

# The Precepts in Eight Chapters

*From the Oral Transmission of the  
Great Perfection in Zhangzhung*





## Zhangzhung Nyengyü Studies, Volume 4

The Precepts in Eight Chapters or the Vision of Awareness in Its Nakedness  
Translation from the Tibetan and commentary by Jean-Luc Achard

Without the slightest doubt, the text of *The Eight Precepts* is one of the most fundamental works of the whole Dzogchen tradition. It is thus no wonder that it was classified under the secret division of the Zhangzhung Nyengyü texts. The teachings disclosed in its contents are certainly complex, and demand a subtle approach in order to uncover their real meaning. They may also sometimes appear repetitive and redundant, but they actually convey many instructions and clarifications which are difficult to find elsewhere. Patient and careful study of each individual chapter will undoubtedly unfold a new understanding and a deepening of the knowledge of the natural state. In fact, this is not a text that one just reads like many others: it is a work containing the sum of all Dzogchen teachings presented in a symbolic form whose secrets are disclosed within its eight chapters. In some ways, it contains the core of the Initiation to the Dynamism of Awareness (*Rig pa'i rtsal dbang*) in that it reveals the actual contents of this initiation in very direct terms. Therefore, to ensure proper understanding, each chapter should be carefully studied before proceeding to the next one.

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Translation of the root-text and commentary  
by Jean-Luc Achard

*Naldjor* - Institute for Movement and Tibetan Yoga

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If you wish to order and receive further information about the activities and publications of Naldjor or if you want to contribute to further publications, please write to Cristina Figueiredo under email : [cfigueiredo@tap.pt](mailto:cfigueiredo@tap.pt).

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The root-text was translated into English during a six-month stay in Triten Norbutse Monastery in Nepal in 1998-1999. At that time, Pamela J. Yuen kindly accepted to help, checking a first draft translation on her return to the United States. Then, in 2001 Michael and Vivien Hunt generously offered to check this version (and another one in March 2008) which was further checked against the extensive French commentary, due to appear in 2011 from the Khyung-Lung Editions. The meaning commentary included after the translation of the root-text was then elaborated during the UMR 8155 seminar "Histoire et interpretation des textes et des doctrines" held at the CNRS, Paris, and was finalized in 2010. An extensive commentary in English has also been prepared and will appear in the same collection later. This detailed commentary is in particular dedicated to the long life of Yongdzin Rinpoche Lopön Tenzin Namdak (who has granted his authorization for the composition of the commentary), to the spiritual activities of Menri Lopön Trinley Nyima Rinpoche and to my dearest friend Michael Hunt, who has so

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Jean-Luc Achard  
Yungdrung Sang-ngak Chokling,  
2010

## Introduction

The text presented and commented upon in this book belongs to the Dzogchen (Great Perfection) teachings as preserved in the Bönpo lineage of Tibet. According to its own historical records, the Bön tradition is linked with the Buddha Tönpa Shenrab, who spread Bönpo teachings in the land of Tazik Ölmo Lungring where his instructions were first spread in very ancient times. From this enlightened sanctuary, the Buddha's teachings have spread to numerous adjacent countries such as Zhangzhung and India, as well as to distant kingdoms such as Phrom, China, etc. Tönpa Shenrab himself is said to have come to Tibet proper only once, in order to fetch back his horses stolen by a demon named Khyabpa Lakring (the "Embracer with Long Hands"). On that occasion, he converted local Bönpos and their sanguinary cults to the tradition of Eternal Bön (*g.yung drung bon*), which is still practiced today. Within this tradition, the Dzogchen teachings are presented as the heart of all the spiritual instructions transmitted by Tönpa Shenrab and his heirs in an uninterrupted lineage. Among the numerous cycles dealing with Dzogchen, the most important of these is undoubtedly *The Oral Transmission of the Great Perfection in Zhangzhung (rDzogs pa chen po zhang zhung snyan rgyud)*<sup>1</sup> which is regarded as the oldest and the core of all Dzogchen teachings. The main masters of this *Oral Transmission* lineage are said to have achieved the Rainbow Body (*ja' lus*), a sign of their full realization of the Base, the Path and the Fruit of the Great Perfection.

<sup>1</sup> From now on *Zhangzhung Nyengyü*.

### 1. The transmission of the Dzogchen teachings

According to the traditional history of Bön, the various cycles of Dzogchen teachings were handed down in a continuous transmission from master to disciple, from the Primordial Buddha Kuntuzangpo down to our own time.<sup>2</sup> Among these cycles, the texts forming the corpus of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* were never put into any written form whatsoever before the late eighth — early ninth century : at that time, Bön was facing a persecution launched by King Trisong Detsen (755-797) and many teachings were hidden or banished from the royal and Buddhist sphere of influence in Tibet.<sup>3</sup>

Probably a little earlier, Tapihritsa, the then twenty-fifth lineage holder of the cycle, had appeared to Nangzher Löpo, the main priest of the king of Zhangzhung, and had given him the complete transmission of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü*, even authorizing him to write it down for the sake of future generations.<sup>4</sup> The special teachings contained in the present volume — *The Precepts in Eight Chapters (Man ngag le'u brgyad pa)* — were written down after the third meeting of Tapihritsa and Nangzher Löpo on the island of the Dangra Lake in Northern Tibet.<sup>5</sup> At that time, Nangzher Löpo was meditating in a hermitage when Tapihritsa appeared in the sky in order to reveal to him the teachings of the definitive meaning (*nges don*). Such precepts are described as the quintessence of all Bön teachings and as the pinnacle of Dzogchen itself. Given their contents, it is clear that the precepts revealed in this text belong to highly esoteric

<sup>2</sup> This statement mostly concerns the oral uninterrupted lineage of the *Kama (bKa' ma)*, whereas the literature known as Treasures (*gter ma*) has an interrupted line of transmission, when texts were supposedly hidden for specific reasons and supposedly rediscovered at a later date.

<sup>3</sup> This mostly means that Bön was probably banned from Central Tibet but continued to flourish in Eastern Tibet proper, where it has done so down to the present day.

<sup>4</sup> On the meetings of the two masters and the teachings transmitted by Tapihritsa on these occasions, see Achard, *Les Prophéties du Seigneur Tapihritsa*, Khyung-Lung, 2005, *passim* (that volume includes a detailed commentary of the first teachings that Tapihritsa revealed to Nangzher Löpo).

<sup>5</sup> On this lake, see J. Bellezza, *Divine Dyads — Ancient Civilization in Tibet*, p. 333 *et seq.*

instructions which were transmitted only in a hidden way, so that no unfortunate beings might hear them. Traditionally, such instructions were whispered into a bamboo tube placed at the ear of the listener. In the historical preface to the text, these instructions are described as the quintessence of the teachings of the Nine Buddhas<sup>6</sup> and the Twenty-four Ascetics who all achieved the Rainbow Body (*'ja' lus*)<sup>7</sup>. This means that the text contains the heart-essence of all the Great Perfection teachings transmitted by these masters.

As far as their contents are concerned, the overall teachings revealed in Tapihritsa's instructions clearly belong to the Precepts Series (*Man ngag sde*) of Dzogchen, which contains the quintessence of all Great Perfection teachings.<sup>8</sup> Their main subjects are the practices of "Cutting through Rigidity" (*khregs chod*) and "Passing over the Crest" (*thod rgal*), which are the two main yogas of the Precepts Section in general. Even though these two expressions are not themselves used in the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü*, their corresponding practices are indeed described at length, though not in a sequential way but rather in a combined one. One should more precisely speak of the practice of Clear-Light (*'od gsal*) to define the purpose of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* texts proper.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The Nine Buddhas are the first lineage holders of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* teachings, namely: 1. Kuntuzangpo; 2. Shenlha Ökar; 3. Tönpa Shenrab; 4. Tseme Öden; 5. Trülshen Nangden; 6. Barnang Khujug; 7. Zangza Ringsün; 8. Chime Tsukphü; and 9. Sangwa Düpa.

<sup>7</sup> These masters are: 1. Lhabön Yongsu Dakpa, 2. Lubön Banam Kyölpo, 3. Mibön Tride Zambu, 4. Zhangzhung Banam Kyölpo, 5. Trisho Gyelwa, 6. Rasang Samdrup, 7. Darma Sherab, 8. Darma Bhode, 9. Zhangzhung Triphen, 10. Muye Lhagyung, 11. Mashen Lekzang, 12. Gyershen Takla, 13. Rasang Yungdrung Se, 14. Rasang Yungdrung Phen, 15. Gebar Döndrup, 16. Gyerpung Gephen, 17. Gyerpung Gegyel, 18. Zhangzhung Namgyel, 19. Mugyung Karpo, 20. Horti Chenpo, 21. Künkhyen Döndrup, 22. Rasang Phengyel, 23. Gurub Sega, and 24. Tsepung Dawa Gyeltsen.

