section, the true nature of mind is introduced directly. There are two main classifications of practice in this class: the

breakthrough of original purity and the direct leap into spontaneous presence. In the breakthrough stage, every form of conceptual fixation is cut through right on the spot. This approach is geared towards lazy individuals, who can use this path to gain liberation effortlessly. The direct leap enhances the realization achieved in the breakthrough stage. This practice is taught for diligent individuals to gain liberation through effort.

These three classes are traditionally likened to the body, heart, and blood: the Outer Mind Class is likened to the body, the Inner Space Class to the heart, and the Secret Key Instructions to the heart's very essence—the life-force or blood that runs through it. When the word "secret" is used in reference to the Key Instruction Class, it is referring to what is most essential; to what is, in some sense, hidden from us. Although we don't see the blood in our heart, without it our body would not function. Our body, in contrast, we see all the time, while our heart and the blood flowing through it are increasingly hidden from view.

In the same way, the ordinary, external appearances of the world are what is most accessible to us and what we are primarily conscious of. That is why the Mind Class, which deals with appearances, is called the "outer" section. The Space Class, on the other hand, works with mind's internal phenomena—perceptions, thoughts, and emotions—which are less visible. Therefore, these teachings are regarded as "inner." Finally, what is most hidden, and most needed, are the key instructions. These are called "secret" because they are so profound, they can only be pointed out directly. They are also called "pith" instructions, as they can destroy a great amount of confusion with just a few words. These key instructions convey the essential points of practice, thereby enabling us to realize the nature of our own mind—inseparable awareness-emptiness. They reveal what is hidden by pointing out this nature directly, so that we can see it for ourselves.

With the Key Instruction Class, there is a sense of fruition, a sense of reaching the point of naked truth. Like shooting an arrow and hitting the bull's-eye, at this stage we are no longer just preparing to shoot, nor are we hitting the outer rim of the target. Our arrow has struck its mark. Here we arrive directly at the essential point, the vajra spot where there is no need for further investigation or discursive analysis.

These instructions are said to be superior, and perhaps more direct, than those in the previous two classes. The reason for this is that the Mind and Space Classes still involve some degree of conceptual analysis and fixation regarding appearance and emptiness. In contrast, the Key Instruction

Class goes beyond concept altogether—there is simply the self-expression of the way things truly are.

The View of the Key Instruction Class

In the Key Instruction Class, the view of original wisdom involves three stages and three corresponding pointing out instructions: 1) pointing out the wisdom of the originally pure essence, 2) pointing out the wisdom of the spontaneously present nature, and 3) pointing out the wisdom of their inseparable union.

The Originally Pure Essence

The first pointing out instruction explains that the essence of mind is originally pure wisdom. The mind's fundamental state is primordially pure; it has been this way from the very beginning. In this very moment, the mind is completely pure in essence, yet this originally pure essence is not real or truly existent. It is primordially empty.

This essence cannot be seen by conceptual mind. Nevertheless, while it cannot be observed in a dualistic manner, there is a seeing that is free of duality. Furthermore, this originally pure essence cannot be fully expressed in words, illustrated with examples, or understood by thoughts. It cannot be conceived of by the dualistic mind. As it is naturally empty, its emptiness does not have to be created by the conceptual mind.

Nothing called "samsara" or "nirvana" can be found apart from the movements of conceptual, dualistic mind. Each of these is imputed in relation to the other. It follows, then, that samsara is not something that needs to be abandoned, nor is nirvana something to hope for or adopt. In this way, one lets go of the idea that there are real things to be relinquished or adopted.

The Spontaneously Present Nature

The second pointing out instruction teaches spontaneous presence, showing how the nature of mind is self-manifest, self-occurring awareness. While the essence of mind is empty, that emptiness is not a vacuous state. It has a vivid, luminous, and clear quality. That is spontaneously present wisdom.

This wisdom is inherently present within the nature of mind; it has been from the very beginning. It is present at all times, even when we think it is absent. The intensity of this luminosity can be so strong that it has a blinding effect, like looking directly into the sun. When we can't see it, it

is not because there is no light, but because it is too bright. This is similar to the experiences of deep sleep and death, when we lose consciousness or feel as though we are falling into darkness. Actually, these experiences are taught to be times when we are resting in mind's luminosity, or dense clarity, though we may not recognize what is happening.

Spontaneously present wisdom has an expressive energy that is unceasing and all pervasive. Its energy radiates in all directions; like the sun's rays filling the entire sky with light, this luminous wisdom pervades all of samsara and nirvana, abiding inseparably with all phenomena. It is the life force of everything. If we recognize this pure, luminous nature of mind, then we have a direct experience of self-manifest, self-aware wisdom. In this experience there is no samsara and no nirvana. If we do not recognize it, however, we have a direct experience of confused appearances.

Inseparability

The third pointing out instruction shows the true nature of mind to be the inseparable union of luminosity and emptiness, or awareness and emptiness. The wisdom of original purity and the luminous nature of mind are inseparable, just like a candle flame and its light. The candle flame's light cannot be separated from the flame itself, just as the candle flame cannot be separated from its light. These two are not different, yet neither are they the same. In the same way, the mind's originally pure essence and spontaneously present nature are neither the same, nor different. These two qualities transcend being identifiable as either single or multiple. They are in a state of primordial union.

Emptiness and awareness are always experienced together. If we contemplate emptiness and enter into that experience as much as possible, there will still be an aspect of clarity or luminosity in our contemplation. Similarly, no matter how deeply we meditate on luminosity, the essence of that experience will be beyond identification and devoid of inherent existence.

The true nature of mind is unconditioned and uncompounded. Primordially and spontaneously present, this nature cannot be seen conventionally or perceived by the dualistic mind. How, then, can we understand it? How can we know it? This view cannot be understood based on someone else's explanations; it can only be known through direct experience. In other words, it is through putting it into practice and experiencing it for ourselves that we can come to understand the mind's true nature.

The nature of mind that is determined by the profound pointing out instructions of the Key Instruction Class is none other than this very mind of the present moment. If you look anywhere else, you will not find it. It is the empty appearance of this very moment, the thought of this very moment, the mental afflictions of this very moment, the direct perception of this moment. The mind changes continually, so we must look at its nature again and again. When we can rest directly in the present moment of mind, with full confidence that liberation is present within whatever arises, we will come to recognize the complete and perfect reality of our own essence.

The Breakthrough and Direct Leap

The Key Instruction Class itself contains various divisions, the most profound of which is the Nyingtik, or Heart Essence, of the Great Perfection. In the Heart Essence, the first stage of practice is called the *breakthrough of original purity*, or *kadak trekchö*. *Kadak* is original purity, meaning the primordially pure nature of awareness. Breakthrough refers to the process of resolving the nature of emptiness by breaking past or cutting through all levels of conceptuality, even the experiences of meditation.

The second stage of practice is called the *direct leap into spontaneous presence*, or *lhundrup tögal*. This term conveys the sense of leaping straight into the immediate experience of original wisdom. Here, the quality of vivid clarity is emphasized, the spontaneously present, luminous nature of mind. This phase is likened to crossing over a mountain pass directly, rather than climbing in a more methodic, step-by-step manner.

The practice of breakthrough is essential when it comes to realizing the originally pure nature of mind and phenomena. This nature is emptiness, the basic state of the Great Perfection. For this reason, a thorough grounding in the view of Madhyamaka can be a great help when receiving the instructions on breakthrough. With the correct view of emptiness, one can meditate effectively on original purity. When supported by the Madhyamaka view and the instructions of breakthrough, the stage of the direct leap becomes very powerful and fruitful. On the other hand, if the practitioner has not thoroughly trained in breakthrough and completed this practice properly, the meditations of the direct leap will be difficult to access.

The practices of breakthrough and direct leap go hand in hand. The practice of breakthrough emphasizes the view and emptiness, while the direct

leap focuses more on meditation and luminosity. Together, these two form a complete practice. Breakthrough, furthermore, must precede the direct leap. There is a saying in Tibet that if one doesn't breakthrough first, one won't be able to leap directly into anything. For this reason, breakthrough is very important, especially at the beginning.

These main practices contain many stages, meditations, and instructions. To progress through all of these steps in the correct sequence we must rely on the instructions of our own guru. Practicing each individual step takes a great deal of time and there are various pointing out instructions given at each phase. To benefit from the teachings, the pointing out instructions need to penetrate our minds. For this reason, simply hearing a cursory explanation of the teachings is not enough.

THE EXCELLENT CHARIOT

This book contains the second half of Dzogchen Ngetön Tenzin Zangpo's *The Excellent Chariot*, which issues from the unbroken lineage of the Great Perfection. As one of the most beautiful and lucid explanations of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, the Khandro Nyingtik, it provides invaluable guidance for practitioners of the Dzogchen teachings. Its instructions are at once both profound and accessible. For centuries, *The Excellent Chariot* has served as one of the main instruction manuals used at Dzogchen Monastery in eastern Tibet.

Heart Essence practice begins with the outer and inner preliminary practices. These meditations are taught extensively in the first half of *The Excellent Chariot*, which is contained in *Great Perfection: Outer and Inner Preliminaries*. Next are the unique Heart Essence preliminary practices: the outer and inner separation, the preliminaries of the three gates, resting naturally, and revitalization. Together, these outer, inner, and unique preliminary practices comprise the first stage of Heart Essence practice. This volume contains detailed instructions on the last of these three stages—the unique Heart Essence preliminary practices.

The second stage consists of the main Heart Essence practices: breakthrough and direct leap. Of these two, *The Excellent Chariot* focuses on the breakthrough stage. In the translation that follows, Ngetön Tenzin Zangpo gives wonderfully clear and precise instructions on this profound practice. For teachings on the direct leap, he advises the reader to consult other

important works on the Great Perfection, such as those by Longchenpa and Terdak Lingpa.

The Heart Essence teachings are considered the most profound and secret instructions in the Nyingma lineage. Texts such as *The Excellent Chariot* are not transmitted lightly or often. As Great Perfection instruction manuals are essentially a supplement to the oral lineage, they should be read only by those who have completed the outer and inner preliminary practices and received pointing out instructions from a qualified teacher. For this reason, we have published this volume in a restricted format.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As this book contains a very important set of instructions from the Great Perfection lineage, I would like to express my profound appreciation and gratitude to my student Cortland Dahl (Karma Tsultrim Shönu) for his exemplary and dedicated efforts in translating this book into English. He not only worked diligently on the translation, but also prepared himself well by receiving the transmissions and explanations of the text. Furthermore, he consulted both myself and others for clarifications throughout the project. I would also like to thank David Lunsford and the Bodhi Foundation, whose great generosity made this work possible.

May the merit of this effort bring peace and harmony to the hearts of all beings in the world. May the seeds of the dakini's heart essence take root in the heart of this Western land and spread their fragrant blossoms of great wisdom and boundless compassion!

Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche
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Translator's Introduction

THIS VOLUME contains a translation of the second half of *The Excellent Chariot*, a unique Great Perfection practice manual written by the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche. The first half of this manual, published as *Great Perfection: Outer and Inner Preliminaries*, provides background teachings on the Heart Essence lineage, as well as detailed instructions on the preparatory practices of the Great Perfection. Building on these foundational teachings, this volume presents detailed instructions on the unique preliminaries and breakthrough meditation of the Nyingtik, or Heart Essence, of the Great Perfection.

In the Nyingma School, the spiritual journey is framed as a progression through nine spiritual approaches, which are often referred to as “vehicles” or “yanas.” The first three—the Listener Vehicle, Solitary Buddha Vehicle, and Bodhisattva Vehicle—are collectively referred to as the “Sutra Vehicle.” In these approaches, one trains successively in the basic principles of renunciation, interdependence, bodhichitta, and emptiness.

The next six vehicles comprise the “Tantra Vehicle,” or “Vajrayana,” in which a series of increasingly subtle methods are used to speed up the process of spiritual transformation. First are the Three Outer Tantras—Kriya, Charya, and Yoga. In Kriya Tantra, acts of ritual purification and physical austerity are emphasized, while in Charya Tantra ascetic practices are used in tandem with methods designed to bring about a state of meditative concentration. In Yoga Tantra, these acts of asceticism are dropped altogether; the emphasis is solely on the internal process of meditative absorption.

The final three vehicles—Mahayoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga—are known as the Three Inner Tantras. The hallmark of these vehicles is their use of the various development and completion stage yogas. All three of these vehicles utilize these yogas to some degree, yet they vary in terms of emphasis. Mahayoga focuses on the development stage, whereas Anuyoga and Atiyoga both emphasize the completion stage. In Anuyoga, however,

the subtle body practices of the symbolic completion stage take precedence, while in Atiyoga formless completion stage practices receive the most attention. Atiyoga—the final stage of the nine-vehicle journey—is synonymous with the Great Perfection.

The Great Perfection contains many divisions and approaches. Of these, the Heart Essence teachings present the most profound and direct path to spiritual awakening. In contrast to the elaborate philosophies of the sutra tradition, and even the complex development and completion stage practices found in other forms of Buddhist tantra, this approach is grounded in the understanding that the enlightened state is directly accessible each and every moment. Liberation, in other words, is not a goal to attain, but rather an immanent reality that must be recognized. In the Great Perfection there is no need to strive towards some future objective. Enlightenment is here and now.

The following passage from *The Precious Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle* summarizes this approach:

According to the key instructions of the Great Perfection, when it comes to self-occurring wisdom there is no samsara and no nirvana. Hence, wisdom is inherently free; it is beyond being something to embrace or reject. While this Great Perfection does not exist as any *thing* whatsoever, it is unimpeded as the wisdom of universal freedom. It is at once both *originally pure* of faults and *spontaneously present* in terms of its enlightened qualities. This is the ground that one must realize. Once one has come to a decisive understanding of this ground, one meditates on self-occurring wisdom by viewing whatever manifests as the play of reality itself. Meditation, here, does not involve the slightest sense of deliberate concentration. Instead, meditating on this sublime and uninhibited self-liberation is a *nonmeditation*, the natural manifestation of the flow of wisdom.¹

As Longchenpa points out here, there are two main principles in this system. The first is that our own awareness is already pure and pristine, and that it always has been. This fundamental state is termed *original purity*. The only difference between buddhas and ordinary beings is that the former recognize this innate purity, while the latter do not. This pure nature of mind is not a void or blank state, but luminous and filled with the

entire range of enlightened qualities. The mind's luminous nature, moreover, spontaneously manifests to the realized practitioner. This *spontaneous presence* is the second main principle of the Great Perfection.

The principles of original purity and spontaneous presence are actualized through the practices of *trekchö* and *tögal*, respectively, the *breakthrough* and *direct leap*. Together, these two form the core of Heart Essence practice. Longchenpa explains:

In *breakthrough*, one brings naked awareness into one's own experience. On this effortless path, one need not utilize appearances, for liberation occurs all on its own. This *buddhahood without meditation* is geared for lazy individuals, its vital points intended for those of the highest caliber. The *direct leap*, on the other hand, is for those who are more industrious. In this approach, liberation requires effort and one must utilize the appearances of luminosity to purify the corporeal body into a body of light, thereby bringing the attainment of buddhahood in this very life.²

With the view of breakthrough, the guru introduces the student directly to the mind's fundamental nature of original purity. This pure essence does not need to be changed or altered in any way. The practitioner need not strive to purify obscurations, nor work at gathering the two accumulations. On the contrary, such purposeful effort is taught to be a major obstacle on the path of the natural Great Perfection. The only thing to do here, if one can be said to *do* anything, is simply recognize and sustain the flow of pure awareness. For students of the highest caliber, recognition and realization occur simultaneously. In the *Illuminating Lamp of the Copper Lettered*, Vimalamitra writes:

Breakthrough carries the meaning of *immediacy*, indicating that liberation requires no effort and occurs all on its own.³

For those who are not capable of mastering the breakthrough view instantaneously, the meditations of the direct leap may be utilized to speed up the process of realization. In this approach, one uses physical postures and gazes to directly experience the manifestations of reality itself. While this stage does involve working actively with appearance, the

approach here differs significantly from the development and completion stages found in other forms of Buddhist tantra. In the direct leap, meditation is imbued with the breakthrough view. Thus, there are no fabricated visualizations to develop (as is the case in the development stage), nor is there any need to work at bringing the subtle energies into the central channel (as in the symbolic completion stage). For this reason, the practitioner must already have a stable recognition of the nature of mind for the direct leap to be effective. If one is thoroughly grounded in the breakthrough view, the meditations of the direct leap provide a powerful and swift method to bring one's experience of pure awareness to its fullest expression.

— GREAT PERFECTION IN INDIA AND TIBET —

In light of their great power and profundity, the teachings of the Great Perfection have been safeguarded and practiced in secret for ages. In the human realm, the Great Perfection was first practiced in the charnel grounds of India, and later amidst the snowy peaks and barren plains of Tibet.⁴ The texts of the Great Perfection abound in tales of the siddhas and saints who mastered these teachings, many of which are recounted in the translation of *The Excellent Chariot* that follows.

The Great Perfection is not a static body of teachings, but a fluid tradition that has grown and evolved over time. The literary tradition of the Great Perfection began with Garap Dorjé. This master was the first person to commit the 6,400,000 verses of the Great Perfection to writing. Garap Dorjé's student, Manjushrimitra, divided these teachings into the Mind, Space, and Key Instruction Classes. Shri Simha, Manjushrimitra's heart son, then further divided the Key Instruction Class into the Outer, Inner, Secret, and Extremely Secret Unsurpassed Cycles.⁵ This last division, the Extremely Secret Unsurpassed Cycle of the Key Instruction Class, is more commonly referred to as Nyingtik, the "Heart Essence" of the Great Perfection. It is this profound set of teachings that concerns us here.

In its early history, the Heart Essence teachings were practiced and taught by a lineage of remarkable masters. The precise details of the lineage succession vary depending on the source, yet in most accounts a number of important figures emerge. The following passage from *Clarifying the Practice of the Heart Essence* gives a general overview of the Great Per-

fection lineage, starting with the primordial buddhas Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri, and then descending through a series of Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan siddhas:

Glorious Samantabhadra and his female counterpart taught the male and female buddhas of the five sambhogakaya families, as well as the sixth buddha, the great Vajradhara. Vajradhara taught the glorious teacher Vajrasattva, who went on to teach the nirmanakaya buddha Garap Dorjé. This master then taught the vidyadhara of enlightened form, Manjushrimitra, who transmitted the teachings to the vidyadhara of enlightened mind, Shri Simha. Shri Simha taught them to the great vidyadhara Padmakara, the wise Vimalamitra, and the translator Vairochana. These three masters passed the teachings on to King Trisong Deutsen, the dakini Yeshé Tsogyal, Nanam Dorjé Dudjom, and other great treasure revealers and vidyadharas.⁶

Though the individuals listed here figure prominently in most of the Great Perfection's lineage histories, it is important to note that each individual cycle of teachings offers its own distinct presentation. In *The Excellent Chariot*, for example, Garap Dorjé is said to have transmitted the teachings directly to Shri Simha, who then passed them on to Padmasambhava. This is the presentation of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis. The Heart Essence of Vimalamitra, by contrast, states that Garap Dorjé passed on the teachings to Manjushrimitra, and the lineage then descended to Shri Simha, Jnanasutra, and finally to Vimalamitra. These two lineages will be discussed in more detail below.

Three masters brought the Heart Essence teachings to Tibet: the Indian saints Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra, and the Tibetan translator Vairochana. Vairochana's teachings pertain primarily, though not entirely, to the Mind and Space Classes mentioned above.⁷ These teachings have largely lost currency due to the prevalence of the revelatory "treasure" teachings of Padmasambhava, which discuss the Great Perfection almost exclusively in terms of the Heart Essence teachings.⁸

Of these three lineages, the teachings of Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra have been the most widely practiced in Tibet, though early on in the history of the Great Perfection there seems to have been more parity in terms of the influence these three had. In the early days of the Great Per-

fection, the teachings of Vimalamitra were the first to gain prominence. Vimalamitra transmitted these teachings to a few close disciples and later concealed them as treasures for future generations. The lineage then descended to Dangma Lhungyal (tenth-eleventh centuries), who received the transmissions of the oral tradition and also revealed the concealed treasures.

After some time, the influence of these teachings began to wane and the teachings of Padmasambhava began to flourish. In the following passage from the *Precious History of the Treasure*, Padmasambhava shares his predictions concerning the future of the Dzogchen teachings in Tibet with Yeshé Tsogyal:

Lady Tsogyal wrote all this down and then asked, “Should these secret instructions on the Heart Essence be propagated or concealed?”

“The time has not yet come to spread these teachings,” the master responded, “so they should be concealed as treasure . . . After some years the great master Vimalamitra will arrive and the time will have come for his disciples. The Heart Essence teachings will then be spread far and wide. My teachings on the Heart Essence of the Dakinis will appear once the Heart Essence teachings that were translated earlier have entered into a state of decline and are on the verge of disappearing altogether. When the earlier teachings are just about to die out, these instructions will manifest. They will do so quickly and on a vast scale, but only for a short while, like the flame of a butter lamp flaring up before it burns out.”⁹

The Great Perfection teachings of these two masters came to be known as the Early Heart Essence and Later Heart Essence, respectively. Each master passed on his teachings to numerous disciples, and the transmission of the Great Perfection soon blossomed into a diverse range of lineages.

The Great Perfection is rooted in the teachings of the Nyingma School, the most ancient lineage of Buddhist practice in Tibet, yet these teachings have also been widely practiced by many highly regarded masters of Tibet’s other three main lineages. The Dalai Lamas of the Geluk lineage, the Karmapas of the Kagyü tradition, and the Khyentsé incarnations of the Sakya School have all practiced and taught the Great Perfection.¹⁰

Even Milarepa (1052-1135), the great patriarch of the Takpo Kagyü, studied the Great Perfection, though his initial efforts met with failure. More recently, Jamgön Kongtrul (1813-1899) and other lamas of Tibet's nonsectarian Rimé movement advocated the Great Perfection as the pinnacle of the Buddha's teachings. Interestingly, even Tibet's non-Buddhist Bön religion has its own strand of Great Perfection teachings, some of which are nearly identical to those presented in this very book.¹¹

The Great Perfection is also notable for the number of female masters it has produced. Two of the earliest examples are Princess Mandarava and Yeshé Tsogyal. These figures are often mentioned as the spiritual partners of Padmasambhava, yet they were also great masters in their own right. Yeshé Tsogyal in particular played a critical role in transmitting the Great Perfection teachings to Tibet and helping to ensure their preservation for future generations. Later female masters continued to practice, transmit, and teach the Great Perfection, and many were instrumental in maintaining and shaping their respective lineages. One such example is Mingyur Paldrön (1699-1769) of the Mindroling lineage, whose profound writings on the Great Perfection were included by Jamgön Kongtrul in his *Treasury of Precious Treasures*.¹² Remarkable female masters of recent times include Shuksep Lochen Chönyi Sangmo (1865-1953)¹³ and Sera Khandro (1892-1940),¹⁴ two women who trained some of the foremost Great Perfection masters of the twentieth century, including Zhadeu Trulshik Rinpoche (b. 1924) and Chatral Rinpoche Sangyé Dorjé (b. 1913).¹⁵

In the Nyingma School, the vast majority of Great Perfection teachings are contained in revealed treasures, or *terma*. Along with transmitted teachings and pure visions, treasures are one of three primary lineages through which the Nyingma teachings, including those of the Great Perfection, are disseminated. *Transmitted teachings*, or *kama*, are passed on from teacher to student and maintained in an unbroken continuity of study and practice, while *pure vision* teachings, or *dak nang*, can be traced to the visionary encounters between realized masters and enlightened manifestations. Pure visions often result in the composition of new liturgical practices and, occasionally, commentarial literature. Treasures may be either teachings or sacred objects that are hidden by a spiritual teacher for the benefit of future generations. These teachings and objects are later revealed by a reincarnation of the spiritual teacher him or herself, or by a reincarnation of one of the teacher's primary disciples.¹⁶ In Tibet, most treasures were hidden by Padmasambhava and his spiritual partner Yeshé

Tsogyal, though there are numerous examples of this practice occurring in other lineages as well.¹⁷

Over the past millennium, various cycles of treasure teachings have been revealed, only to fade into obscurity decades or centuries later. Others have withstood the test of time and remain influential to this day. Of those that relate to the teachings of Vimalamitra, two of the most important are the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra, which will be discussed below, and the Heart Essence of the Karmapa, which was revealed by the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorjé (1284-1339). More recently, an important treasure cycle was re-revealed in the nineteenth century by Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo (1820-1892), entitled the Heart Essence of Chetsün.¹⁸

Relatively speaking, the number of treasure cycles linked to the teachings of Vimalamitra pales in comparison to the number of cycles associated with Padmasambhava. Padmasambhava's concealed teachings are so numerous, in fact, that the word "terma" has become nearly synonymous with this great Indian siddha. It is hard to single out which of his treasure cycles are most important, but a few deserve special mention. Of the earliest treasure cycles to be revealed, Rigdzin Gödem's (1337-1409) *Unimpeded Wisdom Mind* has been held in high regard since its discovery in the fourteenth century. This cycle is still widely practiced in certain regions, such as Sikkim, and at some of the Nyingma School's most important monasteries, including Dorjé Drak in Central Tibet. Rigdzin Gödem is often mentioned alongside Guru Chöwang and Nyang Ral Nyima Özer as one of the three most important tertöns. Other cycles, such as Mingyur Dorjé's (1645-1667) *Space Dharma* and Longsel Nyingpo's (1625-1692) revelations, have also been integrated into the practice curriculum of some of the Nyingma tradition's most important monastic centers, and have made a lasting impact on the trajectory of Great Perfection thought and practice for this reason.¹⁹ More recently, cycles discovered by the Rimé masters Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo and Chokgyur Dechen Lingpa (1829-1870) have profoundly shaped the Great Perfection tradition, as have the cycles revealed by Dudjom Rinpoche Jikdrel Yeshé Dorjé (1904-1988) and Dilgo Khyentsé Rinpoche (1910-1991) in the twentieth century.²⁰

It is also worth noting that some treasure cycles are considered distillations of the Great Perfection teachings of both Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra. These include some of the most influential treasure revelations, such as Terdak Lingpa's Essence of the Profound Nature of Ati, one of the most important Dzogchen teachings in the Mindroling tradition.

Another example is Jigmé Lingpa's (1729/30-1798) *Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse*, the Longchen Nyingtik. This cycle is now one of the most widely practiced treasure revelations in the Nyingma world, thanks in large part to the extensive body of commentarial literature it spawned. Two of the most well known texts from this lineage are Patrul Chökyi Wangpo's (1808-1887) *Words of My Perfect Teacher* and Jigmé Lingpa's own instruction manual on the Great Perfection, *Supreme Wisdom*.

FOURFOLD HEART ESSENCE

In the fourteenth century, Longchen Rabjam compiled the Nyingma tradition's most famous collection of Great Perfection teachings, the Fourfold Heart Essence. This massive compilation spans thirteen volumes and contains hundreds of individual titles. It is perhaps the most thorough presentation of the Heart Essence teachings ever put down in writing. Over the centuries, the greatest scholars and meditators of the Nyingma School have looked to these sacred texts for guidance on the most profound meditative practices of Vajrayana Buddhism. Later works on the Great Perfection, such as Jigmé Lingpa's renowned *Supreme Wisdom*, draw heavily from its lucid explanations and pith instructions. Its texts are even used as a primary source of information by Tibetan historians.

The Fourfold Heart Essence contains five sections: the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra (Vima Nyingtik), the Heart Essence of the Dakinis (Khandro Nyingtik), the Guru's Quintessence (Lama Yangtik), the Quintessence of the Dakinis (Khandro Yangtik), and the Profound Quintessence (Zabmo Yangtik).²¹ The first two sections contain the Heart Essence teachings of Vimalamitra and Padmasambhava, respectively. The following three sections contain the writings of Longchenpa: The Guru's Quintessence contains his commentaries on Vimalamitra's teachings; the Quintessence of the Dakinis contains his clarifications of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis; and the Profound Quintessence deals with the teachings of both. In the following passage, the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche gives a brief overview of the contents of the Fourfold Heart Essence:

The import of the Three Classes, the Ninefold Expanse, and all the other key instructions of the Great Perfection were condensed by the Kashmiri scholar Vimalamitra and codified in

the Secret Heart Essence, the Sangwa Nyingtik. These teachings came to be known as the vast Heart Essence of Vimalamitra, or Vima Nyingtik. Padmasambhava, the master from Oddiyana, codified the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, or Khandro Nyingtik. His teachings came to be known as the profound Heart Essence of Padma, or Pema Nyingtik. The omniscient Longchenpa then wrote brief clarifications on the first set and more extensive commentaries on the second. The former are collectively referred to as the Quintessential Wish-Fulfilling Jewel, which is also known as the Guru's Quintessence, or Lama Yangtik, and the latter as the Quintessence of the Dakinis, or Khandro Yangtik. All of these teachings were then gathered into one compilation, thus condensing both the transmitted teachings and treasures. This collection is referred to as the Fourfold Heart Essence, the Nyingtik Yabshi.²²

The Fourfold Heart Essence covers a wide range of Buddhist practices. Its two main sections, which contain the teachings of Vimalamitra and Padmasambhava, respectively, each comprise a complete path to liberation. Both cycles contain a series of instructions on the outer, inner, and unique preliminary practices, as well as on the various meditations that make up the main body of tantric practice. As might be expected, the two core Heart Essence practices, breakthrough and direct leap, receive the most attention. Yet though the emphasis is clearly on these two stages, there are also numerous texts that relate to other forms of Vajrayana practice, such as the development and completion stages.

The Fourfold Heart Essence devotes far less attention to the development stage than the completion stage, especially in the teachings of Vimalamitra. Moreover, its few sadhana practices are presented in a style and format that sets them apart from the more complex and lengthy development stage sadhanas of the Mahayoga tradition.²³ The usual sadhana divisions of lama, yidam, and dakini are also absent. Instead, the majority of its ritual practices concern Dorjé Yudrönma, Sokdrup Nakmo, Danglha, and other important Dzogchen Dharma protectors.

In terms of completion stage practice, a diverse range of approaches is represented. The Fourfold Heart Essence includes texts on the practices of yogic heat, luminosity, transference, yogic union, as well as extensive instructions on the various intermediate states, or bardos. Though these

practices are not unique to the Great Perfection, they are often integrated into this path as methods that prepare the student for the fruitional practices of the Heart Essence.

The Fourfold Heart Essence's most outstanding contribution to the Great Perfection tradition is its extensive treatment of the breakthrough and direct leap, the most fundamental practices of the Heart Essence tradition. Longchenpa's collection contains scores of texts that relate to these two stages. These include detailed instructions on the unique Heart Essence preliminary practices, which are covered extensively in the translation of *The Excellent Chariot* that follows, as well as elegant poems and detailed treatises designed to lead the meditator first to a recognition of the *originally pure* nature of mind, and then to an experience of its *spontaneously present* manifestations.

In contrast to Longchenpa's Seven Treasures, which outline the philosophical underpinnings of the Great Perfection, the texts of the Fourfold Heart Essence are short and to the point. They are not intended to be theoretical expositions, but practical guides to the subtleties of meditation. As such, they are often pithy and evocative, and many are just a few pages in length.²⁴ Not all of its texts deal strictly with practice, however. As with most treasure cycles, the teachings contained in the Fourfold Heart Essence center on a number of important tantras.²⁵ There are also numerous biographies of lineage masters, detailed lineage histories, and instruction manuals that explain how to bestow the empowerments of the Great Perfection.

THE HEART ESSENCE OF VIMALAMITRA AND GURU'S QUINTESSENCE

The Heart Essence of Vimalamitra contains the Dzogchen teachings that Longchenpa received from his own root guru, Kumaradza (1266-1343). The Indian master Vimalamitra first gave these teachings in secret to five disciples during his sojourn to Tibet. As mentioned in the previous section, these teachings were then passed on as an oral transmission, and also written down and hidden as treasures by Vimalamitra's student Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo (eighth-ninth centuries). Centuries later they were revealed by Dangma Lhungyal and propagated by Chetsün Sengé Wangchuk (eleventh-twelfth centuries). Though the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra combines the lineages of the transmitted teachings and revealed

treasures, it is often cited as belonging to the tradition of the transmitted teachings.

The first grouping of texts in this collection is divided into four categories: the *Golden Lettered*, the *Conch Lettered*, the *Turquoise Lettered*, and the *Copper Lettered* and *Ornamented Letters*, which are grouped together. Of these four, the aptly entitled *Golden Lettered* group forms the core of the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra. It contains a lengthy inventory of the contents of the collection, a root tantra, as well as a lengthy commentary on this tantra composed by Garap Dorjé.

The *Golden Lettered* collection also includes a series of teachings called "last testaments." The first group of last testaments includes three teachings transmitted by the buddha Vajradhara to Garap Dorjé. These three are called the *Three Last Testaments of the Buddha*. The next set, entitled the *Four Last Testaments of the Masters of Awareness*, consists of four posthumous teachings transmitted by the very first Great Perfection masters. These four texts contain what are, perhaps, the most famous Heart Essence teachings in the entire Great Perfection lineage: Garap Dorjé's *Three Statements That Strike the Vital Point*, Manjushrimitra's *Six Experiences of Meditation*, Shri Simha's *Seven Nails*, and Jnanasutra's *Six Methods of Resting*. A fifth testament by Vimalamitra is also included.

The remaining volumes of the collection contain a wealth of material on the intricacies of Great Perfection practice. Many of the texts are filled with annotations that flesh out the cryptic root verses. Most are quite brief, with some just a few pages long. The majority of these texts deal with the Great Perfection's breakthrough and direct leap practices, and there is a notable absence of ritual-based sadhana literature.²⁶ There are, however, nearly two hundred pages devoted to the various empowerments of the Vima Nyingtik, as well as a lengthy lineage history and numerous biographies of important lineage masters.

Longchenpa's commentaries on the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra fill two volumes. Collectively, these commentaries are entitled the Guru's Quintessence, though they are more popularly known as the Quintessential Wish-fulfilling Jewel, or Yangtik Yizhin Norbu. Of all Longchenpa's writings—which remain unrivaled as comprehensive presentations of Great Perfection thought and practice—this collection is held in especially high regard. It was this body of writings that the great master himself directed his students to consult when in doubt concerning their Great Perfection meditation. Shortly before he passed away, Longchenpa told his students:

Those of you who are able to benefit others should do so without any sense of attachment. Bestow upon your fortunate students whatever empowerments, tantric teachings, and key instructions they wish to receive. Those of you who are focusing on practicing the sacred Dharma, do not let yourself get caught up in mundane activities. Instead, rest evenly in the nature of the breakthrough and direct leap. When there are things you do not understand, consult *The Quintessential Wish-fulfilling Jewel*. This work of mine is like a wish-granting gem, so you should study it in great detail and meditate on what you learn. This will bring an end to samsara and allow you to reach the state of nirvana.²⁷

The commentaries that comprise the Guru's Quintessence are based primarily on a Dzogchen tantra entitled the *Garland of Pearls*. This precious tantra is one of the Seventeen Key Instruction Class Tantras, each of which addresses various aspects of the view, meditation, and conduct of the Heart Essence teachings. According to Longchenpa, the unique contribution of the *Garland of Pearls* is the series of skillful key instructions it employs to bring about liberation.²⁸ Elaborating further, the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorjé, explains that the *Garland of Pearls* shows the practitioner how to develop his or her meditation by fully integrating the fruitional state, and how to recognize the various experiential signs that herald the onset of true realization.²⁹

As with the other sections of the Fourfold Heart Essence, the Guru's Quintessence covers a broad range of topics. It opens with an inventory of its contents, a lineage history, and supplications and offering rituals meant to serve as preliminary practices. Next, we find a series of texts for the empowerments associated with this collection, followed by nearly 540 pages on the main and subsidiary practices of the Heart Essence. The compilation concludes with a series of sadhana practices for the main protectors of the lineage.

HEART ESSENCE OF THE DAKINIS AND THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE DAKINIS

The most treasured cycle of Padmasambhava's Great Perfection teachings is the Heart Essence of the Dakinis. This is not only one of the most exhaustive presentations of Dzogchen theory and practice, but also one of the clearest. Its texts lay out straightforward guidelines for each and every

stage of the Heart Essence, starting with the common preliminary practices, and then progressing through the unique Dzogchen preliminaries, the various stages of tantric practice, and finally to the practices of breakthrough and direct leap.

Padmasambhava sought out the Heart Essence teachings after receiving a prophecy from the dakini Vajravarahi, who told him that his destined teacher was Shri Simha. Once he found this master, he dwelt in the charnel grounds of ancient India for twenty-five years studying and practicing the teachings he received. At the close of the eighth century, the Dharma king Trisong Deutsen invited Padmasambhava to Tibet to help construct Samye Monastery. While there, he taught the entire range of Buddhist teachings and helped plant the Dharma firmly in Tibetan soil.

Padmasambhava transmitted the Heart Essence teachings in secret to a few close disciples. He first taught the Heart Essence of the Dakinis to Yeshé Tsogyal at the cave complex of Zhotö Tidrō in Central Tibet, and later at Samyé Chimpū. The following passage from the *Precious History of the Treasure* recounts how this transmission took place:³⁰

One time the master Padmasambhava was practicing at Zhotö Tidrō Trak along with his spiritual partner, Lady Tsogyal of Kharchen. While they were there, wisdom dakinis exhorted Yeshé Tsogyal with the following prophetic declaration: “The enlightened mind of this great master, the nirmanakaya buddha, holds a set of profound key instructions called the Heart Essence of the Dakinis. These direct instructions bring buddhahood in three years and cause the corporeal aggregates to disappear in this very life. You must request these teachings!”

Hearing this, Yeshé Tsogyal offered a great tantric feast and requested the teachings. “Great master,” she said, “please give me the direct instructions that will cause the aggregates to disappear and bring buddhahood in this very life. Please bestow upon me the key instructions of the Heart Essence!”

With this supplication, she made innumerable prostrations and circumambulations, upon which the great master replied, “Tsogyal, your request is an excellent one, for I possess instructions that are unlike those I have given you in the past. These teachings lie beyond the nine vehicles and are the very pinnacle of them all. Just seeing these key points is enough to destroy

all intellectually fabricated beliefs and meditations. With this approach, the levels and paths are perfected without any need for effort. Without correcting or changing anything, the afflictions are freed on their own; there is no need to use antidotes. This fruition is not produced by causes, but is perfected in and of itself, for the wisdom mind is spontaneously present and arises instantaneously. In this very life, the corporeal, flesh and blood aggregates will be freed into the luminous sambhogakaya. Within three years, you will venture forth to the Supreme Realm and be able to seize the stronghold in the realm of the spontaneously present dharmakaya. These instructions I will now teach you!"

The great master then revealed the true mandala of the peaceful and wrathful deities in the great feast hall, empowering and offering instructions to a hundred thousand wisdom dakinis, headed by the lady from Kharchen. He taught them all the Seventeen Tantras, with the *Tantra of the Clear Expanse of the Sun* as the eighteenth, along with a great many key instructions.³¹ All these teachings were then grouped into two categories. The first set contained key instructions on the vastness of the tantras, while the second collection was composed by the master himself and contained cycles for simple yogis. Each was then committed to writing and catalogued by the master and Yeshé Tsogyal.

It was at this time that the king extended an invitation to the master and his spiritual partner to visit Chimpū. The two then set off, accompanied by the king, the queen, and the royal children. Once there, they began a series of one hundred and eight tantric feasts. During the course of these feasts, a young, eight-year-old princess named Pemasel, the daughter of the noble Queen Changchup Men of the Drom clan, passed away. Seeing her body, the king burst into tears and fell to the floor unconscious. Yeshé Tsogyal then covered him with a white sash and sprinkled him with sandalwood water, upon which the king regained consciousness.

The master then spoke:

"Alas, noble king, worldly affairs are but a dream.

By their very character, conditioned things are illusory.

Politics, too, are like last night's dream,
And wealth and subjects, like the drop of dew on a blade
of grass.

Life is as impermanent as a bubble about to burst,
And all conditioned things are subject to decay.
All that comes together must part in the end—
This is the nature of all conditioned things.
Nothing whatsoever is stable and permanent,
So do not believe the impermanent to be permanent.
Instead train in the nature of the birthless dharmakaya!"

To these words of advice, the master added many prophecies concerning future events and told the king about the series of incarnations that Princess Pemasel was to take. At the conclusion of all this, he prophesied the coming of Tsultrim Dorjé and Trimé Özer. The princess was commanded to be the guardian of the profound Heart Essence teachings, and they were then concealed as a profound treasure. Later, just as the master had prophesied, these teachings were revealed by the omniscient Tsultrim Dorjé and spread far and wide by Trimé Özer.³²

As noted here, the Heart Essence of the Dakinis was hidden as treasure and then revealed by the reincarnation of Princess Pemasel, Pema Ledrel Tsel. Longchenpa was the immediate reincarnation of Pema Ledrel Tsel. He came into contact with the treasure revelations of his previous incarnation, and also received the Heart Essence teachings directly from Padmasambhava and Yeshé Tsogyal in a visionary state. The details of these transmissions are discussed extensively in *The Excellent Chariot*.