<sup>8</sup> It should however be noted that the classification of the three Series of Dzogchen (*rdzogs chen sde gsum*) — namely the Series of Mind, Space, and Precepts — does not appear in the corpus associated with the Bon of Zhangzhung. It is rather a specific characteristic of the Bon of India (*rgya gar gyi bon*).

<sup>9</sup> As we shall see below, this Clear-Light is not similar to the Clear-Light practice of the Tantras. It is directly centered on the visionary experience of Clear-Light itself and not on visualizations or mental sensations of Clarity.

According to the Oral Transmission accompanying these texts, the main themes of the collection can be defined as those of the Base of the Natural State (*gzhi yi gnas lugs*), the Path (*lam*) leading to freedom (*gro*) from conditioned existence, and the ultimate Fruit (*mthar thug 'bras bu*) which the adept realizes at the end of the Path itself.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. The Base of the Natural State

The Base of the Natural State will be described here according to the special teachings given in the *Instructions on the Six Lamps* (*sGron ma drug gi gdams pa*), which contain some of the most detailed descriptions dealing with this Base. The analysis of the Base given in that text is probably among the clearest, as it lucidly links the apparently cosmological principles associated with the primordial state to the nature of the mind of the individual. In that text, the Base is explained according to :

- its own Essence (*ngo bo*) expressed as the Universal Base (*kun gzhi*);
- its relation with what is known as Awareness (*rig pa*), that is, the direct and pure knowledge of the primordial State; and
- the nature of the mind and its intellect (*blo*) aspect.

### 2-1. The Essence of the Universal Base

As for the Universal Base, it is said to be identical to the Pure and Perfect Mind (*byang chub sems*), i.e., to Mind itself (*sems nyid*).<sup>11</sup> This Base abides as the great Generic Base (*spyi gzhi chen po*) of Samsara and Nirvana, of enlightened Buddhas and deluded sentient beings, etc. This means that everything “occurs” within the infinite display or space of this very Base, be it the conditioned manifestations of samsaric existence or the

<sup>10</sup> On the teachings associated with the Base, the Path, and the Fruit in the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü*, see Achard, *The Three Precepts*, *passim*.

<sup>11</sup> “Pure and Perfect Mind” and “Mind itself” are two synonyms of the real and ultimate nature of the mind of the individual.



splendors of nirvanic marvels. In this respect, it is defined as the Space of Reality (*bon nyid kyi dbyings*) abiding as pure Emptiness (*stong pa*) filled with the visionary manifestations of Clear-Light (*'od gsal*). The nature of this Clear-Light is such that it cannot be obscured by anything and that it is naturally empty of material substance (*dnagos po*) and of characteristics (*mtshan ma*). It is also empty of corruptions and artifices (*bcos slad med pa*) and simply abides as the resplendent natural aspect of one's primordial state.

In the Precepts Series of Bön and Buddhism, the Universal Base is often described according to the system of the "seven Bases" (*gzhi bdun*) which are actually seven ways of defining the Base itself.<sup>12</sup> In the *Zhangzhung Nyengyū*, this approach is not employed, but the Universal Base is envisioned in the following four ways :

- its abiding as Primordial Purity or as being primordially pure (*ka dag*);
- its abiding as Spontaneity or as being spontaneously accomplished (*lhun grub*);
- its being neutral (*lung ma bstan*); and
- its being expressed as the Single Thigle (*thig le nyag gcig*).

Expressed as the great Primordial Purity, the Base is in reality the Absolute Body (*bon gyi sku*) itself, the Essence (*ngo bo*) of our real nature, pure of all stains and beyond all limits. In this respect, it is empty of all dualities such as Samsara and Nirvana, Buddhas and sentient beings, passions and Compassion, discursive thoughts and Wisdom, virtues and vices, happiness and misery, defects and qualities, self and others, objects and consciousness, etc. In fact, it cannot be tainted by any duality whatsoever, since it remains *ab aeterno* immaculate and beyond any kind of limitation. It abides in a state in which all dualistic notions such as existence and non-existence, appearance and

<sup>12</sup> On this theme, see Achard Jean-Luc, "La Base et ses sept interprétations dans la tradition rDzogs chen", *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 1, pp. 44-61. According to Longchenpa, these seven ways are defined as defective (*skyon can*), whereas an eighth mode of defining the Base (as Empty and Clear, *stong gsal*) is the only one regarded as authentic (*yang dag pa*).

emptiness, eternalism and nihilism, production and cessation, etc., are transcended.

In its Spontaneity aspect, the Base abides as the Perfection Body (*rdzogs pa'i sku*), which is beyond the creation of Buddhas and the corruptions of sentient beings, beyond causes and effects, etc. This very state is not something likely to be produced by the intelligence of a given mind, nor by the efforts of a demi-urgic being : it simply emerges naturally out of itself in a spontaneous process which corresponds to the abiding mode of the Body of Perfect Rapture (*longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku*). Its perfection (*rdzogs*) is said to be that of a "total perfection" (*kun rdzogs*), "full perfection" (*yongs rdzogs*) and "complete perfection" (*thams cad rdzogs*). This means that in the visionary and liberating arising nature of this Spontaneity, all samsaric phenomena are perfected in the sense of "terminated"; all nirvanic phenomena are perfected in the sense of "sublimated"; and all dualistic aspects (such as passions and compassion, Buddhas and beings, etc.) are perfect in the sense of "ended".

As to its neutral aspect, it corresponds to the various or indeterminate (*nges med*) Emanation Bodies (*sprul sku*) which arise as being endowed with the qualities of neutrality, absence of partialities, potentiality of arising as anything, and so forth. The idea of indeterminacy means that these Bodies arise as various magical displays of impartial (*phyogs med*) nature.<sup>13</sup> The variety of manifestations occurring at this level is such that, owing to the circumstances of realization (*rtogs*) or non-realization (*ma rtogs*), these visionary wonders arise as nirvanic marvels or samsaric appearances, as fully enlightened Buddhas or deluded sentient beings, etc. In other words, the Base remains continuously neutral and is not affected by samsaric manifestations or nirvanic displays, etc.

As to the expression of the Natural State as the Single Thigle (*thig le nyag gcig*) or quintessential, ultimate unity of Reality, it means that the Space of the Universal Base (*kun gzhi'i dbyings*) embraces all Buddhas and beings within its single essence : it is

<sup>13</sup> In other words, they cannot be restricted to limited characteristics since their characteristic is exactly to be variegated, impartial, etc.

a space-like, universal dimension, similar to the limitless sky embracing all manifested existence (*snang srid*).<sup>14</sup>

## 2-2. The Nature of Awareness

Awareness (*rig pa*) is the pure and direct non-discursive knowledge of the Natural State. It is beyond ordinary mind, mental consciousness, and intelligence and abides as the discerning reality of Mind itself. In the *Instructions on the Six Lamps*, it is explained according to the following six modalities : 1. the definition of the Wisdom of Self-Awareness (*rang rig ye shes*); 2. its Essence (*ngo bo*); 3. its dynamism (*rtsal*) or effulgent nature; 4. its various names (*ming*); 5. its arising within the continuum of the individual; and 6. its being the base or source of Samsara and Nirvana.

First, as for the Wisdom of Awareness, it is to be envisioned as the pure Knowledge of the Universal Base abiding within the continuum of each sentient being. Its arising can be compared to the sun shining in a totally pure sky, illustrating the radiant and unblocked nature of its potentiality. This Wisdom shines throughout the three times and embraces all beings endowed with a mind.

Second, the Essence of this Wisdom is said to be simultaneously empty (*stong pa*) and luminous (*gsal ba*), radiating without any obscurations, grasping, etc. It abides as a pure, discerning Knowledge which is devoid of dualistic conceptions and free from all discursiveness. In reality, it is the base of the arising of the variety of thoughts, memories, etc., but its very Essence remains untainted by thoughts, grasping, etc.

<sup>14</sup> Many people confuse this description with that of a universal, ocean-like consciousness which would be some sort of unique, cosmic mind. Such a representation has nothing to do with the nature of the mind itself; it is a Hindu belief which has to be discarded as an erroneous view. It is not because our nature shares the same, identical modalities (of Essence, Nature, and Compassion) that we are all identical or that our minds merge in this supposedly cosmic consciousness. These ideas have nothing to do with Bön in general and Dzogchen practice in particular. In order to illustrate the common traits of our mind, Yongdzin Rinpoche often uses the image of stalks of bamboos: when you cut them open they are all the same inside (empty), but they are still all different, one from the other.

Third, its dynamism is such that it manifests in a threefold way, as sounds (*sgra*), lights ('*od*) and rays (*zer*). These three manifestations arise from the dynamism of Awareness and are not separated from it. They form what is described as the "objects of Awareness" (*rig pa'i yul*) but this is not to be understood as a dualistic representation of a given Awareness and its objects, since Awareness and the three manifestations are one and the same, the latter being the dynamic manifestation of the former. In fact, they are defined as being undifferentiated (*dbyer med*) and "without union or disunion" ('*du bral med pa*).

Fourth, among its various names, Awareness is synonymous with Wisdom (*ye shes*), as it spontaneously abides as a primordial knowledge since the very beginning. It is also specifically defined as the Base of All or Universal Base (*kun gzhi*) in the sense that it is the base of the arising of all thoughts, ideas, etc., as well as the Base of all Wisdoms, etc. If one realizes its real nature, it appears as being pregnant with Buddha-Bodies (*sku*) and Wisdoms (*ye shes*), but if one fails to realize this nature, it simply becomes the Base in which all karmas and passions are collected. It is also called the King of Self-Knowing Awareness (*rang shes rig gi rgyal po*) or King of Awareness (*rig pa'i rgyal po*), etc., since it is the ruler of all consciousnesses and it cannot be ruled by them.

Fifth, in the continuum of the individual, Awareness arises like the sun shining in the sky. It is not tainted by dualistic grasping and discursiveness, since it is the pure Knowledge of the Single Thigle (*thig le nyag gcig*) embracing everything and within which everything is entirely perfected. Its very nature is similar to that of the moon and the reflection of the moon in water : the continuum of the individual has the potential to reflect the very nature of Awareness in the same way water reflects the moon shining in the sky. Rocks, earth, etc., do not possess this dynamic, reflective nature, and so cannot reflect the moon on their surface. This means that only beings endowed with a mind can manifest the pure nature of Awareness, since they possess the dynamic potential to reflect it.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Several other examples illustrating the nature of this dynamism are given in the text entitled *The Lamp Clarifying the Advice on the Universal Base* (*Kun gzhi zhal shes gsal ba'i sgron ma*), which is an offshoot of the *Instructions on the Six Lamps*. See Achard, *La Lampe Clarifiante les Conseils sur la Base Universelle*, Khyung-Lung Editions, 2009.

Sixth, as to its being the source of Samsara and Nirvana, since Awareness abides as totally neutral and primordially pure (being untouched by limitations), it is potentially the base of the arising of all the qualities of Nirvana if one realizes its real nature. On the other hand, if this realization does *not* dawn within one's continuum, it becomes the base of the arising of all the defects of Samsara. With regard to its visionary manifestations, if realization arises, the lights become the base of the enlightened Body (*sku*) of a Buddha; sounds become the base of his Speech (*gsung*), while rays become the base of his Mind (*thugs*). But if realization fails to arise, lights become the base of the conditioned body (*lus*) of deluded beings; sounds become the base of their ordinary speech (*ngag*), and rays become the base of their discursive mind (*gid*).

### 2-3. *The nature of ordinary mind*

The ordinary mind (*sems*) is simply an aspect of the King of Self-Knowing Awareness, in the same way as the rays of the sun are the dynamic manifestations of the sun itself. So in the *Instructions on the Six Lamps*, it is clearly stated that "the intellect arises from the dynamism of Awareness" (*rig pa'i rtsal las blo ru shar*). This intellect or mind is simply the "thinking capacity" of mind which emerges from the non-discursive aspect of Awareness itself. This mind leads to ignorance when it tends to grasp the natural manifestations of Awareness (sounds, rays, and lights) in a dualistic mode, tainted by karmic propensities and emerging passions.

The very essence of this mind is to indulge in the various thoughts processes and dualistic patterns of conditioned thinking. It is stimulated by the data transmitted by the six associations of consciousnesses which enable it to grasp at the various objects of these consciousnesses. It is a discursive process which is the source of the grasping of a self.

### 2-4. *The threefold abiding mode of the natural state*

In summary, the Natural State is not described in the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* as a static condition of utter immobility, a

state of inner calm, and so on. It is to be envisioned as the primordial state of the individual, and is expressed according to three aspects : 1. the Universal Base (*kun gzhi*), which is the infinite dimension of space-like Reality; 2. the primeval Awareness (*rig pa*), which naturally discerns this state; and 3. the ordinary mind or intellect (*blo*), which is a discursive and dynamic aspect of Awareness itself. In other words, the Universal Base is the Space of Reality (*bon nyid kyi dbyings*) blazing with the visionary marvels of the Wisdom of Awareness (*rig pa'i ye shes*) whose discursive dynamism appears as the multiplicity peculiar to the discursive thoughts of mind (*blo*).

This primordial State can also be defined as a Base (*gzhi*), as a quintessence (*snying po*), and as wonders (*cho 'phrul*). Here the Base is nothing but the Mind of Perfect Purity (*byang chub sems*), the quintessence is the Wisdom of Awareness, and the wonders correspond to the multiple discursiveness of mind.

Still this very State is further described as the sum of the Mother (*ma*), the Son (*bu*) and its dynamism (*rtsal*) : the Mother is the Space of Reality, the Universal Base, empty and devoid of self; the Son is the Wisdom of Awareness, Mind itself (*sems nyid*), naturally radiant and free from all grasping; and its dynamism arises as the mind in which Mother and Son are non-dual. Each of these threefold definitions serves at illustrating the real nature of the Single Thigle itself.

### **3. The Path leading to Freedom**

Basically, the practice leading to the realization of such a state as Dzogchen consists in deepening and stabilizing the experience of the Natural State, so that its effulgent nature can manifest in gradual visionary displays culminating in the ultimate vision of total Awareness and the final enlightenment within the primordially pure Space of Reality. However, prior to engaging in such advanced meditations, yogis are trained in preliminary practices and should receive special initiations (*dbang*) to ripen their continuum. Once these initiations have been obtained, adepts should engage in a preparatory retreat centered on these preliminaries.

### 3-1. Preliminary practices

In the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* cycle, the preliminary practices (*sngon 'gro*) are presented according to nine sections or phases (*dgu rim*), each of which is to be performed at least one hundred thousand times, during a specific retreat. Then, the preliminaries are practiced four times a day. Prior to this, the adept is guided on the fourfold meditation on impermanence (*mi rtag*), preciousness of the human body (*mi lus*), the inevitability of karmic results (*las*) and the unsatisfactory nature of conditioned existence (*'khor ba*). Once these principles have been integrated, one can enter the preliminaries as they are expounded in the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* tradition proper. These concern the following themes :

1. Self-initiation (*dbang*) through the practice of Guru-Yoga (*bla ma'i mal 'byor*);
2. Impermanence, with the same practice as that of the four meditations just mentioned;
3. Confession of wrong actions, centered on the practice of Shenlha Ökar and the recitation of the 100 syllable mantra;
4. Developing the Pure and Perfect Mind for the benefit of others and oneself;
5. Taking Refuge in the four Objects of Refuge, namely :
  - a. the master; b. the Buddha; c. the Bön teachings; and d. the religious community of Shens;
6. Mandala offering, for collecting the accumulations of merits;
7. Mantra recitations, for clarifying obscurations;
8. The offering of the body, which is similar to the Chö (*gCod*) practice;
9. The Prayer to the masters of the lineage (*bla brgyud gsol 'debs*).

Each of these practices is of utter importance but the base of them all remains the Guru-Yoga through which the practitioner receives the blessings of the lineage and the ability to discover and cultivate the experience of the Natural State. In the present cycle, the Guru-Yoga is centered on the figure of Shenlha Ökar (or sometimes Tapihritsa) and is performed four times daily.

Each session of practice is completed by the dedication (*bsngo ba*) of merits to the welfare of all beings. Usually, the standard way of practicing these preliminaries is through a retreat of 49 or 100 days, each individual preliminary being performed 100 000 times. Towards the end of the retreat, several spiritual signs occur and indicate the level of integration reached by the practitioner.

In the traditional course of practices, these preliminaries are followed by a series of two special preliminaries of Dzogchen (*rdzogs chen khyad par gyi sngon 'gro*), consisting in the outer and inner Disjunctions of Samsara-Nirvana (*phyi nang 'khor 'das ru shan dbye ba*) and in the training of the three doors (*sgo gsum sbyang ba*). These have been discussed at length elsewhere according to the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* itself and the main cycles of Bönpo Dzogchen teachings.<sup>16</sup>

### 3-2. Main Practice

As mentioned above, the main practice (*dngos gzhi*) of Dzogchen is made up of two yogas : Cutting through Rigidity (*khregs chod*) and Passing over the Crest (*thod rgal*). Though these expressions are not used in the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* and *Nyamgyü* collections,<sup>17</sup> the actual practices are clearly described in several of their texts.