The texts of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis follow a similar, though slightly different, structure than those of the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra. The collection opens with an inventory of the treasure's contents and a short presentation of the lineage history. The next section contains the *Six Essence Tantras That Liberate upon Wearing*, which begins with the root tantra, *Essence Tantra That Liberates upon Wearing*. These six tantras are accompanied by six short commentaries. A series of three testaments follows, which are for the most part identical to the *Three Last Testaments of the Buddha* found in the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra. The *Four Last Testaments of the Masters of Awareness*, however, are absent in this collec-

tion. Following these testaments, there is a more lengthy commentary on the six essence tantras, entitled *Essential Instructions on the Essence Tantras That Liberate upon Wearing*. This grouping of texts, which forms the core of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, contains some of the most frequently quoted literature in the entire Great Perfection tradition.

The next two texts are the main sadhana practices of this cycle, the *Outer and Inner Sadhanas of the Sugatas*. Following these two concise ritual practices is an extensive series of texts that present the various levels of empowerment. The following passage gives an overview of these empowerments and their relationship to Heart Essence practices:

To begin, novice practitioners should be granted the vase empowerment and instructed to practice the approach of the threefold ritual of the yidams of the five buddha families. They should then meditate on these yidams until the experiential signs of success have manifested in their entirety. Next, bestow the secret empowerment and instruct them to meditate on a suitable yogic heat practice until all the experiential signs of success for this practice have manifested. Once this has come to pass, grant the knowledge-wisdom empowerment and have the students utilize a mudra until the bindu is workable and there is some degree of facility concerning the nature of bliss-emptiness. Then bestow the word empowerment and instruct them to meditate on the breakthrough stage until its nature has been recognized. Following this, bestow the empowerment into the display of awareness and introduce the direct leap, instructing them to meditate until the four visions have reached a point of perfection. There is nothing wrong with bestowing all of these empowerments and instructions simultaneously, but doing so in a gradual manner is particularly effective.³³

A number of practice-related teachings follow this series of empowerment texts.

The second volume of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis begins with a text entitled *Questions and Answers: A Rosary of Golden Amrita*. This wonderful composition contains a dialogue between Yeshé Tsogyal and Padmasambhava, in which Yeshé Tsogyal requests clarifications concerning the view, meditation, and conduct of the Great Perfection. Following this are

a number of completion stage writings, including pithy teachings on the practices of yogic union, the intermediate states, luminosity, yogic heat, and the extraction of essences. The volume continues with texts related to the protector practices of the cycle; outer, inner, and secret guru yoga practices; short texts on the breakthrough and direct leap practices; writings on various usages of the cycle's tantras; writings on the intermediate states; and various prophecies, supplications, and lineage histories. Summarizing the unique contribution of this cycle, Terdak Lingpa writes:

Generally speaking, in other classes of tantra found in the Vajrayana, the meaning is concealed using vajra words. In contrast, this meaning is taught explicitly in the Seventeen Tantras and the commentaries that elucidate their essential meaning. In particular, the style and approach of the *Six Essence Tantras That Liberate upon Wearing*, the *Three Last Testaments of the Buddha*, and the key instructions on these teachings composed by the Great One of Uddiyana and his spiritual partner are in harmony insofar as they all teach the innermost realization of the buddhas. This eminent and supreme path, the profound and secret Great Perfection, is what we now know as the "Heart Essence of the Dakinis." In this tradition, symbolic representations are used to point out the true, fundamental nature of things. For those fortunate individuals with a karmic connection to these teachings, this provides an unsurpassed avenue for bringing about a swift realization of this true nature.³⁴

Longchenpa's commentaries on the Heart Essence of the Dakinis span three volumes. Of all his works, this collection receives a unique level of praise as one of the most significant contributions to the practice literature of the Great Perfection. In terms of its length and systematic structure, it is certainly one of the most comprehensive presentations of Heart Essence practice ever composed, yet its true contribution lies in the seemingly limitless pith instructions it contains and its marvelously clear instructions on the subtleties of Great Perfection meditation practice. Commenting on the unique status of this collection, Dudjom Rinpoche writes:

It is clear that in the land of snow mountains all the other writings on the [Heart Essence], those which are considered to be

profound, contain not even a fraction of the profound points which are elucidated in this ocean of indestructible reality, the mind treasure of this second Samantabhadra.³⁵

As might be expected, the circumstances surrounding the composition of these texts were far from ordinary. In fact, though its contents are commentaries, the Quintessence of the Dakinis is also considered a mind treasure.³⁶ Longchenpa received the transmission of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis directly from Padmasambhava and Yeshé Tsogyal in a visionary state, an encounter that is said to have lasted six days. The following passage relates the wondrous circumstances that surrounded these transmissions:

One winter, in the Year of the Female Wood Rabbit, Longchenpa was practicing at Chimpū Hill in Rimochen Cave, along with eight of his fortunate male and female students. As he was giving them the empowerments and explanations of the Secret Heart Essence, many protectors and dakinis suddenly arrived and exhorted him to begin teaching the Heart Essence of the Dakinis. He then sent the yogi Özer Kocha to fetch the texts.

When they gathered together later, the practitioners there could actually see all the innumerable gatherings of dakinis that were taking place. At night, the din of the dakinis' natural sounds could be heard in every direction, as could various instruments. The yogis and yoginis, each and every one, had neither dreams that indicated that they were asleep, nor anything that showed they were wide awake. Instead, everyone remained in a state of blissful, clear, and thought-free wisdom day and night for an entire month. When introductions were given, everyone beheld the light of deep, pervasive blue, as well as the light of the fivefold wisdom. When instructions were given, and during the course of all the supportive teachings, the entire sky would fill with rainbows. This went on for an entire month.

When Longchenpa composed the treatises of the great Heart Essence commentaries that have come to be known as the Quintessence of the Dakinis, various wondrous omens occurred. A great many beings were brought to the state of liberation and omniscience through the empowerments, explanations, and instructions of the Heart Essence.³⁷

As in the other cycles of the Fourfold Heart Essence, the first two texts in this collection are an inventory of the cycle's contents and a lineage history. Following this is a lengthy empowerment text, a series of writings on various preparatory practices, and finally two groups of three texts on the breakthrough and direct leap.

A single five-hundred-page treatise takes up almost the entire second volume. Entitled *An Ocean of Clouds of the Profound Reality*, this vast text is the longest composition in the Fourfold Heart Essence. It offers a comprehensive presentation of Great Perfection thought and practice, from descriptions of the ground of reality to practical instructions on tantric practice, all the way up to the fruition of Great Perfection meditation. This is a rare example of Great Perfection literature that gives equal attention to both the theoretical grounding of the Heart Essence and its practical implementation, treating both in an incredibly detailed manner. It also covers related topics such as the lineage history of the Great Perfection and the various samaya vows associated with the four empowerments.

The third and final volume of the collection contains a great number of practice-related texts. It includes texts on the development stage, completion stage, and of course Heart Essence practice proper: the breakthrough and direct leap. There are also various texts associated with a sadhana of the five buddha families, as well as various rituals and Dharma protector practices.

The fifth and final component of the Fourfold Heart Essence is the Profound Quintessence, which comprises the final two volumes of the collection. As mentioned earlier, this compilation contains instructions that relate to the teachings of both Vimalamitra and Padmasambhava. For the most part, this collection contains further instructions and clarifications of the teachings contained in the preceding sections of the Fourfold Heart Essence. One interesting addition is a short text on the direct leap practice of dark retreat.³⁸ The Profound Quintessence is not as comprehensive or systematically organized as the other components of the Fourfold Heart Essence and contains no inventory.

— PRACTICING THE HEART ESSENCE —

The first step an aspiring Dzogchen practitioner must take is to seek out a qualified teacher. The qualities needed by teachers and students of the

Great Perfection are explained extensively in the first half of *The Excellent Chariot* (contained in *Great Perfection: Outer and Inner Preliminaries*). Once a committed student has made a heartfelt connection with a genuine Dzogchen master, the next step is to follow the teacher's instructions, which usually entails practicing the outer and inner preliminaries. The outer preliminaries consist of a series of contemplations designed to elicit a feeling of disenchantment towards mundane activities, along with a sense of enthusiasm towards the state of liberation and the practices that lead to this state. This attitude of joyful renunciation ensures that one's practice on the spiritual path doesn't end up reinforcing ordinary states of desire and attachment. The inner preliminaries build on this foundation by clearing away obstacles and obscurations, while simultaneously creating circumstances that set the stage for realization to take place. Once the mind has been thoroughly trained and refined via these preliminary steps, the advanced practices of breakthrough and direct leap are utilized to help the meditator first identify the pure, nondual awareness that permeates all experience, and then hasten the process of realization by working directly with the active manifestations of reality itself.

The following passage highlights the various stages that comprise this process, starting at the fruitional state of buddhahood, and then working backwards to show all the steps leading up to this fruition:

Generally speaking, all the inconceivable number of teachings, treatises, and key instructions that have been transmitted by the buddhas, bodhisattvas, gurus, and siddhas are nothing more than skillful ways to bring about the attainment of buddhahood, the perfect fruition of the twofold benefit. To attain buddhahood, one must utilize the practical instructions of the profound path of the direct leap to bring the conscious effort and concepts associated with materiality to a point of exhaustion. To reach such a point, one must completely perfect the display of the self-manifest mandala. For this to take place, manifest appearances must evolve, which necessitates witnessing the appearances of manifest [reality]. To witness these appearances, one must completely purify and eliminate all of the afflictions in one's own stream of consciousness, yet without repressing the afflictions (as is done by the listeners). This takes place by practicing breakthrough, the nature of the ground. For this to

happen, the wisdom of insight must arise, as this will lead to the realization that the very essence of the afflictions is fundamentally free of all elaborations. To arouse the wisdom of insight, one must be able to rest the mind one-pointedly in a state of tranquility, which, in turn, means that one must let go of mundane activities and attachment to this present life. Each of these paths must be actualized in dependence upon the path that precedes it. This will take place when the stages outlined here are traversed one by one in the correct manner, like the rungs on a ladder.³⁹

Each step outlined in the preceding passage has a corresponding practice, or set of practices, associated with it.

THE OUTER AND INNER PRELIMINARIES

To begin, the student must complete the outer and inner preliminary practices mentioned above. Over the centuries, these preliminary practices have gradually taken on a fairly rigid structure. The current formulation of the four contemplations that change the mind as the outer preliminaries, and the sequence of refuge, bodhichitta, Vajrasattva, mandala, and guru yoga as the inner preliminaries, was not always the standard form of practice. In the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra, for example, the outer preliminaries consist of a seven-point contemplation that differs quite significantly from the standard format just mentioned.⁴⁰ These seven points do address common themes like impermanence, karma, and the nature of samsara, yet they also contain instructions on practices normally considered more advanced than the relatively accessible meditations of the standard formulation. The seventh point, in particular, contains a three-step process in which the meditator uses a simplified version of completion stage practice to meditate on bliss-emptiness, clarity-emptiness, and nonconceptuality. Longchenpa's instructions on the third and final step bear a striking similarity to his teachings on breakthrough practice. He writes:

To train the mind in nonconceptual reality, relax your body and mind from deep within. Without moving your eyes, meditate in a state free from conceptual discursiveness and withdrawal, and devoid of thoughts and memories.⁴¹

Though not as widely practiced as the standard formulation, this seven-fold contemplation is preserved in at least two lineages that are actively practiced today.⁴²

Another interesting presentation is given in Longchenpa's *Profound Quintessence*. In a text entitled *Precious Instructions on the Common Preliminaries*, the ordinary progression of the outer and inner preliminaries is completely reversed: The student begins by practicing guru yoga, followed by the mandala offering and contemplations of the precious human existence, impermanence, the suffering of samsara, and the principle of karma. Next is the cultivation of faith and compassion, then a meditation on the dreamlike, illusory quality of experience. Two subtle body yogas designed to elicit an experience of nonconceptuality conclude the presentation. Keep in mind that all of these practices are presented here as *outer* preliminaries. Most contemporary formulations, in contrast, list these practices as either *inner* preliminaries or *main practices*, with the exception of the fourfold contemplation listed above.⁴³

The *Heart Essence of the Dakinis* contains a number of different formulations of these preliminary practices. In *The Sun, Moon, and Stars*, Longchenpa lays out a six-year plan in which complete liberation is said to coincide with the completion of the teachings.⁴⁴ In this extensive approach, the preliminary phase takes six months: one month contemplating impermanence, one month on the shortcomings of samsara, one month on the principle of karma, one month on the freedoms and endowments combined with Vajrasattva, one month on the outer, inner, and secret mandalas, and one month of guru yoga. Noticeably absent from this structure are refuge and bodhichitta, presumably because all Mahayana and Vajrayana practices implicitly contain these two elements.

One of the most well-known commentaries on the *Heart Essence of the Dakinis* is Terdak Lingpa's *Illuminating the Profound Path*.⁴⁵ This text sets out a fivefold version of the preliminaries: impermanence, refuge, compassion and bodhichitta, Vajrasattva, and guru yoga. As the basis for this formulation, the author cites a passage from the *Last Testament* that instructs the meditator to "train in impermanence, compassion, and bodhichitta."⁴⁶ Elaborating on this approach, he explains that this simplified version of the preliminaries highlights those principles that are of central importance. For the beginner, however, it is more beneficial to take a more extensive approach, in which subsidiary topics like the preciousness of human existence are explicitly addressed. This latter approach, he

concludes, is clearest and in harmony with the general presentation of the Great Vehicle.⁴⁷

According to *The Excellent Chariot*, the primary practice manual used at Dzogchen Monastery, the outer and inner preliminaries are to be practiced in tandem, rather than sequentially as is often the case. The sequence of these practices is as follows: contemplation of the precious human existence is paired with refuge, impermanence with bodhichitta, karma with the three vows, the suffering of samsara with Vajrasattva, the benefits of liberation with mandala offering, and faith with guru yoga.⁴⁸ These practices are explained in the first half of *The Excellent Chariot*.

Of all the outer and inner preliminaries, the practice of guru yoga is taught to be of paramount importance in the Great Perfection. In guru yoga, the student's mind merges with the wisdom mind of the guru. When the devotion of the student is sincere and heartfelt, this merging of minds can bring about an immediate and profound shift in consciousness. In the following passage, Patrul cites Longchenpa, stressing the importance of this practice:

In the development stage, completion stage, and other such practices, it is not the essence of the path that brings liberation, as one must also utilize certain factors to work with one's conduct and deepen one's practice. In guru yoga, however, it is the essence of the path alone that triggers a realization of the true nature within, and which thus leads to liberation. For this very reason, guru yoga is the most profound of all paths.⁴⁹

THE UNIQUE HEART ESSENCE PRELIMINARIES

Once the student has completed the outer and inner preliminaries, the next step is to practice the unique preliminaries of the Heart Essence teachings: the outer and inner separations of samsara and nirvana (known in Tibet as *kordé rushen*); the physical, verbal, and mental preliminaries; and the practices of resting in the natural state and revitalization. These practices, all of which are discussed extensively in *The Excellent Chariot*, prepare the student for the advanced practices of breakthrough and direct leap.⁵⁰

As with the outer and inner preliminaries, there is no set order for the unique preliminaries; each lineage has its own distinct approach. Even within the Heart Essence of the Dakinis a number of different presenta-

tions are given. In the *First Testament of the Buddha*, for example, the inner separation is mentioned first, followed by the practices of resting in the natural state and revitalization. In the *Second Testament of the Buddha*, the outer separation is linked with the physical, verbal, and mental preliminaries: first the physical aspect of the outer separation is practiced followed by the vajra stance, then the verbal separation and the four HUM yogas, and finally the mental separation and mental preliminary of analyzing the origin, presence, and departure of the mind. Following these are the practices of resting in the natural state and revitalization. The *Third Testament of the Buddha* deals solely with the direct leap and does not address these unique preliminaries. Thus, though they do address the individual practices of the Heart Essence, it is difficult to discern their order due to the fact that each of the three testaments has a different orientation and presentation.

The next text in the Heart Essence of the Dakinis is entitled *Essential Instructions on the Essence Tantras That Liberate upon Wearing*. In this short set of instructions, Garap Dorjé condenses the content of the tantras and key instructions into a more accessible format with a clearly structured set of practices. This presentation is based on the first of the three testaments. Following the condensed version of the outer and inner preliminaries (meditating on impermanence, compassion, and bodhichitta), the student is advised to practice the inner separation. No mention is made of the outer separation or the physical, verbal, and mental preliminaries.

Resting in the natural state and revitalization are included in the main practice, rather than the preliminaries. They are also considered a single practice. One uses the gazes presented in the practice of revitalization to rest in the natural state, rather than first gaining familiarity with the natural state and then using the practice of revitalization to integrate this state with mild, moderate, and intense activities. It is important to note that here, “natural state” is equated with the nature of mind, i.e., breakthrough. In later presentations, “natural state” is taken to mean unfabricated, not in the sense of the “natural” nonmeditation of breakthrough, but rather formless tranquility.⁵¹

As mentioned earlier, Longchenpa’s *Sun, Moon, and Stars* contains the single most elaborate and comprehensive approach to Heart Essence practice found in the Heart Essence of the Dakinis. One interesting feature of this system is that the unique Heart Essence preliminaries are practiced in conjunction with the four empowerments and the “main practices” linked to them, namely the various development and completion stage yogas.

Following the six-month preparatory period outlined above, the student and teacher commence a series of empowerments and their corresponding practices. The first step entails the bestowal of a dakini empowerment, followed by three months of practice. Next is the vase empowerment and six months of practicing the outer and inner sadhanas of the five buddha families. Following this are twenty days of the physical outer separation practice and ten days of the vajra pose. Note here that Longchenpa follows the traditional approach of breaking the outer separation practice into its physical, verbal, and mental components and practicing them in tandem with the preliminaries of the three gates.

Once these practices have been completed, the secret empowerment is bestowed. At this stage, one practices the verbal separation for twenty days, each of the HUM yogas for twenty days, the inner separation for one month and ten days, yogic heat for one month, and other subtle body practices for three months. Following these practices, the knowledge-wisdom empowerment is bestowed and one practices the mental separation for twenty days and the mental preliminary of analyzing the origin, presence, and departure of the mind for nine days. Next, the state of tranquility is introduced by resting in the natural state and practicing revitalization for three days each, and finally a series of subtle body practices are practiced for a total of six months and ten days. These stages conclude the unique preliminaries, after which the word empowerment is bestowed in conjunction with the practice of breakthrough and the empowerment into the display of awareness in conjunction with the direct leap.⁵²

In two of the most well-known commentaries on the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, Terdak Lingpa's *Illuminating the Profound Path* and the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche's *Excellent Chariot*, the unique Heart Essence preliminaries are structured differently. Both of these texts present the physical, verbal, and mental elements of the outer separation as a single practice. The inner separation follows this outer separation, after which one practices the preliminaries of the three gates, resting in the natural state, and finally revitalization. This sequence is explained in detail in *The Excellent Chariot*.⁵³

In the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra yet another approach is taken. To the preliminaries mentioned above, a practice involving the sounds of the four elements is added.⁵⁴ In some systems stemming from this lineage, the practice of the four elements and the outer and inner separation practices

are not addressed, or are mentioned only in passing. In his *Background Teachings on the Direct Leap* from the Guru's Quintessence, Longchenpa clearly emphasizes the importance of the preliminaries of the three gates relative to these other practices. In this text, he explains the preliminaries of the three gates as the main preliminary practices, while concerning the yogas of the four elements and the separation practices, he states, "It is permissible to precede the preliminaries of the three gates by training in the sounds and nature of the four elements and the conduct of the separation of samsara and nirvana, or to simply skip these steps."⁵⁵ Some instruction manuals omit these practices altogether.⁵⁶

In other traditions, certain preliminaries are linked with the practice of breakthrough and others with the direct leap, though again there is no standard presentation. In *Stages of the Path: The Essence of Wisdom*, from the Chokling Tersar lineage, the preliminaries of the three gates, resting in the natural state, and revitalization are presented as a preparatory practice for the breakthrough stage, while the outer and inner separation are listed as the preliminaries for the direct leap. In his well-known *Essence of Wisdom*, Adzom Drukpa explains this approach:⁵⁷

Once those who are internalizing the view, meditation, and conduct of the breakthrough have attained stability, the entire range of thoughts that comprise all that appears and exists will be understood and experienced as the display and play of awareness. Practicing the so-called "unique preliminaries" at this point, even if one has already done so in the past, is especially effective. Hence, practicing the separation prior to the direct leap is a wonderful approach.⁵⁸

Yet another system is found in *Clarifying the Practice of the Heart Essence*, which stems from the Northern Treasure tradition of Rigdzin Gödem. In this text, breakthrough is preceded by the outer separation practice, while the physical and verbal preliminaries, inner separation, resting in the natural state, and revitalization are practiced prior to the direct leap (the mental preliminary is not included in this system). Other widely practiced manuals contain yet more unique presentations of these practices.⁵⁹ Thus, while there is clearly no set order to these practices, the individual Heart Essence lineages all contain some variation of the preliminaries discussed here.

THE MAIN PRACTICES OF THE HEART ESSENCE

Following the outer, inner, and unique preliminary practices, the student will ideally be ready to start the main practices of the Great Perfection: the development stage and completion stage. In the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, the practices of these two stages are linked with five empowerments: the vase empowerment, secret empowerment, knowledge-wisdom empowerment, word empowerment, and the empowerment into the display of awareness. The latter of these five is unique to the Great Perfection teachings. Terdak Lingpa's commentary on the Heart Essence of the Dakinis shows the link between these empowerments and the practices of development and completion:

If one wishes to guide mature students through the entire path of development and completion, they should begin by training their minds with the preliminary practices. Next, the vase empowerment should be offered along with teachings on the outer and inner development stage sadhanas of the five buddha families. Following this, the secret empowerment should be granted with teachings on the path of yogic heat, then the knowledge-wisdom empowerment along with the path of the spiritual partner. Next, the word empowerment may be offered with teachings on the breakthrough stage of original purity, and the empowerment into the display of awareness along with the path of the direct leap.⁶⁰

This passage shows the most common progression of tantric practice in the Nyingma School. The practitioner begins with the preliminary practices outlined above. In the next phase, the student receives the vase empowerment and practices the development stage. In development stage practice, the meditator uses the visualization of pure realms and deities, mantra recitation, and meditative absorption to disrupt the ordinary processes of distorted perception and replace them with the pure appearances of a divine mandala. Such practices may have one deity or a pair of deities as their focal point, and typically involve the recitation of lengthy liturgies and numerous repetitions of sacred mantras.⁶¹ By absorbing one's mind in these visualized appearances and mantric sounds, the habitual tendency to view the world as impure and problematic is progressively refined away.

Eventually, one's mind, and then even the body, merges with this divine identity.⁶²

Though development stage practice is an effective method for undoing the habitual patterns associated with impure perception, it can also lead to a fixation on the newly developed pure vision of reality. The completion stage functions to counteract this tendency, and also to help the practitioner identify and directly experience the subtle energetic body and the empty radiance of pure awareness. There are two main divisions of completion stage practice: completion stage with symbolic attributes and completion stage without symbolic attributes. In the former, emphasis is placed on working with the subtle energies of the body and, in particular, on bringing the energies of the right and left channels into the central channel. In the completion stage without symbolic attributes, the nature of mind is emphasized. This includes formless practices such as Mahamudra and the breakthrough stage of the Great Perfection.

The passage above states that once a practitioner has received the vase empowerment and meditated on the development stage, they should be given the secret empowerment and instructions on the practice of yogic heat (a completion stage practice with symbolic attributes). Though this practice is often associated with the Kagyü tradition's Six Dharmas of Naropa, it is also commonly practiced in the Nyingma School. This yoga, known in Tibet as *tummo*, employs visualization techniques, along with physical and breathing exercises, to create a blazing, blissful sensation that fills the entire body. This blazing bliss incinerates all forms of confusion and negativity, removes blockages in the central channel, and swiftly activates the practitioner's innate wisdom. The knowledge-wisdom empowerment is bestowed in the next phase along with instructions related to sexual union with a spiritual partner.

Following these two stages, the sacred word empowerment is bestowed along with instructions on the breakthrough stage. Of the two Heart Essence practices, breakthrough is designed for those inclined to an effortless approach, where the focus is on emptiness and original purity. In this phase of practice, which is explained extensively in the translation of *The Excellent Chariot* that follows, the meditator is introduced to awareness, or *rigpa*. By this time, the teacher and student will ideally have developed a mutual trust in one another. The student's devotion, coupled with the teacher's realization, will set the stage for a direct realization of the nature of mind on the student's part. Once awareness has been pointed out and

recognized, the main practice consists of repeatedly familiarizing oneself with this experience until it becomes a stable, living experience.

In the final stage, the empowerment into the display of awareness is bestowed and the meditations of the direct leap are taught. As noted before, this practice enables the practitioner to work directly with the appearances of reality itself, through which a series of four visions gradually unfold. This style of practice is geared towards those who are more industrious by nature. Here, the focus is on luminosity, rather than emptiness, and spontaneous presence.

Though the progression laid out here is a common approach in the Nyingma School, there are also more concise styles of practice that reflect the simplicity of the Heart Essence teachings. In *The Excellent Chariot*, for example, the various empowerments are not linked with the completion stage practices just mentioned, but with the unique preliminaries discussed above. The Third Dzogchen Rinpoche writes:

The various instructions that have been given up to this point should be practiced in conjunction with the four empowerments, as taught by the omniscient lord of Dharma in the Quintessence of the Dakinis. Once the elaborate vase empowerment has been bestowed, one should begin by contemplating the rarity of the opportunities and endowments, and then proceed through the physical preliminary of the vajra stance. Next, the unelaborate, secret empowerment is given and one practices the verbal preliminaries. Following this, the knowledge-wisdom empowerment is bestowed in conjunction with the mental preliminaries, and then the word empowerment in tandem with probing the conceptual mind and seeking out its hidden flaw.⁶³

The breakthrough-oriented approach outlined here is unique in the Heart Essence tradition. Most Heart Essence instruction manuals present the breakthrough and direct leap stages together, often placing more emphasis on the latter in terms of length of discussion.⁶⁴ In *The Excellent Chariot*, only a passing reference is made to the direct leap. In the colophon, the author instructs the reader to consult Terdak Lingpa's commentary on the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, *Illuminating the Profound Path*, should he/she be inclined to practice the direct leap. Despite the fact that

this stage is not taught, it is said that twenty-eight Great Perfection yogis attained rainbow body by relying solely on this text.⁶⁵

In contrast to the unique preliminaries, there is no standard set of practices that constitute breakthrough meditation. Though some meditations and pointing out instructions may be shared, each lineage has its own distinct way of presenting them. One of the more extensive presentations of breakthrough practice is found in Longchenpa's *Essential Instructions on Breakthrough*, from his Guru's Quintessence. In this manual, breakthrough practice is divided into three phases: (1) the preparatory step of dismantling the mind's abode, (2) the main practice of introducing awareness in its original state, and (3) the concluding step of sustaining one's experience of awareness. The first of these entails three steps: an analysis of the origin, presence, and departure of mind, an analysis of whether the mind is unitary or composite, and an analysis of the naked observation of one's own original state. The main body of the practice consists of being introduced to awareness in its original state, at which point the guru gives a series of experiential pointing out instructions to trigger a recognition of the nature of mind in the student. In the third and final phase, the student is instructed to simply maintain this recognition.⁶⁶

A text entitled *Pointing Out the Breakthrough: The Spacious Expanse of Liberation from Extremes* outlines the structure of the most common presentation of breakthrough practice in the Heart Essence of the Dakinis. Although breakthrough instructions are found in other central texts of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, including the *Last Testaments* and *Essential Instructions on the Essence Tantras That Liberate upon Wearing*, it is in this text that one finds the full range of breakthrough contemplations and pointing out instructions as they are structured in later commentaries, such as those by Terdak Lingpa and the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche. This short text presents not only the structure of breakthrough practice that has become standard in this particular lineage, but also many of the scriptural quotations cited throughout Great Perfection literature.

According to this approach, breakthrough practice consists of a series of three contemplations, followed by a sevenfold set of pointing out instructions. The first contemplation is termed *probing the conceptual mind*, or, more literally, *cutting through to the very root of conceptuality*. In this contemplation, the practitioner inquires into what it is that cycles through samsara, experiences happiness and suffering, and attains liberation. This practice aims to bring about a sense of inner certainty that the mind is at

the root of everything. In the next contemplation, *seeking out the mind's hidden flaw*, the practitioner analyzes the mind's qualities and its relationship to sensory experience, emotions, and thoughts. With this practice, one comes to feel certain that the mind cannot be found anywhere or identified in any way.

The third contemplation is an analysis of the origin, presence, and departure of the mind, similar to the mental preliminary mentioned earlier. In both cases, the point is to see that the mind does not exist in any way whatsoever. According to Longchenpa, the reason for practicing this analysis twice is that the mental preliminary focuses on the objective setting of the mind. In other words, one looks for the *location* where the mind arises, abides, and ceases. Here, however, one analyzes the subjective mind itself, rather than its location, the aim in this case being to recognize its essence.⁶⁷

Once the meditator has a thorough grounding in these contemplations and a stable sense of certainty that transcends mere intellectual understanding, the next step is to receive a series of seven pointing out instructions.⁶⁸ In the commentaries of Terdak Lingpa and the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche, these seven instructions are included as part of a larger three-fold outline. According to these two instruction manuals, awareness is first pointed out via the transmission of blessings, then through the view, and finally on the basis of meditative experience. The seven pointing out instructions mentioned above constitute the second of these three steps. The first stage that precedes these seven introductions is essentially a group guru yoga practice, in which both the teacher and student supplicate the root and lineage gurus, merge their minds together, and then simply rest in the ensuing state. Both Terdak Lingpa and the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche note that while this stage is not explicitly addressed in the root texts of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, this practice carries a great deal of blessings and is capable of triggering a powerful experience of the teachings.⁶⁹

In the sevenfold pointing out instruction, the guru points out the nature of mind by imparting pith instructions on the view. These seven steps, which stem from the *Essential Instructions on the Essence Tantras That Liberate upon Wearing*, are as follows: (1) thoughts are pointed out to be mind, (2) mind is pointed out to be empty, (3) emptiness is pointed out to be appearance, (4) appearances and emptiness are pointed out to be inseparable, (5) inseparability is pointed out to be self-liberated, (6) the five poisons are pointed out to be self-liberated, and (7) the six collections

of consciousness are pointed out to be self-liberated.⁷⁰ At the conclusion of this section, both Terdak Lingpa and the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche note that this sevenfold set of pointing out instructions is essentially the same as Garap Dorjé's well-known *Three Statements That Strike the Vital Point*.⁷¹

The third step presented by these two authors is not found in the root texts of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis. Instead, it seems to be an amalgam of material found in Longchenpa's Dakini's Quintessence.⁷² This stage as well contains a series of pointing out instructions. In contrast to the previous step, however, these instructions are not philosophical in nature, but more evocative and inspirational. In the first introduction, the natural stillness of mind is pointed out within a state of meditative absorption. This introduction contains a beautiful set of instructions that the guru is instructed to read aloud to the student.⁷³ Next, the natural radiance of awareness is pointed out to be the play of wisdom. This introduction takes place in three steps. First, stillness is pointed out to be the mind's adornment, then movement is pointed out to be the play of the mind, and finally movement and stillness are pointed out to be nondual. As with the first pointing out instruction, these introductions are evocative and experiential, rather than theoretical.

Following these contemplations and pointing out instructions, both Terdak Lingpa and the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche offer general advice on studying and practicing the breakthrough teachings, how to advance in practice, and how to identify the obstacles to meditation and apply their respective antidotes. This general advice, followed by a short colophon, concludes the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche's presentation of the Heart Essence teachings. Terdak Lingpa's text continues on with approximately forty pages devoted to the direct leap, four pages to the intermediate states, and three pages to the nirmanakaya pure realms.⁷⁴ He concludes with a short discussion of the profundity of the Heart Essence teachings and their seal of extreme secrecy.

— TEACHING THE HEART ESSENCE —

According to Jamgön Kongtrül, there are three ways to impart the instructions of the Heart Essence: (1) as a system of experiential guidance, (2) as a series of pointing out instructions, and (3) as parting advice to someone on the verge of death. Concerning the first, he writes that those who are

more discursive by nature and enthusiastic about experiencing the ordinary signs of spiritual progress should first practice the yoga of the four elements to prepare for the pointing out instructions. Those who are diligent and inclined towards yogic conduct should begin by practicing the separation of samsara and nirvana. Finally, those who are lazy and inclined towards conceptual analysis should practice the preliminaries of the three gates. Once the practitioner completes the appropriate set of preliminary practices, they may then fruitfully receive the pointing out instructions of the main Heart Essence practices.

In the second approach of imparting the teachings, pointing out instructions are given immediately after bestowing empowerments. This approach is appropriate for those who are karmically ripe for the teachings, i.e., those who have undergone extensive training in previous lifetimes or practiced other systems of meditation prior to encountering the Great Perfection. Here, only the breakthrough and direct leap are taught, though various symbolic introductions may be given to supplement the instructions.

The third approach, Kongtrül writes, can be likened to giving instructions "to someone about to set out on a journey." This refers to the death process. Since the various stages of death are experienced with resistance by those who are not familiar with them, the Heart Essence teachings may be imparted to a dying person so they may recognize and understand what they are experiencing, and thereby use the death process as a way to liberate themselves.⁷⁵

Following this discussion of the various ways one may impart the Heart Essence teachings, Kongtrül goes on to explain how those with differing backgrounds and limitations may approach these instructions. The most complete approach involves a style of training referred to as "maturing guidance" (smin slob), in which the practices and instructions are imparted in their entirety. If this is the case, one begins with the common outer and inner preliminaries, before moving on to a set of yogas that relate to the energies and essences of the subtle body. In the next step, one practices the unique preliminaries of the Heart Essence, and then the various stages of breakthrough meditation. Following this is the separation of samsara and nirvana and the key instructions of the direct leap. Each of these steps, he explains, "must be practiced until actual experience has taken birth in one's being."⁷⁶

For those who have already trained in a different form of completion stage practice, a more abbreviated approach may be taken. Such individu-

als may start with whatever form of the outer preliminaries seems appropriate, and then move straight into the preliminaries of the three gates and breakthrough practice. For those whose age prohibits them from practicing the subtle body yogas, or who for whatever reason are not able to derive benefit from these practices, it is permissible to simply omit these yogas. Similarly, it is perfectly fine to teach breakthrough alone to those unfit for the direct leap, such as those with faulty sense faculties. On the other hand, Kongtrül cautions, it is not permissible to skip over breakthrough and teach the direct leap alone.⁷⁷

— THE EXCELLENT CHARIOT —

The teachings contained in this volume build on the instructions found in *Great Perfection: Outer and Inner Preliminaries*, which contains the first half of *The Excellent Chariot*, a profound text compiled by the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche for use at the retreat center of Dzogchen Monastery in eastern Tibet. The first half of *The Excellent Chariot* deals primarily with the outer and inner preliminaries. The second half, presented in this volume, addresses the unique Heart Essence preliminaries and the main Great Perfection practice of breakthrough meditation. In addition to an extensive treatment of these topics, the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche also includes biographies of the lineage masters of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis and general instructions on how to study and practice the Great Perfection.

The Excellent Chariot is a compilation of writings from various Great Perfection masters. While the teachings contained in *Great Perfection: Outer and Inner Preliminaries* were drawn primarily from Longchenpa's *Precious Wish-fulfilling Treasury* and *Resting in the Nature of Mind*, the main sources for the instructions that follow are the root texts of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, Longchenpa's Quintessence of the Dakinis, and Terdak Lingpa's *Illuminating the Profound Path*. The biographies included in this work were taken from Longchenpa's *Precious History of the Treasure*. These sources are among the most authoritative works on the Heart Essence in the entire Nyingma lineage.

As a final note, these instructions are meant to be studied under the guidance of a qualified lineage master. The Great Perfection, moreover, carries a strict seal of secrecy. Its teachings are meant to be studied and practiced

privately, not shared with those who have not received the appropriate transmissions. In *Supreme Wisdom*, Jigmé Lingpa writes:

To eliminate the fault of committing the seventh root downfall, which concerns secret conduct, be sure to [perform these practices] in a place where there is no human activity and where you cannot be seen or heard.⁷⁸

If such a strict injunction is given concerning simply being *seen* practicing the teachings, then it should be obvious that one should not teach or discuss them with others, unless a lineage master has explicitly authorized one to do so. With this in mind, please honor the request made by The Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche in the preceding foreword: Please do not read these teachings unless you have completed the preliminary practices and received pointing out instructions from a qualified lineage master, or have received explicit permission to read this text from such a teacher.

— ACKNOWLEDGMENTS —

This translation project was carried out at the request of the seventh Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, without whose guidance, blessings, and support the translation of this profound text would not have been possible. The very first Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, Namkha Ösel, was a great master of the teachings contained in this book. He was also a clear source of inspiration for the author, as evidenced by the latter's extensive praises of Namkha Ösel in the lineage history chapter of this very work. Throughout their successive incarnations, the Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoches continued to uphold the teachings of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis at Dzogchen Monastery in eastern Tibet, working together with the Dzogchen tulku to ensure that this profound lineage of teachings and realization remained available to future generations in its purest form.

It is fitting, then, that the seventh incarnation of Namkha Ösel, the current Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, is one of the driving forces in transmitting these teachings to the West. In 2006 and 2007, Rinpoche transmitted the teachings contained in this book in their entirety at the annual Nalandabodhi Sangha retreat in Seattle, Washington. Rinpoche also took

the time to meet with me on numerous occasions to clarify key points in the text and answer my many questions. For his initial request and encouragement to translate *The Excellent Chariot*, for his boundless love and compassion, and for his example of what a true Dzogchen yogi should be, I am forever grateful.

Throughout this project, I have been blessed to have the support and guidance of many masters of the Dzogchen lineage, friends and family members, and fellow translators. In particular, I would like to thank the following Dzogchen masters for contributing to this project through their empowerments and transmissions, teachings, and blessings: Chatral Rinpoche Sangye Dorjé, Trulshik Rinpoche, Alak Zenkar Rinpoche, Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche, Tsoknyi Rinpoche, Tulku Thondup, and Khen Rinpoche Sherab Sangpo. I would especially like to thank Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, whose kindness and generosity to me as a student surpass anything I could ever say or write. If anything of the profundity and power of the original Tibetan manuscript has made its way into this book, it is due solely to the blessings of these masters and the enlightened lineage they represent.

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Last but not least, I would like to thank my wonderful family. My mother, father, and brother have supported me in every possible way throughout my life. Their love and guidance means the world to me and I can never hope to repay their kindness. I am especially grateful to my wife, Tenzin Dekyi, and little boy, Sangye, both of whom have given me the love and companionship I so needed while working on this challenging project.

As someone who is still very much a beginner when it comes to the Great Perfection, what I have written here reflects my own limited understanding of this profound topic. I feel truly blessed to have been asked to translate this text, yet both the introduction and the translation that follows are sure to contain inaccuracies. It is my hope, however, that this translation will kindle interest in the teachings and encourage others to improve upon my efforts. Whatever merit has resulted from this endeavor I dedicate to the flourishing of the Great Perfection teachings in all times and places and to the long lives of the great masters who uphold this tradition. Through this, may all beings recognize mind's true nature!

Tsultrim Shönu [Cortland Dahl]
Boudhanath, Nepal
November, 2007

THE EXCELLENT CHARIOT

A VEHICLE FOR THE PATH TO LIBERATION

*An Instruction Manual for
The Great Perfection,
Heart Essence of the Dakinis*

Tibetan:

*rDzogs pa chen po mkha' 'gro snying thig gi khrid yig
thar lam bgrod byed shing rta bzang po*

Sanskrit:

*Mokṣa panthāṁ gatiṣu ratho nāma mahāśamdhī
dākīṇī cittatilakasya kṣiptalekha viharatisma*

by the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche,
Ngetön Tenzin Zangpo

*The Unique Heart Essence Preliminaries:
Ascertaining the True Nature*



The Third Dzogchen Rinpoche, Ngetön Tenzin Zangpo

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Outer Separation of Samsara and Nirvana

TO BEGIN, prepare yourself to receive these teachings by developing supreme bodhichitta. Think to yourself, "I must bring all the infinite number of sentient beings to the state of unsurpassed liberation, precious enlightenment. To this end, I will listen to these sacred teachings, take their words and meanings to heart, and put them into practice!" Listen carefully to the instructions with this motivation.

— FOLLOWING A GURU —

It is said that the teachings one receives must be rooted in a relationship with a genuine guru. On this point, *Resting in the Nature of Mind* explains:

This excellent path, unmistaken when it comes to cause and result,
Comes from following true masters.

As stated here, the ability to clearly distinguish Dharma from non-Dharma and virtue from vice comes from following a spiritual teacher. Explaining how one should actually do so, the omniscient lord of Dharma, Longchenpa, wrote:

Just like a patient relies on the king of doctors,
Like subjects rely on their king, and travelers rely on their guides,
Like merchants rely on their captain, and passengers rely on
a ferryman—
To pacify the afflictions and spontaneously manifest the twofold
benefit;

To free oneself from all harm, all wrongdoing, all fear of birth and death;

To cross the ocean of existence, one must follow a teacher.

These metaphors show us how to follow a teacher. To pacify the sickness of the afflictions, you should act like a patient would towards his or her doctor. To protect yourself from the fear of being harmed, act like a subject would towards a king. To free yourself from the fear of birth and death, act as a traveler would towards a guide. To bring about both your own and others' welfare, act as a merchant would towards the captain of his or her ship. Finally, to cross over the ocean of samsara, act as a passenger on a ferry would towards a ferryman. This is how you should follow a guru.

In the following passage from *Resting in the Nature of Mind*, Longchenpa explains the first of these metaphors, following a guru like a patient relies on a doctor:

Think of your guru as a doctor, the instructions
 As medicine, and yourself as a patient.
 Consider your diligent efforts the medical treatment,
 With peace and happiness as the resulting cure.
 The other ways of following can be inferred from this—
 Follow your guru with these four pure ideas as your guide.

The *Flower Ornament Sutra* explains further:

Fortunate child, think of yourself as a patient. Think of the Dharma as your medicine. Think of diligent practice as your medical treatment. Think of your spiritual teacher as a skilled physician.

Or, fortunate child, think of yourself as a subject. Think of the Dharma as fearlessness. Think of diligent practice as the total pacification of any harmful forces. Think of your spiritual teacher as a king.

Or, fortunate child, think of yourself as a traveler. Think of the Dharma as that which brings fearlessness. Think of diligent practice as that which frees you from all that you fear. Think of your spiritual teacher as a courageous warrior that guides you.

Or, fortunate child, think of yourself as a merchant. Think of the Dharma as the goods you are going to collect. Think of diligent practice as the way to make profits. Think of your spiritual teacher as the captain of your ship.

Or, fortunate child, think of yourself as a passenger on a ferry. Think of the Dharma as the ferry itself. Think of diligent practice as crossing over to the other side of a river. Think of your spiritual teacher as a skilled ferryman.

You shouldn't abandon your spiritual teacher under any circumstance, even at the cost of your own life. The *Way of the Bodhisattva* states:

Never, even at the cost of your life,
Should you forsake your spiritual teacher,
Learned in the meaning of the Great Vehicle,
And in the bodhisattva's conduct, supreme. [V.102]

As shown here, you should practice by studying the sacred Dharma and regarding your guru with sincere interest and appreciation.

The five topics taught in the first volume comprise a graded set of preliminary practices that are commonly found in the sutras. These five are: 1) the rarity of the freedoms and endowments, 2) the impermanence of life, 3) the principle of karmic causality, 4) the sufferings of samsara, and 5) the benefits of liberation. Having carefully contemplated these five topics, one can then move on to a second set of preliminary practices that are common to both the sutras and tantras. These six are: 1) taking refuge, 2) developing bodhichitta, 3) maintaining the vows, 4) purifying negativity and obscurations through the meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva, 5) gathering the accumulations with the mandala offering, and 6) invoking blessings with the practice of guru yoga.

Next we have a set of unique preliminary practices that are specific to the Great Perfection of the secret, unsurpassed Heart Essence. This section is divided into two parts: 1) the nature of the student who receives these teachings and setting the stage with conducive circumstances, and 2) how the instructions that are taught should be imparted.

THE NATURE OF THE STUDENT

AND CONDUCIVE CIRCUMSTANCES

The first of these topics is addressed in all the tantric treatises and manuals of key instructions. The *Tantra of Self-arising Awareness* summarizes:

Strong faith and great diligence,
 Great intelligence and no attachment,
 Great reverence and practice of Secret Mantra,
 No conceptuality and an undistracted mind,
 With samaya vows and diligence in practice . . .

As stated here, there are a number of prerequisites needed by those who receive these teachings. To start, the factors that allow one to receive blessings in a rapid manner must be present in their entirety. More specifically, this refers to the four kinds of faith: lucid faith, inspired faith, the faith of conviction, and ultimate faith. Lucid faith creates great delight in the guru and motivates one to practice his or her instructions. With inspired faith, one has an intense interest in the results of practice. With the faith of conviction, one is free from doubt concerning the principle of causality. Finally, ultimate faith is that which cannot be snatched away by fleeting circumstances. In addition to these four kinds of faith, one should also have great courage, be dauntless in the pursuit of unsurpassed enlightenment, and be diligent. In other words, one should not procrastinate or act inconsistently. With these factors one's commitment will be stable, and experience and realization will arise with ease.

One must also be able to eliminate any missteps that may occur. To do so, the clear intelligence associated with analyzing the profound and true nature must be present. Moreover, the tendency to be obsessed with one's present life must be severed by reversing one's clinging and fixation to food, clothing, and the other pleasures of worldly existence. Respect towards the guru and deity should be one-pointed as well. Through this, blessings will be received automatically. One also needs to engage in the profound practice by cutting through any exaggerated or depreciatory doubts one has about the path of Secret Mantra. The mind needs to be stable and undistracted. This is brought about by not identifying with attachment, aversion, and other ordinary thought patterns. One's vows need to be maintained, meaning that one must not have failed to keep the main and sub-

sidiary samaya vows one has received. Finally, diligence is also necessary; one must not lose heart or get worn out when it comes to meditating on and practicing the true nature. It is said that one who possesses these qualities is a fit vessel for this profound path.

The following passage from the *Tantra of the Clear Expanse* addresses the place such a student should practice:

Snowy retreats, empty lands, the peaks of mountains, and charnel grounds—

Completely isolated places, clear and lofty—

Such are the places a fortunate student should practice.

As stated here, you should practice in places that are positive by their very nature, with little human activity or noise. Avoid any areas where there is danger of enemies, thieves, or other such factors. Instead, find an environment that has a hospitable climate. Meditative absorption develops naturally in such places.

Concerning the time one should practice, the same text states:

The times between summer and fall, between winter and spring,
And sunrise and sunset—these times are said to be supreme.

The reasoning here is that the temperature is moderate at such times. For this reason, the circumstances that lead to states of dullness and torpor are few in number, the wisdom of direct perception can arise with ease, and introduction to the nature of mind is greatly facilitated.

Concerning the companions one should practice with, the *Tantra of the Clear Expanse* states:

Those with pure samaya and great pure perception,

Who are open-minded and stable, in whom the five poisons are weak,

And who are patient and loving companions—these you should befriend.

To explain, you should surround yourself with those who have the meditative experiences that come from practicing this profound path, or, even if they don't, who are subdued, peaceful, and have kept their samaya vows

pure. Your companions should be adept when it comes to pure perception. Likewise, their afflictions should be less intense and they should have a loving mind. If the people you surround yourself with have these qualities, there won't be any difficulties in finding conducive circumstances for practice.

Explaining the specific practice materials one will need, the *Tantra of the Clear Expanse* states:

Flowers, empowerment offerings, materials for feast gatherings,
Torma arrangements, and supports to revive your constitution
While engaged in practice—gather all the conducive requisites.

As stated here, you should gather together offerings to make to your guru when receiving empowerment, as well as materials needed for the collection of tormas that will be offered to the dakinis. Food, drink, and other provisions that match your constitution should be collected as well, so long as they have not been involved with any form of negativity. All these provisions should be collected at the outset so that you don't have to busy yourself with finding them later.⁷⁹

The next section addresses the actual topics contained in these teachings, which contains four levels of instruction:

- ▶ Instilling confidence by recounting the lineage history
- ▶ Maturing the student with empowerments
- ▶ Teaching the practices by way of practical instructions
- ▶ Sealing the importance of the transmission⁸⁰

— LINEAGE HISTORY —

The first two topics, lineage history and empowerment, were taught above in the context of the common preliminaries. Nevertheless, I will say a bit about them here as well. The Great Perfection was taught to Vajrasattva and the rest of the innumerable peaceful and wrathful mandala deities by the dharmakaya buddha Samantabhadra. This teaching took place effortlessly, transcending sounds and words, in the great equality of the three times. Vajrasattva, in turn, manifested an inconceivable number of ema-

nations, including masters of awareness and dakinis, and taught them the nature in which the kayas and wisdoms neither come together nor part. This teaching self-manifested and was unimpeded like an echo. Everything up to this point constitutes the *lineage of realization*, in which the victorious ones are both teacher and student.

Vajrasattva went on to teach Garap Dorjé, who then taught Shri Simha. The latter was the teacher of Padmasambhava. These teachings, which took place via symbols and symbolic stages, make up the *symbolic lineage*. Next, Padmasambhava taught Yeshé Tsogyal, which constitutes the *oral lineage*. The master and his female partner then transferred their blessings to the fortunate master of this teaching, Princess Pemasel, and sealed their transmission with aspirations and empowerments. This constitutes the *lineage of aspiration and empowerment*. The lineage of the secret words of the Heart Essence was then set down in writing and entrusted to the dakinis and treasure guardians. The teachings were hidden at Tramo Rock and later removed by Pema Ledrel Tsel. This constitutes the *lineage of words on yellow parchment*.

This treasure revealer's work for the benefit of beings was left unfinished due to the influence of obstacles. As foretold in the treasure's prophecy, however, Pema Ledrel Tsel reincarnated as Longchen Rabjam and was taught directly by the male and female masters, Padmasambhava and Yeshé Tsogyal. With this, he received the *lineage of prophetic transmission*. Hence, these teachings have been passed down through six different lineages.

Generally speaking, in other classes of tantra found in the Vajrayana the meaning is concealed using vajra words. In contrast, this meaning is taught explicitly in the Seventeen Tantras and the commentaries that elucidate their essential meaning. In particular, the style and approach of the *Six Essence Tantras That Liberate upon Wearing*, the *Three Last Testaments of the Buddha*,⁸¹ and the key instructions on these teachings composed by the Great One of Oddiyana and his spiritual partner are in harmony insofar as they all teach the innermost realization of the buddhas. This eminent and supreme path, the profound and secret Great Perfection, is what we now know as the Heart Essence of the Dakinis. In this tradition, symbolic representations are used to point out the true, fundamental nature. For those fortunate individuals with a karmic connection to these teachings, this provides an unsurpassed avenue for bringing about a swift realization of this true nature. As taught in the *Tantra of the Array of Lamps*:



Namkha Ösel, the First Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche

The validity of the Secret Mantra's meaning
Comes from the realization, symbolic, and oral lineages.
One recognizes this meaning by relying on examples.
In dependence upon signs, this turns into conviction.

Down to:

With this, one will behold the fruition, even without practice.⁸²

THE SEPARATION OF SAMSARA AND NIRVANA

There are three steps involved in ascertaining the true nature:

- ▶ The separation of samsara and nirvana
- ▶ The preliminaries of the three gates
- ▶ Resting in the natural state

The first of these contains two further divisions:

- ▶ A teaching on separation
- ▶ How to perform the separation

On the first topic, the *Tantra of Penetrating Sound* explains:

If samsara is not separated from nirvana,
 The connection between the three worlds
 And ordinary body, speech, and mind will not be cut.
 Thus, samsara and nirvana must be separated.

By their very nature, our ordinary body, speech, and mind are completely pure from the very beginning. Nevertheless, this nature becomes temporarily and adventitiously obscured by our fixation and deluded perception. This process, in turn, causes us to wander continuously throughout the six realms, which we've done from time immemorial down to the present day. Along the way we've experienced the innumerable physical forms, verbal expressions, thought patterns, and types of suffering found in each of the six realms.

None of these experiences have done us any good, though, have they? What's the use of continuing to grasp and cling to this never-ending stream of mundane activity? What we need to do now is separate samsara from nirvana and cut the very root of what causes us to continue being reborn in samsara.

To bring about this separation, forms that match the karmic appearances of samsara are taken as the path. Through this, you will come to see the hidden flaw of negative karma and be freed from all forms of clinging and fixation. The following passage shows how this is in line with the common approach of the Secret Mantra:

Conceptuality purified by conceptuality
 And existence by existence itself.
 When water has been poured in one's ear
 It can be removed by pouring in more water.
 The same holds for our concepts of things,
 Which are purified with thorough understanding.

There are two forms of separation, outer and inner. Concerning the first of these, the *Last Testament* states:

If you truly want to attain buddhahood,
 Train in the preliminary practices.
 If you don't carefully separate
 Ordinary body, speech, and mind,
 You will never leave the three worlds.
 Yet once adept in the preliminaries' key points
 They will transform into realization, common and supreme.
 Settle alone in an isolated place.
 To practice the physical preliminary,
 Engage in the various activities of the six realms,
 And train in the activities of the Three Jewels.

The same text then states:

For the verbal preliminary,
 Make all the sounds and expressions of the six realms,
 The sounds of peaceful and wrathful deities,
 And the sound of the elements.

And further:

To perform the mental preliminary,
 Train your mind in the suffering of the six realms.

These are the divisions that effect the separation of body, speech, and mind.

First we have the body. Our ordinary bodies are produced from ignorance, which causes us to wander perpetually in samsara. To ensure that

this doesn't continue from here on out, body, speech, and mind must be separated from samsara.

This practice relates to both samsara and nirvana. Concerning the first of these, begin by going to an uninhabited, mountainous area. Bless a torma with the three syllables and dedicate it to the deities, nagas, and local guardians in the area. Then make the following command: "In this place, we are to practice the separation of samsara and nirvana. Until our activities have reached their conclusion, do not create any obstacles whatsoever, neither outer nor inner. Please aid us in our virtuous quest!" Then develop bodhichitta with the following thought: "From this moment on, until every sentient being has attained the precious state of buddhahood, I will separate samsara and nirvana with my body and will not revert back to samsara!"

Next, act out whatever behaviors of the six realms come to mind, be they physical, verbal, or mental. Experience all the various pleasures of the gods, all of their sense pleasures, songs, dance, and music. Act out their death and fall as well, and all the suffering this entails. Next come the demi-gods. The demi-gods fight and quarrel; they are killed and dismembered. They stage battles, wage wars, and do other such things. Along the way, they experience all manner of happiness and suffering. Act all this out as well. Lamas, rulers, and other wealthy humans experience various forms of happiness, enjoyments, and sense pleasures. The middle class engages in business and agriculture, subduing their enemies and protecting loved ones, while the impoverished live in a state of misery. Act out all of this, as well as the birth, old age, sickness, and death they all experience. In a similar manner, act out the stupidity, ignorance, and enslavement that animals experience, the hunger and thirst that torture spirits, and the suffering of heat and cold that those in hell have to bear.

Imagine all these forms of suffering as though you yourself are experiencing them. Physically run and leap about, move, and sit around; act out all the behaviors of the six realms.* Verbally, express all the various

* Author's note: "One approach that can be taken when separating samsara from nirvana is to separate the activities of the three gates from one another and practice them over three sessions, linking each with a particular object of purification. This includes the physical activities associated with the six realms and postures of the peaceful and wrathful deities, the sounds and speech of the six realms and mantras and sounds like HUM and P'ET, mentally experiencing the sufferings of the six realms, and so on. In this context, however, these are all practiced together. If you happen to be inclined to a more extensive approach, then do each separately."

sounds and expressions that these beings make. Do all this spontaneously and continuously until you're completely tired and worn out. Then, turn your attention to the ensuing state of consciousness, observe your mind in its original state, and relax.

Alternately, you can physically act out the expressions of the peaceful and wrathful blissful ones, verbally recite their mantras and make all their sounds, and mentally recreate the forms associated with either your personal development stage yidam deity or those of the peaceful and wrathful blissful ones. To the best of your ability, clearly visualize their forms, recall their purity, and stabilize divine pride. Then, once again, turn your attention towards the state of consciousness that follows and maintain your mind in its original state.

By practicing in this manner, physically there will be no heat or cold, hunger or thirst, fixation or clinging, nor anything to reject or embrace. In terms of speech, the intelligence born of meditation will arise concerning the words of your guru's instructions and their meaning. In terms of the mind, the experiences of unimpeded emptiness, clarity, and bliss will effortlessly arise. Practice until these have actually occurred.

These practices serve to purify the negativity of our ordinary body, speech, and mind, pacify obstacles, and reverse intense clinging. They also allow us to understand the relationship between the confused mind and the universe of the six classes of beings and to wear away our negativity and obscurations. Their ultimate function is to enlighten the individual as to the nature of vajra body, speech, and mind.

In the root texts, it is taught that the separations of body, speech, and mind should be separated and practiced in tandem with the preliminaries of the three gates.⁸³ Nevertheless, practicing the three separations together condenses the essential aspects of these practices, which is an important point. It is with this understanding that the gurus of the past have practiced as taught here.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Inner Separation of Samsara and Nirvana

ONCE AGAIN, those of you gathered here should begin by forming the appropriate motivation. Think to yourselves, "I will bring all sentient beings to the state of unsurpassed liberation, the manifest realization of the true nature!" With this motivation, listen to the teachings one-pointedly with an undistracted mind.

— HOW TO RECEIVE TEACHINGS —

The correct way to receive teachings is discussed in the *Precious Wish-fulfilling Treasury*:

Eliminate distractions and diversions,
Make actual and imagined Dharma offerings,
Prostrate, sit up straight, and join your palms,
Then listen respectfully without distraction.

As stated here, when listening to the Dharma, everything that causes distraction and creates diversions should be abandoned. Worldly business and other such factors cause the three gates to become distracted. In other words, when you become obsessed with gathering a retinue and accumulating material things, the mind becomes preoccupied, which is why such factors are referred to as "disturbances."

Start out by arranging a throne for the teacher in a place free from any factors that will create obstacles for the teaching. Next, prepare a seat of the finest materials and invite the teacher to sit. Make physical offerings, such as incense, flowers, and butter lamps, and imagined ones as well. For

the latter, visualize giant clouds of offerings, both things that are owned by others as well as those that are not. Visualize these offerings filling the entire expanse of space and then offer them to the teacher. You should not use makeup or parasols, walking sticks, or weapons, nor should you wear shoes or anything that covers your head. Do not glance around. Instead, sit in the vajra posture or a squatting position, lower your gaze, and join your palms together. Having done all this, sit and listen without letting yourself be distracted from the teachings.

The *Middle-length Perfection of Knowledge* states:

Fortunate men and women should venerate sacred beings and receive teachings from them. Having heard the teachings, they should practice them in the correct manner until perfect and complete enlightenment is attained.

In the *Precious Wish-fulfilling Treasury*, Longchenpa writes:

Applying the eighty-four ways to study,
Listen with an inspired, respectful attitude.

As written here, when listening one-pointedly to the Dharma you should be inspired and have great respect for the Dharma and the guru, listening with eighty-four different qualities. Here, *inspired* refers to the state of one-pointed clarity that comes about when there is a sense of delight and the mind has no afflicted thoughts. *Respect* means to avoid inconsequential chatter, sit up straight, join one's palms, and smile. The eighty-four ways to study can be learned from the sutras. Listing these eighty-four ways, the *Sutra Requested by Akshayamati* states:

With interest, by contemplating, with a corresponding superior attitude, with application, with a spiritual teacher, without pride, with conscientiousness, by paying homage, with harmony, with obedience, with veneration, by developing reverence, showing respect, listening attentively, directing the mind, being undistracted, by remaining, with the ideas of the wish-fulfilling jewel and medicine, by removing the chronic disease of the afflictions, with the receptacle of mindfulness, with realization and understanding, with the desire for intelligence, with memory, by never tiring of listening to the Dharma, by developing generosity, with

pacification and omniscience, studying widely, taking delight with respect, with physical ease, with peaceful speech, with a great sense of happiness, by listening without any weariness, listening to the words, thinking about their meaning, by listening with good behavior, listening diligently, listening to the teachings of others, studying the four ways of attracting students, listening to teachings one has not heard, training in clairvoyance, not desiring other vehicles, studying the perfections, studying the bodhisattva teachings, listening with skillful means, studying the four abodes of Brahma, studying mindfulness and introspection, studying with those who are learned about arising, being learned about nonarising, by ugliness, through love, through interdependent origination, through impermanence, through suffering, through selflessness, through peace, through emptiness, through the absence of signs, through the absence of desire, by not overapplying oneself, by engaging in virtue, by being blessed with the truth, without waste, with control, by protecting one's mind, protecting one's own side and vanquishing the other side (meaning demons, non-Buddhists, and the afflictions), by relying upon the seven riches, vanquishing poverty, through the praise of the learned, through the delight of the learned, through the universal knowledge of realized beings, through the sincere interest of those who are not realized beings, by seeing the truth, eliminating the shortcomings of the aggregates, evaluating the shortcomings of the conditioned, relying upon the meaning, relying upon the Dharma, relying upon wisdom, relying upon the sutras of definitive meaning, not engaging in any negativity, benefiting oneself and others, through the karma of good acts and not regretting them, through specificity, and attaining all the qualities of buddhahood—these are the eighty-four ways that bodhisattvas study.

In this context, the teachings that are to be studied in this manner are those of the Secret Mantra Vajra Vehicle.* In this tradition, it is taught that enlightenment is attained by completing all the paths and actualizing the

* Author's note: "At this point, a wise vajra master may add relevant material from the sutras and tantras as the teachings are explained, should they wish to give a more detailed presentation. However, I will offer no elaboration from this point forward save a general presentation of the main topics for each section."

realization of the three kayas of buddhahood. On this point, the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* states:

The enlightenment of buddhahood is not far away.
 Nature, words and meanings, divisions, classifications,
 Definite enumeration, characteristics, and difference—these seven
 topics
 Comprise the various kayas of perfect buddhahood.

The nature of perfect, genuine buddhahood consists of perfect abandonment and perfect wisdom. The former involves uprooting the afflictive and cognitive obscurations on the path, then eliminating them altogether immediately upon the attainment of the vajralike concentration. Since those related to meditative composure and the other obscurations all fall into one of these two categories, eliminating these two will effectively eliminate all obscurations.

The nature of perfect realization consists of wisdom and compassion. As stated in *Resting in the Nature of Mind*:

The qualities of realization are the levels and paths,
 Development and completion, and dharanis and concentrations,
 Endowed with the essence of wisdom.

As the nature of compassion, skillful methods are innumerable.

There are many different ways to classify the various forms of wisdom that make up the three kayas of buddhahood. Here I will give an overview of this topic. The wisdom of buddhahood is explained in both the sutras and their commentarial literature. The *Condensed Perfection of Knowledge* states:

Hence, if you desire to know the supreme wisdom of buddhahood, you should have faith in this, the mother of the victorious ones.

And in the twenty-first chapter of the same text:

There is the wisdom of unsurpassed buddhahood. There is the turning of the wheel of Dharma. There is the thorough maturation of sentient beings.

As stated here, the tataugas are the very embodiment of the two forms of wisdom: the wisdom that knows things as they are and the wisdom that knows things in their multiplicity. In this state, the qualities of abandonment and realization have been perfected, including the wisdom of the sphere of reality and the rest of the five wisdoms. All the shortcomings associated with ignorance have been purified as well, while the qualities of knowledge have blossomed in their entirety.

THE BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI

Our own teacher, Shakyamuni, the peerless King of the Shakyas, started out by developing supreme bodhichitta. He then proceeded to gather the accumulations for three incalculable eons, before finally attaining complete and perfect buddhahood. To elaborate, the sacred divine son Shvetaketu first beheld the five visions as he dwelt in Tushita, the Joyous Heaven. Then, placing his crown on the head of Maitreya and appointing him regent, he took the form of an elephant and entered the womb of Mayadevi. Ten months later he was born in Lumbini Grove, whereupon he was bathed by the gods. Since his mother passed away seven days after he was born, he was entrusted to Mahaprajapati and the rest of the thirty-two nurses. He then grew up like a lotus in the midst of a vast ocean. Since the king had accomplished all he set out to do, he named the young boy Siddhartha, "the one who accomplishes all goals."

Young Siddhartha dwelt in the palace and manifested the appearance of studying grammar, mathematics, archery, sports, and other subjects. The king then arranged his marriage to sixty thousand brides, including Gopa, the daughter of Dandapani Shakya; Yashodhara, the daughter of Ghantashabda; and Mirgaja, the daughter of Shuklodana. Each of these brides had a retinue of twenty thousand.⁸⁴

As he dwelt in the palace enjoying the five sense pleasures, the sound of a cymbal triggered his memory of the prayers he had made in the past and he heard following words:

Having seen the hundred sufferings that plague sentient beings,
You pledged to become their protector, refuge, and support;
To benefit, protect, and defend them.
This is the aspiration you made in times past.

Now, virtuous warrior, remember your previous deeds
And the aspirations you made to benefit beings!

And:

Remember the vow you made in the past:
That once free from death and suffering, with buddhahood
attained,
You would offer nectar to quench the thirst of those in need.
Now quickly take leave of this wonderful city!

Spurred on by these aspirations, he developed renunciation, mounted his chariot, and took it to the four directions of the city. In these four directions, he witnessed the four rivers of birth, old age, sickness, and death, as well as a mendicant who had entered the path that leads to liberation from these four. He then said to himself:

Aging, sickness, and death—
If these three did not exist,
I too would continue
To delight in pleasurable things.

Pondering these sufferings, he developed a firm sense of renunciation. He prostrated to his father, mounted Kanthaka, and ventured into the sky, each of his horse's hooves held aloft by one of the Four Great Kings. He then ordained himself in front of the Stupa of Purity.

Next he manifested the appearance of practicing meditation. In Vaishali, he practiced meditation with Aradakalama, training up to the level of nothing whatsoever.⁸⁵ He then went to Rajagriha, where he studied with Udraka Ramaputra, this time reaching the peak of existence.⁸⁶

After this, he manifested the appearance of practicing asceticism. First he ventured to the bank of the River Nairanjana and settled into a state of concentration that encompassed all of space. For two years, he ate only one grain of rice each year, and after that he drank only one drop of water a year for another two years. Finally, for two years he did not eat or drink anything at all.

Later, as he travelled to Vajrasana, he met a Brahmin girl named Sujata along the road. She offered him the distilled milk of five hundred cows.⁸⁷

Once he drank it, his body gained a golden luster. He then got some grass from the grass seller Svastika and arrived at Vajrasana. Arranging his seat with the grass he had received, he sat down cross-legged and made the following pledge:

So long as I do not attain the undefiled state,
I will not move from this cross-legged posture!

With this, he settled into a state of concentration.

As he sat in meditation, the demon Mara led an army of hundreds of millions against him, but the bodhisattva was resting in the absorption of love. All the weapons they fired at him transformed into a rain of flowers, and all of their screams and shouts turned into melodious praises. This subdued the minds of all the demons and turned back the hordes of Mara. Next, Mara's seven daughters came to seduce him with their charms, yet they were transformed into seven old hags. Regretting their acts, they confessed their misdeeds and returned to their previous states. At midnight he settled into the fourth level of concentration, and by morning he had actualized the wisdoms of understanding exhaustion and nonarising; he had attained the enlightenment of buddhahood.

For seven weeks he sat and taught the Dharma to no one. For the first week, he did not move from his cross-legged posture. In the second, he traveled throughout Jambudvipa. In the third, he ventured far into the three-thousandfold universe. In the fourth, he gazed at the bodhi tree. In the fifth, he traveled to the realm of Muchilinda, the king of nagas. In the sixth, he subdued the parivrajakas. And in the seventh, he dwelt in the Grove of the Rajayatana Tree, where the merchants Trapusha and Bhallika offered him honey and the four kings offered him a stone begging bowl.

After expressing the auspiciousness of these acts, he said the following:

Profound, peaceful, simple, luminous, and unconditioned
Is this nectarlike Dharma I have found.
Yet if I teach it to others, they will not understand,
So I shall stay silent and remain here in this wood.

With this, he formed a less altruistic mind-set.

At that time, Brahma remembered the Tatagata's previous aspirations

and urged him to turn the wheel of the Dharma. Indra implored him as well. This prompted him to venture to Varanasi, where he dwelt in the Deer Park of Rishipatana and turned the wheel of Dharma three times, teaching the retinue of five excellent disciples and eighty thousand gods about the four noble truths. Thus, there were twelve turnings in all.

In the perfect place of Vulture Peak Mountain, he turned the middle wheel of Dharma on the absence of characteristics, while in the realm of the nagas and a number of other unspecified places, he gave his final set of teachings, those on the definitive meaning.

In this way, he turned the wheel of the Dharma in such a way that the teachings he gave fit the specific mind-sets of the disciples who received them. Some beings that needed his guidance were established in the bliss of gods and humans. Others were set on the paths of the three vehicles and the principle of causality. The spiritual approach that leads to the bliss of gods and humans is called the Vehicle of the Higher States, referring to the result that ensues once one has practiced the cause of such states—the practice of the ten virtues and the abandonment of the ten forms of vice. As stated in the *Glorious Remainder*:

Practicing the ten virtues and giving up the ten forms of vice
Will cause one to be born as a god or human in the desire realm.

The Vehicle of True Goodness is divided into two, the Causal Vehicle of the Perfections and the Fruitional Vehicle, or Secret Mantra Vajra Vehicle. The first of these is divided further into the Vehicle of Listeners, the Vehicle of Solitary Buddhas, and the Vehicle of Bodhisattvas. The Secret Mantra Vajra Vehicle contains six divisions: Kriya, Upa, and Yoga; and Maha, Anu, and Ati. Together, these are the nine vehicles.

THE INNER SEPARATION

OF SAMSARA AND NIRVANA

The various vehicles taught above are all contained within the Great Perfection, the nature of which transcends the intellect. In fact, these vehicles are said to be nothing more than methods for realizing Atiyoga. As stated in the *King Who Creates All*:

Universally inclusive and subsuming all intents—
 All are condensed in the natural Great Perfection.
 This itself is the essence of everything,
 For within it, there is nothing left out.

To access the meaning of what is spoken of here, one must effectively separate samsara from nirvana in an internal manner. This section contains two divisions:

- ▶ A teaching on the separation of samsara and nirvana
- ▶ How to separate samsara and nirvana

Concerning the first of these divisions, the *Tantra of the Clear Expanse* states:

To bring the inner source of confusion to an end,
 Separate samsara from nirvana in an internal manner.

The outer separation of samsara and nirvana brings the external circumstances of confusion to an end. Nevertheless, if the internal sources and seeds of confusion have yet to be exhausted, aversion and the other forms of afflicted motivation will continue to plant their respective seeds, which in this case are the habitual patterns associated with vice. As a result, these habitual patterns will eventually become active again along with their potential, and the continuity of samsara's six realms will not be severed. To break through this cycle, samsara and nirvana must also be separated from one another in an internal manner.

The second section concerns how to go about actualizing this separation. There are three factors that need to be addressed here:

- ▶ The object of purification
- ▶ The process of purification
- ▶ The signs of successful practice

The objects of purification are all the negative karma and habitual tendencies that we have accumulated with the negative bodies we've had from time immemorial down to the present. On this point, the *Last Testament* states:

Since this body is produced by ignorance,
The six classes are present as seeds.

And:

This body comes into existence from ignorance and confusion.
Hence the body contains the seeds of the six classes of existence.

While the *Tantra of the Clear Expanse* states:

At the crown, throat, heart, navel,
Secret place, and soles of the feet
Are AH, SU, NRI, TRI, PRE, and TU.

Because the seed syllables of the six realms mentioned here have yet to be purified, we wander continuously throughout the six classes of existence and experience the suffering of samsara's three worlds. To purify the seeds of this process, as well as the causes that lead our body, speech, and mind into a state of confusion, we need to separate samsara from nirvana.

Visualize a white AH syllable at your crown as the seed of the gods and their habitual patterns; a gold SU syllable in your throat as the seed of the demi-gods and their habitual patterns; a greyish-blue NRI syllable in your heart center as the seed of humanity with all of its attendant habitual patterns; a dark red TRI at your navel, the seed of the animals and their habitual patterns; a green PRE syllable in your secret place as the seed of the spirits and their habitual patterns; and smoke-colored TU syllables at the soles of your feet as the seed of the hell beings and their habitual patterns. Visualize all of these clearly and meditate that the entire range of habitual patterning associated with each of these realms is drawn in and dissolves into these syllables.

In an impure state, the habitual patterns created by karma and affliction accumulate in these six syllables. Anger and the other factors motivated by aversion accumulate on the syllable TU. Similarly, attachment accumulates on PRE, pride on AH and NRI, envy on SU, and stupidity on TRI. In his explanation of the Secret Heart Essence, Vimalamitra writes:⁸⁸

Through the functioning of the mental consciousness, the factor that causes a rebirth as either a human or god accumulates, respectively, on the AH and NRI syllables. Through the func-

tioning of the universal ground consciousness, the factors that cause birth as either an animal or demi-god accumulate on the TRI and SU syllables, respectively. Through the functioning of the five sense consciousnesses and the afflicted consciousness, the factors that cause birth as spirits and hell beings accumulate on the PRE and TU syllables. These factors are present in the mind stream of all sentient beings throughout the six realms.

As stated here, the seeds of the afflictions and their habitual patterns, those of the five poisons and greed, are the basis for purification.

Second, we have the factors that are generated to purify these—the three syllables of enlightened body, speech, and mind. The *Last Testament* explains:

Since awareness is the true three kayas,
The three kayas manifest as three syllables.
Master the power of these syllables and make the separation.

As indicated here, visualize the syllable of the enlightened body at your crown, a brilliant white OM; in your throat visualize a brilliant red AH, the syllable of enlightened speech; and in your heart center, a brilliant blue HUM, the syllable of enlightened mind. The omniscient lord of Dharma, Longchenpa, explains:

At the time of realization, the virtues that manifest as the self-display of wisdom amass on the three syllables of enlightened body, speech, and mind. The virtue created by deity meditation and other factors linked with enlightened body settles on the syllable OM. That of mantra recitation and other related factors settles on the syllable AH, while that associated with nonconceptual meditations and the like settles on the syllable HUM. This process purifies the six syllables, which are the basis of the purificatory process, as well as the habitual patterns that rest upon them.

While verbally reciting OM AH HUM, visualize the three-colored fire of wisdom blazing forth from the syllables at your three places. This fire com-

pletely incinerates each of the six syllables associated with the six classes of samsaric existence, as well as their attendant habitual patterns, to the point where nothing more remains. It blesses ordinary body, speech, and mind with the enlightened body, speech, and mind of the victorious ones and floods all the realms of the six classes of existence with light. Visualize that each of these realms, along with its habitual patterns, is incinerated into nothingness and that all the causes and results of samsara and the lower realms, both your own and those of others, are refined away. Imagine that your body then becomes brilliantly clear, like a crystal ball wiped clean. As you visualize all this, recite OM AH HUM seven hundred thousand times with a beautiful melody.

This process uses the syllables of the victorious ones' enlightened body, speech, and mind to refine away the six syllables that are the seeds of the six classes of existence. Once this takes place, you will be freed from the various forms of karma that accompany them, which is associated with the happiness and suffering of samsara, and all obstacles will be pacified.

The third section deals with the various signs and omens that occur once this process has effectively purified negativity and obscurations. Signs that physical impurities have been purified include being cleansed, wearing fresh clothes, and the body transforming, such that it resembles a crystal ball or other such thing. As signs that verbal impurities have been purified, many omens may occur. One may hear a conch being blown, for example, or instruments being played and mantras resounding. One may also become eloquent or develop a great vocal range. Signs that mental impurities have been purified include clear senses, finding crystals, jewels, or treasure, and being enthusiastic about virtuous deeds. In brief, the intense fixation associated with ordinary body, speech, and mind will cease and various signs that herald the occurrence of wonderful qualities will manifest. At best, they will occur manifestly. If not, they will occur as visionary experiences, or at the very least, in the dream state. Exert yourself in this practice over and over again until at least some of these signs have actually manifested.

In the *Thorough Realization of Empowerment*, it is written:

The ordinary body, speech, and mind
Of whomever makes the separation

Will be inseparable from the body, speech, and mind
Of all the buddhas throughout the three times.

On the other hand, if the separation of samsara and nirvana is not made with reference to one's ordinary body, speech, and mind, the causes of samsara will remain and one will end up reversing course from the positive qualities listed above. As stated in the *Tantra of Penetrating Sound*:

If samsara is not separated from nirvana,
The connection to the three worlds
And ordinary body, speech, and mind will not be severed.
Thus, samsara and nirvana must be separated.

You should practice in this manner assiduously.

CHAPTER NINE

The Vajra Stance

ONCE AGAIN, listen respectfully to the teachings with a one-pointed mind free from distraction. The need to study and practice the sacred Dharma in the correct manner is addressed in the *Jataka Tales*, which state:

Study is a lamp that dispels the darkness of ignorance,
A supreme jewel that cannot be stolen by a thief or anyone else,
And the weapon that conquers all that is thoroughly afflicting.
It is the supreme companion that illuminates the methods and key
instructions.

It is the supreme gift when one meets with realized beings.
It will delight those who are learned in the midst of an assembly
And overwhelm one's opponents like the light of the sun.
The guides will offer praise and the impure will be cleared away.

And again, from the *Jataka Tales*:

By being subdued and extremely bright, confidence will be born,
And one will immediately gain great renown.
This is the cause of extraordinary eloquence.
Study habituates one to excellence, clarifies the meaning, and brings
realization.
With study, there will be no conflicts
And one will fully dwell on the path of the Three Collections.

The following passage from the *Principles of Elucidation* explains the benefits of listening one-pointedly:

Those who listen with faith will reap merit
 That leads to the happiness of the higher realms;
 They will have the seed of knowledge
 That brings about the transcendence of suffering.

And further:

The Blessed One taught that there are five benefits to listening to the Dharma: One will hear all that has not been heard, one will become adept in what has been heard, hesitation will be eliminated, one's view will be true, and one's knowledge will bring realization of the words and their profound meaning.

There are also benefits for those who are teaching the Dharma, for doing so is the supreme offering one can make to the Buddha, as well as the highest form of generosity towards sentient beings. Teaching causes merit to flourish and brings the attainment of clairvoyant powers. Concerning the first of these, the sutras state:

Teaching my Dharma correctly
 To benefit another is supreme.
 Flowers, perfumes, and butter lamps
 Are not true offerings to the Victorious One.

Addressing the highest form of generosity, the *Maitreya Sinhanadika Sutra* states:

If one were to completely fill with jewels as many
 Buddha realms as there are grains of sand in the Ganges,
 Then joyfully offer them to the victorious ones,
 Or give a single verse to another sentient being,
 The incredibly vast offering of precious jewels
 Wouldn't equal even a fraction of the generosity
 Involved in compassionately giving the verse.
 How could one possibly fathom what happens
 When two or three verses are given?

In addition, it is also said that the generosity of the Dharma causes merit to flourish and brings the attainment of innumerable clairvoyant powers. The *Compendium of Instructions* states:

The generosity of offering the Dharma is not material.
It is what causes virtue to flourish.

And in the *Sinhanadika Sutra*:

Through the generosity of offering the Dharma past lives are remembered.

While the *Sutra Requested by the King of Nagas Sagara* explains:

Through the generosity of the Dharma, one will come to perceive directly the exhaustion of all defilement.

There are also innumerable benefits involved in memorizing the teachings one has heard. The *Sutra Requested by Sagaramati* states:

Those who memorize the tataugas' sacred Dharma
Will become protectors of the world like Indra and Brahma.
They will be universal emperors and rulers of mankind,
With happiness, peace of mind, and awakening to enlightenment.

— TEACHING THE DHARMA: THE BUDDHAS —

There are three different approaches to explaining and listening to the Dharma: the approach of the buddhas, the approach of the foe destroyers, and the approach of the scholars. The buddhas turn the wheel of the Dharma using their three miraculous powers. The first of these is the miraculous power of manifesting magical displays. Demonstrating infinite magical feats, such as emanating light, rising seven tree lengths up into the sky, and other such displays, the buddhas instill faith and interest in those who are in need of guidance. This is the miraculous power of enlightened form.

With the miraculous power of expression, they clairvoyantly perceive

the specific class, mind-set, and latent tendencies of those in need of guidance, and then know how to teach the Dharma accordingly. Through this, they are able to bless the mind stream of each member of their retinue. This is the miraculous power of enlightened mind.

Once this has made the disciples' mind stream pure and workable, they rain down the Dharma according to the personal interests of their students by means of the miraculous power of fitting instructions. Through these three powers, they link beings with the states of the higher realms and true goodness.

As explained in the following passage from the *Treasury of Higher Dharma*, teaching is the supreme miraculous power.

Of the miraculous powers, teaching is supreme
Because it is undeluded, fitting, and brings a pleasant result.

The rationale for the necessity of these three miraculous powers is that those in need of guidance must be inspired by magical displays, since not having faith renders one an unfit vessel for the Dharma. As written in the *Way of the Bodhisattva*:

Do not teach the Dharma to those without respect,
To those who wrap their heads with cloth, though not sick;
To those with parasols, staffs, or weapons,
Or those whose heads are covered.

With the power of expression, buddhas understand the individual mind stream of the student and its degree of malleability. This allows them to impart fitting instructions in a manner that matches their particular interests and karmic propensities.

If the teachings are not given in this way, they will be of no benefit to the disciple, just as medicine can turn to poison when prescribed to treat the wrong illness. The *Way of the Bodhisattva* states:

Those fit for the vast Dharma
Should not be linked with the Lesser Vehicle.

And in the *Rich Array of Ornaments Sutra*:

If a practitioner is not ready for such teachings,
 And is introduced to teachings on emptiness,
 It will be as though nectar had turned to poison.

Hence, the teachings of the Great and Lesser Vehicles are taught in such a way that they are linked with the different levels of disciples.