#### 3-2-1. The direct experience of the Natural State

The first one is centered on the direct experience of the Primordial Purity (*ka dag*) of the Natural State of Awareness (*rig pa'i*

<sup>16</sup> On these subjects and the practice of ordinary and extraordinary preliminaries, as well as on the direct introduction to the natural state, see Achard, *The Dawn of Awareness*, *passim*. On the special preliminaries, see also Lopön Tenzin Namdak, *Heart Drops of Dharmakaya*, pp. 35-49.

<sup>17</sup> The *Nyamgyü* (*Nyams rgyud*) is the collection of some of the teachings given by the masters of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* tradition. It exists in three versions (large, medium, and short).



*gnas lugs*). According to the View of the Primordial Purity, all phenomena pertaining to Samsara and Nirvana are not existent, not non-existent, not manifested in any way whatsoever, not empty, not born, not obstructed, etc. They just abide in their ultimate nature as being totally empty (*ye stong chen po*), namely baseless and free from the beginning (*ye gro*l). This state of primeval Reality is, however, not merely empty : it is naturally endowed with a self-arisen Awareness (*rang byung gi rig pa*) which represents the clarity aspect (*gsal cha*) or discerning aspect (*rig cha*) of this Emptiness.

Awareness can be : i. not realized, ii. wrongly realized, iii. partially realized or iv. fully realized. Thus, if one fails to realize and recognize the nature of this Awareness, then one errs into the six destinies of beings. If it is wrongly realized, one enters the mistaken approach of either eternalism or nihilism. If it is partially realized, one may enter the Path of the four causal Vehicles (*rgyu theg bzhi*). And if it is totally realized, one can practice the teachings of the five resultant Vehicles (*'bras theg lnga*), including Dzogchen teachings as the highest of all Paths. Therefore, Awareness is at the core of everything : it is the heart of all the teachings of the Buddha Tönpa Shenrab.

Whether it is realized or not realized, the natural state of Awareness is not affected by this recognition or the lack of it, just like the sun is not affected by the clouds appearing in the sky : beyond the limit of these clouds, the sun never ceases to shine. It is the same for Awareness, whose Nature is thus described as immutable. In some texts, it is defined as that which stands beyond achievement, in the sense that it naturally or spontaneously abides within one's continuum, without any preference, no matter what kind of sentient being one is. It is present without any fluctuation from Kuntuzangpo down to the smallest insect.

To state things in a direct way, Awareness arises "within" oneself but is not in any way whatsoever considered to arise inwardly or outwardly. In fact, it arises beyond such limitations, as is clearly demonstrated by direct experience. In some texts, it is said that it arises indeterminately (*ngeś med*) and without partialities (*phyogs med*). Others say it arises naturally in a spontaneous way, which is simply another way of describing its unbounded and unrestricted nature. However, defining it as

spontaneous or as spontaneously accomplished (*lhun gyis grub pa*) may lead to some misconceptions. Indeed, some people think that Spontaneity in Dzogchen means that one can be spontaneous (acting like a fool) and do as one wants (acting out whatever comes to one's mind).<sup>18</sup> This is a very childish approach that has nothing to do with Dzogchen at all. The Spontaneity in Great Perfection teachings has a totally different meaning : it is in particular applied to the View (*lta ba*) and not particularly to the Conduct (*spyod*). This means that the arising of Awareness appears spontaneous insofar as it is not created or produced by anyone or any cause. It abides by itself in a self-perfected way, embedded in its primordially pure Essence and its luminous Nature. So Spontaneity refers to something very specific and perfectly delimited. Conduct, for its part, has to be based on humility, honesty, restraint, calm, patience and compassion. These qualities are naturally produced in the mind of the practitioner engaging in serious practice. Such qualities are in fact signs showing that meditation is getting deeper, clearer, etc., and demonstrate the decisive progress that is arising within.<sup>19</sup>

In general, in the context of Trekchö teachings (as well as on other occasions), it is said that there exist three forms of Awareness :

- all encompassing Awareness (*khyab rig*),
- knowing or sapiential Awareness (*bsam rig*), and
- Primordial Awareness (*ye rig*).

The first — all encompassing Awareness — directly refers to the Essence of the Blissful Ones (*bde gshegs snying po*) that encompasses or pervades all beings. In other words, it is the natural

<sup>18</sup> This kind of behavior might be demanded during practices such as the outer *Khorde Rushen* but otherwise restraint, peace, and humility are the established norm of perfect conduct.

<sup>19</sup> Of course, spontaneity — in a slightly different sense — can be part of Conduct but it does not mean that one can jump at somebody else's throat or hurt others simply because one thinks one is a "spontaneous Dzogchenpa". Such an approach has nothing to do with the teachings of the Great Perfection, and people thinking otherwise should spend some time reflecting on the differences between Dzogchen and the Dzogchenpa. If the first is obviously unconditioned, the second is necessarily conditioned until he reaches the ultimate Fruit.

state itself as it is present in all sentient beings, the potential of Buddhahood abiding in the heart of each and every being.

The sapiential Awareness is the utterly pure knowledge that one obtains during meditation or studies of the teachings of the various Vehicles of Bön. For instance, when one meditates on a theme, one reaches a state of Awareness of this theme, which is called *rig pa*. If one does not meditate, then one does not become aware of the meaning of this theme. In other words, it is a state characterized by fluctuations. Even if one enters the experience of the natural state and remains within it, this very experience of Awareness does not last (at first) and is gradually replaced by the activities of ordinary mind after meditation (or, unfortunately, sometimes *during* meditation).<sup>20</sup>

The Primordial Awareness is what one refers to as the Awareness (*rig pa*) in Dzogchen teachings, i.e., this is the real experience of the natural state, the *discerning (rig)* and utterly pure capacity to experience one's primordial nature. It is a state which is unaffected by fluctuation and thus does not degenerate if one does not meditate, nor is it being improved if one meditates. It stands beyond such limitations and is described as primordially arising (*ye shar*) within one's continuum. It is devoid of the materiality of ordinary outer objects and free from the inner grasping of a self by one's ordinary mind. In fact, it is characterized by a natural Clarity (*rang gsal*) in which all discursive thoughts (*rnam rtog*) arise as primordial Wisdoms (*ye shes*).

How do we distinguish these three forms of Awareness, and is it actually necessary? It is indeed important to clearly understand the differences between the three kinds of Awareness. The first one is the *sugatagarbha* and does not necessarily imply that one should or need to practice Dzogchen teachings to become "aware" of this Essence of the Blissful Ones. This is, for instance, what happens for practitioners of the Sūtra level: they study several texts explaining the nature of this *sugatagarbha* but do not necessarily have an experience of it, since it is a potential likely to develop itself until the obtainment of Buddhahood. It is

<sup>20</sup> This is actually the purpose of performing long retreats of contemplation, because, in theory, the time spent in the actual experience of Awareness is longer than that spent in distraction. The longer the retreat, the stabler the experience.

thus a process whose complete blossoming depends on the individual : if he practices the ten virtues, avoids the ten non-virtues, and trains in the ten *paramitas*, then this potential will ultimately develop into the realization of full Buddhahood.

The second is the knowledge at which one arrives during meditation. It thus also depends on the individual, whether he is able to develop a state of utterly pure knowledge in which he can perfectly *discern (rig)* what he is doing or what is occurring during the meditation session. In a sense, it implies a subject and an object, even if the state of knowledge that one reaches at that point is said to be beyond duality.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, this second kind of Awareness is different from the preceding one, since it is not a potential state existing in all beings<sup>22</sup> nor a process able to develop itself in a more or less predictable way.

The third kind of Awareness differs from both of the preceding insofar as it depends only on itself and is not a potential, a process, or a meditative state. It stands beyond consciousness and is therefore beyond the grasping of ordinary mind. It does not depend on discursive thoughts and is not the product of any analytic introspection. Rather, it is the self-discerning (*rang rig*) knowledge of the Natural State itself, arising beyond limited conceptions such as intelligence (*blo gros*), consciousness (*nam shes*), ordinary mind (*sems*), meditative experiences (*sgom nyams*), etc. In this direct and transcending experience of Awareness, three qualities arise naturally (which clearly help to distinguish it from the two other kinds of Awareness) :

- the various outer appearances are clearly seen as insubstantial, and all rigid grasping at them is cut off, just like the branches of a tree are automatically cut when the tree is uprooted;
- the inner fetters which bound one to a self are destroyed and one remains in a state of primordial emptiness devoid of self, just like shooting an arrow into the heart of a powerful being (who is thus killed right away); and

<sup>21</sup> At such a stage, both subject and object merge into each other in the non-dual experience of undifferentiated mind and appearances (*snang sems dbyer med*). This point is of utter importance.

<sup>22</sup> Not all beings meditate and thus they never experience this kind of Awareness.