When taught in this way, teachings are said to be virtuous in the beginning, virtuous in the middle, and virtuous in the end; sublime in meaning, with sublime words and syllables, and distinct; and also completely perfect, completely pure, and completely refined. To explain, that which is virtuous in the beginning, middle, and end is virtuous insofar as discipline, concentration, and knowledge have come together and have not been allowed to degenerate. The sublime meaning is the unmistakable content that is expressed, while sublime words and syllables are the vehicles of expression that allow this meaning to be understood. *Distinct* means that they are unique and unlike anything else. *Completely perfect* refers to the fact the Buddha's teachings remedy the entire range of afflictions, and *completely pure* means they bring liberation from the afflictions that pertain to one's particular level and that they are of an essentially liberating nature. They are completely refined insofar as they liberate one's mind stream by eliminating the latent tendencies associated with the afflictions at other levels.

In the *Treasury of Higher Dharma*, it is written:

The two forms of our Teacher's sacred teachings
 Have the nature of scripture and realization.

The Buddhist scriptures are referred to as the "Dharma of scripture," while the "Dharma of realization" refers to three factors: the path, nirvana, and the basis of supreme merit. That which is realized possesses a twofold purity. It is pure in the sense that the sphere of reality is pure by its very nature, and also in the sense of being liberated from adventitious impurities. That which realizes this is subjective knowledge, which is without appearance. The "Dharma of realization" is referred to as such from the perspective of the conventional mind by condensing these two factors. Finally, the "sacred Dharma" refers to the highest of all that is free from desire.

When it comes to this sacred Dharma, there are innumerable vehicles

and avenues of practice. Nevertheless, the very essence of them all, their true culmination, is the Secret Mantra of the Great Vehicle, the Vajrayana. The *Torch of the Three Methods* explains:

It has the same objective, yet is free of confusion,
 It is rich in methods, without difficulties,
 And for those with sharp faculties—
 From this perspective, the Mantra Vehicle is superior.

In the approach mentioned here, one is guided through the superior path of skillful means, in which enlightenment is attained in a single lifetime.

— THE VAJRA STANCE —

There are three preliminary practices associated with the three gates, the first of which pertains to the body. On this practice, the *Tantra of Penetrating Sound* states:

Holding the vajra posture,
 Train the body and benefit the mind.

When the vital points of the body are penetrated, the lucid and impure aspects of the mind are separated from one another. To bring about this separation, you must practice the vajra stance. Stand up on a thick cushion with your body straight and the soles of your feet joined together. Dig your toes into the ground and spread your knees out to the sides. With your palms joined, raise your hands over the crown of your head, but without touching it, and spread your elbows outwards. Tuck your chin in to compress the windpipe and, finally, vigorously tense the muscles of your arms and legs. Your body should be like a three pronged vajra, pointed on the top and pointed on the bottom. Practice this day and night.

As for the visualization, imagine yourself to be a blue, three-pronged vajra, blazing with fire. Once your body begins to burn and you cannot maintain the posture any longer, heat will arise and your mind will enter a nonconceptual state. When it does, let your body collapse naturally and then maintain your original state of nonconceptuality.

It is important to perform the separation using physical actions. The *Great Array* explains:

One who wishes to perform the separation
To turn naturally away from physical activity
Should do as was explained above,
Performing the outer separation in a genuine manner.
Once one has reversed course in this manner,
There will be no abiding, and the body
Will not become involved with the three realms.

The three upper prongs of the vajra stance represent essence, nature, and compassion, while the lower three signify the three kayas. The point at which these two converge in the center symbolizes taking the two practices of breakthrough and direct leap onto the path as being of a single essence.

Performing the physical preliminary practice in this way performs three functions: an ordinary function, a specific function, and an ultimate function. Concerning the first of these, this practice purifies every trace of physical negativity. It also serves to pacify all harmful forces and obstacles associated with the body, since such forces will see the body as a vajra blazing with fire. Finally, it reverses whatever clinging one may have towards the body. As to its specific function, by reversing clinging in this manner, one will no longer engage samsara and the body will be liberated into the nirmanakaya. Its ultimate function is to transcend suffering and reach the primordial state, in which one's own body and the vajra body of all the buddhas are inseparable. Keeping these functions in mind, practice this day and night with intense diligence.

CHAPTER TEN

Sealing Appearances and the Aggregates

ONCE AGAIN, those of you gathered here should begin by giving rise to precious bodhichitta. Think to yourselves, "I will bring all sentient beings to the state of perfect buddhahood. To this end, I will listen to the sacred Dharma in the correct manner and put the teachings into practice!" Listen carefully with this motivation.

The scriptures state:

Having thoroughly gathered your thoughts,
Listen with a completely altruistic attitude.
Those with forgetful minds will not be blessed
By Vajrasattva and the other blissful ones.

This approach to receiving teachings with a sense of enthusiasm is also discussed in the *Sutra of the Wise and the Foolish*, which recounts the tale of King Chiling Karling, who pounded a thousand nails into his own body just to hear a single stanza of the Dharma. Another story tells how King Kanashinasali used his own body to make one thousand butter lamps, again, just to hear a single stanza of the Dharma.

As these and other such tales show, some individuals are capable of enduring innumerable hardships to receive teachings. We, in contrast, are able to receive the profound and vast teachings of the Great Vehicle right now, without having to undergo any hardships at all. How wonderful this is! Even if the teachings are given day and night without interruption, you should receive them with a sense of delight and enthusiasm. As is said, "The precious Dharma is rare and involves many hardships." How incredibly rare it is to have the good fortune to listen to and receive teachings on the Dharma, living as we do in a borderland at the end of an era.

Even if we have no great understanding of the teachings we receive, just hearing the sound of the Dharma is extremely beneficial. To give one example, long ago a female dog heard the sound of the teachings being given by a monk named Upakuté, and this was enough to wear down her obscurations. When she died, she was born as a god in the Heaven of Mastery over Others' Creations. Another story tells of a pigeon that lived nearby a monk. Early each morning, this pigeon heard the monk reciting the *Condensed Perfection of Knowledge*. Sometimes day would break when the monk had recited half the text, and sometimes when he had recited two-thirds, at which point the pigeon would fly off. Just hearing the sound of the teachings contained in the sublime *Condensed Perfection of Knowledge* wore down the pigeon's obscurations. No sooner did it die than it was reborn as a human, who then gained faith in the Three Jewels. With this newfound faith, the pigeon, now a man, took ordination. He had only to look at the portions of the text he had heard to understand them, without needing to memorize them.

If such great benefits ensue when a mere animal hears the sound of the teachings, then what about we humans? It is said that we are defined by our ability to communicate and understand. For this reason we are suitable vessels for explaining and receiving teachings and can put them into practice. What wonderfully good fortune!

TEACHING THE DHARMA: — THE FOE DESTROYERS —

The Dharma is taught in three different ways. The first of these was taught in the previous section and pertains to the buddhas, who teach the Dharma via their three miraculous powers. Next are the foe destroyers, who teach the Dharma via the three purities: the pure vessel, pure speech, and pure content. Respectively, these three refer to the students who are fit to receive the teachings, the teacher who instructs them, and the content that is expressed, i.e., the Buddha's teachings. As a foe destroyer, the teacher first clairvoyantly examines the students to tell if they are fit vessels for the Dharma. Those who are fit vessels are then taken on as disciples. These disciples listen to the pure speech of their teachers and apply themselves to their speech and words in a faultless manner. In other words, the pure meaning of the Dharma—the various types of speech that guide

one to liberation—are imparted in an unmistaken and undeluded manner, bringing great benefit.

At this point, one may wonder why it is that the foe destroyers do not teach via the three miraculous powers. The reason for this is that they are still subject to four factors that impede understanding. The first factor is environmental circumstance. For example, if a given location is simply too far away, a foe destroyer will not be aware of it. This was the case with Maudgalyayana, who did not know where his mother had been reborn. The second factor is temporal circumstance, which refers to the fact that foe destroyers do not know what took place in the extremely distant past. Shariputra, for instance, was unaware that the layman Shrija possessed the seed of liberation. The third factor is the circumstance of characteristics. This includes the fact that foe destroyers are unaware of the infinite range of results that follow from a cause, as well as the infinite range of causes that lead to a particular result. As shown in the sutras:

The one who knows the distinct causes
 Of the pattern of colors on a peacock's tail
 Is omniscient, for this cannot be known
 Without the wisdom of omniscience.

In addition, there are many teachings of the buddhas that the foe destroyers do not comprehend. Since they do not attain the ten strengths, the fourfold fearlessness, the four correct discriminations, and the other qualities of great enlightenment, they lack the ability to behold the entire range of the Buddha's teachings, including the teachings on buddha nature. Hence, as stated in the *Commentary on the Unsurpassed Continuum*:

In brief, there are four classes of individuals that are classified as not having the eyes to see buddha nature. These four are worldly beings, listeners, solitary buddhas, and bodhisattvas who have newly entered the Great Vehicle.

SEALING APPEARANCES AND THE AGGREGATES

Generally speaking, the first eight vehicles, from the Listener Vehicle up to and including Anuyoga, are merely paving the way and laying a foundation

for the Atiyoga path. As the true path, Atiyoga is what brings the attainment of the actual fruition.

In this context, the particular instructions of the Great Perfection Atiyoga tradition that concern us here are the four verbal preliminary practices. The *Tantra of Penetrating Sound* explains:

For speech, while chanting HUM,
Seal, advance your training, develop malleability,
And take to the road . . .

There are two further divisions in the first of the practices mentioned here: sealing external appearances and sealing the internal aggregates.

SEALING APPEARANCES

In an isolated place, seat yourself in the seven-point posture and visualize a blue HUM syllable in your heart center. Once its appearance is vividly clear, leave your lips and teeth barely apart and mingle your subtle energies, consciousness, and the HUM syllable. Then, as you sing HUM with a beautiful melody in a long, drawn out manner, visualize a stream of HUM syllables emerging from the HUM syllable in your heart and issuing forth from your right nostril. Imagine these syllables completely saturating the entire range of external appearances, which, as a result, manifest in the nature of HUM. This constitutes the practice of sealing, which functions to liberate appearances as lacking true existence.

In the *Last Testament* it is taught that one should practice the vital point of sealing for three days. Hence, though there is a tradition in which the practices of sealing external appearances and sealing the internal aggregates are separated from one another and taught in two sessions, here they are addressed together. When practiced, however, they should be practiced separately. One can be practiced in an earlier session and one later, for example, or one can be practiced one day and the other the next.

SEALING THE AGGREGATES

As before, go to an isolated place and seat yourself in the correct posture. Visualize the blue HUM syllable in your heart, and then imagine more HUM syllables emanating out and emerging from your right nostril. All

the HUM syllables that have saturated external objects then return and enter unimpededly through your left nostril. Next, visualize the interior of your body becoming entirely saturated with these syllables. Recite HUM as many times as you can and then retain the breath.

At a certain point, it will seem as though your body has become effortlessly filled with HUM syllables and you may feel an uncomfortable sensation. This is the decisive factor when it comes to sealing the inner aggregates. This practice functions to liberate the inner flesh and blood aggregates into their lack of inherent existence. In the context of both the outer and inner process of sealing, you should sing HUM with a beautiful melody and in a long, drawn out manner. Merge the energies, consciousness, and HUM in this way and practice with intense diligence.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Advanced Training

ONCE AGAIN, all of you gathered together and assembled here should be of one mind. Give rise to supreme bodhichitta by thinking to yourselves, "I will now receive these sacred teachings in the correct manner and put them into practice so that I may bring all sentient beings, both myself and others, to the state of omniscience—unparalleled buddhahood!" Having set the stage with this motivation, listen carefully to the teachings.

The benefits of listening to and receiving teachings on the Dharma are too numerous to count, as shown in the following tale:

Long ago there was a monk who taught the Dharma. As he gave a teaching in an open field one time, a frog nearby heard the sound of his voice. A cowherd named Nanda went to receive the teachings as well, but as he did he absentmindedly crushed the frog under his walking stick and killed it.

Because it had heard the Dharma before, and because it died with the sound of the Dharma clearly in its ears, the frog was instantly reborn as a god in the Heaven of the Thirty-three. This, in turn, enabled it to understand three facts: from whence it had come, where it was born, and what karma had propelled it there. Examining these three, it realized that it had been a frog in the past, and that merely hearing the sound of the Dharma had resulted in its rebirth as a god. With this understanding, it brought many divine flowers to the Buddha and, accompanied by many divine children, prostrated before him.

When they arrived, the Buddha said, "All conditioned things

are impermanent. All phenomena are without a self. All that is defiled is suffering. Nirvana is peace."

Hearing this, the divine child beheld the truth.

In this way, just hearing the sound of the Dharma purifies obscurations and lays the foundation for the Dharma in the future. For this very reason, it is important to apply oneself diligently by studying and contemplating over and over again. As stated in the sutras:

Through study, one will understand the Dharma.

Through study, one will turn away from negativity.

Through study, pointless pursuits will be abandoned.

Through study, nirvana will be attained.

Hence, studying the sacred Dharma without partiality is an extremely important point.

— TEACHING THE DHARMA: THE SCHOLARS —

As explained above, there are three ways to explain the Dharma. The first two of these, the approaches of the buddhas and foe destroyers, were taught earlier. Next we have the approach of the scholars, which is twofold. The scholars of the glorious Nalanda Monastery explained all of the Buddha's teachings using the five perfections and all the treatises using the five factors for appraising texts.

The five perfections are those of place, teacher, teaching, retinue, and time. With the sambhogakaya realms and emanated [nirmanakaya] places, these are taught to be both thoroughly unconditioned and conditioned. In terms of the thoroughly unconditioned sambhogakaya realm that abides in the ground itself, these five are as follows: the perfect place is the Richly Arrayed Supreme Realm; the perfect teacher is glorious Vairochana; the perfect teaching is the Great Vehicle alone; the perfect retinue consists of bodhisattvas who have attained the levels; and the perfect time is the continuous cycle of eternity.

There were three turnings of the wheel of Buddhist doctrine in the conditioned realms. In the first turning, the perfect place was the Deer Park of Rishipatana, the Grove of the Gift of Fearlessness, which is located outside

Varanasi; the perfect teacher was Shakyamuni; the perfect teaching was the four truths; the perfect retinue was the five excellent disciples along with eighty thousand gods; and the perfect time was the period seven weeks after Shakyamuni attained buddhahood.

In the middle turning, the perfect place was Vulture Peak Mountain in Rajagriha; the perfect teacher was Shakyamuni; the perfect teaching was made up of the extensive, moderate, and condensed doctrines, which are included in the six classes. The perfect retinue was twofold: the ordinary retinue consisted of a great gathering of people, including Shariputra, Maudgalyayana, Subhuti, and the rest of a group of five thousand monks; Prajapati and five hundred nuns; and the householder Anathapindada, the laywoman Vishakha, and a great assembly of male and female lay people. The extraordinary retinue consisted of billions upon billions of bodhisattvas, including Bhadrapala, Ratnasambhava, and Susartavaha. The perfect time was a period of eleven years and ten months.

In the final turning, the perfect place consisted of the heavens, the naga realm, Rajagriha, Padminagara, and other places; the perfect teacher was, as before, Shakyamuni; the perfect teaching was the teaching on buddha nature and the other divisions of the definitive meaning; the perfect retinue consisted of many assemblies, both ordinary and extraordinary; the perfect time was a period of thirty-two years. This explains the distinction between the unconditioned sambhogakaya and conditioned nirmanakaya realms.

In this context, the dharmakaya teachers dwell in the realization of the combined three kayas, which are beyond meeting and parting. These teachers experience the perfect enjoyment of the nature of the five perfections. For them, the perfect place is the completely pure sphere of reality, infinite and uninvolved with any conceptual reference points. In this sphere, the perfect teacher Samantabhadra spontaneously enacts the entire range of natural activities. His perfect retinue consists of the perfect enjoyment of the apparent aspect of the kayas and wisdoms, which are none other than Samantabhadra himself (and the infinite number of vajra holders that spontaneously appear out of his display). As the perfect teaching, he teaches this retinue the vajra nature of reality itself—the great wisdom mind of self-occurring luminosity, which has not been conditioned by anyone. The perfect time is the pure witnessing of reality itself, through which the teachings, transcending words and letters, self-occur and self-manifest. The *Tantra of the Sole Offspring of All the Buddhas* states:

The teachers Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri
 Spoke this from the natural expanse:
 Listen retinue, self-expressions of the natural state,
 This self-occurring wisdom alone
 Is the sole offspring of all the buddhas.

When appraising a treatise, there are five factors that must be taken into account: its author, its scriptural source, the genre to which it belongs, its purpose and intended audience, and a comprehensive summary of its contents.

ADVANCED TRAINING

— WITH APPEARANCES AND THE AGGREGATES —

The very pinnacle of all the Buddha's teachings, treatises, tantras, and key instructions is the Great Perfection, the teaching of the dharmakaya. Of the instructions on this topic, the first verbal preliminary practice was addressed earlier. The second verbal preliminary practice is advanced training, in which there are two steps: advanced training with external appearances and advanced training with the inner aggregates.⁸⁹

ADVANCED TRAINING WITH APPEARANCES

Go to an isolated place and sit upright with your body in the correct posture. Clearly visualize a blue HUM syllable in your heart center and then chant short HUM syllables in a sharp and forceful manner. As you do so, imagine many dark blue HUMs shooting out from the HUM at your heart center one after another. Some of these HUMs should be big and some small, each equal in size to the outer object it is directed towards. Fierce, violent, sharp, and swift, these powerful syllables bore into all external appearances until they become totally insubstantial. At the conclusion of all this, chant one long HUM and imagine that all these appearances become completely transparent. Then relax.

The sign that you have trained with appearances in this manner is that you will come to feel that while things do appear, they lack inherent existence; that they are evanescent and insubstantial like a rainbow. This is what is meant by "advanced training with appearances."

The function of this practice is as follows. Previously, you have clung to these appearances as though they were real and permanent, not understanding that they lack inherent existence. This practice will enable you to train, from this point forward, in the fact that appearances lack inherent existence. In doing so, you will be confident when you arrive at the main practice and will not fixate on these appearances as being real.

ADVANCED TRAINING WITH THE AGGREGATES

The next step is to advance your training with the inner aggregates. Once again, seat yourself in the correct posture. Chanting **HUM** forcefully, visualize **HUM** syllables with the four characteristics mentioned above—fierce, violent, sharp, and swift—only this time, imagine them piercing your own body. Imagine them boring unhindered into your entire body, from front to back and top to bottom, until it becomes evanescent and insubstantial. To conclude, chant one long **HUM** and imagine your body becoming like a sieve inside and out. Then relax.

As a sign that your visualization has hit its mark, your muscles will begin to burn, throb, and ache, and you will have the sense that the body is insubstantial and evanescent. You will experience the feeling that it lacks inherent existence, like the reflection of the moon in water. When this comes to pass, you will be adept in this practice.

The function of this practice is as follows. Up to now, your attachment and fixation towards the aggregates have caused you to cling to an “I,” a “self,” and you haven’t recognized that the body has no inherent existence of its own. From this point forward, this practice will elicit the understanding that the body lacks any such inherent existence. Once you have arrived at the main practice, this will rid you of any clinging towards the “self,” regardless of the illness and suffering you may experience physically. By realizing that the self does not exist, you will gain confidence and be free from any fixation or attachment towards the body. Consequently, illness and malevolent forces will not affect you. Ultimately, this practice functions to liberate the aggregates into luminosity, the rainbow body. Hence, you should apply yourself to this practice with intense diligence.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Malleability and Taking to the Road

ONCE AGAIN, listen carefully to the teachings you are about to receive. Listen respectfully, with a one-pointed mind, and without distraction. You should train in receiving teachings as taught in the Great and Lesser Vehicles. On this point, the *Jataka Tales* states:

Study is a lamp that dispels the darkness of ignorance,
A supreme jewel that cannot be stolen by a thief or anyone else,
And the weapon that conquers all that is thoroughly afflicting.
It is the supreme companion that illuminates the methods and key
instructions.

It is the supreme gift when one meets with realized beings.
It will delight those who are learned in the midst of an assembly
And overwhelm one's opponents like the light of the sun.
The guides will offer praise and the impure will be cleared away.

Hardship should be willingly embraced for the sacred Dharma; one should practice with care, diligently, and with great intensity. As written in the *Precious Wish-fulfilling Treasury*:

To pacify the afflictions that torment the space of mind,
To which we have been accustomed since time immemorial,
We must seek the Dharma as Sudhana and Sadaprarudita did—
Abandoning discouragement and following our spiritual teacher.

As explained above, until karma and the afflictions have been done away with, we need to pacify them by following a guru superior to ourselves, the reason being that this is how one must attain superior qualities.

The following stories illustrate this approach. In the city Saukhyakara, there lived a boy named Sudhana, the son of an extremely wealthy merchant. Sudhana traveled all over the South on a continual quest for the Dharma. In the course of his travels, he studied with 108 gurus. Fifty-four of these gurus, including Manjusinha, gave him prophecies and blessings. After their instructions, there were fifty-four more whom he served.⁹⁰

The bodhisattva Sadaprarudita⁹¹ sold his own flesh when he was seeking the Perfection of Knowledge teachings. Setting off in a chariot with the daughter of a merchant and a retinue of five hundred, he traveled east to the city of Ghandavat, where he venerated the bodhisattva Dharmodgata with offerings. We too need this same type of resolve and diligent exertion.

— THE THREE KAYAS AND FIVE PERFECTIONS —

The primordial ground precedes all distinctions between samsara and nirvana; it does not fall to any extreme. The objective sphere of reality is pure by its very nature. Like the center of wide-open space, it is empty and accommodating. Like the depths of a clear ocean, it is transparent and unmoving. And like the surface of a polished mirror, it is clear and unobscured. This true and primordial nature is present as the empty essence, clear nature, and unimpeded radiance of compassion.

In this state, the four types of energy, as the life-force of knowledge, act as a mount. These four set compassion—the essence of awareness—into motion, which then manifests externally. From this, an accommodating plane of existence comes about from the essence component. The nature component then causes the appearances of spontaneously present wisdom to arise within this plane of existence. Then, due to the compassion component, the knowledge that allows one to differentiate objects manifests as the capacity to analyze. In that very instant, all this is understood to be self-manifest. With this understanding, awareness recognizes itself and the primordial ground is self-liberated on its own. This is the fundamental awakening of Samantabhadra.

At this time, inner clarity—omniscient wisdom free of all constructed limitations—is present as the nature of an extremely subtle form of self aware wisdom. This wisdom abides within the realm of the dharmakaya, the precious sphere of spontaneous presence. It does not, however, have a

face, hands, or any other such distinct features. Rather, it is present merely by virtue of the fact that it neither meets nor parts from the appearances of the nature and compassion that arise from the unimpeded radiance of the basis of manifestation.

The perfect teachers at this time are Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri. Samantabhadra is the king of self-knowing awareness. Samantabhadri, as reality itself, is the wisdom of equality, the nature of which does not change or fluctuate with the four times. In the great fortress of reality itself, the realm of the youthful vase body, dwells their retinue—the assembled ocean of wisdom—which is inseparable from them and their very embodiment. Within a state free of fluctuation and change, the uncreated, precious teachings of enlightened body, speech, and mind are present there as well, without moving, occurring, abiding, being received, cast away, or changing.

In this way, the dharmakaya self-manifests as a realm of luminosity within the primordial ground, enacting the perfection of the entire range of the appearances of the three kayas—this is the true nature of the peaceful dharmakaya. Since the dharmakaya itself transcends any objective agent or act, it is not restricted by its own displays or representations.

Both the environments where beings live and the teachers who appear manifest from the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. We will now address the way in which this occurs. The vast sambhogakaya appears out of the display of the apparent aspect of the profound sambhogakaya. This takes place via the five perfections. The perfect place in this context is the Completely Pure Richly Arrayed Realm. The perfect teacher is the Great Glacial Lake Vairochana, who holds a precious wheel as a symbol of his supreme enlightenment. From the empty spaces in this wheel comes the stalk of a great lotus. Upon its stamen and center are twenty-five third-order thousandfold universes, located one on top of the other. In the thirteenth universe that sits in the central core of these twenty-five is a universe known as Endurance. The base and center of this universe are ornamented with flowers, and it consists of a beautiful arrangement of one billion worlds, each with four continents and Mount Meru. All of these universes are stacked one above the other like a pile of cloth and nestled together like domes of silk. Each is ornamented with the incalculable manifestations of the five perfections, those of teacher, teaching, retinue, Dharma, and time.

Beneath the crossed legs of Vairochana are sixteen great pure realms,

stacked one upon another like jeweled umbrellas and nestled together like an immeasurably gigantic heap of rice. These realms are adorned with the Dharma and teachers that tame by whatever means necessary. From each of his pores, streams of scented water pour down and form glacial lakes. From these lakes come universes that are ornamented by innumerable shapes and forms of the Great Glacial Lake. Within each of these dwells another Great Glacial Lake, from which more universes with forms of the Great Glacial Lake manifest just as before, and so on. Hence, universes and teachers manifest and fill all of space, appearing for the sole purpose of taming the sentient beings that pervade all of space in just the same way.

In the same manner, Vajra Akshobya dwells in the east, Ratnasambhava in the south, Amitabha in the west, and Amoghasiddhi in the north, each with his own symbolic implement: the vajra, jewel, lotus, and crossed vajra. As before, stalks of lotuses emanate out of the empty spaces in the symbolic implements held by each of these Buddhas, upon which manifest the Universe Adorned With Vajras, [the Universe Adorned with Jewels,] the Universe of Piled Lotuses, and the Universe of Sublime Activity, each of which has its own twenty-five buddha realms as before.

Hence, the entire extent of space is completely pervaded by the realms of sentient beings. The tataqatas, in turn, pervade these realms and are present as the teachers who tame beings by whatever means necessary, as well as their retinues, teachings, and so forth. The time span of all of this is one Great Eon of Mahabrahma. All this is spontaneously present as one great domain of influence of the fundamental awakening of the glorious Samantabhadra. It remains until all sentient beings have been liberated from samsara.

During this great eon, the eternal wheel of the adornments of enlightened body, speech, and mind emanate various forms within this universe, including the forms of Buddhas who tame beings by whatever means necessary, the Dharma, the Sangha, sages, priests, Brahma, Indra, and so on. These natural and automatic activities empty samsara. This is referred to as the "Universe That Depends upon Mahabrahma," in which the completely pure teacher that tames beings works continuously for their benefit.

In the places where these universes and teachers are found, sentient beings are tamed by the three vehicles. However, in the end, they are brought to the Vehicle of the Vajra Essence. When every sentient being has attained buddhahood and not a single one remains, the works of

Samantabhadra will have reached their culmination. This is referred to as the "Great Empty Eon of Mahabrahma."

The teachings that are given by the Great Glacial Lake Buddhas of the five families are the great self occurring letters. They are not compiled by anyone; they appear on their own. This is the unceasing sound of the Mahayana drum. The perfect time is the immutability of reality itself. The perfect retinue consists of the inconceivable buddhas of the five families.

All of the Great Glacial Lake teachers that dwell within the Completely Pure Richly Arrayed Realm during the Eon of Great Brahma are present as the essence of thirty-six enlightened acts.⁹² These do not occur in any objectively graspable manner. Rather, they should be understood to be mere components of enlightened wisdom.

The victorious nirmanakaya appears from the sambhogakaya. The analytic capacity of self-occurring wisdom is directed outwards, from which glorious Vajrasattva, the master of all the peaceful and wrathful buddhas, self-manifests to tame beings. This is the spontaneous presence of the perfect teacher. The perfect teaching is the realization of the luminous great perfection. The perfect retinue includes Vajrapani and the other emanations that manifest from its natural compassion to tame beings. The perfect time is that of the great natural and nondual appearance. The perfect place is the Richly Arrayed Realm of Wisdom, where the teacher teaches in the form of a series of elegant verses.

Having given this general presentation of the manner in which the three kayas manifest and the nature of the five perfections, we will now continue with the instructions of the Great Perfection. These teachings, the supreme and swift path of the Secret Mantra Vajra Vehicle, constitute the very essence of the sacred Dharma that is taught by the teachers of the three kayas.

— MALLEABILITY —

To begin, place a long stick or some other suitable object in front of you as a support for the visualization that follows. With the correct physi-

cal posture, chant the syllable **HUM** with a beautiful melody and in a long, drawn out manner. At the same time, visualize an unbroken chain of **HUMs** issuing forth from the **HUM** in your heart center. Starting at its base, imagine them gradually winding their way up the meditation support, coiling around it like thread on a spool. Once they arrive at the top, fix your mind there and relax for a moment. This will elicit a vivid state of mind.

Next, continue to recite **HUM**, but this time gradually unravel and retract the chain of **HUM** syllables. Gather them in and visualize them dissolving into the **HUM** in your heart center, then relax again. Alternatively, you can visualize it coiling around other things in the same manner and then unraveling. You can do this with mountains and other high places, the trees and dwellings at the peak of such places, trees, and so on. You can also visualize a tall **HUM** syllable in front of you and then imagine the chain of **HUMs** coiling around it and unraveling as before. At the conclusion of this process, leave your consciousness to itself, relax your mind for a moment, and simply rest.

As a sign of successful practice, fixation towards the ordinary body, speech, and mind will naturally reverse course, which will lead to a state that transcends concepts and words. The function of this practice is as follows. In this practice, the energies, mind, and **HUM** are merged together and one then trains by going and returning. This, in turn, allows one to control awareness, which was not possible prior to this point. In the context of the main practice, one will then have the ability to transform one's awareness into anything at all.

— TAKING TO THE ROAD* —

Sit in the correct posture as before and unify the body, energies, and mind. Then transform them into a blue **HUM** syllable, approximately one cubit in height.⁹³ As you melodiously chant **HUM** in a drawn out manner, move forward like a malevolent spirit, swaying back and forth as you go and resting for a moment in the intervals. Imagine yourself traveling to immeasurably distant places as you chant long, drawn out **HUM** syllables. Then sim-

* Author's note: "In the extensive approach taken here, the tradition is to treat the practices of making awareness malleable and taking to the road separately and address them over the course of two sessions. Hence, this is what should be done."

ply let be and relax. After that, return back, rest in your original condition, and relax once again.

Next, focus your mind on traveling to and returning from all the rivers, mountains, and other places you've been. You can also journey to extremely distant locales in the form of the HUM syllable. Setting off all by yourself, go to places with meandering rivers, forests crowded with trees and boulders, bathing pools at the sides of rivers, meadows, thickets, areas filled with various flowers and other such things, and places where different types of birds and animals live. At times, just relax in places with rivers, flowers, and so on, focusing on the visualization and singing HUM in a melodious, drawn out fashion.

By practicing in this manner, a heartfelt feeling of weariness with samsara will arise from deep within, a nonconceptual concentration on reality itself will take birth in your mind stream, and the mind will experience a deep sense of well-being. This, in turn, will enable awareness to reach its full expression.

Practicing the verbal preliminaries in this way serves two functions, one ordinary and one supreme. Its ordinary functions are to reverse intense clinging and eliminate obstacles related to speech. It also functions to purify all forms of verbal negativity, which pertains to both of the functions just mentioned. Its supreme functions are to keep one from becoming verbally involved in samsara, to liberate speech into the sambhogakaya, and to become indivisible with the enlightened speech of all the buddhas, which again pertains to both of the first two functions just mentioned.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Mental Preliminaries

ONCE AGAIN, those of you gathered together here should listen to these teachings with the correct motivation. Think to yourselves, "I must swiftly bring all the infinite number of sentient beings, each of whom has been my very own mother, to the state of unsurpassed, perfect, and genuine buddhahood. To this end, I will apply myself to these teachings on the extraordinary and essential instructions that directly point out the profound and true nature, the profound instructions on the key points that lead to liberation!" With this motivation, listen to these teachings without distraction.

The attainment of the state of perfect buddhahood and complete omniscience depends upon a guru, a spiritual teacher. On this point, *Resting in the Nature of Mind* states:

By following spiritual teachers and virtuous companions,
The accumulation of virtue will grow, pleasant results will be gained,
There will be no fear of existence, only infinite benefit and
happiness,
And the boundless wealth of beings' twofold benefit will be
attained.
These guides of ours are emanations of the Victorious One,
Appearing as they do in these degenerate times.
We should follow, therefore, such sacred beings
So long as we have not yet attained the essence of enlightenment.

And in the *Sutra of Going for Mindfulness in the Dharma*, it is written:

By following a virtuous companion, mindfulness and introspection will be entirely pure and the fundamental virtues will be completely perfected.

While the *Middle-length Perfection of Knowledge* states:

Subhuti, those who wish to attain complete omniscience should follow a spiritual teacher.

And the *Condensed Perfection of Knowledge* states:

One should always follow learned gurus. Why?
Because the qualities of learnedness come from doing so.

As these passages demonstrate, excellent qualities come from following a spiritual teacher. On this point, the *Sutra Requested by Ratnacuda* states:

Devaputra, when you follow and venerate a spiritual teacher everything will be seen as a pure buddha realm, the sacred concentration of great compassion will be attained, you will never be apart from the perfection of knowledge, sentient beings will be thoroughly matured, and everything you hope for will be perfectly attained.

In the chapters that follow, I will give a brief account of the lives of the masters of awareness, the realized teachers of the Secret Mantra Vajra Vehicle that lived in times past.

— THE LIBERATION OF GARAP DORJÉ —

In the land of India, the wellspring of the Dharma, there was once a region called Oddiyana, the Land of Topknots, which was located to the northwest of the Vajra Seat.⁹⁴ On Dhanakosha Island in the midst of this land there was a sacred place called the Auspicious Bliss-inducing Temple. This temple was surrounded by 600,008 smaller temples, and there were golden ropes ornamented with nets of bells hanging between them. 3,200,000 families inhabited the land. Its king and queen were Uparaja and Aloka-

bhasvati. Their daughter, a fully ordained nun named Sudharma, lived one league to the west, where she had a small dwelling on an island of golden sand located in the midst of the ocean.

One night, Sudharma dreamt that she was visited by a white, crystal man. In her dream, the man gave her an empowerment by placing a nectar-filled vase on the crown of her head. In that instant, she beheld the entire three-thousandfold universe with brilliant clarity. She related what happened to her female servant, who responded by telling her it was a clearly an omen that a child of the buddhas was to be born.

Nine months and ten days later, a baby boy was born from between the ribs on the right side of her body; he was adorned with all the marks and signs of buddhahood. Sudharma exclaimed:

Who else could this child be but a demon?
 The gods and demi-gods take on various forms.
 Yet still, no one has ever seen an incident such as this!
 This will bring the slander of evil beings, how terrible!

With these words, she cast her child into a pit of ashes.

Celestial deities then fetched and bathed his enlightened form, proclaiming:

Great protector, victorious and transcendent,
 Protector of the universe who illuminates the true nature,
 Take us under your protection.
 Celestial vajra, this we now pray!

As they uttered auspicious prayers, dakinis gathered together clouds of offerings, while gods, nagas, spirits, and other beings offered gifts of sandalwood and saffron. The guardians of the world beat their great drums, blew their conches, and hoisted victory banners and pennants. The kings of sages as well gathered together clouds of various medicinal substances and incense.

Seeing all this, Sudharma returned to fetch the boy and begged his forgiveness, bathing him with perfumed water and milk. From that point on she raised him well and he grew up like a lotus in the midst of a great lake.

After seven years, the words of the Dharma and their meaning arose in

his enlightened mind, despite the fact that he had not studied them. He asked his mother for permission to go and discuss the Dharma with Buddhist scholars. She consented, and he then went before King Uparaja and asked to meet with the scholars. The boy went to discuss matters with the scholars, and together they came to a mutual and definitive understanding concerning all the Buddhist and non-Buddhist religious doctrines. The scholars prostrated to the boy and placed his feet on the crowns of their heads, naming him "great master Prabhava." The king was extremely pleased as well and offered him the name "great master Garap Dorjé," "the Vajra of Supreme Delight." Since he had been cast into a pit of ashes by his mother but did not pass away, he also came to be known as "great master Ash-colored Zombie." The local people named him as well. Expressing their wonder at the fact that he had been left for dead by his mother but had not died, they called him "great master Joyful Zombie."

He then ventured to Mount Suryaprakasha in the north, where he stayed for thirty-two years demonstrating how to remain in a state of concentration. At this time, he dwelt in the Supreme Realm and requested the entire range of empowerments for the natural Great Perfection, along with the most secret, unsurpassed instructions, from glorious Vajrasattva. This caused a rain of flowers to fall on the mountain where his body was. A voice was then heard to proclaim, "The teachings of the non-Buddhists are now in decline."

Hearing what had happened, a non-Buddhist king nearby began to inquire in all the towns as to what had caused these events. A cowherd told him, "At the base of a nearby mountain there is a sage resting in meditation with a rain of flowers falling all around him. Even if you blow a horn in his ear he doesn't wake up. It must be him!"

The king then ordered assassins to kill Garap Dorjé, but when they arrived in his presence they were paralyzed. As the master arose from his meditative absorption, a path appeared that led up into the clouds and he left. Seeing this, everyone, the king and his retinue included, begged his forgiveness. They then cast aside their misguided beliefs and converted to the Buddhist faith.

Garap Dorjé's enlightened mind contained the collected teachings of all the buddhas of the past, and in particular, the 6,400,000 verses of the natural Great Perfection. On the peak of Mount Malaya, a mountain filled with jewels, these teachings were requested by two dakinis: the One with the Taste of Bliss (the dakini of vajra space) and the Golden One Who

Brings Bliss (the dakini of boundless qualities). For three years they stayed in a cave where dakinis gather and set these teachings down in writing.

Garap Dorjé then ventured to the northeast of the Vajra Seat, where there was a great charnel ground named "Cool Grove." This charnel ground was filled with various types of worldly and karmically produced dakinis, and other unruly beings. There was a five-tiered golden stupa there as well, where the sound of bells could be heard. It was in the center of this place, where there was a lake of purifying water, that the great master stayed and meditated.

— THE LIBERATION OF SHRI SIMHA —

At the same time, a boy named Shri Simha was born in the Chinese town Shokyam Nakpo to the householder Geyden Zangpo and his wife, Nangsel Denma. When he was fifteen, the boy studied grammar, logic and epistemology, astrology, and the rest of the five sciences with the master Hastibhala. He became extremely learned.

One day, as he was traveling to Suvarnadvipa, the noble Avalokiteshvara appeared in the middle of the sky and made the following prophecy:

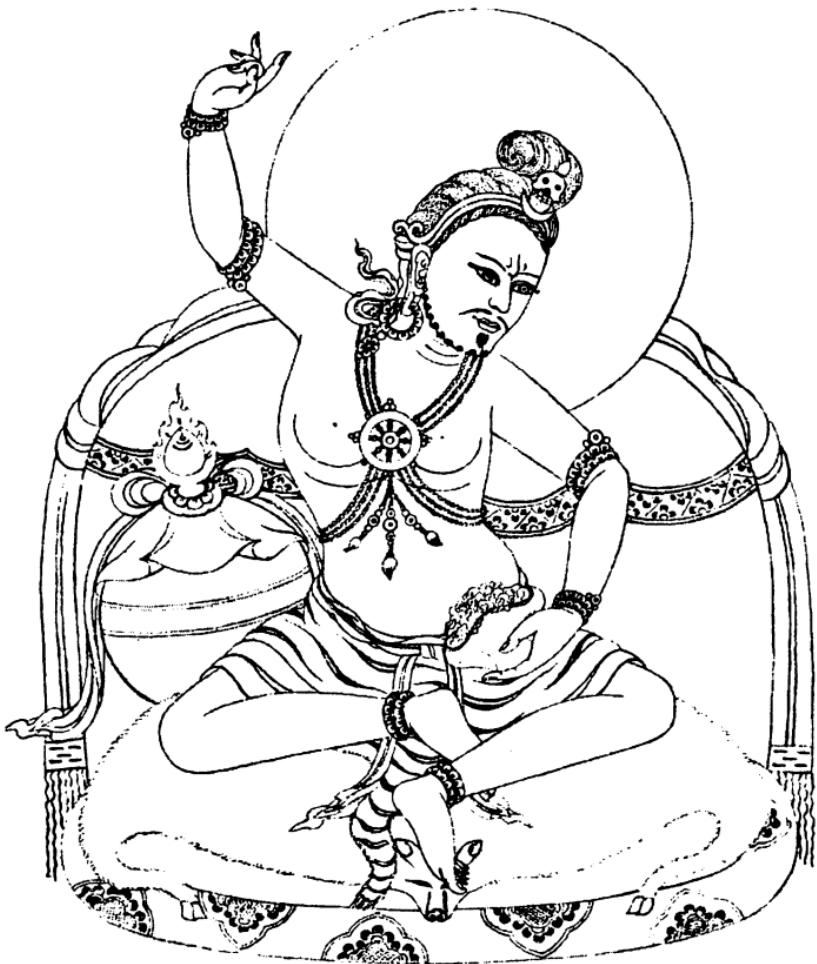
Fortunate one! If you truly wish to attain the fruition in a single life, you must go to the great Cool Grove Charnel Ground.

With these words, the bodhisattva vanished.

Shri Simha made up his mind to study the meaning of the outer and inner tantras for a period of seven years in order to realize the fruition of the Secret Mantra swiftly. With this resolve, he went to the east side of the Five-peaked Mountain⁹⁵ and trained under the outcaste Bhelakirti. With this master, he studied the entire range of tantras, transmissions, and key instructions of the outer and inner mantras.

One morning, as he was bathing himself in a pond, the Great Compassionate One appeared again and made the same prophecy, before vanishing. Shri Simha thought to himself, "It is extremely difficult to travel to India, so I should first practice swift footedness!" After practicing for three years, he was able to use the miraculous power of swift footedness to travel a cubit off the ground.

With his newfound power, he set off for India and reached the Cool



Shri Simha

Grove Charnel Ground after nine days, where he met the great master Garap Dorjé. Prostrating and placing the master's feet on the crown of his head, Shri Simha asked to be accepted as a student, to which Garap Dorjé consented. For twenty-five years Shri Simha received empowerments and guidance on the tantras, transmissions, and key instructions of the supreme sphere from his master. Putting them into practice, he attained a body of light, like the reflection of the moon in water, and obtained the supreme spiritual accomplishment. At the time, the dakinis that lived in the charnel ground and the great lanka demons that protected the area each offered him the essence of their life-force, vowed to protect the teachings, and gathered together a great mass of offerings that surpassed the imagination, including parasols, victory banners, and flags.

The great master Shri Simha then traveled thirteen yojanas⁹⁶ to the northwest to the great Wild Jungle Charnel Ground, a place where violent winds blew during the day and fires blazed by night. Worldly flesh-eating demonesses and dakinis roamed about, and there was also a lake of purifying water, a bliss-inducing stupa, and a sacred site associated with the worldly gods Rama and Ishvara. At the same time that Shri Simha was living there, practicing yogic discipline and teaching the Dharma to dakinis, the master Padmasambhava of Oddiyana arrived there miraculously, as had been prophesied by Vajravarahi.⁹⁷ He proceeded to prostrate and circumambulate Shri Simha, whereupon he asked to be accepted as the latter's student. The master consented and taught him all the various cycles of the Mind, Space, and Key Instruction Classes, such as the *Tantra of the Great Perfection Equal to Space*. The key points of all these teachings were codified in the Heart Essence of the Dakinis and later passed on to Lady Tsogyal of Karchen.

— SEARCHING FOR THE MIND —

Concerning these unique instructions, we have now arrived at the three-fold mental preliminary practice. On this topic, the *Tantra of Penetrating Sound* explains:

Where does the mind come from?
 Where does it stay? Where does it go?
 If these three questions are investigated,
 The mind will be trained and its true nature understood.

To start, investigate the mind's point of origin. The factor that we refer to as "awareness" and "mind" is in constant motion like the wind; it is this "mind" that experiences all forms of happiness and suffering. Where does this shifting awareness first come from? Does the mind come into being from a point of existence or nonexistence? Does it arise from appearances or from emptiness? Does it originate from the external universe or the beings that inhabit it?

You may wonder whether or not the mind arises from some particular thing made up of the four external elements. If you look for such a thing, however, you will find that you can break everything down into tiny par-

ticles. In the end, you won't find anything. You may then get the idea that it arises from inside your own body. Search through each part of your body, through your head and each of your limbs. Can you find it anywhere? On the other hand, if you think that it arises from a state of emptiness, can you find some place that it arises from? Yet if it comes into existence from appearances, what do you actually observe? In short, investigate the mind that you are searching for and then turn your attention back to the mind that is doing the searching. You will then behold the mind in its original state, and see that it has no identifiable essence at all. Until this has actually come to pass, you should repeat this process of examination over and over again.

Second, investigate the mind's presence. In this very moment, is the essence of this aware consciousness present in the external universe or in the beings that inhabit it? What part of the body is it in? And if not there, where else might it be? What shape, color, function, and essence indicate its presence?

Once you have examined and investigated in this manner, and determined that it does not exist in any location whatsoever, turn your attention back to the consciousness that is conducting the investigation. Continue with this process until you have determined that consciousness lacks inherent existence and has no basis or root, while it nevertheless knows and perceives.

Third, look into the mind's departure. Like the wind, this mindful awareness seems to suddenly arise and then departs just as abruptly. Where does it go? Does it end up in the external universe or in the beings that inhabit it? Does it end up in appearances or emptiness, existence or nonexistence, or in some other condition? When you investigate this matter, you will see that there is no place to which the mind goes. Likewise, the subjective mind itself cannot be identified either. It has no essence that one can point to and say, "This is it!" Hence, there is no place where the mind goes, nor is there a mind that goes somewhere. As before, continue this process until you have determined that empty awareness neither comes nor goes.

Practicing these mental preliminaries serves an ordinary function, a supreme function, and a sublime function. In an ordinary sense, it functions to reverse any intense clinging one may have to the ordinary mind, as well as to purify mental negativity and pacify obstacles. Its supreme function is to keep the mind from becoming involved with samsara, and to bring it to a state of liberation, inseparable from the dharmakaya. Its sub-

lime function results in the mind becoming inseparable from the enlightened mind of all the buddhas, which will bring about an infinite range of benefits for other sentient beings.

In addition, the *Tantra of the Clear Expanse* states:

Be aware that there are three functions served
By the physical, verbal, and mental preliminary practices:
The ordinary, unique, and ultimate.

It is also explained that there are two divisions here, in which case the first two functions just mentioned are considered the ordinary and the latter supreme. The *Tantra of Penetrating Sound* explains:

The two functions served here can be understood
By the divisions of the ordinary and supreme.

Keeping both the ordinary and supreme functions of this practice in mind, apply yourself assiduously to bringing these investigations to a state of culmination. In other words, thoroughly investigate the mind's points of origin, presence, and departure.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Resting in the Natural State

ONCE AGAIN, set the stage for receiving these teachings by giving rise to supreme bodhichitta. Think to yourself, “For the benefit of all the infinite number of sentient beings, I will attain the state of unsurpassed, perfect, and genuine buddhahood. To this end, I will listen to these profound and sacred teachings and put them into practice in the right way!” With this motivation, listen well.

The import of the Three Classes, the Ninefold Expanse, and all the other key instructions of the Great Perfection was condensed by the Kashmiri scholar Vimalamitra and codified in the Secret Heart Essence, the Sangwa Nyingtik. These teachings came to be known as the vast Heart Essence of Vimalamitra, or Vima Nyingtik. Padmasambhava, the master from Oddiyana, codified the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, or Khandro Nyingtik. His teachings came to be known as the profound Heart Essence of Padma, or Pema Nyingtik. The omniscient Longchenpa then wrote brief clarifications on the first set and more extensive commentaries on the second. The former are collectively referred to as the Quintessential Wish-fulfilling Jewel, which is also known as the Guru’s Quintessence, or Lama Yangtik, and the latter as the Quintessence of the Dakinis, or Khandro Yangtik. All of these teachings were then gathered into one compilation, thus condensing both the transmitted teachings and treasures. This collection is referred to as the Fourfold Heart Essence, the Nyingtik Yabshi.

The teaching that concerns us here is the profound and secret Heart Essence of the Dakinis. These key instructions were extracted from the tantras by the second Buddha, the master Padmasambhava of Oddiyana, who then created a system of practical instructions and passed them on to his fortunate disciples. In the following section, I will give a brief account

of the life and liberation of guru Padmasambhava based on his spiritual biography.

— THE LIBERATION OF PADMASAMBHAVA —

In the land of Oddiyana there was once a palace made of vaidurya in the City of Blazing Jewels. Illuminated with the light cast by a jeweled lamp, the palace was the picture of purity inside and out. King Indrabhuti lived there with his 108 queens, surrounded by his major and minor ministers. Because he had no heir, the king made offerings to the three jewels on the fifteenth day of summer one year. He chanted the *Cloud of Dharma Sutra*, erected an almshouse, and commenced a series of great acts of generosity to the masses.

Many years passed in this manner and his treasuries eventually grew depleted, yet the stream of beggars did not cease. The people he had appointed to work there said to them, "The treasuries are now completely empty, we have nothing left to give you!" But the beggars who had just come there retorted, "If you don't give us anything, all that you have given in the past will have been in vain!"

When the king heard this, he inquired as to how he could keep the treasuries from running out. In response, he was told of a beautiful naga maiden who lived on an island in the outer ocean. This maiden was said to have a wish-fulfilling jewel, which she would give away if a bodhisattva with compassion towards sentient beings asked her for it.

The king discussed the idea of making such a trip with a captain who had ventured into the outer oceans in search of jewels many times in the past. His ministers begged him not to go, but he would not be dissuaded. With five hundred merchants as his retinue, he boarded a ship and set off.

After a few days had passed, they arrived at a treasure isle with sands composed of precious gems. Leaving their retinue behind, the king and captain boarded a smaller boat and set off again. They traveled a few more days, passing mountains of silver, vaidurya, and other places along the way. Once they reached a golden one, the king asked what it was. "It is the golden mountain," the captain replied, "that's where we're headed."

They arrived at the base of the mountain where the ground was filled with golden sands. The captain instructed the king carefully, "There's a castle on top of this mountain made of seven precious jewels. Its door has

a vajra knocker. Use this to knock on the door and say, 'I desire a jewel so that I may benefit sentient beings.' Give this sign and then enter silently. One hundred naga maidens will come to you bearing jewels. Do not say a word to them. Next, the beautiful naga maiden herself will come to offer you the jewel. Take it quickly, wrap it in a piece of cloth, and put it on top of your head." With these instructions, the king set off.

Just as the captain predicted, a beautiful blue naga maiden arrived. She was extremely attractive, so much so that one could never get enough of looking at her. She offered the king the jewel from the crown of her head, which he accepted and quickly returned. He then left with the captain and returned back to the isle where the retinue had been left behind. With the captain at the helm, they set off for home.

After some time they came to an island in the middle of the ocean. There, sitting upon a beautiful lotus flower, they found a young boy, adorned with all the marks and signs of buddhahood. Coming before him, the king said, "Little boy, who are your parents and what is your caste? What is your name and from whence do you come? What do you eat and why are you here?"

To which the little boy replied:

My father is Samantabhadra, self-awareness,
 And my mother, Samantabhadri, the sphere of reality itself.
 My caste is the indivisibility of this sphere and awareness,
 And my name is Padmasambhava, the glorious Lotus-born.
 My homeland is the unborn sphere of reality itself,
 While for sustenance, I consume dualistic appearances and
 thoughts,
 Engaging in the conduct of the buddhas of the three times.

This delighted the king, who thought to himself, "This must be a nirmanakaya emanation! I will ask him to be my son." "Please return with me to be my object of worship and son," he said.

When the boy consented, he cut the lotus at the stalk, took the boy and the precious jewel, and returned to the land of Oddiyana along with his retinue. When they returned, everyone in the king's court welcomed them with a great celebration. The king then prayed to the jewel and a canopied throne made of seven precious jewels appeared. Seated upon the throne,

the prince was invested with power over the entire kingdom and given the name "Lotus King."

The king then supplicated and prayed to the jewel again. This time a great rain commenced, fulfilling all needs and desires. The word spread in all directions and King Indrabhuti announced, "This jewel will grant one's every wish and need. Whomsoever may come and get what they desire!" The jewel was then placed atop a victory banner.

After making offerings to it, the king bathed and prostrated before the jewel. Joining his palms together, he said, "If the jewel that I have found is genuine, may a shower of whatever sentient beings desire rain down!"

With this, wind blew from the four directions and swept away all that was unclean throughout the surrounding land. A fine rain fell as well, ensuring that no dust would arise. After this, first a shower of delicious food rained down, then clothing, and finally a rain of jewels fell . . . everyone received exactly what they desired. Through this, poverty and destitution disappeared from the land.

The master, however, understood that the welfare of beings would not be served if he were to take control of the kingdom. To ensure that he fell from the graces of the king and his ministers, he began consciously acting in an unconventional manner. One day, he let a trident slip from his hand. It struck the head of the son of one of the king's most important ministers, and the boy died as a result.

Since whoever broke the laws of the kingdom had to be punished, the ministers who were in charge of upholding the law assembled and said to the king, "Your majesty, though your son has been enthroned as a prince, he has killed the son of a minister, though this boy had done him no harm. He must be executed by impalement."

The king did his best to change their minds, but they wouldn't listen. "Well then," he said, "we must banish him," and the ministers consented.

With a heavy heart, the king told the master:

On a lotus flower in the midst of a jewel-filled ocean,
You spontaneously appeared, a nirmakaya emanation with no
parents.

With your unconventional practices you killed the son of a minister,
And the ministers have punished you, as the royal law decrees.
You are not to be killed now but banished, please go wherever
you please.

The master then responded:

In this world, one's mother and father are precious indeed.
 You, my parents, have given me an entire kingdom!
 Yet I have no attachment to this land, nor any fear of being
 banished,
 And since birth and death are no different, I do not fear being killed.
 Since the law of the land is strict, it is good that I am being
 banished!
 Mother and father, may you live long and happily.
 Our karmic connection is sure to bring us together once more.

With these words, he prostrated and left.

He traveled to the south of Oddiyana, where he stayed in the Cool Grove, a great charnel ground filled with spirits and wild beasts. All the people of the area were brought to this place when they passed away, so he ate the corpses for food and flayed their skin for clothing. He brought all the dakinis there under his control with his unconventional practices, and was given the name Pema Tötreng Tsel, "The Mighty One with a Garland of Skulls."

Next he ventured to the great Joyful Grove Charnel Ground, where he continued his unconventional practices and was granted empowerment by the dakini Marajita. In Sosaling, he was granted empowerment by Shantarakshita and praised by the dakinis. Traveling to an island in the middle of the ocean, he brought four dakinis under his control. He was then granted empowerment by Vajravarahi, who taught him all the tantras and instructions. Through his accomplishment and because he was able to bring all worldly and transcendent dakinis under his power, he came to be known as Dorjé Trakpo Tsel, "Mighty Vajra Wrath," and Tsokyé Dorjé, "Lake-born Vajra." He attained the major spiritual accomplishments, both supreme and mundane.

In this way, he attained accomplishment and gained mastery over all phenomena. Though he was a great nirmanakaya by his very nature, he recognized that due to the varying characters and interests of beings, if he had no master, people would lose faith in him. Anticipating this, he enacted the process of study and contemplation by doing so himself with many learned and accomplished Indian masters. With the Sahori master Prabhahasti, he was ordained as a Buddhist monk and received the name Shakya Simha,

“Lion of the Shakyas.” He understood the entire range of outer and inner doctrines and beheld the mandala of vajra space, which brought him the yogic attainment of a master of awareness with power over longevity.

In South India he received teachings from Nagarjunagarbha. He studied grammar, logic, epistemology, and the true inner nature, as well as other such topics from the Causal Vehicle of Characteristics and the entire range of teachings of the Fruitional Vajra Vehicle. He understood all these teachings and beheld an infinite number of Mahayoga mandalas.

Next, he began to debate with the non-Buddhists. Once they had been defeated, he demonstrated his powers in the jungle and made it miraculously burst into flames. This allowed him to convert all the non-Buddhists to Buddhism. He came to be called Sengé Dradrok, the “Roaring Lion.”

He also received empowerment from the nun Ananda, who swallowed then withdrew him from her secret lotus. He received the collected sadhanas of the enlightened speech of the lotus from her, including the outer, inner, and secret empowerments, and the Wish-fulfilling Wheel of Mahakaruna. From Manjushrimitra he received the *Magical Web* and the other tantras, transmissions, and key instructions of Manjushri. From Humkara he received the tantras and transmissions of the enlightened mind of Vishuddha, such as the *Heruka Galpo Tantra*. From Prabhahasti he received all the teachings associated with Vajrakilaya, and from Buddhaguhyya, the *Magical Tantra of the Peaceful and Wrathful*, including the *Secret Essence*. From the master Vajravikara he received the tantra of the enlightened qualities of Amrita, and from Dhanasamskrita he received the *Tantra of Worldly Matarah*. From Rambuguhya he received the stages of the wrathful black magic mantras and mundane offerings and praises. With all these masters he studied each and every class of tantra and understood them all. Through these practices he was able to meet an infinite number of mandala deities face to face. At this time, he came to be known as the great master Loden Chokse, “Wise One with Passion for the Supreme.”

Because he had fathomed every single teaching in the entire world, he was without equal on the face of the earth in terms of his level of knowledge and accomplishment. Wherever he stayed, Padmasambhava was able to mount and ride the sun’s light rays. Because of this, he was given the name Nyimé Özer, “Light Rays of the Sun.”

Following this, he attracted Mandarava, the daughter of King Arshadharra of Sahor, and dwelt with her in the jungle. Since the time had come to tame beings, the master and his spiritual partner went to town to seek

alms. The townspeople, however, had no faith in him and accused him of defiling the royal caste, saying that he was spiritual practitioner in appearance only and a disgrace to the Buddha's teachings. "Burn him in the charnel ground!" they shouted.

Each of the townspeople brought a load of sandalwood and a measure of sesame oil, wrapped them in clothes that had been thrown away or used for the dead, and proceeded to burn the master and Princess Mandarava alive. For nine straight days, smoke continuously bellowed out from the fire. When they went to look, however, they saw that the flames were actually blazing outwards and were burning the king's castle and the surrounding environs. Meanwhile, the master and his spiritual partner were sitting on the anthers of a lotus in the midst of a lake of sesame seed oil.

Once they saw all this, the townspeople felt great remorse, begged for forgiveness, and asked the master to be accepted as followers. With this, the fire that was incinerating the city subsided. The master taught them the Buddha's teachings and each and every one attained the immaculate eye of Dharma. Showering him with praises and bowing down before him, they gave him the name Padmasambhava, "the Lotus-born."

Next, he returned to Oddiyana, where he was recognized by all the people from his past. "The murderer who killed the son of the minister has come back to harm us," they said, "Burn him alive!" Just as in Sahor, he was burned alive, and for twenty-one days people watched as smoke continuously bellowed out from the fire. And again, just like before, they begged his forgiveness once they saw him sitting there unharmed. They praised him with the name Pema Tötreng Tsel, "Powerful Lotus with a Garland of Skulls," and asked to be accepted as his followers. He stayed in Oddiyana for eight years, giving empowerments into the mandalas of the Secret Mantra, teaching the Buddhist doctrine, and eventually establishing the entire land in the Dhārma. King Indrabhuti, along with his court, gained accomplishment and ventured forth to the Realm of Dakinis.

Following this, Vajravarahi made the following prophecy:

Fortunate one, the true transmission that brings fruition in
a single life

Is utterly unique and cannot be realized by everyone.

This teaching abides in the vajra mind of Shri Simha.

In the Charnel Ground of the Wild Jungle you shall attain
realization!

Hearing this, the great master traveled miraculously to the great Charnel Ground of the Wild Jungle in a single instant, where he found the great Shri Simha. He prostrated to the master, circumambulated him, and begged to be accepted as his student. Granting his request, Shri Simha proceeded to teach him the Great Perfection, imparting to him the *Tantra Equal to Space* and every other teaching in the Mind, Space, and Key Instruction cycles.

In particular, as he was receiving all the cycles of the Outer, Inner, and Secret Spheres, he made another request. "Great master," Padmasambhava said, "please give me practical instructions that will cause the defiled aggregates to disappear in this very life, that will enable me to see the pure realms of the sambhogakaya and attain buddhahood in the pure realms of the dharmakaya."

"Fortunate son," Shri Simha replied, "this is excellent! I possess a teaching that is the very pinnacle of teachings and the innermost heart of all views. This teaching goes beyond all vehicles; it is the heart essence of the dakinis. Its meaning is even more secret than secret; it is the great vehicle of the luminous vajra essence. Beyond thought and free from intellectualization, it transcends the domain of consciousness. It lies beyond the confines of existence and nonexistence, and is not an object of the view and meditation or development and completion. It is the mother of all buddhas throughout the three times and the shortcut taken by the great masters of awareness. With these penultimate and unsurpassed key instructions, the enlightenment of buddhahood will be attained in three years. This teaching I will now grant you."

He then went on to offer and entrust to Padmasambhava the Great Perfection empowerments of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, as well as a great many texts of key instructions on its practices. As a support for these transmissions, he also taught him each and every one of the Eighteen Tantras,⁹⁸ including the *Tantra of Penetrating Sound*. For twenty-five years he dwelt there, studying, contemplating, and meditating on the instructions he received.

Next he practiced for three years in the great charnel ground of Sosaling. There he did away with birth and death and attained a form like the reflection of the moon in water, which allowed him to benefit a great number of beings, human and nonhuman alike, with a variety of miraculous feats. In particular, during the day he dwelt as the court priest of the Indian king Dharmapala, and at night he traveled to the charnel grounds Cool

Grove, Sosaling, Great Illumination, Bliss-inducing, Bhasing, Tachung, and the Fearful, where he freely practiced the Secret Mantra together with a gathering of radiant dakinis.

It was at this time that King Trisong Deutsen, who protected his land according to the Dharma, invited him to Tibet. There he taught the sacred Dharma's instructions on a vast scale. It was in this context that he gave these teaching cycles on the utmost secret Great Perfection.

— RESTING IN THE NATURAL STATE —

The teaching that concerns us here is resting in the natural state, which contains two divisions. The first covers the main practice of resting in the natural state, and the second addresses the process of revitalization. The main practice of resting in the natural state contains two further divisions: the purpose of resting in the natural state and the way to do so.

Concerning the first, the *Clear Expanse* states:

Disturbances in the body, speech, mind, and elements
Are released by resting in the natural state.

As stated here, once you've become worn out by practicing the physical, verbal, and mental preliminaries that were taught earlier, you should rest. The siddha Kotalipa explains:

Let this weary traveler, the mind itself,
Rest in a state free of elaborations—
The great seal: fresh, innate,
Natural, and uncontrived.

At this point, you do not need to involve yourself in anything that disturbs the constitution of the energetic channels and elements, and which thereby creates stress in the body, speech, and mind, or with the virtuous practices that are ordinarily considered appropriate. Instead, relax and let the three gates rest in their natural state. The *Last Testament* explains:

Next, become adept in resting in the natural state
Physically, verbally, and with the mind.

At this point, you should meditate by focusing your mind one-pointedly on whatever manifests, regardless of whether it is a samsaric thought that would ordinarily be eliminated or a virtuous thought that would function as a remedy. This will bring about a fundamental transformation of these thoughts, turning the conceptual into the nonconceptual, just as murky water becomes clear all on its own when left untouched.

If you forcibly block your thoughts, not only will it make your mind restless, it will hinder a state of concentration from arising. It was with this understanding that the following passage from the *Ornament of the Sutras* was taught:

Why? Because correctly engaging attachment
 And other such factors themselves
 Brings complete liberation. Therefore,
 Doing so brings complete emergence from them.

The *Two Segments* teaches a similar skillful approach:

As attachment is what binds one to the world,
 Attachment itself will bring liberation.

And from *Distinguishing the Middle from Extremes*:

Based on observation,
 Nonobservation takes place.
 And based on nonobservation,
 Nonobservation occurs.
 Therefore, observation is established
 To be by its very nature unobservable.
 Hence observation and nonobservation
 Must be understood to be equal.⁹⁹

The separations of samsara and nirvana and the other practices taught earlier address the coarse fixation-based perceptions associated with the ordinary appearances, habitual tendencies, and so forth that arise so readily in the mind. Next, the inner separation, sealing, advanced training, and other practices are used to rein in the more subtle elements. This, in turn, keeps the sense consciousnesses from being distracted elsewhere, at which point the mental consciousness merges with the six collections of con-

sciousness and the mind's tendency to radiate out to other objects is put to rest. In the next step, the conceptual mind is not directed towards the six objects that serve as focal points or the unconditioned phenomena associated with them. Rather, one just settles in the natural state, without forming any concepts concerning appearance and emptiness, certain things that need to be eliminated, the remedies that eliminate them, or anything else. "Natural state," here, means uncontrived, while "resting" denotes simply letting be in this state, hence the term "resting in the natural state."

Explaining the actual practice of resting in the natural state, the *Tantra of Penetrating Sound* explains:

At this time, the key point of body, speech, and mind
Is for the practitioner to settle in the natural state.

To explain, begin by seating yourself on a comfortable cushion in either the cross-legged posture of the bodhisattvas or in a squatting position, whichever you prefer. Just let your body be; remain motionless, relaxed, and at ease. Let your breath flow naturally in a relaxed manner and do not talk or say anything, neither good or bad. Without busying yourself with recitations, chanting, and other verbal activities, keep silent and don't alter your breathing. Do not identify with any nonvirtuous or neutral thoughts of the past, present, or future. You can even let go of thoughts that are normally considered virtuous. Just let be. This will bring about a state of basic lucidity in the three gates, just like water left untouched clearing up all on its own. This is a wonderful way to bring about meditative concentration and tranquility.

The signs of progress in this practice are as follows. When you are physically resting in the natural state, you will have no desire to move; when you are verbally resting in the natural state, you will not want to speak; and by letting your mind rest in the natural state, all forms of discursive thinking will be purified on their own and vanish. Until these signs actually occur, persevere in this practice. On this topic, the *Perfection of Knowledge* states:

Engaging in the yogic practice of the perfection of knowledge is
to engage in the yogic practice of space.

Concerning the benefits of resting in the natural state, the *Clear Expanse* states:

For whoever rests in the natural state like this,
 Disturbances in the elements will be pacified,
 As will circumstances that lead to illness,
 And fixation will be self-liberated.

As stated here, resting in the natural state physically, verbally, and mentally serves both temporal and ultimate functions. On a temporal level, one will rest in the natural state physically, verbally, and mentally, and the elements will remain undisturbed. This, in turn, will ensure that circumstances leading to illness do not occur and that one will rest naturally in a state of meditative concentration. This practice also performs the function of letting the aggregates, elements, and sense fields rest in their original condition, which allows bodhichitta to develop. By verbally resting in the natural state, the words used to communicate will be self-purified and the nature that defies description will dawn in one's mind stream. By letting one's mind rest in the natural state, all thoughts will be liberated on their own and one will be able to settle naturally into the natural Great Perfection, a state that transcends thought and expression.

The ultimate, supreme function of this practice is to bring about the self-purification of clinging related to ordinary body, speech, and mind. To elaborate, by physically resting in the natural state, one will connect with the nirmanakaya. By verbally resting in the natural state, one will connect with the sambhogakaya. And by letting the mind rest in the natural state, one will connect with the dharmakaya. Hence, since body, speech, and mind are indivisible, they neither meet nor part from the three kayas. This is addressed in the *Last Testament*, where it is written:

Fortunate son, you will connect with the nirmanakaya by physically relaxing, you will connect with the sambhogakaya by verbally relaxing, and you will connect with the dharmakaya by letting your mind relax.

The problems associated with failing to rest in the natural state are the opposite of all the excellent qualities just mentioned. You should persevere in this practice until the signs of progress have actually manifested.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Revitalization

ONCE AGAIN, prepare yourself for the teachings by giving rise to supreme bodhichitta. Think to yourself, "I will bring all sentient beings to the state of liberation and omniscience—unparalleled, genuine, and perfect buddhahood. To this end, I will listen to these instructions on the Secret Mantra Vajra Vehicle and put them into practice in the right way!" Listen carefully with this motivation.

In the *Chronicles*, it is written:

With your eyes, look at the mouth of the one who teaches the Dharma.

With your ears, listen without distraction to what is taught.

With your mind, memorize the words and examine their meaning.

As taught here, you should practice remaining undistracted with your three gates, while at the same time listening with a sense of enthusiasm and keen interest.

THE COMING OF BUDDHISM TO TIBET AND THE HEART ESSENCE TEACHINGS

I will now say a bit about how the Dharma came to Tibet, elaborating upon the account given in *History of the Heart Essence*. The snowy land of Tibet was blessed as a realm to be tamed by Mahakaruna. The people and regions of this land came into existence through the coupling of a bodhisattva monkey who was an emanation of the Realized One and a crag demoness who was an emanation of Tara.

The succession of Tibetan rulers consisted of a line of celestial kings that originally came from India, another land that had been blessed by Avalokiteshvara. The first king was Nyatri Tsenpo. Succeeding him were the Seven Kings of the Sky called Tri, the Six Kings of the Earth called Lek, the Seven Silmas, and the Five Linking Kings called Tsen. During the reign of King Totori Nyentsen, Tibet's karmic connection with the Buddhist teachings became manifest. As the king dwelt at the fortress of Yuimbu Lagang, the Eighteen Tantras rained down upon the roof of the Indian King Ja. At the same time, due to the blessings of Mahakaruna, Tibet's share of the Dharma appeared at the palace just as the sun began to rise. Accompanied by wonderful omens, a rainbow dome, and a shower of flowers, the *Sutra Designed Like a Chest*, the *Hundredfold Homage for Mending Breaches*, and a mould of the Cintamani Mantra appeared. At the time, Tibet had yet to develop an alphabet and had no tradition of virtuous practice, so the meaning of the texts was not understood. A prophecy was received, however, that foretold their being understood after five dynastic successions. The king named these teachings the "Secret Remedy"¹⁰⁰ and treated them with great respect. This was the beginning of the sacred Dharma in Tibet.¹⁰¹

After five generations, Lokeshvara¹⁰² manifested as King Songtsen Gampo. Understanding the meaning of the teachings that had arrived in Tibet centuries earlier, this king had some of the Indian sutras and tantras translated and established a tradition of practicing the ten virtues.

Four generations later, King Tridé Tsukden and Queen Kyimshing Kongjo ruled the land. One day, as the king and queen slept upon their jeweled bed, the queen dreamt that a baby boy manifested from the Five-peaked Mountain in China, like the appearance of the sun's light, and entered her womb. She explained all this to the king, who then asked a great mystic about the significance of the dream.

"This is a great omen," the mystic responded, "you have conceived a son who is the manifestation of the bodhisattva Manjushri. You must perform a great ritual!"

Nine months and ten days later, on the day of the constellation Pushyami in the first month of spring in the Year of the Horse, the prince was born. A great feast was held in honor of his birth, and the boy grew up like a lotus in the midst of a vast ocean. When the time arrived, another feast was held to commemorate the prince's first steps and to give him a name. As this took place, the prince himself stood up and said, "I am a divine king

who has descended from space. I am the emanated king Trisong Deutsen, the spontaneously present lord of the earth, ruler of all the black-haired peoples!"¹⁰³ Hearing this, all the Tibetan subjects, struck with wonder, showered him with praises and offered prostrations.

When he turned thirteen, the king's father passed away and he was enthroned as the ruler of the land. At the same time, however, a powerful and important minister named Mashang Drompa-kyé began to seize power, banning the practice of Buddhism and converting the populace to the native Bön religion. This displeased the king, who then discussed the matter with another important minister, named Gö, and asked how they might go about converting all the Tibetan peoples to the Buddhist doctrine.

"That would be wonderful," the minister said, "here is what you should do: make it known that your life is in severe danger, and that if two ministers are imprisoned for a period of two years, it will help offset the danger. Then, once you've done that, request that this be put into action."

Having set the stage in this manner, the king then bribed the soothsayers to make them say what he wanted. Once the entire kingdom had heard the news, the king summoned his ministers and court and asked, "Who will be able to go in my place?"

The elder minister Gö stood up. "Please let me go," he said. Out of competitiveness, Mashang arose as well and asked "Please let me go too!"

A prison was then built in the Trang Valley of Tölung, where the two ministers were sent along with enough provisions for three years. Later, the elder minister Gö was released. Mashang, however, was punished by being imprisoned and set under guard, and the other ministers that were hostile to the Dharma were exiled to other places.

The king then discussed matters further with Gö and, as a way to get a temple built, they gave the choice to the king's ministers and subjects. After some discussion, they decided to build a small temple. The king then invited Shantarakshita to Tibet.

When he received the invitation, the abbot responded, "You are late! I have waited for nine hundred years, and until now you haven't come. When the king was born, however, one tooth began to grow in my toothless mouth." With this, he journeyed to the land of Tibet, where he was welcomed by the king and all the ministers.

They laid the foundation stone for the temple, but spirits and ghosts did not let them complete its construction. The preceptor then predicted

that the building would be finished once the master Padmasambhava was invited to Tibet and had subdued the land. As predicted, there was a learned and accomplished master from Oddiyana named Padmasambhava who was serving as the court priest of the Indian king Dharmapala, and whose spiritual powers and miraculous abilities were unimpeded. They invited this master to Tibet, and he proceeded to bind all of the country's wicked spirits and ghosts under oath.

Padmasambhava pacified the land with the heruka's dance and vajra gait, whereupon foundation stones were laid on the perimeter. A wall was then erected along this perimeter in a vajralike pattern. At that time, four foremen were appointed and the work was divided up and given to skilled craftsmen from India, China, Shang Shung, Sumpa, Lhobel, Karlok, Li, and Mangyul. All these workers toiled by day, while the eight classes of gods and demons acted as foremen and directed the nonhuman entities to work by night. In this way, the sections that were built at night were even higher than those built during the day.

Wonderful paintings, woodwork, and statues also appeared at night. In this way, the Great Spontaneously Present and Eternal Temple of Samye was erected, along with the four major sanctuaries, eight minor sanctuaries, the sanctuaries of the sun and the moon, and the three sanctuaries of the queens. All these functioned as the external support. These, as well as the inner supports, were consecrated by the bodhisattva preceptor Shantarakshita and the master Padmakara, during the course of which innumerable wondrous omens occurred. For thirteen years, feasts of auspiciousness and all varieties of performances were put on. For the king and his subjects, the sun of joy and happiness had risen.

The preceptor and master matured the king and his subjects by conferring a vast range of the Buddha's teachings, both those of the Causal Vehicle of Characteristics and the Fruitional Vehicle of the Secret Mantra. Many other panditas were invited from India as well. Along with the preceptor and master, they translated and compiled teachings from both the Sutra and Mantra traditions, doing so on a vast scale. In addition, the master Padmasambhava composed sadhanas that related to the tantras, key instructions that related to the sadhanas, and created a system of practice based on these key instructions. With these, he matured the king, his subjects, and their retinue, blessed each and every mountain and cave as a power spot, and filled the land with spiritual treasures.

One time the master Padmasambhava was practicing at Zhotö Tidro



Yeshé Tsogyal

Trak along with his spiritual partner, Lady Tsogyal of Kharchen. While they were there, wisdom dakinis exhorted Yeshé Tsogyal with the following prophetic declaration: "The enlightened mind of this great master, the nirmanakaya buddha, holds a set of profound key instructions called the Heart Essence of the Dakinis. These direct instructions bring buddhahood in three years and cause the corporeal aggregates to disappear in this very life. You must request these teachings!"

Hearing this, Yeshé Tsogyal offered a great tantric feast and requested the teachings. "Great master," she said, "please give me the direct instructions that will cause the aggregates to disappear and bring buddhahood

in this very life. Please bestow upon me the key instructions of the Heart Essence!"

With this supplication, she made innumerable prostrations and circumambulations, upon which the great master replied, "Tsogyal, your request is an excellent one, for I possess instructions that are unlike those I have given you in the past. These teachings lie beyond the nine vehicles and are the very pinnacle of them all. Just seeing these key points is enough to destroy all intellectually fabricated beliefs and meditations. With this approach, the levels and paths are perfected without any need for effort. Without correcting or changing anything, the afflictions are freed on their own; there is no need to use antidotes. This fruition is not produced by causes, but is perfected in and of itself, for the wisdom mind is spontaneously present and arises instantaneously. In this very life, the corporeal, flesh and blood aggregates will be freed into the luminous sambhogakaya. Within three years, you will venture forth to the Supreme Realm and be able to seize the stronghold in the realm of the spontaneously present dharmakaya. These instructions I will now teach you!"

The great master then revealed the true mandala of the peaceful and wrathful deities in the great feast hall, empowering and offering instructions to a hundred thousand wisdom dakinis, headed by the lady from Kharchen. He taught them all the Seventeen Tantras, with the *Tantra of the Clear Expanse of the Sun* as the eighteenth, along with a great many key instructions.¹⁰⁴ All these teachings were then grouped into two categories. The first set contained key instructions on the vastness of the tantras, while the second collection was composed by the master himself and contained cycles for simple yogis. Each was then committed to writing and cataloged by the master and Yeshé Tsogyal.

It was at this time that the king extended an invitation to the master and his spiritual partner to visit Chimpū. The two then set off, accompanied by the king, the queen, and the royal children. Once there, they began a series of 108 tantric feasts. During the course of these feasts, a young, eight-year-old princess named Pemasel, the daughter of the noble Queen Changchup Men of the Drom clan, passed away. Seeing her body, the king burst into tears and fell to the floor unconscious. Yeshé Tsogyal then covered him with a white sash and sprinkled him with sandalwood water, upon which the king regained consciousness.

The master then spoke:

Alas, noble king, worldly affairs are but a dream.
 By their very character, conditioned things are illusory.
 Politics, too, are like last night's dream,
 And wealth and subjects, like the drop of dew on a blade of grass.
 Life is as impermanent as a bubble about to burst,
 And all conditioned things are subject to decay.
 All that comes together must part in the end—
 This is the nature of all conditioned things.
 There is nothing whatsoever that is stable and permanent,
 So do not cling to the impermanent as being permanent.
 Instead train in the nature of the birthless dharmakaya!

To these words of advice, the master added many prophecies concerning future events and told the king about the series of incarnations that Princess Pemasel was to take. At the conclusion of all this, he prophesied the coming of Tsultrim Dorjé and Trimé Özer. The princess was commanded to be the guardian of the profound Heart Essence teachings, and they were then concealed as a profound treasure. Later, just as the master had prophesied, these teachings were revealed by the omniscient Tsultrim Dorjé and spread far and wide by Trimé Özer.¹⁰⁵

— REVITALIZATION —

The next set of instructions relates to the practice of revitalization. This topic contains two divisions:

- ▶ A teaching on revitalization
- ▶ How to do the practice

Concerning the first of these, the *Clear Expanse* explains:

To realize the nature of original purity,
 Rest in the natural state and practice revitalization.

In the previous stage, the mind itself was allowed to rest in its natural state of nonconceptual clarity. Here, the training consists of gradually

integrating this with one's ordinary activities using mild, intermediate, and intense circumstances to familiarize oneself with this state. This is similar to the way someone interested in learning swordsmanship would start out by practicing with a wooden sword.

The second section addresses the way to actually do this practice. Practicing revitalization with the body, speech, and mind while utilizing specific gazes will enable you to realize what it means to break through to the true nature. As stated in the *Last Testament*:

Revitalize yourself with the gazes
Of the listeners, bodhisattvas, and wrathful deities.

First is the gaze of the listeners. Start out by seating yourself in the seven-point posture; settle into a meditative state with your legs crossed, hands in the posture of meditation, spine straight, tongue touching the roof of the mouth, breathing relaxed, eyes directed towards the tip of the nose, and the chin tucked slightly inwards.¹⁰⁶ As written in *Resting in the Nature of Mind*:

The body should be like the king of mountains, with seven points . . .

As this passage indicates, you should remain motionless, without letting your body or senses vacillate. Do not move your eyes or let your senses chase after the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, sensations, and thoughts that occur. Instead, cut the flow of ordinary speech and let the movements of the breath relax on their own. Direct your gaze towards the tip of the nose with a sense of vivid presence.

However the six collections of consciousness happen to manifest, do not try to perpetuate or restrain what occurs. Just leave them in their original condition. Through this, all circumstances and appearances will be clear and nonconceptual by virtue of their very essence, and one then trains by simply not falling out of this state. The *Clear Expanse* explains:

With the peaceful gaze of the listeners,
Let body, speech, and mind rest in the natural state.

Next is the gaze of the bodhisattva. Shifting your eyes from their earlier position, stare blankly into space, gazing with a sense of vivid presence. This will set the stage for the arising of a momentary state of mind that is both clear and unimpeded. By its very nature, this state of mind does not exist from the moment it arises. Instead, it must be realized to be indivisible appearance-emptiness, like the moon's reflection in a pond. The *Clear Expanse* says:

With the gaze of the bodhisattvas,
Rest in the natural state and bliss itself will be attained.

Third is the gaze of the wrathful deity. Without slipping out of this state of absorption, stand up and spread your feet apart. Then proceed to refine your ability by glancing about with your eyes and shouting "ha ha, hi hi" as you intensify your awareness. Like a wave dissolving back into the ocean, with this approach you will be training in the realization of that which is self-occurring and self-manifest, that which is free of elaborations and need not be altered. With this approach, the more circumstances you encounter, the more empty wisdom will continue to develop, just like the relationship between the amount of firewood and the size of a fire. It is also written:

With the gaze of the wrathful deity,
Rest in the natural state and attain three qualities.

To summarize, with the gaze of the listeners, the point of the eyes, the point of the nose, and the point of the mind are concentrated into a single point and left to themselves, still and motionless. This causes the body, speech, and mind to shift naturally from a state of motion to a state of rest. This is then stabilized with the gaze of the bodhisattvas, where one looks with a sense of vivid presence into space, staring blankly and letting the three gates rest in the natural state. Finally, the gaze of the wrathful deities brings the stability of the previous stage to a point of perfection and, through this, to liberation.

On a temporal level, these practices will produce an extraordinary state of tranquility imbued with the experiences of bliss, clarity, and noncon-

ceptuality. This, in turn, will suppress the coarse afflictions and suffering. Ultimately, these coarse afflictions will be conquered by insight—the realization of the nature of original purity—and one will be established on the true path.