- the multiple discursive thoughts are automatically cut off, just like the smoke coming from a chimney on the roof stops when the fire in the stove below goes out, while Wisdom naturally dawns within the continuum.<sup>23</sup>

The real, discerning experience of the natural state is that of the Transparent Reality (*bon nyid zang thal*) in which primordial Wisdom arises naturally. In this state of the utterly pure Reality, everything is without partiality or bias : there are neither limits nor center, no characteristics, etc. Within this state, all appearances are naturally liberated, and whatever manifests simply arises as the spontaneous manifestations of Reality itself. When one realizes that this state is entirely encompassed by the Absolute Body (*bon sku*), one is then able to truly recognize one's own Essence, directly encountering the authentic expression of the Absolute Body.

When this state of liberation is reached, one's three doors are naturally liberated without there being any necessity to apply antidotes to their passions :

- all that is seen through the eyes is the View of the Naked Vision of Reality (*bon nyid cer mthong gi lta ba*);
- all thoughts that arise in the mind are the Meditation of the overflow of Wisdom (*ye shes klong brdol gyi sgom pa*);
- all activities performed by the body form the automatically self-arisen Conduct (*shugs 'byung rang shar gyi spyod pa*); and
- all that manifests is the Fruit of inherently liberated natural visions (*rang snang rang grol gyi 'bras bu*).

The state that has been described can thus be designated as the Natural Liberation of Awareness (*rig pa rang grol*), which means that our Awareness does not depend on exterior circumstances

<sup>23</sup> There are many other ways of presenting Awareness according to the Dzogchen teachings, such as the twofold presentation of the Awareness abiding on the Base (*gzhi gnas kyi rig pa*) and the Awareness arising as its dynamism (*rtsal shar gyi rig pa*). We shall discuss them elsewhere. On this subject, see in particular Lopön Tenzin Namdak (ed. by Gerd Manusch), *Primordial Wisdom in the Continuity of the Mother, passim*.

to reach Liberation since it is naturally liberated within its own Essence : since in reality it is not bound by anything, it is therefore not liberated thereafter. It is consequently not limited by samsaric or nirvanic phenomena nor is it entangled by the dualistic grasping of ordinary mind. It consequently does not need to be liberated at all. However, just reflecting like this is certainly not enough and will not lead to liberation but simply to further delusion. One indeed needs to walk the whole Path of liberation, stabilize the experience of the natural state and then engage in the contemplation of the visions of Clear-Light.<sup>24</sup>

### 3-2-2. *The Spontaneous Effulgence of Clear-Light*

The core of Dzogchen teachings is represented by the practice of Clear-Light (*'od gsal*), commonly known as Thögel (*thod rgal*) or “Passing over the Crest” during which the practitioner gradually builds up familiarization with the visionary aspect (*snang cha*) of his own Awareness. The practice itself can be explained according to three main points :<sup>25</sup>

- controlling the key points of the body, speech, and mind,
- inducing the vision of manifest Awareness, and
- contemplating the arising of visions.

<sup>24</sup> This demands yogic skills that are far beyond the limited, deluded approach of the nihilists who think it is enough to mentally decide that one's mind is already the Buddha. Their totally wrong approach does not clear away obscurations; only total realization can do so, not a mere mental decision. Those postulating that it is possible to get enlightenment without practicing meditation, or simply by remaining in a quiet state, are among the most deluded people who have not understood one iota of the Buddha's teachings. If there is of course nothing to be meditated upon, this does not mean that one should just remain quiet without doing anything: “nothing to be meditated upon” means nothing to meditate upon in the terms of the Development and Perfection Stages, not in the terms of Dzogchen practice.

<sup>25</sup> The practice of Clear-Light is presented here in an abridged form. The details are given in *The Practice of the Six Essential Points* (forthcoming).

*a. Controlling the key points of the body, speech, and mind*

The Wisdom of Awareness embraces everything, the whole individual, but it is more precisely located within the body, and it can be rendered manifest by controlling the key point (*gnad*) or Magic Wheel (*'phrul 'khor*) of the body. In fact, it is even said that if one does not control this key point of the body (but also those of speech and mind), it will be impossible to contemplate the arising of the visions of the natural state.<sup>26</sup>

The key point of the body consists in adopting the posture of the three Bodies, namely the Lion posture of the Absolute Body, the Elephant posture of the Perfection Body, and the Sage posture of the Emanation Body. In the *Chaktri* instructions of Dru Gyelwa Yungdrung, two further postures are added, namely the Swan and the Antelope.<sup>27</sup>

For the key point of speech, one gradually diminishes any kind of discourse until one eventually remains like a mute. This means training in not talking for short periods; then training similarly for longer periods during which one may still recite one's daily prayers, etc. However, after a certain time, one blocks any kind of speech and remains totally silent.

The key point of the mind consists in concentrating one's mind on the eyes and these on the outer sky. Oral instructions say that one concentrates without distraction the inner Space of mind on the outer empty Space of reality so that the Lamp of the utterly pure secret Space (*gsang ba'i dbyings nam par dag pa'i sgron ma*) arises in its nakedness. When one contemplates this Lamp, one is in the empty and luminous condition of Awareness in which one sees the visionary marvels of the Bodies (*sku*) and pure realms (*zhing khams*) of Buddhahood.

*b. Inducing the vision of manifest Awareness*

In an utterly pure and isolated place, one should gaze at the rays of the sun in the eastern and western directions during the

<sup>26</sup> By "the arising" is here meant a visionary state quite beyond the mere appearing of a few thigles.

<sup>27</sup> On these postures, see Lopön Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, *The Main Dzogchen Practices* (ed. Gerd Manusch), pp. 61-63.

day. At night, one should either press the eyes or contemplate the rays of the moon or those of a butter lamp. By training in this way, one will start seeing *thigles*, chains of Awareness (*rig pa'i lu gu rgyud*), colored fogs, and later more complex visionary manifestations.

The outer blue sky, the sun, the moon, etc., are defined as the objects (*yu*) on which one concentrates. The specific ways of gazing at the sky or the sun form the key point of the gaze (*lta stangs*). Remaining in the experience of the Natural State during that contemplation is the key point of Awareness (*rig pa*). Together with the key points of body, speech, and mind described above, these form the set of the six key points (*gnad drug*) of Thögel practice.

### *c. Contemplating the arising of visions*

When one trains in this way, one is gradually confronted with the arising of the visionary manifestations of the Natural State appearing in ever-increasing splendor. In the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* tradition, these visions are described according to a set of five visionary experiences, namely :

1. the Increasing of Visions (*snang ba 'phel ba*),
2. the Spreading of Visions (*snang ba mched pa*),
3. the Intensification of Visions (*snang ba rgyas pa*),
4. the Perfection of Visions (*snang ba rdzogs pa*), and
5. the Ultimate State of Visions (*snang ba mthar thug pa*).<sup>28</sup>

In standard Great Perfection teachings, the visions are usually described as a set of four :

1. the Vision of Manifest Reality (*bon nyid mngon sum gyi snang ba*),

<sup>28</sup> These will be described at length in Achard, *The Six Essential Points*, forthcoming. See also Lopön Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, *The Meditation on the Clear-Light* (ed. Gerd Manusch), pp. 25-50. On the explanation of these visions according to the tradition of Shardza Rinpoche, see Achard, *La Pratique des Six Points Essentiels de l'Esprit de Parfaite Pureté*, volume I, pp. 141-149.



2. the Vision of Increased Luminous Experiences (*nyams snang gong 'phel gyi snang ba*),
3. the Vision of the Full Measure of Awareness (*rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*), and
4. the Vision of the Exhaustion of Reality (*bon nyid zad pa'i snang ba*).<sup>29</sup>

According to Shardza Rinpoche, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Visions of the first system correspond to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vision of the second one. He also clearly states that the system with five visions is centered around dark retreats (*mun mtshams*), whereas that with four visions corresponds to the standard daylight practice of Thögel.

#### 4. The Ultimate Fruit of Buddhahood

When one reaches the ultimate Vision of Thögel, one actually realizes the nature of the three Buddha-Bodies (*sangs rgyas kyi sku gsum*) as naturally abiding within oneself. Thus, the experience of Exhaustion or Ultimate Stage of Vision confronts one directly with the primordial purity of one's own Essence and this very purity is defined as being the Absolute Body (*bon sku*). The original sanctuary of this Body within oneself is the Brown Agate Tent (*mchong gur smug po*) in the center of the heart.

The natural dynamism (*rang rtsal*) of this Body manifests in the spontaneously accomplished expression of the Wisdom of Awareness (*rig pa'i ye shes*) manifesting in sounds, rays, and lights. The utter perfection of this dynamism is known as the Perfection Body (*rdzogs sku*) abiding within our channels, wheels, and so forth.