According to the *Essential Commentary* and *Last Testament*, the other preliminary practices that were taught earlier are practiced first, while resting in the natural state and revitalization are included in the main practice. Since they are the primary methods used to still the mind, this approach certainly has its place. The presentation here, however, is in line with the approach found in other instruction manuals.

When meditating in this way, if you practice with a sense of enthusiasm, there will be few hindrances and your meditation will naturally evolve, whereas being bored or uninterested will end up creating problems for your practice. As is the case when one tries to tame a skittish horse, resistance to the meditation process can turn into a habit, so you should be sure to take short rests and cultivate this in a gradual manner.*

* Author's note: "The annotated outline found in the sections on the preliminaries and main practice is taken from the instruction manual of Orgyan Terdak Lingpa."

The Main Practices of the Heart Essence

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Probing the Mind and Searching for Its Hidden Flaw

ONCE AGAIN, begin by developing supreme bodhichitta. Think to yourself, "I will bring all the infinite number of sentient beings to the precious state of unsurpassed, genuine, and perfect buddhahood! To this end, I will receive these profound, secret, and unsurpassed instructions in the correct manner and put them into practice." With this motivation, listen carefully to the teachings that follow.

The *Precious Wish-fulfilling Treasury* states:

The Dharma practice for the student who receives teachings
Is to eliminate flaws and listen with respect.

Hence, when receiving teachings on the Dharma you should eliminate the three flaws of the vessel, the six stains, and any other such factors, while at the same time cultivating a whole host of positive qualities and listening to the teachings with a respectful attitude.

THE INCARNATIONS OF PRINCESS PEMASEL

In this section, I will elaborate upon the history and origins of this treasure that were taught above and say a bit about the subsequent incarnations of Princess Pemasel.

One time, the protector of the Dharma, King Trisong Deutsen, bowed down before the great master with the utmost reverence and offered him a golden bowl filled with turquoise. "Great master," the king said, "when will my daughter become human once again and what Dharma will she prac-

tice? In what birth will she attain buddhahood and where will she work for the benefit of beings?"

"Listen father and king," the master replied, "once her negative karma has been purified she will be reborn in Drak in the hamlet of Sar as a woman with great faith and all her senses intact. At this time she will maintain a mere karmic link with my instructions. Next, in a place called Layak in the south, she will be born as a woman with great intelligence in the Year of the Monkey. In this incarnation she will become the disciple of lord Nyang Ral,¹⁰⁷ an emanation of the enlightened body, and will set out on the path.

"In her next incarnation she will be born as a man in Yeru in the hamlet of Mar. The habitual patterns she formed by taking up the monastic life will propel her to do so again, and she will then meet with my own emanation, Chöwang.¹⁰⁸ With his instructions, she will behold the very essence of awareness and be taken under the care of the dakinis.

"Following this incarnation, she will be born in a place called Drintang, on the border of Do, Mön, and Tibet, where once again she will take up the monastic life as a result of the habitual patterns she formed in the past.¹⁰⁹ At that time, the dakinis will protect her from obstacles and grant her prophecies, which will allow her to connect with my profound treasure and reveal three treasure gates. In this period, she will not be able to benefit beings on a vast scale, despite the fact that she will have encountered the instructions of the profound Heart Essence. Instead, this will be the time for her to practice them in secret.

"She will become the master of these teachings and have seventy students, some of them with the right karma and some of them without. Of these seventy disciples, those with the right karmic connection will be reborn in the Realm of Bliss, while some of those without this connection will be reborn in the lower realms. At this time, a dakini will grant her a prophecy and twenty-one qualified students will arrive.

"In particular, a master of this secret treasure of the profound Heart Essence will be born in the Year of the Monkey as a woman from Sungkar in Drak. She will have a delicate body, perfect features, and great intelligence. She will also be sincerely interested in the Dharma, have a pleasing demeanor, and teeth with flecks of white.¹¹⁰ Between her eyebrows, there will be a birthmark that resembles a lotus. Since she will have been blessed by Yeshé Tsogyal, if she is given these instructions, she will attain buddhahood without remainder in upper Karak and the teachings will flourish for a brief time.

"If this does not come to pass, however, these instructions will be of no benefit and demonic forces will change everyone's attitude towards them. Consequently, there will be very little interest in these teachings. Nevertheless, since any form of contact with them is beneficial, all these people will have set out on the path.

"Her lifespan at this point will be fifty-nine years. If life-enhancing practices are performed this may be prolonged for a short while. Otherwise, obstacles may result in her passing away even before her fifty-ninth year. If she appears to be dying due to broken samaya vows and this prompts [her students] to confess their broken vows, she will live out her entire lifespan. At this point, a woman who has been blessed by dakinis of the five classes will arrive. By taking her as a spiritual partner, her life will be revitalized and she will outlive her allotted lifespan.

"These profound treasures will then be brought to Lower Bumtang. If it so happens that they do not arrive there, they may be hidden in their previous treasure location, in a rock undisturbed by spirits and demons, in which case they will be revealed again in a future life.

"Once that life is over, she will wander briefly through the sambhog-akaya pure realms and then be reborn at the Sanctuary of Liberation in Bumtang. Once she has reached the age of fifteen, she will reveal the Heart Essence tantras and their key instructions at the Lionlike Rock in Lower Bumtang and use them to benefit beings. She will then reveal a great many treasures and display the miraculous power of physical incongruity.¹¹¹ Five dakinis will take on the form of young maidens and act as her spiritual partners, and through this she will bring benefit to beings.

"In that life she will come to be known as Trimé Özer and will have an emanation of Hayagriva as a son named Dawa Trakpa.¹¹² There will also be 108 students who will be struck with the profound key points, 1008 students with a connection to the teachings, thirty with the capacity to benefit beings, and a great many benefactors and others who make a connection by offering food and material wealth.

"In addition, she will also spread the teachings of the Great Perfection in Lhotrak and Kharchu. In Lhotrak, all the teachings on the Mind Class will be revealed from the Lion-faced Rock. From Upper Mönkar, she will reveal my profound maledictory mantras, and from here at Chimpū, the princess' own silk brocade cloak, a special type of turquoise, a strand of zi and agates, a mirror of white silver that allows one to see distant places, a Dharma robe of my own that is patterned with gold, and a yellowish skull

cup, within which are the teachings that bring buddhahood in a single life—the instructions of the four empowerments and the tantras. All of this will be hidden and then rediscovered by the princess once she has transmigrated and taken rebirth in Bumtang.

“Through this, she will bring an incalculable amount of benefit to beings and attain perfect and complete buddhahood in that very life. After that, she will benefit beings in the sambhogakaya realms and will no longer take rebirth. Finally, you king, Yeshé Tsogyal, the princess, and I, Padmasambhava, shall all meet face to face on the Glorious Copper-colored Mountain.”

Delighted, the king offered many prostrations and circumambulations, and then said, “Great master, since worldly affairs are pointless, please grant us instructions that will bring happiness in this life, joy in the next, and which will eventually lead us to buddhahood itself.”

The master responded:

Ah, great and mighty king, please listen to my words.
 The futility of worldly affairs has made you wander
 Endlessly through samsara, suffering again and again.
 You must seize the royal fortress of the dharmakaya!
 You must grasp the essence of objects, the birthless sphere of reality
 itself!
 You must take hold of the essence of places and stay in isolated
 forests!
 You must look at the essence of solitude, reality itself, empty and
 clear!
 You must rest in the essence of dwellings, the innate nature of mind!

In this manner, the master bestowed a great many oral instructions that distilled the very essence of the teachings. Continuing, he taught:

As the essence of the view, look at unchanging clarity-emptiness!
 As the essence of meditation, behold the nature of mind just as it is!
 As the essence of activity, destroy the confusion of dualistic fixation!
 As the essence of the fruition, do not seek, for it is spontaneously
 present!
 If you do all this, you will be happy in this life, joyful in the next,
 And will swiftly attain perfect buddhahood itself!

The master's words greatly pleased the king, who once again offered prostrations and circumambulations.

The princess' brocade cloak with the instructions were then placed into a brown rhinoceros hide casket and hidden as treasure. With prayers that she meet with the teachings again in the future, the master wrote the syllable NRI with the blood of knowledge¹¹³ on the heart center of the princess' corpse and summoned her consciousness back. Once she regained her senses and was able to communicate and understand, he bestowed upon her the empowerments of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis and gave her the secret name Pema Ledrel Tsel. The girl then held the casket of texts at the crown of her head and prayed, "May I meet with these teachings in the future and benefit sentient beings!"

The master then said, "Once the karma of her past lives has reawakened, the three of us—father, daughter, and master—will meet once again."

With this statement, the princess' consciousness again left her body and the master then appeared to cremate the remains right then and there. At the same time, however, he brought her remains instantly to Oddiyana for a tantric feast in order to purify her obscurations. He then returned an instant later and said, "Tsogyal, make note of all that has transpired here and conceal this record along with the profound treasure. This will give her confidence in these teachings when she meets with this treasure again in the future."

Lady Tsogyal wrote all this down and then asked, "Should these secret instructions of the Heart Essence be propagated or concealed?"

"The time has not yet come to spread these teachings," the master responded, "so they should be buried as treasure. Since the princess placed the casket of texts on the crown of her head and made aspirations for the future, these teachings are her heritage. After some years the great master Vimalamitra will arrive and the time will have come for his disciples. The Heart Essence teachings will then be spread far and wide. My teachings on the Heart Essence of the Dakinis will appear once the Heart Essence teachings that were translated earlier have entered into a state of decline and are on the verge of disappearing altogether. When the teachings are just about to die out, these instructions will manifest. They will do so quickly and on a vast scale, but only for a short while, like the flame of a butter lamp flaring up before it burns out." The master then continued on, saying a great deal about the teachings before they were hidden as treasure for future generations.

Later, Princess Pemasel took a series of births just as the great master foretold. Of these, when the lifespan had declined to fifty years and most people did not even live to see forty, she was born as Pagangwa Rinchen Dorje¹¹⁴ in a land to the south of the Seljey Mountain Range that resembled a blazing iron cage. In the Year of the Ox, she revealed profound treasures from Takpo and Lung Tramo Trak. Instead of putting them into practice, however, she took them from these places and began to travel, which prompted the dakinis to punish her. Consequently, she did not live out her entire lifespan.¹¹⁵ The statement made in the *Golden Rosary of Questions and Answers* that she would die and wander briefly through the sambhog-akaya pure realms then came to pass, and she dwelt in the Supreme Realm that manifests as the path to those yogis who meditate on the mandala of fivefold light, the appearance of directly perceptible luminosity.

The princess was then reborn as Longchenpa in Tödrong, located in the Tra Valley of Yoru. His father was the master Tenpa Sungwa and his mother Dromza Sönam Gyen. By the time the boy was seven, he knew how to read and had studied the sadhanas of *Gathering of the Blissful Ones*, Vajrakilaya, and the enlightened activity sadhanas of the Guru. By the age of ten, he understood all of these, in addition to having studied astrology, thread-cross rituals,¹¹⁶ and other subjects.

At thirteen, he took monastic ordination and studied the Vinaya teachings of the sacred Dharma with Khenpo Samdrup Rinchen, at which point he received teachings on the *Supreme Scripture*, the *Sutra of Individual Liberation*, the *Luminous*, and other texts. Next, with various masters he studied texts on philosophy, *Entering the Middle Way*, and various tantras and key instructions, such as those associated with Path and Fruition, Six Applications, Pacification, Severance, Mahamudra, the Mind Section of the Great Perfection, the teaching cycles of Lord Atisha and the Kadam School, and numerous other collections of sadhanas that were held in common by multiple traditions. He trained himself thoroughly by studying, contemplating, and meditating on these teachings, eventually reaching a point where he had internalized them all and was completely omniscient. In particular, with the sacred guru Kumaradza he received and practiced the empowerments, explanations, tantras, oral transmissions, and key instructions of the Secret Heart Essence, as well as a great many minor treasures and transmissions of Guru Padmasambhava.

One winter, in the Year of the Female Wood Rabbit, he was practicing at Chimpu Hill in Rimochen Cave with eight of his fortunate male and



Longchen Rabjam

female students. As he was giving them the empowerments and explanations of the Secret Heart Essence, many protectors and dakinis suddenly arrived and exhorted him to begin teaching the Heart Essence of the Dakinis. He then sent the yogi Özer Kocha to fetch the texts.

When they gathered together later, the practitioners there could actually see all the innumerable gatherings of dakinis that were taking place. At night, the din of the dakinis' natural sounds could be heard in every direction, as could various instruments. The yogis and yoginis, each and every one, had neither dreams that indicated they were asleep, nor anything that

showed they were wide awake. Instead, everyone remained in a state of blissful, clear, and thought-free wisdom day and night for an entire month. When introductions were given, everyone beheld the light of deep, pervasive blue, as well as the light of fivefold wisdom. When instructions were given, and during the course of all the supportive teachings, the entire sky would fill with rainbows. This went on for an entire month.

When Longchenpa composed treatises on the great Heart Essence, commentaries that have come to be known as the Quintessence of the Dakinis, various wondrous omens occurred. A great many beings were brought to the state of liberation and omniscience through the empowerments, explanations, and instructions of the Heart Essence. The unique instructions that are being taught here stem from this lineage.

THE PROFOUND PATH OF MEDITATION

This second section addresses the profound path of meditation, the main practice of the Great Perfection. These instructions include the path of breakthrough, which shows the true nature of original purity to be free of all elaborations, and the path of the direct leap, which points directly to the spontaneous presence of wisdom. The first of these topics is divided further into: 1) ascertaining the true nature and 2) pointing out awareness in its original state.

As stated in the *Essential Instructions on the Essence Tantras That Liberate upon Wearing*, ascertaining the true nature takes place in three steps:

First probe the conceptual mind,
Then seek out its hidden flaw,
Finally, examine its origin, presence, and departure.

PROBING THE MIND

To begin, go to an isolated place and sit down in the seven-point posture of Vairochana. With your legs in the vajra posture, place your hands beneath your navel in the meditation mudra, spread your shoulders out like the wings of a vulture, and straighten your spine like an arrow. Lower your gaze to the tip of your nose, place your tongue on the roof of the mouth, and tuck your chin slightly inward. Your body should be as straight as a

statue in a temple, not bent or crooked. Let your senses relax naturally. Don't move your eyes or glance about in agitation. They should be neither wide open nor closed. The eyes and mouth should be placed in such a way that they lead to an experience of open clarity. Don't block your senses, just relax your body and sit free and easy, like a bundle of straw with its rope cut. Sitting comfortably, relaxed, and with a sense of lightness is a skillful way to relax the four external elements and the physical body. The *Tantra of the Clear Expanse* states:

Do not move, let your body rest at ease.
 Do not speak, leave your voice where it is.
 Do not think, let your mind relax naturally.
 Open your eyes slightly and gaze into space.
 Keep a space the size of a barley seed
 Between your teeth, your mouth barely open.
 Let your three gates relax with the breath
 And rest for a brief time upon exhaling.

The same text then reads:

Without giving free rein to the mind's thoughts and memories,
 Direct your eyes to the very tip of your nose,
 And then from the nose, direct your attention to the tip of the
 mind.
 Bring them all to a single point and rest in a state of equanimity.

As you rest in a state of equanimity as taught here, examine the essence of what is being settled into and that which is doing the settling. The three gates are the basis for all positive and negative experiences, all our happiness and sadness. The one who experiences, the experience itself, and what is experienced all come down to these three. For this very reason, we must carefully examine which of these three is the primary factor.

Examine the body, with its feelings of pleasure and pain, hot and cold, and hunger and fullness. Analyze all the positive and negative verbalizations associated with speech, and all the mind's perceptions that are mediated by the five senses, the good ones we embrace and the bad ones we reject. Examine and investigate body, speech, and mind from every angle.

Which of them is the primary factor? What is it that wanders in samsara

and transforms into a buddha? Who serves as the basis for all these experiences of happiness and sorrow? Who affirms some things and negates others? Who is it that amasses positive and negative karma and cycles through a succession of rebirths, engaging in virtue and vice along the way? Who is it that experiences the happiness and suffering that result from these acts? Is it body, speech, or mind? Contemplate each of these three with great care. Are these three separate factors, or do they function as a whole?

By examining and analyzing these questions, you will come to understand that the mind is at the root of everything, and it will be as though you've recognized a thief. This is alluded to in the following passages. The *Clear Expanse* states:

This alone is the basis of all samsara and nirvana.

And in the *Tantra of the Secret Essence*:

The mind itself has no basis or root,
Yet it is the root of all phenomena.

While in the *Songs of Realization*, it is said:

The mind itself is the sole seed of all there is,
That from which existence and nirvana arise.

SEARCHING FOR MIND'S HIDDEN FLAW

Mind is at the root of all samsara and nirvana. Examine its color, shape, and characteristics. Is it round, square, semicircular, triangular, or oblong? Is it something that can be perceived as an actual entity or not? Examine and analyze this question carefully. What about its color? Is it white, yellow, red, green, or blue? Is it the same as the body, speech, and conceptual mind, or is it something other than these three?

When you come across something that you like or something you don't, when you hear something pleasant or unpleasant, or when you feel all the variations of happiness and sadness, is the mind the same as these experiences or different? If it is the same, then the mind would end up having color, since it would have to be the same as the body. If you think that

they're different, however, then examine where the mind might be apart from these experiences.

By analyzing in this way, you will come to see that, in fact, they are neither the same nor different. With this, the indivisible particles of the body will naturally dissolve altogether and the mind will vanish without a trace, like the path of a bird in the sky. When this has come to pass, you will have come to know the mind's hidden flaw.

Awareness is not any particular *thing*, yet it is present with vivid clarity. It is not limited in any way; it is neither subject nor object, something that arises or ceases, and it is neither permanent nor nothing at all. Beyond being an object that can be precisely described, it is primordially free of all signs of confusion. Hence, as the *Garland of Pearls* teaches:

The original purity of the basic state
 Does not know even the word "confusion,"
 What need to mention "unconfused"?
 Therefore, confusion is originally pure.

THE ORIGIN, PRESENCE, AND DEPARTURE OF MIND

Even though you may not find any hidden flaw in terms of the ground, you should still examine and analyze the essence of this mind that clings to a self where there is none. Where does it first come from, where does it stay, and where does it go in the end? Further, how does it originate, in what way is it present, and how does it cease? The *Clear Expanse* states:

Next, in what way is the mind present?
 You may say it exists, but it is empty of being a thing.
 Yet if you say it does not, there is still the clarity of the analytic process.
 Empty and clear—it is devoid of anything to identify.

In this way, leave the mind to itself and search inside and out for its location. Though you may not find the essence of that which is present, mind still gets caught up in the past, present, and future with its endless proliferation of discursive thought. Hence, consciousness is in a constant state of flux. What are these fluctuations of consciousness actually like? Where do they go? Does the essence of that which departs do so from a point of

existence or from a point of nonexistence? If it departs from a point of nonexistence, then the idea that there is something departing makes no sense. How does this agent, the essence of that which departs, actually do so? Do its movements resemble those of a god or human? Does it burrow into the ground or fly through space? Does it move about with the form of one of the six classes of existence? What are its characteristics, color, and size?

This process of analysis contains the key instructions for seeking out the mind. Since these instructions are of the utmost importance, carry out this process with great care, diligently analyzing day and night. This is called “using the mind to seek the mind” and “using the mind to tame the mind.” It is also called “searching for mind’s hidden flaw,” “destroying the mind’s abode,” and “exposing the deceptive cavern of the mind.”

Pursue the mind relentlessly as though you are putting it on trial; examine its characteristics in minute detail like you’re thrusting a spear at an opponent with a shield or as though you are threading a needle. What you are doing here is using the mind to tame itself, in the same way that rock can be used to break down rock and iron to cut iron.

By examining and analyzing the mind in this manner, you will come to see that there is no such concrete entity anywhere at all. Once you’ve arrived at this point, the observer will function as an antidote, and the very object that is being observed will be purified into its empty, rootless nature, in the same way that the leaves of a tree will automatically wither away once its trunk has been cut. The awareness that observes all this as well cannot be accurately represented with verbal approximations, for in essence, discerning self-awareness is innately pure and self-manifest as spontaneously present wisdom.

In this context, when your mind is still, look at the essence of this stillness, and if it moves, look at the essence of its movement. In this way, sustain the natural flow of the unimpeded display of awareness, which is beyond any sense of observer and observed. This, in turn, will actualize the true nature of innate emptiness and original purity. As written in the *Tantra That Liberates upon Wearing*:

Analyze everything, inside and out; it is inherently empty and free.

And also:

Once you know the complete purity of the universal ground,
The nature of the ground will manifest and be liberated on its own.

You may wonder why the origin, presence, and departure of mind are being investigated again here. In the previous presentation, one analyzes in an objective manner to determine the mind's nonexistence. Here, in contrast, the subject is analyzed so that one may directly encounter its essence. This is how it was described by the omniscient lord of Dharma Longchenpa.¹⁷ The first approach is used to determine that the mind is groundless and rootless, while the latter shows the true nature, in which one rests evenly in the nature that was ascertained. This process of examination and analysis must be carried out in a precise manner, methodically and continuously.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Empowerment into the Display of Awareness and Pointing Out the Nature of Mind

EMPOWERMENT INTO

THE DISPLAY OF AWARENESS

THE VARIOUS instructions that have been given up to this point should be practiced in conjunction with the four empowerments, as taught by the omniscient lord of Dharma in the Quintessence of the Dakinis. To elaborate, once the elaborate vase empowerment has been bestowed, one should begin contemplating the rarity of the freedoms and endowments, and then proceed through the physical preliminary of the vajra stance. Next, the unelaborate, secret empowerment is given and one practices the verbal preliminaries. Following this, the knowledge-wisdom empowerment is bestowed in conjunction with the mental preliminaries, and then the word empowerment in tandem with probing the conceptual mind and searching for its hidden flaw.

In this context, it is said that the empowerment into the display of awareness should be bestowed prior to pointing out the nature of mind. If, however, one has not been able to combine the elaborate vase empowerment and the other empowerments with the instructions as outlined above, there is also a tradition in which the five empowerments of awareness are bestowed at this point.¹¹⁸ Whatever the case, a brief outline of the display empowerment should be presented.

Once again, begin by developing bodhichitta. Think to yourself, "So that all the infinite number of sentient beings may swiftly attain the state of unsurpassed, perfect, and complete buddhahood, I will listen to the sacred Dharma and put the teachings into practice!" With this motivation, listen carefully.

The scriptures state:

The appearance of a buddha is an extremely rare event,
 And a human birth is exceedingly difficult to come by.
 Having friends who study the Dharma and have faith
 Is something you could not find in a hundred eons.

Accordingly, you should cultivate the habit of listening with respect, physically, verbally, and mentally.

Those who are disrespectful, lack faith, or whose behavior is merely superficial, whether physically, verbally, or mentally, are not to be taught the Dharma. On this point, the *Way of the Bodhisattva* states:

Do not teach the Dharma to those without respect,
 To those who wrap their heads with cloth, though not sick;
 To those with parasols, staffs, or weapons,
 Or those whose heads are covered.

Hence, you should avoid any inappropriate behavior when listening to the Buddhist teachings. Listen to the teachings with faith and a keen interest in the sacred Dharma and the guru.

At this stage the empowerment into the display of awareness is to be bestowed. The previous stages of probing the conceptual mind and searching for its hidden flaw must not be left in the realm of theory. Instead, these instructions should be distilled down to their very essence and put into practice, whereby the mind's true nature will be thoroughly resolved. Those who have done so may then receive the display empowerment and the various pointing out instructions.

If these teachings are given to those who have not gone through this process and are just interested in studying them in a theoretical, superficial manner, they will be of no great benefit. As stated in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*:

The Dharma, without meditation,
 Is just like a deaf musician,
 Who can bring joy to others,
 But who hears nothing himself.
 Just as the sweet taste of molasses
 Cannot be experienced by description,

But will be experienced once tasted,
 The taste of emptiness, in the same way,
 Cannot be experienced through description.
 Its taste must be experienced through meditation.

Hence, these instructions should be given in their entirety to those in whom genuine wisdom has taken birth.

The texts of the Heart Essence state:¹¹⁹

Then the buddhas Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri
 Taught the maturing empowerment into the display of awareness.

As the same text then explains, the empowerment into the display of awareness, the infinite transmission, has preliminary steps, a main part, and a conclusion. The text reads:

A fully qualified guru
 Should teach the fortunate student
 The threefold empowerment of infinity.

The display empowerment should be bestowed as taught in the texts of this tradition.

To be empowered into the display of awareness means to recognize your own pristine awareness—your original state. This awareness, the essence of primordial buddhahood, has been with you from the very beginning; the guru merely points it out. It is this pointing out, however, that will allow you to recognize the mind's genuine nature for yourself, at which point whatever manifests will be liberated as the display of awareness. In other words, having the nature of mind pointed out will allow you to recognize that each and every phenomena throughout samsara and nirvana, all that appears and exists, is the display of your very own awareness. By simply mastering your own awareness, you will have received the most supreme empowerment of all.

The same text then explains:

Receive the essence, the direct empowerment of the display.
 This great embodiment, the nature of innate radiance,
 [Is the attainment of the empowerment of infinite awareness.]

If the empowerment into the display of awareness is not received,
Being liberated by conditioned rituals is impossible.¹²⁰

Those who have yet to attain the empowerment into the display of awareness will never reach Buddhahood just by being shown many mandalas made of the five precious jewels, receiving sanctified water over and over again, having crowns placed on their heads, or participating in tantric feasts. On this point, the *Clear Expanse* states:

Without the empowerment of infinite awareness,
It is impossible to be matured by conditioned empowerments.

Therefore, receiving this empowerment will automatically purify all the obscurations of ignorance and deepen [one's realization].

Alternately, the five unique awareness empowerments may also be bestowed at this point. There are two steps to this process: First, one who has not received these empowerments must do so. Second, this must be stabilized in the recipient's mind stream. The first of these has a preliminary step, a main part, and a conclusion. As the preliminary step a mandala must be offered, as this sets the stage for the realization of the mirrorlike nature of awareness. In the main part of the empowerment, there are two stages, the first of which pertains to the empowerment into the display of awareness that matures the recipient. For this empowerment, five syllables* are visualized at the five places, relating to the five chakras, five kayas, and five wisdoms. Then one recites these syllables while visualizing their projection and absorption. This process serves to purify the five afflictions.¹²¹

In the main part of the practice, the direct empowerment into the display of awareness is bestowed. This empowerment functions to bring the mandala of the heart of luminosity into view, which allows one to proceed to the level of the exhaustion of reality itself.¹²²

Once these two stages are complete, one may proceed to the third section, the conclusion, at which point a feast is performed. This serves to ensure that the great spiritual attainments will be achieved by pleasing the

* Author's note: "These five syllables are a white OM syllable (visualized on the crown of one's head), a red AH (visualized in the throat), a blue HUM (visualized in the heart center), a gold SVA (visualized in the navel center), and a green HA (visualized at the secret center)."

guru and dakinis. Finally, to stabilize this in one's being, one must habituate oneself to the nature of the four visions.

— POINTING OUT THE NATURE OF MIND —

Next, awareness is pointed out in its original state. This occurs in three stages. Awareness is first pointed out using the skillful transmission of blessings, then through the view, and finally experientially through meditation.

POINTING OUT THE NATURE OF MIND THROUGH THE TRANSMISSION OF BLESSINGS

To point out the nature of mind through the transmission of blessings, begin by making offerings and supplications with a vast feast offering. Next, the students should offer a mandala and then seat themselves in the correct posture. This last point is addressed in *Resting in the Nature of Mind*:

Tranquility is achieved by relaxing body, speech, and mind.
Its primary component involves thoroughly pacifying all focal points

In a state of the natural equality of all phenomena,
While fixing the mind on a single focal point is a supplemental technique.

As stated here, states of nonconceptual absorption are attained by relaxing the three gates. When the body is relaxed, the energetic channels relax. When the energetic channels are relaxed, the energies relax. When the energies are relaxed, the elements relax, and then the petals of the four chakras and so forth stay where they are meant to be. This will bring about the automatic occurrence of tranquility and mental stillness. The reason for this is that the essential elements, which serve as the basis for the mind, will have been brought to a state of immobility and will stay in one place.

When meditating by relaxing in this manner, there will be a natural absence of any tendency to repress or indulge thoughts. This is the essential and primary form of tranquility meditation. As a supplemental technique,

one may also fix the mind on a single focal point to attain stability. This latter approach elicits a slight degree of nonconceptuality.

In a fundamental sense, the nature of mind does not come from anywhere, stay anywhere, or go anywhere; it is always present in a state of even spaciousness. In being clear and lucid, it is insight, and in being still, it is tranquility. The term "integration" refers to the indivisibility of these two.

The presence of these integrated factors is present in each and every sentient being at all times. When the clarity of mind naturally enters a state of stillness and relaxation, its true nature can be pointed out with ease. Liberation occurs when the meditator understands tranquility and insight, which means to simply let be, without trying to correct or modify anything, regardless of whether the mind is active or at rest.

To give the actual pointing out instructions, start by taking the teacher who is giving the instructions as the basis for your meditation and go through the stages of visualization that were described earlier in the guru yoga section. Develop a sense of certainty that your guru is the very essence of the Three Jewels, that he or she has done away with every fault, perfected every positive quality, and is capable of fulfilling all your needs and desires. Surrender yourself totally, putting your trust in the fact that the guru knows just what to do.

With a feeling of devotion so overwhelming that your eyes well up with tears, think to yourself, "Sacred root and lineage gurus, please think of me with your boundless compassion and bless my entire being! Grant your blessings that the unique realizations of this profound path may take birth in my mind!"

The guru should then supplicate the lineage gurus one by one, beginning with the lines, "I supplicate you, dharmakaya buddha Samantabhadra! Grant your blessings that the unique experiences and realizations of this profound path might take birth in the mind!"

Once the blessings of the lineage gurus have been invoked with these lines, the guru melts into light out of his or her boundless compassion before dissolving into the crown of the student's head. The student should then be encouraged to settle their mind loosely within the state of simplicity that ensues, in which the student's three gates are indivisible with the three vajras of the guru.

Settling in this state will stir up the blessings and cause the appearances of the three gates to merge with the guru. All thoughts will then mani-

fest as devotion. By relaxing loosely in this experience, radiant awareness will manifest vividly as devotion. The innate nature will dawn freely and without fixation, and devotion will be liberated as self-awareness. This is referred to as birthless self-awareness, which is free within the sphere of original purity. Just let be and maintain the flow of this state without trying to alter it in any way.

Though these instructions are not explicitly mentioned in the primary teachings, they carry a great deal of blessings, as they are capable of generating an enhanced experience of the practice tradition of the gurus.

POINTING OUT THE TRUE NATURE THROUGH THE VIEW

According to the *Essential Instructions*, pointing out the true nature of mind takes place in seven stages. The text reads:

Thoughts are pointed out to be mind, mind to be empty, emptiness to be appearance, appearances and emptiness to be inseparable, inseparability to be self-liberated, the five poisons to be self-liberated, and the six collections of consciousness to be self-liberated.

Pointing Out Thoughts to Be Mind

To begin, let your three gates be as they are. Within this state, let some phenomena arise suddenly in your mind. All the various phenomena that manifest in this way are just like the experiences in a dream. Though they appear to exist from the perspective of one's own deluded thoughts, they do not have even an atom of true existence in any objective sense.

A single basis [for perception] will be perceived in different ways by different beings, due to the differences in karma that the beings in the six classes of existence possess. Though appearances contain no distinctions in and of themselves, they appear to be separate. Even a single being will be determined to be a friend by some and an enemy by others. Therefore, however they may manifest in one's mind, thoughts are never anything other than the mind itself. Subject and object are, therefore, indivisible. Hence, thoughts can be determined to be mind.

Even the buddhas have not seen, do not see, and will not see the essence of mind, so aside from these thoughts that manifest so vividly what else could indicate its presence? The *Clear Expanse* says:

The mind's thoughts and memories are the display of awareness.
 The entire range of appearances and consciousness
 Are none other than awareness itself.

And in the *Vajra Tent*:

There are no buddhas and no sentient beings
 Outside of this precious mind itself.

Pointing Out Mind to Be Emptiness

The mind's existence cannot be established, nor can its nonexistence; it cannot be established to either arise or cease, nor can it be established to be permanent or nothing at all. In fact, it cannot be established in any way whatsoever. As it is free of all elaborations, it cannot be pinpointed with precise descriptions. Hence, the mind can be determined to be emptiness. A tantra states:

Turn your attention back on the very factor that creates movement.
 There is no need to reject it, for it will be self-liberated like the
 breeze.

And in *Infinite Bliss*:

In and of itself, the mind has no root.
 It cannot be found by searching nor identified,
 A state of emptiness, this is how it has always been.
 It is ineffable, self-occurring wisdom.

Pointing Out Emptiness to Be Appearance

In essence, emptiness knows no change, yet its natural display is an unimpeded avenue of manifestation that can appear in any way whatsoever. The tantras explain:

This unimpeded display can manifest in any way—
 Empty, clear, and aware, yet without change.

And:

The nature of emptiness can appear in any way,
Yet the very character of appearance is birthless.

Pointing Out Appearance and Emptiness to Be Inseparable

Appearances as well have no other causes or conditions. Rather, they are the self-display of emptiness, like the moon's reflection in a pool of water. The inseparability of appearance and emptiness is present as the very essence of discerning self-awareness. The *Tantra of the Sun and Moon's Union* explains:

For those who realize that observed objects
Have no inherent existence of their own,
Appearance and emptiness are not two.

Pointing Out Inseparability to Be Self-liberated

This inseparability of appearance and emptiness is self-occurring awareness. Awareness, in turn, is vivid and free of elaborations, unconditioned and spontaneously present. Hence, it is self-liberated in the sphere of the three kayas. On this point, the *Tantra of Inlaid Jewels* states:

Perfect buddhahood is self-awareness itself,
The essence of which is unchanging throughout the three times.

Pointing Out the Five Poisons to Be Self-liberated

When anger manifests, look directly at its essence and then rest at ease. With this approach there is no need to eliminate anger, as it is self-liberated as the wisdom of clarity-emptiness. The same holds for whatever thoughts of the five poisons happen to arise, which will manifest in their essential and innate form: passion as bliss-emptiness, confusion as non-conceptuality, and pride and envy as self-clarity. In other words, they will be liberated into the presence of the five wisdoms. We can extrapolate from this that whatever nonvirtuous thoughts happen to arise, including the five root and twenty subsidiary afflictions, they can all be understood to be self-manifest and self-liberated. As written in the *Clear Expanse*:

This alone is the basis of all samsara and nirvana,
Self-occurring wisdom arising in and of itself.
Knowing this is referred to as "mere wisdom."

Pointing Out the Six Collections to Be Self-liberated

In a similar manner, by observing whatever appearances and thoughts happen to manifest, whether coarse or subtle, they will be seen to be devoid of inherent existence. This holds for form and the other objects of the six collections, as well as the subjects to which they appear; they all lack any basis and are self-liberated as great primordial emptiness. The *Tantra of the Sun and Moon's Union* states:

For those who realize that observed objects
Have no inherent existence of their own,
Appearance and emptiness are not two.

In brief, however it may manifest, the nature of awareness is such that it is beyond being bound or freed; it is free of elaborations and self-liberated within the space of original purity. Hence, it has already arrived at a point of perfection, for its true nature transcends meditator and object. As written in the *Tantra of Penetrating Sound*:

Self-awareness is free of all conceptuality,
And is thus endowed with four great forms of liberation:
It is primordially liberated, with no basis for being liberated again.
It is self-liberated and thus needs no remedy.
It is directly liberated, dissolving right where it is seen.
It is thoroughly liberated, with no need for effort and strain.

One gains introduction through this itself by cutting through to the very root of birthlessness. One comes to a resolution through this single point by ascertaining that it is unceasing. Finally, in coming to ascertain inseparability, one masters the display through liberation.¹²³ The import of these three statements is none other than what was just explained above.

POINTING OUT THROUGH MEDITATIVE EXPERIENCE

This section contains two divisions:

- ▶ Pointing out natural stillness within a state of absorption
- ▶ Pointing out natural radiance as the play of wisdom

Pointing Out Natural Stillness within a State of Absorption

The *Jeweled Lamp* states:

From the nature of the three forms of freely resting
The very nature of original purity will be actualized.

To rest freely like a mountain, let your body remain motionless in the seven-point posture of Vairochana. To rest freely like the ocean, keep your eyes still; look straight ahead about one arrow-length into space with a sense of vivid presence. To let your awareness rest freely, remain untainted by thoughts of the past, present, and future. This present moment of consciousness manifests, yet is unidentifiable. Without trying to add or remove anything, just let be in the state of reality itself.

As the student rests in this manner, say the following:

Now listen, fortunate one. Look without distraction at the naked self-clarity of this present moment of awareness. Do not indulge your thoughts or try to rein them in. Awareness cannot be spoiled by moral judgments or tainted by hope and fear. It is clear, yet ungraspable; lucid, yet without inside or out; wide open, but without slipping into a state of diffusion. It is inherently radiant, yet cannot be identified. It is transparent, expansive, and even. This naked state, just as it is, is the dharmakaya itself—naturally luminous and unchanging. Simply maintain recognition of this ungraspable self-radiance.

This is buddhahood, pure and pristine,
The dharmakaya of unchanging self-awareness—
Vivid, vibrant, and clear, like a cloudless autumn sky.
Rest like a mountain, steady and immutable.
Rest like the ocean, still and clear.
Rest like space, infinite in breadth.
However still your mind may be,
Rest in that as the state of awareness.
However your mind may manifest,
Rest in that as the radiance of awareness.
Motion and stillness are self-awareness,

Isolate their pure lucidity and rest.
 Rest in the self-clarity of phenomena,
 Which never waver from the state of awareness,
 Just as birds can never escape space, wherever they may fly.

By following these instructions, the mind will enter a state of lucid clarity. Next, exclaim the syllable P'ET and use the distraction this creates to destroy this nonconceptual lucidity. A state of consciousness will then manifest that is free from conceptual impressions and the antidotes that are applied to them, an uninhibited state of self-illuminating basic simplicity. This must be recognized as the absorption of the natural stillness of awareness.

Regardless of whether the mind is still or in motion, and whether you find yourself repressing negative thoughts or indulging positive ones, simply look directly at the natural flow of self-awareness. This will bring about an absorption of unfixated, natural stillness, which will manifest nakedly and vividly. The "riverlike" meditation of effortless spontaneous presence is to be found here alone.

Once you have attained some stability in this, you can begin integrating this state of absorption with your ordinary activities by mingling mild, moderate, and intense activities with your meditative experience. Through this, all acts, expressions, thoughts, and memories will manifest as the play of reality itself. There will be no differentiation between formal meditation sessions and postmeditation, no gap between day and night, and no discriminating between right and wrong. Without making a distinction between meditator and meditation, everything will manifest as the radiance of awareness; you will cross over into the exhaustion of phenomena, the wisdom mind of original purity. This is alluded to in the *Tantra of Penetrating Sound*:

When it comes to wisdom, the originally pure essence,
 Not even the word "ignorance" is a possibility.
 There are no enumerations, no "unity" and no "duality,"
 For it does not even exist as wisdom.

Pointing Out the Natural Radiance of Awareness to Be the Play of Wisdom

Pointing Out Stillness to Be the Adornment of the Mind

To begin, let your body, speech, and mind rest loosely and simply let be. Next, consciously create various discursive thoughts; let the mind make its discriminations, then simply let go and relax. Doing this will cause all of these elaborations to completely subside and you will come to rest in your original state. Like the stillness and open clarity of an ocean with no waves, your presence will be one of empty clarity, the coemergent wisdom that is the true and primordial nature. As written in the *Tantra of Self-arising Awareness*:

Beyond the two extremes of permanence and nothingness,
And with the impurities of the four extremes naturally cleared
away . . .

Because its essence, nature, and compassion are inseparable, the mind is dharmakaya in being free of elaborations, sambhogakaya in its fixation-free clarity, and nirmanakaya in being the unimpeded basis for the manifestation of the variety of experiences. The *Tantra of Inlaid Jewels* states:

Perfect buddhahood is self-awareness—
In essence, unchanging throughout the three times,
By nature, eternally unimpeded,
And with compassion that manifests universally.

And in the *Tantra of Penetrating Sound*:

Wisdom, in its original condition,
Cannot be separated into three modes.

Pointing Out Movement to Be the Play of the Mind

Whatever manifests as the unimpeded display of this clear and nonconceptual mind, do not try to repress and reject some experiences or indulge and embrace others. Simply let be and maintain this natural flow. In the same way that each wave is part of the ocean, every thought that manifests

is none other than the play of reality itself, no matter how it may appear. The *Tantra of Inlaid Jewels* explains:

This unimpeded display can manifest as anything,
Yet this manifestation is liberated in and of itself.
Even the word "liberated" cannot describe it,
So how could it possibly be said to be "unliberated"?

From the very moment it manifests, there is no need to apply an antidote to awareness, for it is self-liberated like the coil of a snake. As the *Tantra of Penetrating Sound* teaches:

Awareness, however it may manifest,
Self-liberates like the coil of a snake.

Pointing Out the Nonduality of Movement and Stillness

Out of the nonconceptual state of the mind itself, a variety of thoughts may manifest unimpededly. When they do, simply let them be. Do not try to repress and reject some while indulging and embracing others. In so doing, you will not waver from the state of reality itself and the self-display of this stillness will project forth without obstruction. Hence, by their very nature, movement and stillness are inseparable.