Furthermore, the arising of this dynamism at the doorway of the Lamps (*sgron ma'i sgo*) and its display in ever more intensified visions forms the natural arising of the Emanation Body (*sprul sku*). In this respect, the three Buddha-Bodies are entirely perfected within oneself and should not be searched for elsewhere. In fact, our connection to the three Bodies is constant and we have never been separated from them, but their manifest ex-

<sup>29</sup> See Achard, *The Four Lamps*, pp. 31-38.

pression entirely depends on one's practice of the Path. There are thus three kinds of three Bodies :

- the three Bodies of the Base (*gzhi'i sku gsum*) at the time one's mind became connected with our body;
- the three Bodies of the Path (*lam gyi sku gsum*) when one has engaged in formal practice and developed a sufficient level so that these Bodies arise in one's continuum; and
- the three Bodies of the Fruit (*'bras bu'i sku gsum*) when one has totally perfected their manifestations at the end of the practice of the Path.<sup>30</sup>

Practitioners who reach that ultimate stage of the Path and obtain the Fruit of Buddhahood will manifest special signs at the time of their death. The most advanced among them will realize the Rainbow Body (*'ja' lus*), which is a sign of their complete perfection of the Path of Dzogchen and their non-regressive integration of the Fruit of Buddhahood. Thus, at the time of their *parinirvana*, their physical aggregates will start to resorb into lights in the following manner :

- the flesh will resorb into a yellow light,
- the blood will manifest as a white light,
- the physical heat will arise as a red light,
- the breath will vanish into a green light.

Only the impure parts of the body — hair and nails — remain, while various kinds of atmospheric marvels occur during these resorptions. Simultaneously, one's speech dissolves into echoes (*brag cha*) and mantric syllables, while the mind remains entirely absorbed into the unborn state of the Absolute Body. At that time, one is able to manifest the five modalities of a fully enlightened Buddha, namely : the aspects of Body, Speech, Mind, Qualities, and Activities.

<sup>30</sup> The realization of these Bodies arises with the manifestations of the Five Wisdoms (*ye shes lnga*), which are the Wisdom of Emptiness, the Wisdom of Equality, the Discriminative Wisdom, the Mirror-like Wisdom, and the All-accomplishing Wisdom.

## 5. The text of the *Eight Precepts*

The teachings presented in the *Eight Chapters* belong to the third or secret (*gsang ba*) section of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü*, which deals with the Naked Vision of Awareness (*rig pa gcer mthong*).<sup>31</sup> This section has only one text, which can be subsumed to its eight root precepts (*rtsa ba'i man ngag*) explained in a self-commentary (*rang 'gre*). The inclusion of the present text in this “secret” section is due to the fact that it uses a “secret vocabulary” (*gsang tshig*) precisely aimed at directly introducing the adept to the Naked Vision of Awareness, i.e., to his own natural state.

Throughout its eight chapters, Tapihritsa explains the abiding mode of the Essence of the Blissful Ones (*bde gshegs snying po*) within one’s body. In fact, each chapter can function as an individual literary entity in itself. Each of them is introduced by a short, elliptic precept (*man ngag*) which states things in a symbolic form (which is a good example of the twilight language used in hidden instructions). Then, each lexeme of the precept is given its exact meaning in open and clear language. After this comes a statement clarifying the proper meaning of the precept, and this short clarification is followed by the related teachings associated with the themes given in the initial precept. These teachings come with various subdivisions according to each chapter. One will undoubtedly note that the secret instructions given by Tapihritsa in this text contain what appears as numerous repetitions or variations on a similar theme, as if the self-commentary was auto-commenting itself on several occasions. In fact, as stated above, one should consider each chapter as an individual section, complete in itself and able to deepen matters in a progressive manner. In a certain sense, the text can be compared to a pure crystal whose individual facets reflect the contents of all the others, and from that perspective, it definitely expresses the Great Perfection itself.

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<sup>31</sup> For a complete analysis of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü*’s structural contents, see Achard, *La Structure du Zhangzhung Nyengyü*, Khyung-Lung, 2005.

In conclusion to this introduction, it may be interesting to note that the text also exists in a partially identical form in the Nyingma Canon.<sup>32</sup> It appears under the title *The Single Son of all Revelations* (*bsTan pa thams cad kyi bu gcig pu*), a tantra discovered by Chegom Nagpo (lCe sgom nag po), an important *tertön* of the early 12th century. According to traditional accounts, Chegom Nagpo re-discovered texts which Chetsün Sengge Wangchuk (lCe btsun Seng ge dbang phyug) had hidden thirty years prior to their discovery. Chegom is known to us as a master of Zhangtön Tashi Dorje (Zhang ston bKra shis rdo rje, 1097-1167) who was a key lineage holder of the Vimalamitra tradition of *Heart Drops* teachings (*snying thig*) and innermost and unsurpassable secret Tantras (*yang gsang bla med rgyud*).<sup>33</sup>

Both versions of the text show a series of similar precepts (*man ngag*) serving as the base of a direct introduction (*ngo sprod*) with the real nature of Mind. Their purpose is to demonstrate the existence of Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas*) within one's own body (*sangs rgyas rang lus la gnas pa*). The variants between the two texts are sometimes important, but in the sections which are similar, variant readings are superficial, even if they diverge in their respective explanatory sections. From a purely literary point of view, the version of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* appears to be more logical, with the quotation of a precept at the opening of each chapter and its self-commentary directly following the quotation. This is not the case with the Nyingma version, which is sometimes clumsy in its logical progression.

It is very difficult at present to determine which of the two texts is the older and therefore the source of the second. In the Nyingma Canon, the history and origin of many tantras cannot be traced back very far and some of the texts included in that collection are of totally unknown lineages. It is also clear that some have been borrowed from Bon po sources, such as works taken from the *Triple Proclamation of the Great Perfection* (*bsGrags*

<sup>32</sup> I have discussed elsewhere the relationships between this text and the Nyingma Tantra concerned (see *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, pp. 231-239). I am just synthesizing here the relevant elements of this discussion.

<sup>33</sup> This refers to the *Bima Nyingthik* (*Bi ma snying thig*) cycle and the group of the *Seventeen Tantras* (*rGyud bcu bdun*).

*pa skor gsum*), to name just a single collection.<sup>34</sup> Here, if we simply take into account the traditional view of both the Bon and the Nyingma traditions on their own texts, since the lineage of the Nyingma version of the text cannot be traced back beyond the 14th century (maybe earlier), the Bon version appears to be much older and is situated in a lineage of transmission which is very well established and appears to be much older than the Buddhist tradition itself. For this reason and further elements,<sup>35</sup> one is rationally tempted to present the Bon version as the older one. Besides, this would naturally fit with a traditional approach of the history of Dzogchen in Tibet which includes the Bonpo tradition.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> S.G. Karmay has shown that the *Golden Tortoise Tantra* (*rGyud gser gyi rus sba*) was borrowed from the cycle of the *Triple Proclamation of the Great Perfection*; see Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, pp. 220-223. I have shown elsewhere that the text of the *Pearls of Pure and Perfect Mind* (*Byang chub sems kyi thigs pa*) has been included in the Nyingma Canon after its borrowing from the same collection of the Triple Proclamation. See Achard, "Le Tantra des Vingt-Deux Perles de l'Esprit de Parfaite Pureté", *passim*.

<sup>35</sup> See Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, pp. 232-239.

<sup>36</sup> Some Buddhist followers are often compelled to adapt the history in order to have it fit the traditional historical outlines of their own lineage. This even implies changing the name of important masters and making it Buddhist. For instance, as already shown elsewhere by Samten Karmay (*The Great Perfection*, p. 203), Dudjom Rinpoche has given a weird Buddhist rendering of Shardza Rinpoche's name in his *History of the Nyingma Lineage*.

## **The Root Verses of the Eight Chapters**

I — “In two cities on the summit of the Supreme Mountain dwell five wild men.”

II — “O Son of Noble Clan! The Wish-fulfilling Buddha abides within the Chest of the heart.”

III — “O Son of Noble Clan! Within the Mansion of gold and turquoise appears a self-arisen stupa made of five kinds of jewels, which abides as surrounded by pearls.”

IV — “O Son of Noble Clan! On the beautiful golden meadow strewn with turquoise flowers abide the sun and the moon.”

V — “Within the mansion of Sun and Moon abides a Jewel blazing with five different lights.”

VI — “O Son of Noble Clan! On the summit of the Supreme Mountain abides a precious, blazing jewel.”

VII — “O Son of Noble Clan! In the two self-arisen caves abides the Ancestor, the Buddha of Essence itself.”

VIII — “O Son of Noble Clan! From the depths of the Ocean, a precious, hidden jewel has come forth to the summit of the Supreme Mountain and projects its rays of light in the sky.”

## **The Symbolic meaning of the Eight Chapters**

### Chapter I

The precept saying “In two cities on the summit of the Supreme Mountain dwell five wild men” means that the five primordial Wisdoms abide in the eyes located on the head of the body.

Its real meaning is that the unobstructed and luminous Essence of one’s Mind inside the heart shines through the eyes in what is known as the Contemplation of Transparent Wisdom.