Waves may arise on the surface of the ocean in a variety of ways, but in the end they dissolve back into it and the two become indistinguishable. In just the same way, thoughts may arise and subside suddenly, yet they are never anything other than states of reality itself, regardless of how they may manifest. The *Marvel* states:

Just like waves and the ocean,
All the undulating waves of the mind
Dissolve back into the ocean of the primordial ground.

And in the *Songs of Realization*:

For so long as they radiate out from the mind
There will be embodiments of the protector.
Are waves and the ocean any different?

When the mind is still, it rests in the primordial state, when in motion, its manifestations are the play of the mind, and when these two are in balance, there is a state of nonduality. Hence, whatever you do will never be anything other than the play of reality itself. So do not try to prolong states of stillness, block movement, or make these two the same. However the mind may manifest, do not try to repress and reject some experiences or affirm and embrace others. Do not fixate on the mind as being one particular way, for reality itself transcends all discriminations. What has now been pointed out is the wisdom mind of the natural Great Perfection.

Concluding Instructions

A DIRECT EXPERIENCE of awareness will occur in reference to the objectives of the various meditations taught earlier. By pointing this awareness out, one will then be able to cut through superimpositions regarding the true nature. Next, one need only maintain the continuity of this recognition and keep it from being lost, through which it will gradually stabilize.

On the other hand, if the nature of this meditation is not actually experienced but is instead left in the realm of theory, when the true nature of mind is pointed out in this context the element of surprise will have been lost. If this happens to be the case, one should again meditate assiduously on the stages of contemplation that were outlined earlier. Then, by being taught and practicing in such a way that pointing out the true nature of mind elicits actual experience, one will gradually begin to experience its full significance. The *King Who Creates All* concludes:

With wisdom purified of dual and nondual,
Meditation and nonmeditation are just names.

Meditation is necessary so long as one has yet to arrive at self-manifestation and self-liberation, as conceptuality will continue to function in its ordinary, usual way until this has come to pass. Hence, as taught in the *Resting in the Nature of Mind*:

In particular, negative thoughts lead one into existence.
To liberate them, one must utilize the skillful method of absorption,
And later the wide-open expanse of knowledge will manifest,
liberated from all extremes.

As stated here, thoughts are what propel us into samsara. Dignaga's *In Praise of Manjushri* states:

Thoughts are great ignorance
 And will propel you into the ocean of samsara.
 Yet when you rid yourself of these thoughts,
 You will pass permanently beyond suffering.

And in the *Heap of Jewels Sutra*:

Thoughts cause us to wander through the wilderness of samsara,
 Perpetually creating karma and affliction
 And bringing about suffering after suffering.

There is no question that if we meditate to bring an end to such thoughts, a time will come when the knowledge that sees the complete liberation of all phenomena will manifest. Once you have moved beyond the realm of thought and concept into reality itself, conceptual constructs will dissolve into the sphere of reality and become of one taste with the dharmakaya. Accompanied by the experiences of bliss, clarity, and nonconceptuality, the great wisdom mind of the luminous Great Perfection will manifest, transcending all examples, meanings, and illustrations. The *King Who Creates All* explains:

The three times are one; they are no different.
 With no past and no future, occurring primordially,
 The dharmakaya is pervasive and singular;
 Its nature is present as the greatest of the great.

And:

This amazing and marvelous play
 Is without activity and abides like space.
 There is nothing to focus upon, yet out of ignorance
 It arises immediately out of itself.

While the *Songs of Realization* teach:

If you concentrate on your guru's transmission and exert yourself,
 There is no doubt that the coemergent will arise.
 It has no color and no qualities, nor description or example.

It is ineffable, and without any essence,
 Like the bliss a maiden clings to in her heart.
 Who could possibly show what this sacred glory is?

In the *King of Samadhi Sutra*, it is written:

If one settles the mind without thinking
 On reality itself, inconceivable as it is,
 An experience of the impartial view will arise;
 This is what we refer to as “absorption.”

When coemergent, self-occurring wisdom manifests, the practitioner will come to see all forms of polarity as fundamentally the same—good and bad, appearance and emptiness, existence and nonexistence, samsara and peace, and knower and known. In other words, as exemplified by the eight examples of illusion, all subjective and objective perceptions will be seen to be none other than the essence of reality itself, in the sense that their very nature is one of nonarising. Hence, appearance and emptiness will be seen to be an overarching unity. In *Resting in the Nature of Mind*, Longchenpa writes:

All appearance and emptiness are an overarching unity,
 Beyond all extremes of existence and nonexistence.
 Free from the idea of existence and peace being different,
 The knower and known are one in essence.
 Reality itself is seen, where neither sameness nor difference exist.

The *King Who Creates All* states:

However things may appear, they are one within suchness,
 For within this majestic state of uncontrived equality,
 The wisdom mind of the nonconceptual dharmakaya manifests
 from within.

As stated here, the nature of mind transcends the extremes of existence and nonexistence. This lucid and vividly clear wisdom never moves, while it nevertheless manifests as the nondual play of samsara and nirvana. When it does, all you need to do is rest without distraction in your original con-

dition, without indulging thoughts or trying to rein them in. This will cause thoughts to dissolve like clouds in the sky and you will be able to rest evenly in the view. On this point, the *King Who Creates All* says:

Ho! Vajra being, meditate on things as they are.
 Realize the view that things are liberated on their own.
 Rest in this nature without distraction; there is no need for effort,
 For everything is self-occurring and liberated on its own.

And:

Let this mind, unborn like space,
 Rest in the state that is unborn and unceasing.

In *Resting in the Nature of Mind*, Longchenpa writes:

Settling free from distraction,
 Without indulging thoughts or trying to rein them in,
 In a state of purity, in which the nature of mind is unborn like sky,
 Do not focus on mental events and they will dissolve like a bank of clouds,
 And the undistracted mind, now free from clouds,
 Will settle evenly into its basic state, the state of things as they are.

There are a number of points that one should be aware of in this context. When putting these teachings into practice, there are certain general factors that block absorption from developing. Addressing this topic, the venerable Maitreya taught:

Being lazy, forgetting the instructions,
 Dullness and agitation,
 Nonapplication and application—
 These are the five flaws.

And concerning the eight applications that remedy these five:

The eight applications that eliminate them
 Are the basis and what is based on it,
 Cause and result,

To not forget one's focal point,
 To notice dullness and agitation,
 To fully apply oneself to the elimination of these factors,
 And rest naturally once they are pacified.¹²⁴

When you rest in equipoise on a given object, it may seem as though your thought activity is increasing, or, alternately, your mind may experience a blank, vacant state. At other times, it may not stay still, or even if it does, a subtle form of mental activity may occur in its depths that cannot be blocked. All three of these herald the onset of stillness.

Conceptual activity cannot be stopped by being forcibly blocked. On the other hand, if you push the mind to its breaking point by consciously creating an endless stream of discursive thought, mental activity will eventually wear itself out and the mind will end up in its original state of stillness. Once this occurs, simply rest in this state. This process is traditionally likened to a crow perched on a ship. The crow will repeatedly take off and fly about, but it will only circle around and around before returning to alight on the vessel once again.

Without relying on a state of stillness or movement, and identifying with neither the objective six collections nor the subjective consciousness, simply maintain the mind's original state. In essence, the mind is beyond being permanent or nothing at all; it is not born and does not die. It is self-aware and self-illuminating, while the appearances that manifest as its unimpeded and radiant display are vast and spacious. It is vividly clear, transcending the realm of words and expression. By maintaining this original state without distraction, your realization of the true nature will evolve and grow increasingly stable.

If dullness predominates, clear away your stale breath, tighten up your physical posture, and elevate your gaze. As you concentrate your mind, focus intently by intensifying your awareness. On the other hand, if your mind is restless and agitated, lower your gaze and look down, find a more relaxed position, and simply let be in a state of deep relaxation.

At times, when the sky is clear and cloudless, turn your back to the sun and direct your gaze into the depths of space. The empty radiance of external space is used as a metaphor that will help you connect with the utterly pure space of mind that is present within. From this, the secret space of the luminous essence will manifest instantly. This is the empty clarity of reality itself, beyond all middle and extremes.

When practicing in this manner, it is necessary to train diligently with-

out falling prey to the five obstructions, such as dullness and agitation. Addressing the five obstructions, *Resting in the Nature of Mind* states:

As practical methods to be used at such times,
 Drowsiness, torpor, agitation, regret, and doubt—the five
 obstructions—
 Should be eliminated, and tranquility and insight should be
 practiced in tandem.
 Drowsiness and torpor thoroughly obstruct tranquility,
 While agitation and regret distract one from insight,
 And doubt does harm to and conflicts with both.

As noted here, there are five factors that obstruct absorption for those engaged in yogic practice. The clear lucidity that is discerned in genuine tranquility is disrupted by drowsiness and torpor, both of which create a state of dullness. Agitation and regret, on the other hand, create thought activity that keeps one from remaining one-pointedly focused on the lucidity of insight. Doubt can disrupt the attainment of either of these two. With drowsiness, one loses the ability to direct the mind and it withdraws inward, while torpor involves a neutral frame of mind that cannot focus clearly on its object. Agitation is mental activity that is directed externally towards objects. Regret is a state of intense aversion in which one obsesses about a particular activity. With doubt one experiences hesitation, which keeps one from carrying out an activity yet to be completed.

Concerning the necessity of approaching these in the correct manner, *Letter to a Friend* states:

Agitation, regret, malice, torpor,
 Drowsiness, attraction to pleasure, and doubt—
 Know that these five obstructions are thieves
 That will steal away the wealth of virtue.

Hence, counting agitation and regret as one, drowsiness and torpor as one, and adding attraction to pleasure, malice, and doubt, there are five in all.

The great omniscient lord of Dharma taught that if a state of stagnation sets in, you should work with tranquility and insight individually. When dull, rouse yourself, and when agitated, rest. Finally, to refine your ability

and enhance your practice, the key point is to mingle meditation with all of your ordinary activities.¹²⁵

When your practice has evolved in this manner and is free from errors, no concepts will be formed concerning either entities or nonentities. This will cause the entire range of conceptual constructs to dissolve into the mind's basis, the nature of mind, at which point the mind will become motionless and stable. Once this has come to pass, you will be liberated from samsara and freed from the dualistic fixation on self and other. The form of the unsurpassed dharmakaya—the great transcendence of elaborations, ideas, and expressions—will be attained. As taught in the *Songs of Realization*:

When you thoroughly investigate both entities and nonentities,
All that moves will completely dissolve.

The mind will then become motionless, naturally still and stable,
Which will bring about a self-liberation from the entities of
samsara.

When self and other are no longer known,
At that point you will attain the unsurpassed body.

And in the *King Who Creates All*:

Ho! When it comes to effortless great bliss, just as it is,
Do not exert yourself in body, speech, or mind;
Do not try to correct anything and do not focus.
Do not direct your mind or identify with subtle concepts.
Just rest in self-occurring wisdom, the nature of bliss.
This self-occurring luminosity is the wisdom mind,
The enlightened activity of the wisdom mind of the king who
creates all.

When you rest evenly in this way, an experience of empty clarity will manifest—devoid of middle and extremes and utterly free of all elaborations. In *Resting in the Nature of Mind*, Longchenpa writes:

At this point, the singular nature will manifest, the primordial state,
The dharmakaya, with no reference to perceiver and perceived,
Pristine luminosity, the very essence of the sun,
Bliss, clarity, and nonconceptuality, without middle or edge.

Until you have achieved stability in the unmistakable and genuine meaning of what is being spoken of here and seized the stronghold of the majestic dharmakaya, you should use the four-session yoga, practicing in the dawn, morning, afternoon, and evening. At the beginning of each session, start by taking refuge and cultivating bodhichitta. In the main part of the session, rest evenly in an unreal, illusory state, while in the postmeditation, continue to familiarize yourself with this state and be sure to practice in the correct manner. At the conclusion of each session, seal your practice by dedicating the merit and reciting prayers of aspiration. Without making any distinction between equipoise and postmeditation, view everything as the great play of appearance-emptiness.

In between sessions, do not let your three gates get distracted and do not engage in any pointless activities. Instead, pass your time with the ten Dharma activities.¹²⁶ As stated in the *Key Instructions on All Dharma Activities, The Tantra of the Manifest Realization*:

To transcribe writings, make offerings,
 Give generously, listen, read,
 Memorize, explain, recite,
 Reflect and meditate on the meaning—
 The nature of these ten activities involves
 An immeasurable accumulation of virtue.

The activities outlined here will cause experience to arise, and are therefore referred to as “the activities of Samantabhadra.”

Colophon

This manual of clear instructions on the teachings of original purity
Found in the *Tantra That Liberates upon Wearing*, the *Essential*

Instructions, and Last Testament

From this profound and vast path that matures and liberates,
The marvelous and secret transmission of the Heart Essence of the
Dakinis,

Was requested by the lama Pema Sengé,
An intelligent practitioner of the Nyingma School.

It was set down in writing in a place where the second buddha of
Oddiyana himself set foot,

A vast forest in an isolated and wonderful land

Within the lower regions of Dorjé Yungdrung, the guardian of this
wholesome place.

At Tarwey Ling, a retreat center for the practice of meditation,
A wholesome spot with the five forms of perfection,

This was composed by a virtuous renunciant, ordained in the teachings
of Shakyamuni,

Who has taken devotion towards the essence of the supreme vehicle as
his path,

Cast aside ordinary activity, and adhered to the three notions.

If I have done wrong in revealing this composition on the Secret Mantra,
which is meant to be kept hidden,

Or if there are any problems in terms of the practices or structure of the
outline,

To the assemblies of gurus, deities, dakinis, and Dharma protectors,
And especially to Sokdrup, Rishi, Shenmar, Dorjé Yudrön, and Danglha,
I confess!

May there be no incidental circumstances or longstanding obscurations!

The fundamental virtue set into motion by a pure and sublime mind-set
To practice virtue with body, speech, and mind, and teach this sublime
path of the Secret Mantra,

As well as the entire ocean of virtue of the activities, conditioned and
unconditioned, that I have done and will do,

I dedicate so that every being may attain perfect enlightenment!

In this way, through the merit of these good and virtuous deeds,

May both I and all the beings who now wander through the ocean of
existence,

With this excellent basis—these rare freedoms and endowments—

And spurred on by the diligence that comes from recalling
impermanence with sorrow,

Generate urgency in our minds and gain conviction in causality,

And spend day and night in study, contemplation, and meditation!

In all countries and lands, may harvests be plentiful and may livestock
thrive!

May all diseases of man and beast be pacified, and likewise all tumultuous
times!

May our every thought and deed be perfectly in line with the Dharma,
And may we enjoy the glory of perfect goodness, peace, and happiness!

May all the communities that maintain the general teachings

Of the Victorious One and the tradition of Padmakara

Spread the teachings that are taught, received, explained, and practiced
far and wide,

So we may master this sacred treasury of transmission and realization!

May these unsurpassed teachings, the very core of the enlightened mind
of the self-arisen Padma,

The utterly secret teachings of the Heart Essence, spread and flourish far
and wide!

May every being who comes into contact with them, who sees or even
hears of them,

Attain the level of Vajradhara and master the four kayas!

These instructions comprise the stages of Breakthrough. Those who wish to practice the Direct Leap may consult the instruction manual of the precious tertön or the other manuals composed by the revered masters of the past.¹²⁷ These instructions can then be linked with those found in the Heart Essence and Quintessence teachings and propagated. Sarva Mangalam!

Concluding Prayer

ବେଶ-ରୂପଶକ୍ତି-ପଦି-ଶୁଦ୍ଧି-ମସର-ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠା-ପା ଶିର୍ଷ-ରୂପଶକ୍ତି-ଦ୍ୟକ୍ଷ-ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ-ମସର-ଦ୍ୟକ୍ଷ-ପା ଦ୍ୟକ୍ଷ-ଶର୍ମି-ଶର୍ମି-ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ-ପା

The innermost heart of dakinis, of the mind, symbol, and hearing lineages;
The essential drop of Ati, bindu of the Great Perfection;
Wisdom mind treasure of the vidyadhara Namkha Ösel—
Is illuminated by *The Excellent Chariot*, how wondrous indeed!

Through the blessings and compassion of Padmakara and Vimalamitra,
And especially through those of the dakini Yeshé Tsogyal,
This has now been translated into the English language
By Tsultrim Shönu in the Western land of America.

These verses were spoken spontaneously by one known as the seventh Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, the lowest of the Dzogchen line. They were recorded and translated by Tultrim Shénu [Cartland]

APPENDIX I

Beginning a Meditation Session

From Terdak Lingpa's *Illuminating the Profound Path*:¹²⁸

For the preliminary phase of a formal meditation session, go to an isolated place and seat yourself on a comfortable cushion. The key point of the body is to sit in an upright manner and let the mind rest in its natural state. The key point of speech is to expel your stale breath three times, imagining that you are purifying all illness, harmful forces, negativity, and obscurations. The key point of the mind is to think to yourself, "I am going to practice this profound path for the benefit of all sentient beings!" With this thought, visualize your guru on the crown of your head and pray with boundless devotion: "Essence of all buddhas throughout the three times, kind root guru, I pray to you! Please bless my mind!" With these words, pray with complete concentration for the goal you wish to achieve.

These steps should precede every meditation session. Though they are not addressed in the actual texts of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, this is the how the gurus of the tradition practice.

From Jamgön Kongtrül's *Pristine Advice*:¹²⁹

For the preliminary phase of a formal meditation session, go to an isolated place and seat yourself on a comfortable cushion. For the key point of the body, sit straight up in the seven-point posture of Vairochana. Once you begin meditating on the various instructions, you should maintain whatever general and specific physical postures are dictated by the particular practice you are doing. It is never appropriate to lie down, lean back, or sit in any other ordinary posture. The reasoning here is that the body is

like a city, the energetic channels like its streets, the energies like a horse, and consciousness like a crippled person. If you restrict their functioning in any way, it will be as though you are blocking an entrance to a thoroughfare, in which case the crippled rider, having mounted a horse, will be unable to go anywhere. To use another example, just as the limbs of a snake are not visible unless it is squeezed, if the physical posture is not adjusted, the mind will not rest. The sages of the past gave a profound piece of advice on this point, with the saying “By establishing an interdependent connection in the body, realization will arise in the mind.”

In the first session of the day, expel the stale breath in a ninefold cycle, and use a threefold cycle in the remaining sessions. For the ninefold cycle, exhale three times through the left nostril, one exhalation gently, one moderate, and one forceful. Then exhale three more times through the right nostril and three through both together. In the threefold cycle, exhale one time through the left nostril, once through the right, and once through both together. As you do this exercise, imagine that all the negativity, obscurations, hindrances, obstacles, and every other unfavorable factor that has been accumulated since time immemorial, both your own and that of others as well, is gathered together all at once. Along with the breath flowing through your nostrils, it is completely expelled and the interior of your body is completely purified, as though it has been completely washed out. This can be likened to cleaning out a vessel prior to pouring a wholesome substance into it.

Next, cultivate bodhichitta by thinking to yourself, “For the benefit of all the infinite number of sentient beings, I will now practice these profound key instructions of the Great Perfection!” Following this, recite these lines:

O precious and glorious root guru,
Please dwell on the lotus seat on my crown.
Accept me with your immense kindness,
Grant me siddhis of body, speech, and mind!

As you make this prayer, visualize a lotus, sun, and moon disc seat on the crown of your head, with your own kind root guru seated upon it in the form of Vajrasattva. His form is replete with the signs and marks of buddhahood and adorned with silks and jewels. In his hands, he holds a vajra and bell and his legs are in the sattva posture.

As you visualize in this manner, pray: "Please grant your blessings: mature and liberate my mind!" To this you may add: "Bless me that the unique realizations of this profound path may take birth in my mind! Bless me that I may swiftly attain the supreme siddhi of mahamudra in this very life!" With these words, pray fervently for the goal you wish to achieve.

Next, visualize a stream of white nectar flowing out of the big toe on the guru's right foot and entering through the aperture of Brahma on your head. This nectar completely saturates your entire body and triggers the wisdom of great bliss. To conclude, imagine that the guru melts into light and dissolves into you.

APPENDIX II

Garap Dorje's Three Statements That Strike the Vital Point

Be introduced through this itself.
Come to a resolution through one thing.
Gain confidence through liberation.
—Garap Dorje

*Longchenpa's explanation from the Profound Quintessence:*¹³⁰

In the main practice of the Great Perfection, one first receives introduction and then stabilizes this in one's being. This involves two stages: introduction to the ground of breakthrough and introduction to the path of the direct leap. For the first, begin by arranging a feast torma and supplicating the lineage. Next, look nakedly at your own awareness and connect with the wisdom mind of the great transcendence of conceptual consciousness, in which ordinary phenomena are no more. Following this, you may introduce those with the very highest potential to the timeless wisdom mind of original purity—the breakthrough that brings buddhahood without meditation.

Though there are many ways to illustrate this breakthrough, here I will use the final testament of the nirmanakaya buddha. These three statements that strike the vital point introduce one's own awareness to be the pristine dharmakaya.

Be introduced through this itself.

Self-awareness has been empty and rootless from the very beginning. Like space, it is completely transparent throughout; it has no outside, inside, or

in-between. Vivid, clear, and pristine, it is unestablished by its very essence, yet at the same time its radiance is unimpeded. This is original purity at its most fundamental, the bare empty awareness of the dharmakaya.

The *Tantra of the Secret Sound* states:

Without memories of the past or thoughts of the future,
 Your mind, in this very present moment,
 Is vibrantly awake, crystal clear, and vivid;
 Recognize this to be the fourfold dharmakaya.

As stated here, simply observe your awareness in this very present moment, just as it is. It cannot be spoiled by the comings and goings of thoughts and memories, nor corrupted by ordinary thoughts of good and bad. There is something here that is at once both vivid, yet devoid of thoughts; devoid of thoughts, yet vivid. In essence, this naked transparency is the dharmakaya; innate wisdom, free of elaborations; original purity, untainted by the mind's stains; the state of primordial freedom, unbound by the fixation of meditative experiences—this is buddhahood, the ever-present dharmakaya. Here one is introduced to this constant bare awareness through this very same awareness.

Come to a resolution through one thing.

Now, simply rest without distraction in what was just pointed out. This is the wisdom mind of the dharmakaya buddhas Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri, the recognition of the great spontaneous presence of non-meditation. With this decisive certainty, let yourself expand into the wide-open space of self-illuminating awareness. Aside from simply resting in this spacious vast expanse, open and unrestricted, there isn't the slightest trace of anything to meditate on here, nothing to think about or recollect, and nothing to pay attention to. Simply relaxing and leaving your mind to itself is itself the wisdom mind of the dharmakaya, resting on its own.

Birthless by nature, it is a spacialike state—the dharmakaya;
 Original purity, where the mind has nothing to do.
 In this very state, with nothing to look at or meditate on,
 Just let be and rest spontaneously; don't modify or spoil it.

Vivid nonmeditation, a state of bare, transparent awareness;
 Effortless and brilliantly vivid, a state of relaxed, rootless
 wisdom;

Fixation free and crystal clear, a state without the slightest
 reference point;

Spacious empty clarity, a state wide-open and unconfined;
 Spacious, free, and unbound, a state without fixation, the senses
 unfettered;

Relax, blissful and expansive; just let be in a state of innate
 spontaneous presence.

Rest like space, in vast empty clarity.

Rest like the sun, self-clarity without fixation.

Rest like the ocean, limpid and unmoving.

Rest like a mountain, without transition or change.

Rest in a state of empty clarity, brilliant and crystal clear.

Rest in a state of natural stillness, relaxed, free, and at ease.

Rest in a state of unreality, blank, illusive, open clarity.

Rest in a state of reality itself, expansive and all pervasive.

Rest in a state of natural presence, empty and still.

Rest in a state without root; don't think, concentrate, be distracted,
 or meditate.

Crystal clarity without concept,

Unconstrained and unreal;

Utter relaxation without effort,

Completely clear with nothing left over;

Free and easy without meditation,

Be wholly at ease in your own being.

What one is resolving here is the wisdom mind. This absorption of non-meditation, transcending sessions and breaks, is a vast spontaneous presence. It is empty awareness, the resting place of original purity in which all ordinary phenomena have come to an end.

Gain confidence through liberation.

While resting in this manner, whatever fleeting memories and thoughts arise as the unimpeded avenue of manifestation, do not try to block them, do not pursue them, and do not use a remedy to do away with them. Left in their own pristine state, the mind's movements are pure. Whatever manifests is self-liberated. Arising and liberation, moreover, are simultaneous; manifestation and liberation do not happen at different times. The display dissolves into the ground, mother and son completely unite, and wisdom merges with the sphere of reality itself. When the basis of thought meets the wisdom mind of primordial purity, everything is liberated into the sphere of reality itself, liberated like waves welling up from the ocean, then dissolving back into it. By recognizing the fundamental ground of liberation the very instant something manifests, one gains confidence through liberation.

Since it has been there from the very start, it is liberated all at once. Since it manifests on its own, it is liberated on its own. Since it is without reference point, it is liberated without fixation. Since it is free of partiality, it is liberated without bias. Since it is self-liberated, it is liberated as whatever manifests. Since it is as it is, it is liberated immediately. Since the display is its own, it is liberated in and of itself. The self-radiance of the empty essence manifests as knowledge, the display of awareness. This manifestation is liberated within the abode of the originally pure dharmakaya. The four times gather into the mandala of reality, becoming of one taste—the wisdom mind in which wisdom and the sphere of reality neither meet nor part. Whatever manifests bursts forth as the play of wisdom, bringing a newfound confidence in wisdom beyond mind, knowledge beyond intellect, and dharmakaya beyond the universal ground.

In knowing the essence to be primordially liberated, you will be confident that there is nothing to liberate again. In knowing the nature to be thoroughly liberated, you will be confident that there is nothing to liberate with antidotes. In knowing compassion to be self-liberated, you will be confident that liberation does not take place in time. In knowing reality to be directly liberated, you will be confident that appearances and mind are liberated in nonduality. In knowing characteristics to be self-liberated, you will be confident that liberation is not something to do; it requires no effort or strain. Hence, since the display is liberated by virtue of the

ground, the stronghold is seized in the majestic fortress of the dharmakaya. On this point, the *Tantra of Penetrating Sound* explains:

The statement “one’s own mind is liberated”
 Does not imply that one thing transforms into another.
 The mind is not something to be freed by something else.
 It is perfect from the ground up, hence it does not come or go.
 If you analyze, you won’t find it; it has no rational proof.
 It is empty clarity, devoid of basis or root.
 Since this nature, which itself abides as self-clarity,
 Is liberated through a vital point, it has no partiality or bias.
 Since it is liberated of time, there is no basis on which it depends.
 Since it is liberated without effort, there is nothing to work at or
 achieve.
 Here, the liberation brought about by this confidence
 Is a primordial liberation; there is no basis for it to be liberated
 again.
 It is self-liberated and thus needs no remedy.
 It is directly liberated, dissolving right where it is seen.
 It is thoroughly liberated, so there is no need for effort and
 strain.

In this way, your own awareness is pointed out to be the dharmakaya; its inherent radiance is resolved to be the wisdom mind; and you then gain confidence in the original purity of liberation upon manifestation. Through these three, you are introduced directly to the the primordial ground of original purity, with a mind-set carefree in the face of whatever manifests and in no need of remedies. The *Last Testament* concludes:

All that appears and exists manifests as the realm of the
 dharmakaya.
 These manifestations are liberated in and of themselves.
 The intent of all the buddhas comes down to just this.

*Jamgön Kongtrül’s explanation from Pristine Advice:*¹³¹

Having set the stage with the practice of guru yoga, the nirmanakaya buddha's *Three Statements That Strike the Vital Point* can be used to realize that one's very own awareness is the pristine dharmakaya.

Be introduced through this itself.

In this very present moment, consciousness is unfabricated and unspoiled; it needs no antidote. In essence, awareness is unidentifiable. It is not established as a conceptual label. This empty clarity is self-occurring wisdom—beyond thoughts, memories, and conceptual mind. Recognize this open clarity of awareness to be the wisdom mind of the originally pure dharmakaya—self-occurring wisdom.

Come to a resolution through one thing.

The dharmakaya dwells in a motionless state, a fourth aspect free of three. This is the wisdom mind that transcends the conceptual consciousness. Past thoughts and memories have already ceased, and future ones have yet to arise. In this present moment, consciousness is wholly unfabricated and untainted, while the radiance of awareness is unimpeded. Rest in this state as though you are leaving a glass of murky water to clear all on its own. Don't obscure your awareness with intentional effort, but do not slip into a state of distraction either. Simply rest naturally in this ordinary awareness—awake, pristine, clear, and ineffable.

Gain confidence through liberation.

When resting in this state, awareness will be naturally limpid and free from complexity, like a clear ocean. Even if ordinary consciousness radiates outwards towards objects, its own manifestations will be self-liberated like waves dissolving back into the ocean. When something manifests, don't be distracted, but don't change anything or spoil it either. Simply let go and relax. Thoughts and memories will disappear without a trace. Experiences will dissolve into the ground. This is what we call "self-liberation." Here one gains confidence in self-manifestation, free from bias and fixation, effort, judgments, and antidotes.

Notes

- 1 Klong chen rab 'byams, *Theg pa'i mchog rin po che'i mdzod*, p. 262.
- 2 Klong chen rab 'byams, *gSang ba bla na med pa 'od gsal rdo rje-snying po'i gnas gsum gsal bar byed pa'i tshig don rin po che'i mdzod*, pp. 338-339.
- 3 Bi ma la mi tra, *Zangs yig can gyi snang byed sgron ma*, p. 117.
- 4 In the first volume of *The Excellent Chariot*, Ngetön Tenzin Zangpo explains the origins of the Great Perfection in detail, teaching how they were first transmitted by the primordial buddhas Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri to Vajrasattva before reaching the human realm. [*Great Perfection: Outer and Inner Preliminaries*, p. 9]
- 5 Though the Three Classes (sde gsum) and Four Cycles (skor bzhi) are the most common classifications of the Great Perfection, there are also other less-fixed classifications, such as the Quintessence (yang ti) and General Essence (spyi ti) teachings. The Quintessence is said to contain the teachings of the extremely secret, unique oral lineage, while the General Essence relates to the key points of the profound meaning of the Key Instruction Class tantras in general.
- 6 bKra shis rgya mtsho, *Zab mo snying thig gi gnad thams cad bsdus pa'i don khrid lag len gsal ba*, pp. 2-3.
- 7 One notable example exception is the Heart Essence of Vajrasattva, a treasure revelation of Künkyong Lingpa (1396-1477). This cycle is included in volume si of Jamgön Kongtrül's *Treasury of Precious Treasures*.
- 8 As reflected in Jamgön Kongtrül's collection of important treasure literature, *The Treasury of Precious Treasures*, there is almost no extant treasure literature that presents the Great Perfection solely from the perspective of the Mind or Space Class. This collection contains less than thirty folios devoted to the Mind Class, and none at all that deal only with the Space Class. The Key Instruction Class, by comparison, takes up nearly two thousand folios. One notable exception is the Three Classes of Dzogchen (rDzogs chen sde gsum), which, as its title implies, addresses all three classes of the Great Perfection. This cycle was revealed by the great tertön Chokgyur Dechen Lingpa and is held in high esteem precisely because it is a rare specimen of treasure literature that contains teachings on all Three Classes. There are numerous components of this cycle in the zha, za, and 'a volumes of the New Treasures of mChog gyur gling pa (see *Catalogue of the New Treasures of mChog gyur gling pa*). Due, perhaps, to the relatively recent appearance of this cycle, this collection has yet to spawn a body of commentarial literature.
- 9 Klong chen rab 'byams, *gTer 'byung rin po che'i lo rgyus*, pp. 105-106.
- 10 Interestingly, not only have the figures mentioned here practiced and taught the Great Perfection, they have also been important tertöns. The great Fifth Dalai Lama, for example, is well known for his treasure revelations, some of which have been transmitted

in the West by the present Fourteenth Dalai Lama. As mentioned below, the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorjé, of the Kagyü lineage, and Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo in the Sakya lineage have also revealed important Heart Essence cycles.

- 11 See Shardza Tashi Gyaltsen's *Heart Drops of the Dharmakaya* for an English translation of one such text. The structure of practices set forth in *Heart Drops of the Dharmakaya* is very similar to the presentation of *The Excellent Chariot* in the translation that follows.
- 12 Mingyur Paldrön was the daughter of the great Terdak Lingpa, one of the most influential figures in the history of the Nyingma lineage. One of her most lasting contributions to the Heart Essence teachings is a profound commentary she wrote on the Essence of the Profound Nature of Ati, Ati Zapton Nyingpo, a cycle revealed by her father. This text is entitled *The Ornament of Samantabhadra's Wisdom Mind* (*rDzogs pa chen po a ti zab don snying po'i khrid dmigs zin bris su spel ba kun bzang dgongs rgyan*).
- 13 The remarkable biography of this master is found in Nyoshul Khenpo Jamyang Dorjé's *A Marvelous Garland of Rare Gems*, pp. 343-350.
- 14 Sarah Jacoby of the University of Virginia is currently conducting research on this figure. Her work includes a translation of Sera Khandro's spiritual biography.
- 15 The two teachers mentioned here, Trulshik Rinpoche and Chatral Rinpoche, are widely regarded as two of the most highly realized living Dzogchen yogis. In recent years, both have been instrumental in maintaining and transmitting the Great Perfection lineages. Trulshik Rinpoche, whose main monasteries are located in Solokhumbu and Kathmandu, Nepal, has been transmitting many important lineages to the reincarnation of Dilgo Khyentsé Rinpoche at Shechen Monastery in Boudhanath, Nepal. Chatral Rinpoche, based in Parping, Nepal and Salbhari, India, has been passing on the lineage of the Dudjom Tersar to the reincarnation of Dudjom Rinpoche, as well as the rare lineage of Sera Khandro to his daughter, Saraswati, who is reputed to be the reincarnation of Sera Khandro. Saraswati has undergone extensive training under her father's guidance and currently serves as his main attendant.
- 16 Treasures may be teachings, statues and other blessed objects, or any other item that is destined to have a positive impact in a particular time and place. Teachings, however, are the most important form of revealed treasures, as they are capable of leading spiritual aspirants to the state of buddhahood. Treasures may be hidden in physical locations or, in the case of teachings, in the mind of a particular student. See note 36 below.
- 17 Precedents for both the treasure and pure vision lineages can be found in the annals of the Indian Buddhist tradition. The Five Teachings of Maitreya (Byams chos sde lnga) are perhaps the most well known example of "pure vision" teachings. This collection, which includes the famed *Unsurpassed Continuum* and *Distinguishing the Middle from Extremes*, was transmitted to the Indian saint Asanga by Maitreya in a visionary state. As for treasures, many of the Mahayana Sutras were said to have been "hidden" in other realms, such as the Perfection of Knowledge Sutras that were retrieved from the realm of the nagas by Nagarjuna.
- 18 In the treasure tradition, treasure revealers may rediscover cycles that were propagated by previous revealers, but which are no longer extant. This category of treasures is termed *yang ter*, or "re-[revealed] treasures." See note 20 for more information on the Heart Essence of Chetsün.
- 19 Mingyur Dorje revealed Space Dharma in the seventeenth century and codified this cycle with the help of the great Karma Chakmé. These teachings have been maintained at Palyul Monastery, one of the six "mother" monasteries of the Nyingma School. Likewise, the teachings revealed by Longsel Nyingpo, as well as those of his teacher, Dudul Dorje

(1615-1672), have become mainstays of Katok Dorje Den, another one of the six "mother" monasteries.

20 Both Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo and Chokgyur Dechen Lingpa revealed numerous cycles, many of which are widely practiced to this day. Of those revealed by the former, the aforementioned Heart Essence of Chetsün deserves special mention, as this particular cycle has spawned an extensive collection of commentarial literature, including instruction manuals composed by Jamgön Kongtrül, Lerab Lingpa (1856-1926), and Adzom Drukpa (1842-1924). A compilation of these texts was recently published by Shechen Monastery under the title *lCe btshun snying thig gi chos skor* (see bibliography for more details). Chokgyur Dechen Lingpa was one of the most prolific tertöns, with revelations that fill thirty-nine volumes. Among his most well known Dzogchen cycles are the Three Classes of Dzogchen, mentioned in note 8, and the Heart Essence of Samantabhadra. Dudjom Rinpoche Jigdral Yeshé Dorje and Dilgo Khyentsé were also active treasure revealers. Some of their better known cycles are, respectively, the Dakini's Heart Essence (not to be confused with the similarly entitled collection included in the Fourfold Heart Essence) and the Heart Essence of Self-occurring Padma.

21 As noted on p. xi in Ponlop Rinpoche's foreword to *Great Perfection: Outer and Inner Preliminaries*, there are alternate explanations concerning the exact contents of this collection. This, however, is the most commonly accepted version. A discussion of these varying presentations can be found in Jamgön Kongtrül's *Dri med zhal lung*, pp. 127-128.

22 *Nges don bstan 'dzin bzang po, rDzogs pa chen po mkha' 'gro snying thig gi khrid yig thar lam bgrod byed shing rta bzang po*, p. 257.

23 Mahayoga is the first of the Three Inner Tantras. When compared to the practices of the second and third inner tantras, Anu and Ati, Mahayoga places more emphasis on the development stage practices of visualization and mantra recitation, and less on the subtle body practices of the symbolic completion stage (the focal point in Anuyoga practice) and fruitional meditations of the formless completion stage (the focal point of Atiyoga). Mahayoga development stage practices also tend to be much more complex and detailed than their Anu and Ati counterparts. For a detailed discussion of the varying approaches to development stage practice and their relationship to the Three Inner Tantras, see *Deity, Mantra, and Wisdom: Development Stage Practice in Tibetan Buddhist Tantra*, pp. 24-40.

24 One important exception is Longchenpa's commentary on the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, *An Ocean of Clouds of the Profound Nature*. Spanning nearly five hundred pages, this massive text offers one of the most comprehensive and systematic presentations of Great Perfection practice ever written. This is also the single largest text contained in the Fourfold Heart Essence.

25 The root tantra of the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra is entitled *Tantra of the Sole Offspring*. In the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, the root tantra is entitled *Tantra That Liberates upon Wearing*.

26 One might think that such a dearth of sadhana-based materials would be common in Nyingtik cycles, but this is rarely the case. In the vast majority of Heart Essence cycles, sadhanas far outnumber texts devoted solely to the practices of breakthrough and direct leap. In the famed Longchen Nyingtik, for example, only the aforementioned *Supreme Wisdom* deals explicitly with these two Heart Essence practices, while there are countless sadhanas, instruction manuals, and subsidiary practices that relate to the development stage practices of visualization and mantra recitation. For this reason, the Fourfold Heart Essence is quite unique, even within the Heart Essence tradition.

27 Chos grags bzang po, *Kun mkhyen dri med 'od zer gyi rnam thar mthong ba don ldan*, p. 556.

28 Klong chen rab 'byams, *Theg pa mtha' dag gi don gsal bar byed pa grub pa'i mtha' rin po che'i mdzod*, pp. 393, 396.

29 Rang byung rdo rje, *Nyams len lag khrigs ma'i khrid ngo mtshar can*, p. 274.

30 Klong chen rab 'byams, *gTer 'byung rin po che'i lo rgyus*, p. 48.

31 See note 98.

32 Tsultrim Dorje and Trimé Özer are alternate names for Pema Ledrel Tsel and Longchenpa, respectively. The events alluded to here are explained in more detail in the section entitled *The Incarnations of Princess Pemsel*, p. 131.

33 Padma las 'brel rtsal, *dBang gi rim pa khrid du bskur lugs*, p. 276.

34 gTer bdag gling pa, *mKha' 'gro snying thig gi khrid yig zab lam gsal byed*, p. 518.

35 Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, p. 586.

36 *Mind treasures* are one class of terma, or revealed treasure. In contrast to physical treasures, which are hidden in a physical location, mind treasures are hidden in the mind stream of an individual. They are revealed when the right circumstances trigger a memory of the teachings, at which point they are set down in writing. For more information on the varieties and history of the treasure tradition, see Tulku Thondup's *Hidden Teachings of Tibet: An Explanation of the Terma Tradition of the Nyingma School of Buddhism* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1986).

37 Nges don bstan 'dzin bzang po, *rDzogs pa chen po mKha' 'gro snying thig gi khrid yig thar lam bgrod byed shing rta bzang po*, p. 292.

38 Klong chen rab 'byams, *rGya mtsho ar gtad kyi mun khrid 'od gsal 'khor lo*.

39 bKra shis rgya mtsho, *Zab mo snying thig gi gnad thams cad bsdus pa'i don khrid lag len gsal ba*, p. 6.

40 The seven-point contemplation mentioned here (*sems sbyong don bdun ma*) is not to be confused with Atisha's well known *Seven-Point Mind Training* (*blo sbyong don bdun ma*).

41 Klong chen rab 'byams, *sNgon 'gro sems sbyong bdun gyi don khrid*, p. 331.

42 The two lineages mentioned here are the Heart Essence of Chetsün and the Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse, the Longchen Nyingtik. Concerning the former, these seven points are addressed in a number of important commentaries found in the lCe btsun snying thig gi chos skor, while in the Longchen Nyingtik these teachings are discussed at length in Jigmé Lingpa's *Steps to Liberation*.