### Chapter II

The precept saying “O Son of Noble Clan! The Wish-fulfilling Buddha abides within the Chest of the heart” means that one’s luminous and unconditioned Mind abides within one’s heart.

Its real meaning is that one’s Mind abides as Bodies and Wisdoms inside the heart. This is defined as the actual abiding mode of Awareness.

### Chapter III

The precept saying “O Son of Noble Clan! Within the Mansion of gold and turquoise appears a self-arisen stupa made of five kinds of jewels, which abides as surrounded by pearls” means that within the Space of Reality inside one’s heart, Awareness abides in a blazing mode which is that of the Five Bodies endowed with the Five Wisdoms. The glow of this Awareness shines through the eyes.

The real meaning of this precept is that the Awareness which shines through the eyes is the Absolute Body, the Buddha himself.

#### Chapter IV

The precept saying “O Son of Noble Clan! On the beautiful, golden meadow strewn with turquoise flowers abide the sun and the moon” means that Awareness manifests in various modes within the pure realms displayed in the pure Expanse of Reality.

#### Chapter V

The precept saying “Within the mansion of the Sun and Moon abides a Jewel blazing with five different lights” means that within one’s heart, the five blazing lights of the natural state represent the Five Bodies of the Buddhas abiding as the Five Wisdoms.

#### Chapter VI

The precept saying “O Son of Noble Clan! On the summit of the Supreme Mountain abides a precious, blazing jewel” means that in one’s head abide the Wrathful Bodies dancing in the Conch Mansion or brain. They represent the active aspect of Compassion.

#### Chapter VII

The precept saying “O Son of Noble Clan! In the two self-arisen caves abides the Ancestor, the Buddha of Essence itself” means that the natural Clarity of Awareness abides within the center of one’s eyes.

#### Chapter VIII

The precept saying “O Son of Noble Clan! From the depths of the Ocean, a precious hidden jewel has come forth to the summit of the Supreme Mountain and projects its rays of light in the sky” means that from the depths of one’s heart, the radiance of the natural state shines through the eyes and is contemplated in the sky.



## The Precepts in Eight Chapters

Homage to Kuntuzangpo, the great realization of all-pervading Self-Awareness!

As Gyerpung Chenpo Nangzher Löpo  
Was remaining in Contemplation on an island of the  
(Dangra) Lake,  
He saw in the sky before him the Lord Kuntuzangpo,  
That is, Tapihritsa, with an immaculate Body, shining  
like white crystal,  
Sitting naked, without ornament on his Body of Self-Arisen  
Awareness.  
Having produced an infinite faith, reverence and devotion  
(for him),  
He circumambulated him and did divine prostrations  
(in front of him).

(At that time,) the Lord spoke these words through his  
mouth :

O Fortunate Son of noble Clan!<sup>37</sup>

You who are endowed with the purified karma of your previous  
lifetimes!

I shall reveal to you the definitive meaning, so listen steadily  
with undistracted senses!

<sup>37</sup> I have translated *rigs* as “clan” throughout because it actually refers to the spiritual “clan” or “affinity” one has, rather than to one’s family. Family refers to a social status or even a class (when translated as “noble family”), ideas which have nothing to do with the present context pointing to fortunate ones who have received initiation or who show the characteristics of qualified students.

In order to guide the fortunate ones of future generations on the unmistakable Path,

I shall reveal to you the noble<sup>38</sup> profound precepts!

Innermost quintessence of the eighty-four thousand Bön teachings,

Pinnacle of the Ultimate Dzogchen teachings,

Precepts of the Nine Contemplative Transmissions of the Blissful Ones,

Oral Transmission of the Twenty-Four Ascetics,<sup>39</sup>

Source of tantras,<sup>40</sup> extracted essence of the Agamas,<sup>41</sup>

These noble precepts, as precious as the eyes,<sup>42</sup>

I shall explain them in order to establish the fortunate ones of future generations on the level of the Absolute Body.

This is why, O son of noble Clan,

These instructions are called “the Mirror where one identifies the Universal Base”,

“The Lamp through which one entirely sees Primordial Wisdom”,

“The Precept through which one contemplates Awareness in its nakedness”,

<sup>38</sup> The recent Triten Norbutse edition has here *gdam pa* (a verbal form meaning “to advice”) instead of *dam pa* (noble) as in all other versions consulted. For this reason and because of grammatical evidence, I don’t think the reading *gdam pa* is correct. The expression “noble precepts” is a *leitmotiv* which occurs again below.

<sup>39</sup> The Tibetan is actually simpler and basically means “individuals” or “men” (*gang zag*), but the intended meaning is to refer to the group of twenty-four ascetic masters who reached Rainbow Body at the end of their life.

<sup>40</sup> In this context, *Tapihritsa* is not referring to the Tantras (*rgyud*) of the Path of Transformation but rather to the whole canonical instructions of Dzogchen which are set down in “treatises” (*rgyud*, tantras).

<sup>41</sup> Agamas are complementary teachings accompanying Tantras. They are “advice” (*lung*) in the sense that they clarify some key points in the Tantras themselves. Precepts (*man ngag*, *upadeshas*) are generally of a more technical or esoteric nature. They are oral secret instructions. Treatises, Advice and Precepts form a triad of inter-related teachings.

<sup>42</sup> Lit. “similar to the eyes” (*mig dang ‘dra ba*) which obviously means “as precious as the eyes”. The *Middle Length Experiential Transmission* (*Nyams rgyud ‘bring po*) contains several works which are similarly compared to parts of the body and to its clothes (belt, hat, etc.).

“The Axe that cuts delusion at its root”,

“The Heart Advice which directly points out the Natural State”.<sup>43</sup>

With these eight precepts, which are :

1. The precept of the Base, of the Natural State of Mind,<sup>44</sup>

2. The precept (showing) that Buddhahood concretely abides in one’s continuum,

3. The precept (showing) that the Essence of the Absolute Body abides in us,

4. The precept revealing the characteristics of the unborn Absolute Body,

5. The precept of the direct introductions to the Pure Realms of the Buddhas,

6. The precept of Buddha Nature contemplation,

7. The precept of the transcending Great Vehicle which is not to be meditated upon, and

8. The precept (explaining) the way (practitioners of) excellent, medium and lower capacities liberate in the narrow path of the intermediate state,

(With these eight thus,) I shall reveal the instructions for cutting delusion at its root and concretely realizing Buddhahood.

Samaya!

## Chapter I

Homage to Kuntuzangpo, the primordially enlightened Self-Awareness!

As for the revelation of the precept of the Base,  
(Namely) of the Natural State of Mind,<sup>45</sup>

This precept says : “In two cities on the summit of the Supreme Mountain

Dwell five wild men”.

<sup>43</sup> “Natural State” translated the tib. *gnas lugs* which is the abiding (*gnas*) mode (*lugs*) of the Base (*gzhi*) of one’s Mind.

<sup>44</sup> Lit. “the abiding mode of the true nature of Mind itself” (*sems nyid gshis kyi gnas lugs*).

<sup>45</sup> See the preceding note.

The “Supreme Mountain” is one’s body while  
Its “summit” is said to be one’s head.

The two cities are the two eyes while

The five wild men are the five primordial Wisdoms,

Their sanctuary abiding in the center of the heart.

These Wisdoms abide (directly there), being seen without  
interruption.

As for the “precept”, (it means that)

What remains visible and unobstructed in the center one’s  
heart is the Contemplation of Transparent Wisdom.

Recognizing this is sufficient (in itself).

O Son of Noble Clan ! As for the revelation of the domains of  
Bodies and Primordial Wisdoms,

The domain of the Absolute Body is the upper part of the  
trunk;

The domain of the Primordial Wisdoms are the two eyes;

The domain of the Body of Perfect Rapture is the head;

The domain of the Emanation Body is the spinal cord<sup>46</sup>

Or it is the whole body.

The domain of Self-Awareness is Space;

The domain of the Lamps is the sky;

The domain of Wisdom is the mirror;

The domain of lights is our own Awareness;

The domains of the Absolute Body are the clusters

(of Luminous Spheres).

The domain of the vehicles is constituted by individuals with  
superior, medium and lower capacities.

The domain of the Secret is the realization of the Space of  
Reality.

<sup>46</sup> The manuscript edition of the *Kanjur* (vol. 171, p. 277) is the only one to  
have the correct alternative case (...*sgal tshigs sam/ yang na...*).

The manifestations endowed with characteristics are (to be) realized as the domain of phenomena.

The Five Lights are to be realized as the natural system of Buddhas.

Your own Awareness, which dwells and shines within you,  
Is to be realized as the Primordial Wisdom of Self-Awareness.

The fact that the Essence of your own Awareness is empty  
Must be realized as the Absolute Body.