43 For example, in the *Sublime Path to Omnicience*, a widely practiced ngöndro liturgy from the Longchen Nyingtik lineage, the structure of practice is as follows. The outer, common preliminaries consist of contemplations of (1) the precious human existence, (2) death and impermanence, (3) the suffering of samsara, (4) the principle of karma, (5) the benefits of liberation, and (6) following a spiritual teacher. The inner, unique preliminaries are (1) refuge, (2) bodhichitta, (3) the meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva, (4) mandala offering, (5) severance, and (6) guru yoga. Thus, two of the practices presented by Longchenpa as *outer* preliminaries (mandala and guru yoga) are here listed as *inner preliminaries*. The final practices mentioned above (the two subtle body yogas) are not included at all in this version of the preliminaries, as such practices are practiced much later in the context of the completion stage.

44 Klong chen rab 'byams, *Khrid yig nyi zla gza' skar*, pp. 311-316.

45 The lineage of this particular text is still being widely transmitted, not only as a lineage of empowerment and reading transmission, as is often the case, but also with the experiential guidance that is the hallmark of this tradition. It appears that these teachings

are traditionally given in a one-hundred-day format, in which the student performs the practices in conjunction with the teachings and empowerments. In addition to being one of the core teachings of the Mindroling lineage, this text has also been taught on at least two occasions by the late Jigmé Puntsok Rinpoche. Khenchen Namdrol Rinpoche of Namdroling Monastery in South India [personal communication, 2004] and Getsé Tulku Rinpoche of Katok Monastery [personal communication, 2007] received this transmission at Larung Gar in Eastern Tibet, though at different times.

46 Padma las 'brel rtsal, *Sangs rgyas kyi 'das rjes gsum pa*, p. 75.

47 gTer bdag gling pa, *mKha' 'gro snying thig gi khrid yig zab lam gsal byed*, pp. 523-525.

48 This pairing of the outer and inner preliminaries seems to be unique to the Heart Essence lineage. Though there is no reference to this approach in the root texts of the Fourfold Heart Essence, it may be that this was part of the oral explanatory lineage that was not written down. A similar presentation of the preliminary practices is outlined in Jamgön Kongtrül's *Pristine Advice*, where the inner preliminaries are linked with the seven-point contemplation that forms the outer preliminaries in the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra. Kongtrül notes that while this approach is not explicitly formulated in the root texts of the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra, the lineage gurus practiced in this manner based on the necessity of including a preliminary step to gather the accumulation of merit [*Dri med zhal lung*, p. 143]. Since both the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche and Jamgön Kongtrül were heavily influenced by the works of Terdak Lingpa, it seems likely that this particular approach has its origins in the Mindroling lineage.

49 Quoted in dPal sprul O rgyan chos kyi dbang po, *Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung*, p. 500.

50 Though the structure of these practices varies significantly from lineage to lineage, the practices themselves are presented with remarkable consistency. There are, however, a few practices where this is not the case. The vajra stance, for example, is practiced seated in some traditions and standing in others. This discrepancy is mentioned in Jigmé Lingpa's *Supreme Wisdom* (p. 283) and Adzom Drukpa's *Essence of Wisdom* (p. 549). *Clarifying the Practice of the Heart Essence* from the Northern Treasure lineage provides a further variation in which one performs the posture in a seated position and varies the color of the visualization in correspondence with one's astrological sign (p. 51). Resting in the natural state is also practiced differently in different traditions. In some presentations, one is instructed to sit in whichever position one finds most comfortable (for example, Terdak Lingpa's *rDzogs pa chen po mkha' 'gro snying thig gi khrid yig zab lam gsal byed*, p. 565), while in others one is instructed to lie down (as in Longchenpa's *Khrid yig rin po che gser gyi phreng ba*, p. 347).

51 *Essential Instructions* states. "Having rested in the natural state, the nature of the breakthrough, one must then access the nature of the direct leap" [p. 89]. Hence, in this presentation the practice of resting in the natural state/revitalization is clearly considered an integral part of the main practice of breakthrough. In later presentations of Heart Essence practice, these came to be associated primarily with the practice of tranquility and the unique Heart Essence preliminaries, as they precede the stages of analysis and pointing out that precipitate a recognition of the nature of mind. The Third Dzogchen Rinpoche discusses these differing presentations briefly on p. 128.

52 Longchenpa discusses these practices in *Khrid yig nyi zla gza' skar*, pp. 312-314.

53 In the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, the structure and duration of the various Great Perfection practices is also discussed in *Pra khrid chos thun khrid kyi zhag grangs*, *Lag khrid gnad kyi man ngag pra khrid du bstan pa*, and *mKha' 'gro snying thig gi lag 'grig*. See bibliography entries under Padma las 'brel rtsal for more details on these texts.

54 In *Supreme Wisdom*, Jigmé Lingpa mentions that though the yoga of the four elements is taught in the tantras, it is permissible to omit it since it is rarely practiced in current times [*Ye shes bla ma*, p. 278].

55 Klong chen rab 'byams, *Thod rgal gyi rgyab yig nyi zla gza' skar*, p. 445.

56 In the *Essential Instructions on the Essence of Luminosity*, for example, the preliminaries consist of the preliminaries of the three gates followed by resting in the natural state. The separation practices and revitalization are not discussed at all [*dNgos gzhi 'od gsal snying po'i don khrid*, pp. 337-344].

57 This text, though typically associated with the Heart Essence of Chetsün, is a combined commentary on both Heart Essence of Chetsün and Rigdzin Gödem's *Unimpeded Wisdom Mind*, *Gongpa Zangtal*, according to its colophon [A 'dzom 'brug pa, 'Od gsal rdzogs pa chen po yang gsang bla na med pa spyi'i khyad par gyi khrid yig lam bzang ye shes snying po, p. 595]. This manual is currently the main Great Perfection practice text used in the lineage of Adzom Drukpa, where it is paired with a collection of notes on this text compiled by Gyalsé Gyurmé Dorje, the son of the first Adzom Drukpa [Pukang Khenpo Sherab Sangpo, personal communication, 2007]. Among the unique qualities of this instruction manual, it discusses the varying approaches found in Great Perfection literature, as well as providing an extremely thorough presentation of the stages of meditative achievement.

58 Ibid., p. 542. While Adzom Drukpa here stresses the importance of practicing the separation of samsara and nirvana in preparation for the path of the direct leap, later in the same text he states that this practice is an important preliminary for the breakthrough as well [p. 552].

59 Jigmé Lingpa's *Supreme Wisdom*, for example, follows the presentation of Terdak Lingpa and the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche [*Ye shes bla ma*, pp. 277-292]. In *The Vajra Essence*, a well known Dzogchen treatise from the Dudjom Tersar lineage, all the preliminary practices mentioned here (with the exception of the four element yoga) are listed as preliminaries for the direct leap [*Khrag 'thung bdud 'joms rdo rje, gNas lugs rang byung gi rgyud rdo rje'i snying po*, pp. 288-303]. In *Buddhahood Placed in the Palm of One's Hand*, a widely practiced cycle revealed by Khenchen Jigmé Puntsok Rinpoche, the structure of the preliminary practices follows the outline laid out in Longchenpa's *Precious Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle* and *Precious Treasury of Words and Their Meanings*, where there are three divisions: (1) the physical, verbal, and mental preliminaries that guide the mind (or the three gates), (2) the yoga of the four elements that guides one to the three kayas, and (3) the separation of samsara and nirvana that guides one to awareness. In this system, all three of these are practiced prior to both the breakthrough and direct leap [*'Jigs med phun tshogs, Khrid yig sangs rgyas lag ster gyi zin bris*, p. 64].

60 *gTer bdag gling pa, mKha' 'gro snying thig gi khrid yig zab lam gsal byed*, p. 632.

61 There is also a more complex form of development stage meditation in which numerous groups of deities are visualized, each with a pair of male and female deities at its center. One such example is the set of practices associated with the Eight Sadhana Teachings (*sgrub pa bka' brgyad*), which comprises the Sadhana Section (*sgrub sde*) of Mahayoga.

62 See *Deity, Mantra, and Wisdom: Development Stage Practice in Tibetan Buddhist Tantra and Generating the Deity* for more details on this topic.

63 *Nges don bstan 'dzin bzang po*, p. 299.

64 There are numerous instances of pithy meditation manuals that focus solely upon breakthrough meditation, but these are quite different in form than extensive guidance texts that present the entire Heart Essence path, starting with the outer, inner, and unique

preliminaries. Of those that take this more extensive approach, I have not seen any other texts that follow the approach presented in *The Excellent Chariot*.

65 See publisher's foreword to the Tibetan edition, p. 1.

66 Klong chen rab 'byams, *Ye babs sor bzhag gi don khrid*.

67 See Klong chen rab 'byams, *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*, p. 354, for a discussion of this point.

68 According to *The Excellent Chariot*, the empowerment into the display of awareness should be bestowed prior to pointing out the nature of mind [p. 299]. The author goes on to explain the importance of this particular empowerment and its relation to breakthrough practice and the nature of mind. Terdak Lingpa, in contrast, links the breakthrough instructions with the word empowerment and the empowerment into the display of awareness with the direct leap [p. 632]. Unlike the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche, he does not offer a detailed explanation of this empowerment or its relation to the direct leap.

69 gTer bdag gling pa, *mKha' 'gro snying thig gi khrid yig zab lam gsal byed*, p. 576 and Nges don bstan 'dzin bzang po, *Shing rta bzang po*, p. 305.

70 Padma las 'brel rtsal, *bTags grol snying po'i don khrid*, p. 88.

71 See gTer bdag gling pa, *mKha' 'gro snying thig gi khrid yig zab lam gsal byed*, p. 582 and Nges don bstan 'dzin bzang po, *Shing rta bzang po*, p. 309.

72 The phrase "pointing out based on meditative experience" (nyams myong bsgom pa'i thog tu ngo sprad pa) is not found in the root texts of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, nor is it addressed in any of Longchenpa's numerous commentaries on this cycle. The subdivisions of this topic, however, are mentioned in the latter's *Rosary of Golden Jewels*, p. 349. In this text, these two divisions (pointing out natural stillness within a state of absorption and pointing out natural radiance as the play of wisdom) comprise the second of three steps, refining the practice (rtsal sbyang). The first and third steps are, respectively, pointing out (ngo sprod) and enhancement (bogs dbyungs). The subdivisions of "pointing out natural radiance as the play of wisdom" are discussed more widely in Longchenpa's commentaries. In *The Jewel Approach* (p. 300), *Delineating the Profound* (p. 317), and *An Ocean of Clouds of the Profound Nature* (p. 354), these pointing out instructions (pointing out stillness to be the adornment of the mind, pointing out movement to be the play of the mind, and pointing out the nonduality of movement and stillness) comprise the main pointing out instructions.

Though the format is somewhat different, many of the divisions of breakthrough practice presented here are also discussed by Jamgön Kongtrül in *Dri med zhal lung*, p. 186. As both this text and the Third Dzogchen Rinpoche's *Excellent Chariot* are rooted in the teachings of Terdak Lingpa, it seems likely that this system of pointing out instructions (via (1) the transmission of blessings, (2) the view, and (3) on the basis of meditative experience) stems from the oral lineage received by this master, or was created by him based on the root texts of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis and Longchenpa's Dakini's Quintessence.

73 This introduction, included on pp. 155-156 of the translation that follows, is taken from Longchenpa's *Rosary of Golden Jewels*, pp. 347-348.

74 Terdak Lingpa's presentation follows a well-known scheme of dividing the Heart Essence teachings into three separate approaches: (1) key instructions for those with great diligence on the outer, inner, and unique preliminaries, followed by the breakthrough and direct leap, (2) key instructions for those with moderate diligence on the intermediate states, and (3) key instructions for those with the least diligence on the nirmanakaya

pure realms. This approach is taken in many of the most widely studied Heart Essence instruction manuals, such as Jigmé Lingpa's *Supreme Wisdom*.

75 The most well-known text used for this latter approach is Karma Lingpa's famed *Great Liberation upon Hearing in the Intermediate States*, more commonly known in the West as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. This text, which is actually a collection of short treatises, includes introductions to the nature of mind and to the manifestations of reality itself (associated with breakthrough and direct leap), as well as pointing out instructions that relate to the stages of the death process and the other intermediate states. See Gyurmé Dorje's translation, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (New York: Viking, 2006).

76 'Jam mgon kong sprul, *rDzogs pa chen po gsang ba snying thig ma bu'i bka' srol chu bo gnyis 'dus kyi khrid yig dri med zhal lung*, p. 228.

77 The preceding discussions are found in *ibid.*, pp. 227-231.

78 'Jigs med gling pa, *Ye shes bla ma*, p. 278.

79 In his *Quintessence of the Dakinis*, Longchenpa adds more detail concerning the materials one needs to gather when practicing the Heart Essence teachings. He writes, "One needs *materials for sustenance*, such as food and clothing (one need not be overly indulgent or ascetic), *supportive materials*, such as the samaya substances of the Secret Mantra (meaning the five meats, five nectars, and so forth), *symbolic materials*, such as the vajra, bell, and damaru, *conducive materials*, such as medicine and other factors that provide auspicious connections, *pleasing materials*, meaning empowerment offerings, torma substances, and so forth, and *supreme materials*, here referring to the inclination to study and contemplate, and the texts and other elements that will help one do so. In brief, all the various elements that will enable one to achieve enlightenment should be collected." [Klong chen rab 'byams (*Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*), p. 25]

80 As noted later in the text by the author himself, the structure and outline of this practice manual is largely based on Terdak Lingpa's *Clarifying the Profound Path*. The fourth item in this section of the outline, however, "sealing the importance of the transmission," does not appear to correspond to a later section of *The Excellent Chariot*. In Terdak Lingpa's text, this brief chapter states the importance of transmitting the teachings to qualified students and invokes the Dharma protectors and guardians to watch over them and maintain their purity [gTer bdag gling pa, pp. 631-635].

81 The *Three Last Testaments of the Buddha* are found in two sections of the Fourfold Heart Essence. There are three sections, each of which contains key instructions that were taught by the buddha Vajradhara directly to Garap Dorjé. These instructions are contained in both the Heart Essence of the Dakinis and the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra. In the latter, however, a number of pithy texts are added that contain the instructions transmitted by Garap Dorjé and the subsequent lineage masters to their closest students. This group of texts includes some of the most famous teachings of the Great Perfection tradition, such as *Three Statements That Strike the Vital Point*, the teaching that Garap Dorjé passed on to Manjushrimitra. For the Vima Nyingtik version, see sNying thig ya bzhi, vol. 3, pp. 287-344; for the Khandro Nyingtik version, see vol. 10, pp. 74-82.

82 The quotation found here is given in full in *Great Perfection: Outer and Inner Preliminaries*, p. 11.

83 Here, echoing the commentary of Terdak Lingpa, Ngetön Tenzin Zangpo is referring to the presentation of one of the primary texts of the Heart Essence of the Dakinis cycle, the *Last Testament* (see previous note for more details on this text). In these instructions, part of which is quoted above, the physical, verbal, and mental outer separation practices are linked with their counterparts in the other preliminary practices. In other words, one first

performs the physical separation followed by the vajra stance, then the verbal separation along with the four HUM yogas, and finally the mental separation followed by the analysis of the mind's origin, presence, and departure. Here, in contrast, one first completes the outer and inner separation practices before continuing on to the three preliminaries. [sNying thig ya bzhi, vol. 10, pp. 77-79]

84 The various primary sources on the life of the Buddha contain a great many discrepancies when it comes to the names of the Buddha's wife/wives and the names of their fathers.

85 The third of the four formless concentrations.

86 Fourth of the four formless concentrations, the highest state that can be attained within samsara.

87 To produce "distilled milk" one takes the milk of one group of cows and then feeds it to a smaller group. This group is then milked as well, and again fed to a smaller group. The process continues until the milk becomes extremely rich and concentrated [Nakamura, p. 143].

88 This could refer to any one of the numerous texts contained in the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra.

89 The Tibetan term translated here as "advanced training" is *tsel-jang* (rtsal sbyang). Ordinarily, this term refers to the stage of one's practice where a certain degree of proficiency in meditation has been attained, and one then uses certain practices to further refine one's ability. In this sense, the term is similar to another commonly used term, *boke dün* (bogs 'don), which is commonly translated as "to enhance [one's practice]." In this context, however, the first part of this term, *tsel*, takes on a special meaning, as this is also the term most frequently used to refer to the expression, or display, of awareness—*rik pey tsel* (rig pa'i rtsal). Hence, when combined with the word *jang*, this term can also be taken to mean "to refine away (sbyang) the display (rtsal) [of awareness]," referring to the fact that in this practice one uses the HUM syllable to effectively insubstantialize all the external and internal appearances that manifest as the display of awareness. Nonetheless, it also has the sense of advancing one's practice and refining one's meditative capability, as it builds upon and enhances the first stage of the verbal preliminaries. According to Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, both of these readings are in some sense correct.

90 This story is drawn from the longest chapter of the *Buddha Avatamsaka Sutra*. A more detailed version can be found in the appendix of Khenpo Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche's translation of *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, as is the following tale of Sadaprarudita.

91 The tale of Sadaprarudita is recounted in Patrul Rinpoche's *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* (p. 155), which draws from the *Eight-Thousand Verse Perfection of Knowledge Sutra*.

92 These thirty-six acts are explained in detail in Longchenpa's *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*, p. 46.

93 The cubit (khru gang) is an ancient unit of measurement that is defined as the distance between the elbow and the tip of the middle finger, or about eighteen inches.

94 Present day Bodhgaya.

95 The Five-peaked Mountain, Wu Tai Shan, is a sacred mountain associated with the bodhisattva Manjushri, located in the Shanxi Province of Eastern China. This is an especially important power spot in the Great Perfection tradition, as it is said that Vimalamitra, after a thirteen-year sojourn in Tibet, attained the rainbow body and promised to remain on this mountain for as long as the Buddha's teachings endure, appearing once every century to elucidate the Heart Essence teachings [Dudjom, p. 555].

96 An ancient unit of measurement; three yojanas corresponds to roughly thirteen miles.

97 The events alluded to here are explained in more detail on p. 113 (starts with the line "Fortunate one, the true transmission . . .").

98 According to Longchenpa's *gTer 'byung rin po che'i lo rgyus*, the Eighteen Key Instruction Class Tantras mentioned here are 1) *Tantra of Penetrating Sound* (*sGra thal 'gyur rtsa ba'i rgyud*), 2) *Fundamental Tantra without Letters* (*Yi ge med pa gzhi'i rgyud*), 3) *Symbolic Tantra of Blazing Relics* (*sKu gdung 'bar ba rtags kyi rgyud*), 4) *Empowerment Tantra of Self-occurring Perfection* (*rDzogs pa rang byung dbang gi rgyud*), 5) *Tantra of Pointing Out Instructions* (*Ngo sprod spros pa'i rgyud*), 6) *Tantra of the Blazing Lamp* (*sgron me 'bar ba'i rgyud*), 7) *Tantra of Self-arising Awareness* (*Rig pa rang shar gyi rgyud*), 8) *Tantra of the Mirror of Vajrasattva's Heart* (*rDo rje sems dpa' snying gi me long gi rgyud*), 9) *Pile of Jewels Tantra* (*Rin po che spungs pa'i rgyud*), 10) *Tantra of the Sun and Moon's Union* (*Nyi zla kha sbyor gyi rgyud*), 11) *Tantra Studded with Gems* (*Nor bu pra bkod kyi rgyud*), 12) *Tantra of Self-liberated Awareness* (*Rig pa rang grol gyi rgyud*), 13) *Garland of Pearls Tantra* (*Mu tig phreng ba'i rgyud*), 14) *Tantra of the Mirror of Samantabhadra's Heart* (*Kun tu bzang po thugs kyi me long gi rgyud*), 15) *Tantra of Auspicious Beauty* (*bKra shis mdzes ldan gyi rgyud*), 16) *Tantra of the Lion's Perfect Power* (*Seng ge rtsal rdzogs kyi rgyud*), 17) *Tantra of the Six Expanses* (*Klong drug pa'i rgyud*), 18) *Tantra of the Sun of the Brilliant Expanse of Samantabhadra* (*Kun tu bzang mo klong gsal nyi ma'i rgyud*) [*sNying thig ya bzhi*, vol. 7, p. 49]. According to the Heart Essence of Vimalamitra, the eighteenth tantra is the *Tantra of the Wrathful Black Goddess* (*Nag mo khros ma*) [*sNying thig ya bzhi*, vol. 6, p. 274].

99 Khenpo Shenga explains this cryptic verse as follows: "Based on the observation of mere awareness, the nonobservation of external objects takes place. Based on the nonobservation of an apprehended object, the nonobservation of any apprehending subject also occurs. Therefore, since there are no objects to be observed, the mind associated with [this] observation is established as the very nature of nonobservation, for when there are no objects to be observed there cannot be any observer. Thus, because what appears to be an object is [in fact] the very nature of nonobservation, observation and nonobservation must be understood to be equal." [Maitreya, *Middle Beyond Extremes*, p. 31]

100 The *Secret Remedy* (*gNyen po gsang ba*). In some accounts, this text is referred to as the *Awesome Secret* (*gNyan po gsang ba*).

101 A detailed account of the origins of the Tibetan people and their ancestral kings can be found in Dudjom, pp. 507-509.

102 Avalokiteshvara (*spyan ras gzigs*).

103 King Trisong Deutsen was one of Padmasambhava's most important disciples. His incarnations, which have been instrumental in maintaining the tradition of revelatory treasures, include: Sangye Lama, Nyang Ral Nyima Özer, Guru Chöwang, Orgyan Lingpa, Pema Wangyal, Tashi Topgyal, and the Fifth Dalai Lama. Jigmé Lingpa and Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo were incarnations of both King Trisong Deutsen and Vimalamitra [Thondup (1996), p. 97].

104 See note 17.

105 See note 32.

106 These seven vary depending upon the context; the fifth point mentioned here, relaxed breathing, is often replaced with having one's shoulders flared slightly outwards, for example. See p. 138 for an alternate presentation of these seven.

107 Nyang Rel Nyima Özer (1136-1204) was one of the most influential treasure revealers in the Nyingma tradition. He is listed as one of both the five kingly treasure revealers (all of whom were considered emanations of King Trisong Deutsen) and the three supreme emanations. He revealed many important teachings, including a cycle related to the Eight

Great Sadhana Teachings, entitled Gathering of the Blissful Ones (*bDe gshegs 'dus pa*). In his history of the Nyingma School, Dudjom Rinpoche mentions only one spiritual partner of Nyang Rel, Cobuma. Dudjom states that this woman was an emanation of Yeshé Tsogyal, but makes no mention of a relationship to Princess Pemasel [Dudjom, p. 756].

108 Guru Chöwang, or Chökyi Wangchuk (1212-1270), was another important treasure revealer. Like Nyang Rel, he too is listed as one of the five kingly treasure revealers and three supreme emanations (see previous note).

109 This incarnation is Pema Ledrel Tsel. A short biography of this master can be found in Nyoshul Khenpo, pp. 71-73.

110 This is considered an auspicious sign [Khenpo Sherab Sangpo, private interview].

111 A miraculous feat in which one manipulates the elements of the physical body, such as transforming the upper body into fire and lower body into water [Krang dbyi sun, p. 2357].

112 Dawa Trakpa (Zla ba grags pa, 1356-1409?) is also known as Tulku Trakpa Özer (sPrul sku grags pa 'od zer). [Thondup (1996), p. 161]

113 The blood of knowledge is menstrual blood [Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, private interview].

114 Pagangwa Rinchen Dorje is an alternate name of Pema Ledrel Tsel.

115 From a dialogue with Vajravarahi:

Someone present, a master named Rinchen Dorjé, asked her, "Where is Pang-gangpa Rinchen Dorjé?"

Pointing her finger at the guru Longchenpa, she said, "There he sits."

But the guru Longchenpa protested, "He was to be reborn in Bumthang in his next lifetime, so how could I be he?"

"He was not reborn there, as it happens. For a time, it was necessary for him to explore some sambhogakaya pure realms. After having revealed his termas, this master Rinchen Dorjé was to have practiced in secrecy for several years. If he had done so, he would have mastered the training on the sambhogakaya level and experienced the utter lucidity of being for his own benefit, and so would have been of enormous benefit to others. But he did not preserve this secrecy, and so did not live out his full life span. Now he has been born as you, and these divisions of utter lucidity that you have experienced in your spiritual practice are the result of his temporary exploration of those sambhogakaya realms." [Nyoshul Khenpo, pp. 108-109]

116 Thread-cross rituals involve elaborate constructions, often made of wood, thread, and other substances, which are used to ensnare mundane spirits. These rituals can be used for various purposes. An extensive explanation of this practice can be found in Nebesky-Wojkowitz's *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, pp. 369-397.

117 The reference here is to Longchenpa's major commentary on the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*. See p. 354 for the discussion noted here.

118 See note 38.

119 The following quotes are from *rTsal dbang* [sNying thig ya bzhi, vol. 11, pp. 267-268].

120 The bracketed line is left out of the quotation. The actual text reads: *ti la mngon sum rtsal dbang thob ། ngang dvangs rang bzhin bdag nyid che ། [rab 'byams rig pa'i dbang thob bo །] rig pa'i rtsal dbang ma thob na ། 'dus byas cho gas grol mi srid །*.

121 This refers to a series of empowerments that are unique to the direct leap stage of practice, tögal. In the Heart Essence of the Dakinis, the text for this series is entitled the *Five Unique Empowerments of the Direct Leap* (*Thod rgal khyad par dbang lnya*). Interestingly,

in the root text noted above the visualized syllables differ from those mentioned here. In place of the SVA and HA syllables, one is instructed to visualize HRI and P'ET [sNying thig ya bzhi, vol. 11, pp. 284-287].

122 "The exhaustion of reality itself" refers to the fourth of the four visions of the direct leap, the "vision of the exhaustion of reality itself" (chos nyid zad pa'i snang ba). Though this is synonymous with the similar "vision of the exhaustion of phenomena, the transcendence of mind" (chos zad blo 'das kyi snang ba), the use of the term "reality" here not only refers to the exhaustion of ordinary phenomena *into* reality, but also to the exhaustion of reality itself, which here refers to the self-radiance of reality that appears to the yogi receding back into the ground of reality. In his *Profound Quintessence*, Longchenpa explains, "Here, *reality* refers to the self-radiance of spontaneous presence that is pointed out by the guru and which has reached its full expression within the inner space of originally pure awareness, empty clarity. *Exhaustion* refers to the dissolution of this self-radiance once it has reached this point, [like] light receding into a crystal ball" [sNying thig ya bzhi, vol. 12, p. 225].

123 In this paragraph, the author is equating the pointing out instructions given here with Garap Dorjé's famed *Three Statements That Strike the Vital Point*. Here, the third statement is listed as "master the display through liberation" (rtsal grol thog tu sbyang ba), rather than the more common "gain confidence through liberation." Though the author is drawing on the commentary of Terdak Lingpa in this paragraph [gTer bdag gling pa, p. 582], the original source of this version of the three statements remains unclear, as all the extant versions of Garap Dorje's teaching that I consulted favor the latter presentation. See the appendix for a detailed explanation of these three, or Palden Sherab Rinpoche's *Lion's Gaze* for a contemporary commentary.

124 The preceding two verses are from Maitreya's *Distinguishing the Middle from Extremes*. For an extended discussion of these topics, see *Middle Beyond Extremes*, pp. 106-108.

125 Here, the author is referring to a work by Longchen Rabjam associated with *Resting in the Nature of Mind*, entitled *Excellent Path to Enlightenment*. The previous discussion of gazing into space as a way to enhance one's meditation practice is also taken from the same section of this text [rDzogs pa chen po sems nyid ngal gso' gnas gsum dge ba gsum gyi don khrid byang chub lam bzang, p. 137].

126 In his commentary on *Distinguishing the Middle from Extremes*, Mipam explains these ten activities in detail:

The ten categories alluded to above condense all the various approaches to practicing and engaging in the sacred Dharma. What are these ten? They are: 1) transcribing the words that form the basis of the sacred Dharma, which is comprised of the Great and the Lesser Vehicles; 2-3) making offerings to and giving generously to the Dharma and those who teach it; 4) making use of one's ear faculty to listen to the words of the Dharma; 5) reading Dharma books; 6) memorizing the words that express [the Dharma]; 7) explaining their meaning to others; 8) chanting from memory; 9) taking the meaning to heart; and 10) meditating on this meaning single-pointedly and in the correct manner. It is taught that these ten Dharma activities condense every activity that relates to the sacred Dharma and that each entails an immeasurable amount of merit [Maitreya, pp. 131-132].

127 This refers to *Clarifying the Profound Path*, an important commentary on the Heart Essence of the Dakinis written by Terdak Lingpa, founder of the Mindroling lineage. Though this text is significantly shorter than *The Excellent Chariot*, it contains detailed

instructions on both the breakthrough and direct leap stages of Heart Essence practice. This text is found in sNying thig ya bzhi, vol. 7, pp. 507-635.

128 gTer bdag gling pa, *rDzogs pa chen po mkha'*gro snying thig gi khrid yig zab lam gsal byed, pp. 525-526.

129 'Jam mgon kong sprul, *rDzogs pa chen po gsang ba snying thig ma bu'i bka'*srol chu bo gnyis 'dus kyi khrid yig dri med zhal lung, pp. 132-134.

130 Klong chen rab 'byams, *Khrid yig sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor*, pp. 210-216.

131 'Jam mgon kong sprul, *rDzogs pa chen po gsang ba snying thig ma bu'i bka'*srol chu bo gnyis 'dus kyi khrid yig dri med zhal lung, pp. 185-186

List of Proper Names

Akanishta	'Og min
Alokabhasvati	'Od ldan ma
Amrita	bDud rtsi
Ananda	Kun dga' mo
Anathapindada	mGon med zas sbyin
Arshadhara	gTsug lag 'dzin
Asanga	Thogs med
Ash-colored Zombie	Ro lang thal mdog
Auspicious Bliss-inducing Temple	bKra shis bde byed brtsegs pa'i gtsug lag khang
Avalokiteshvara	sPyan ras gzigs
Bhadrapala	bZang skyong
Bhelakirti	Bhe la ki rti
Bliss-inducing Charnel Ground	Dur khrod dga' byed
Bön	Bon
Buddhaguhya	Sangs rgyas gsang ba
Bumtang	Bum thang
Changchup Men	Byang chub sman
Charnel Ground of Great Illumination	Dur khrod rab tu snang byed
Charnel Ground of the Wild Jungle	rTsub 'gyur tshal
Chatral Rinpoche Sangyé Dorjé	Bya bral rin po che sangs rgyas rdo rje
Chetsün Sengé Wangchuk	lCe btsun seng ge dbang phyug
Chimpu	mChims phu
China	rGya nag
Chokgyur Dechen Lingpa	mChog 'gyur bde chen gling pa
Chökyi Wangchuk	Chos kyi dbang phyug
City of Blazing Jewels	Rin chen 'bar ba'i grong khyer
Cool Grove Charnel Ground	Khrod bsil ba'i tshal

Dakini of boundless qualities	Yon tan mtha' yas pa'i mkha'
Dakini of vajra space	'gro ma
Danglha	rDo rje dbyings kyi mkha' 'gro
Dangma Lhungyal	ma
Dawa Trakpa	lDang lha
Deer Park	lDang ma lhun rgyal
Dhanakosha	Zla ba grags pa
Dhanasamskrita	Drang srong lhung ba
Dharmapala	Dha na ko sha
Dharmodgata	Dha na sang skri ta
Dignaga	Dharma pha la
Dilgo Khyentsé	Chos 'phags
Do	Phyogs kyi glang po
Dorjé Drak	Dil mgo mkhyen brtse
Dorjé Trakpo Tsel	rDo
Dorjé Yudrönma	rDo rje brag
Drak	rDo rje drag po rtsal
Drintang	rDo rje g.yu sgron ma
Drom	bsGrag
Dromza Sönam Gyen	'Brin thang
Dudjom Rinpoche	'Brom
Dudul Dorjé	'Brom za bsod nams rgyan
Fearful Charnel Ground	bDud 'joms rin po che
Five Linking Kings Called Tsen	bDud 'dul rdo rje
Five-peaked Mountain	Dur khrod 'jigs byed
Forder	Tshigs la btsan Inga
Garap Dorjé	Ri bo rtse Inga
Gelug	Mu stegs pa
Geyden Zangpo	dGa' rab rdo rje
Ghandavat	dGe lugs
Glorious Copper-colored Mountain	dGe ldan bzang po
Gö	sPos ldan
Golden One Who Brings Bliss	Zangs mdog dpal ri
Guru Chöwang	'Gos
Gyalsé Gyurmé Dorjé	bDe byed ser mo
Hastibhala	Gu ru chos dbang
	rGyal sras 'gyur med rdo rje
	Ha sti bha la

Hayagriva	rTa mgrim
Humkara	Hum ka ra
India	rGya gar
Indrabhuti	Indra bo dhi
Ishvara	dBang phyug
Ja	rGyal po dza
Jamgön Kongtrul	'Jam mgon kong sprul
Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo	'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po
Jigmé Lingpa	'Jigs med gling pa
Jnanasutra	Ye shes mdo
Joyful Grove Charnel Ground	Dur khrod dga' ba'i tshal
Joyful Zombie	Ro lang bde ba
Kadam	bKa' gdams
Kagyü	bKa' brgyud
Karak	Kha rag
Karma Chakmé	Karma chags med
Katok Dorjé Den	Ka thog rdo rje gdan
Kharchen	mKhar chen
Kharchu	mKhar chu
Khenpo Samdrup Rinchen	mKhan po bsam 'grub rin chen
King Chiling Karling	rGyal po byi ling gar ling
King Kanashinasali	rGyal po ka na shi na sa li
Kotalipa	Tog rtse pa
Kumaradza	Ku ma ra dza
Kyimshing Kongjo	Gyim shing kong jo
Lake-born Vajra	mTsho skyes rdo rje
Land of Topknots	Thor cog gi yul
Layak	La yag
Lhotrak	Lho brag
Light Rays of the Sun	Nyi ma'i 'od zer
Lion of the Shakyas	ShAkya seng ge
Lion-faced Rock	Brag seng ge'i gdong pa can
Loden Chokré	Blo ldan mchog sred
Lokeshvara	'Jig rten dbang phyug
Longchenpa	Klong chen pa
Longsel Nyingpo	Klong gsal snying po
Lord Atisha	Jo bo rje

Lotus King	Padma rgyal po
Lotus-born	Padma 'byung gnas
Lung Tramo Trak	Lung khra mo brag
Mahakaruna	Thugs rje chen po
Maitreya	Byams pa
Mandarava	Mandha ra ba
Manjugosha	'Jam dpal gzhon nu
Manjushri	'Jam dpal dbyangs
Manjushrimitra	'Jam dpal bshes gnyen
Mar	dMar
Marajita	bDud 'dul ma
Mashang Drompa-kyé	Ma zhang grom pa skyes
Maudgalyayana	Mo'u gal gyi bu/maung gal gyi bu
Mighty One with a Garland of Skulls	Padma thod phreng rtsal
Mighty Vajra Wrath	rDo rje drag po rtsal
Milarepa	Mi la ras pa
Mindroling	sMin grol gling
Mingyur Dorjé	Mi 'gyur rdo rje
Mingyur Paldrön	Mi 'gyur dpal sgron
Mön	Mon
Mönkar	Mon mkhar
Mount Suryaprakasha	Nyi ma rab tu snang byed
Nagarjunagarbha	Klu sgrub snying po
Nanam Dorjé Dudjom	sNa nam rdo rje bdud 'joms
Nangsel Denma	sNang gsal ldan ma
Nyang Ral (Nyima Özer)	Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer
Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo	Nyang ting 'dzin bzang po
Nyatri Tsenpo	gNya' khri btsan po
Nyimé Özer	Nyi ma'i 'od zer
Oddiyana	O rgyan
One with the Taste of Bliss	bDe ba'i ro ldan ma
Orgyan Lingpa	O rgyan gling pa
Özer Kocha	'O zer go cha
Padmakara/Padmasāmbhava	Padma 'byung gnas
Padminagara	Grong khyer padma can
Pagangwa Rinchen Dorjé	sPa rgang ba rin chen rdo rje
Palyul Monastery	dPal yul dgon

Passion for Supreme Intelligence	Blo ldan mchog sred
Patrul Chökyi Wangpo	dPal sprul chos kyi dbang po
Pema Ledrel Tsel	Padma las 'brel tsal
Pema Sengé	Padma seng ge
Pema Tötreng Tsel	Padma thod phreng rtsal
Pema Wangyal	Padma dbang rgyal
Pemasel	Padma gsal
Prabhahasti	Pra bha hasti
Prabhava	Pra bha wa
Prahevajra	dGa' rab rdo rje
Prajapati	sKye dgu'i bdag mo
Princess Pemasel	Lha lcam padma gsal
Rajagriha	rGyal po'i khab
Rama	dGa' byed
Rambuguhya	Rambu gu ya
Ratnasambhava	Rin chen 'byung gnas
Realized One	'Phags pa
Realm of Bliss	bDe ba can
Richly Arrayed Supreme Realm	'Og min stug po bkod pa
Rimochen Cave	Ri mo can
Rishipatana	Ri dvags kyi nag tshal
Roaring Lion	Seng ge sgra sgrogs
Sadaprarudita	rTag tu ngu
Sahor	Za hor
Sakya	Sa skya
Samantabhadra	Kun tu bzang po
Samantabhadri	Kun tu bzang mo
Samyé Chimpu	bSam yas mchims phu
Samye Monastery	bSam yas gtsug lag khang
Sanctuary of Liberation	Thar pa gling
Sangye Lama	Sangs rgyas bla ma
Sar	gSar
Saukhyakara	Skyid pa'i 'byung gnas
Seljey Mountain Range	gSal rje gangs
Sengé Dradrok	Seng ge sgra sgrogs
Sera Khandro	Se ra mkha' 'gro
Seven Kings of the Sky Called Tri	gNam la khri bdun
Seven Silmas	Sil ma bdun

Shakya Simha	ShAkyA seng ge
Shantarakshita	Zhi ba 'tsho
Shariputra	ShA ri'i bu
Shokyam Nakpo	Sho 'khyam nag po
Shri Simha	ShrI seng ha
Shrija	dPal skyes
Shuksep Lochen Chönyi Sangmo	Shug gseb lo chen chos nyid bzang mo
Six Kings of the Earth Called Lek	Sa la legs drug
Sokdrup Nakmo	Srog sgrub nag mo
Songtsen Gampo	Srong btsan sgam po
Sosaling Charnel Ground	Dur khrod so sa'i gling
Subhuti	Rab 'byor
Sudhana	Nor bzang
Sudharma	Su dharma
Sungkar	Zung mkhar
Supreme Realm	'Og min
Susartavaha	Ded dpon dam pa
Suvarnadvipa	gSer ldan
Takpo	Dwags po
Takpo Kagyü	Dwags po bka' brgyud
Tara	sGrol ma
Tashi Topgyal	bKra shis thob rgyal
Tenpa Sungwa	bsTan pa srung ba
Terdak Lingpa	gTer bdag gling pa
Tibet	Bod
Tödrong	sTod grong
Totori Nyentsen	Tho tho ri snyan btsan
Trang Valley	Brang mda'
Tridé Tsukden	Khri sde gtsug ldan
Trimé Ozer	Dri med 'od zer
Trisong Deutsen	Khri srong lde'u btsan
Tsultrim Dorje	Tshul khrims rdo rje
Tulku Trakpa Özer	sPrul sku grags pa 'od zer
Uparaja	U pa ra dzA
Vairochana	rNam par snang mdzad
Vairochana	BE ro tsA na
Vajra Seat	rDo rje gdan

Vajradhara	rDo rje 'chang
Vajrakilaya	rDo rje phur pa
Vajrasattva	rDo rje sems dpa'
Vajravarahi	rDo rje phag mo
Vajravikara	rDo rje mi 'gyur
Varanasi	VA rA Na sI
Vimalamitra	Bi ma la mi tra
Vishakha	Sa ga
Vishuddha	Yang dag
Vulture Peak Mountain	Bya rgod phung po'i ri
Yeru	g.Yas ru
Yeshé Tsogyal	Ye shes mtsho rgyal
Yumbu Lagang	Yumbu bla sgang
Zhadeu Trulshik Rinpoche	Zhwa de'u 'khrul zhig rin po che
Zhotö Tidrö	gZho stod ti sgro brag
Zhotong Tidrö	gZho stong ti sgro

Texts Cited

THE FOLLOWING list of citations contains bibliographic information on the texts mentioned in the introduction and the translation of *The Excellent Chariot*. In most cases, the full titles of the texts cited in *The Excellent Chariot* are not mentioned by the author. To track down the source of these passages, one must therefore link these abbreviated titles with the full titles found in various collections of Buddhist literature. Although we have done our best to correctly identify these texts, it is possible that this list of citations may contain inaccurate references.

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Khandro Nyingtik (*mKha'*gro snying thig). See Heart Essence of the Dakinis.

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