This Absolute Body must be realized as the Single Sphere.<sup>47</sup>

O Son of Noble Clan! As for the five sanctuaries of the Buddha,  
The Absolute Body dwells in the center of your heart;

The Body of the Transparent Wisdom dwells in your two eyes;

The Body of Perfect Rapture dwells in the center of your brain;

The Compassionate Emanation Body dwells within the spinal  
cord;

The Body of self-arisen Luminous Spheres dwells in all your  
channels —

Such are the sanctuaries of the Five Bodies of the Buddha  
within your body.

The unobstructed Awareness is the Absolute Body which  
primordially abides in you.

Since the beginning, this Awareness shines as a body of light.

It has objects and sensory perceptions abiding since the be-  
ginning.

The fact that your Awareness shines primordially in an un-  
obstructed way is the Buddha himself

Whose Transparent Wisdom abides since the beginning (in)  
your two eyes.

<sup>47</sup> The Triten Norbutse edition (p. 690) has an insertion here saying *mig gnyis* ("the two eyes") which does not make sense in this context.

When you know that the Buddha abides naturally within  
you,<sup>48</sup>

The pinnacle of your realization arises as the Absolute Body  
and

When you know that your two eyes are (the sanctuary of)  
the Transparent Wisdom,  
(You actually see) Wisdom shining in lights.

Knowing that Awareness is transparent, you come to know  
that everything is the Absolute Body  
And that your two eyes are its Transparent Wisdom.

O Son of Noble Clan!

In the center of the heart of all sentient beings,  
The Absolute Body which is free from characterizable objects  
Dwells free from being confined to limitations.

[Interlinear note : In the center of the heart of all sentient beings,  
the immutable Absolute Body arises as the quintessence of Wis-  
dom which abides as the five, clear and vivid Wisdoms. From  
these five Wisdoms, the five Lights come forth, with a Clarity ex-  
pressed in lights. As to their pure manifestation, these visions of  
Wisdom arise impartially and abide without declining].

The Essence of Awareness remains changeless;  
Its Compassion remains without birth or cessation;  
Since the Absolute Body is immaculate, your own Awareness  
is unimpeded  
And its unceasing visions are without obstruction.

Since the Essence of Awareness unceasingly shines as  
lights,  
It is called “the subject pervading all lights”,  
Manifesting without bias and not falling into partialities.

<sup>48</sup> I correct the genitive *shes pa'i* (in the Triten Norbutse edition and the original Menri xylograph) and read it as the causative *shes pas* which is more correct grammatically and which is mirrored by the following lines.

While all externally appearing objects remain temporally immutable,

Appearances change and emerge as Pure Visions.

Even though the Wisdom which pervades everything just appears as manifesting to oneself as the subject,

On the (course of the) Path, it is actually neither close nor far.

Even though the objects of Wisdom emerge as manifested objects,

At (the level) of the first Stage (known as) Intense Joy, they are simply exhausted without grasping.

O Son of a Noble Clan! This Body of the Enlightened One  
Which appears as an object whose visions are unceasing,  
Abides as the mind without elaborations and utterly free  
of conceptions.

In the center of our heart,  
The Essence of the Absolute Body abides as brilliantly shining  
into the void.

Its Wisdom abides as Clarity,

Its colors dwell as luminous (complexions)

While its many rays project (outside), abiding as brilliant  
luminosity.

This Body remains motionless

And abides unbiased since the beginning as the fivefold  
clusters of the Blissful Couples of the Five Clans.

The support of the Body of these Blissful Ones rests on the  
chest.

In the realms of the Buddhas, Bodies and Wisdoms are  
unobstructed.

At present, they abide in the center of the heart and

Their Clarity shines in the state of the sky.

The Body of the Transparent Wisdom

Has a support that rests within the eyeballs.

Its sanctuary is in the center of the pupil of the eyes and

Its Clarity arises as being unceasingly visible.

In the center of the eyes, the Wisdom Body abides as an  
undecaying Clarity.

The Body of Perfect Rapture

Has a support that rests within one's head.

Its sanctuary is in the center of the Conch Mansion and

Its Clarity shines as a pure,<sup>49</sup> transparent crystal sphere.

The Body of Perfect Rapture thus arises concretely as  
(reflections appearing in) the center of a mirror.

In the center of one's own Conch Mansion,

It abides together with the Wrathful Bodies seizing every-  
thing with their Compassion.

Their Body has hardly the size of mustard seeds and their  
eyes remain (shining) in naked liberation

While they abide in the Conch Mansion filled with the five-  
fold lights of rainbows.

The support of the Emanation Body rests within one's own  
body :

Its Sanctuary is located within the spinal cord, in the center  
of the chest

And its Clarity shines when the door of the magical mirror is  
opened.

Together with the billions of myriads Emanation Bodies,

The subtle aspects of their Bodies are luminous and hand-  
some

And are by nature resplendent and fascinating.

Projecting many luminous rays,

They remains thusly manifest.

The Body of self-arisen Luminous Spheres

Has a support that rests upon the aggregates of form.

Its Sanctuary is located in all the channels,

Its origination is in the secret door,

Its Clarity shines when it is inserted inside the anthers of  
the lotus and

Its emergence arises illuminating our body, speech and  
mind.

<sup>49</sup> Yongdzin Rinpoche uses the word "polished" here for *phyis pa* which must be thus considered as a past tense form of 'byid pa. The *Kanjur* (p. 281) has the reading *phyes pa* which does not fit with the present context.



O Son of Noble Clan! The Five Clarities of the Buddha  
Are the five lights of the Buddhas' pure realms that shine in  
oneself.

These five lights shine as the radiance of one's own Awareness.  
This Awareness of ours, which radiates without obstruction,  
Shines as being the Buddha himself  
Whose Wisdom illuminates our own eyes.

Thus, since all these Bodies and Wisdoms come from our  
own Mind

And arise clearly,

(This teaching) is called "the Precept on the natural State,  
on the Universal Base".

Such is the first chapter, revealing the precept on the abiding  
Base.

Samaya!

## CHAPTER II

Homage to Kuntuzangpo, the great realization of Self-Liberation!

As for the revelation of the precept showing that the Essence  
of Buddhahood abides concretely in our own continuum,

The precept says :

"O Son of Noble Clan! The Wish-fulfilling Buddha abides  
within the Chest<sup>50</sup> of the heart.

The Chest is the heart;

The Wish-fulfilling Buddha

Is your own Mind, luminous and uncontrived,

From which originate all kinds of Qualities.

The precept indicating that he resides there (means that)

Inside your own heart,

The Bodies and Wisdoms of Buddhahood abide as your own  
Awareness.

<sup>50</sup> *Za ma tog*, i.e., a kind of basket or box.

O Son of Noble Clan! As for the five Essences of the Buddha,  
The Essence of the Buddha is the Absolute Body;  
The Essence of the Absolute Body is our own Awareness;  
The Essence of Awareness is the eyes;  
The Essence of the eyes is this unceasing (capacity of)

vision, and

The Essence of the Buddha is that which is endowed with  
the body of Wisdom.

O Son of Noble Clan!

The Essence of our own Awareness is this unobstructed  
Clarity.

The fact of unceasingly seeing (the visions of Awareness)  
over there through the center of our eyes, this is the Buddha.

The Essence of the Rapture Body is that which abides as the  
Body of Sublime Knowledge.

The Essence of the Body of Sublime Knowledge experiences  
the principle (of Awareness).

The Essence of Sublime Knowledge, which is this unob-  
structed (action of) knowing,

Is the Body of Perfect Rapture, known as “the Buddha en-  
dowed with face, eyes and ears”.

The Essence of the Emanation Body

Is the arising of everything as the five lights and

These five lights are emanated from the marvels of our own  
Awareness.

Moreover, the Essence of the Emanation Body is that which  
arises as an unceasing Compassion.

O Son of Noble Clan! As for the five visions of the Buddha,  
The Complete and Perfect Buddha manifests in the trans-  
parency within our body :

Channels manifest as transparent,

Objects manifest as transparent,

Eyes manifest as transparent,

Awareness manifests as transparent and

Consciousness manifests a transparent.

This Buddha, which manifests in the transparency within  
our body,

This Buddha, who abides in the center of the heart,  
Who cannot even be wrapped up by the aggregates (made) of  
flesh and blood,

This very clear and luminous consciousness of ours  
Is the Buddha who manifests in the transparency of our  
body.

As for this consciousness of ours which manifests as trans-  
parent,

Even if (our) body was enclosed in a nine-storied iron mansion,  
Our own Awareness could not (be imprisoned) and (would)  
arise outwardly :

Such is the Buddha manifesting as transparency within our  
own Awareness.

As for the domain of the Buddha that manifests as transparent,  
The support of the Absolute Body rests within the chest.  
Its sanctuary resides in the heart  
And its Clarity is that of Self-Awareness shining in the sky :  
Such are the objects manifesting as transparent.

As for our own Awareness manifesting as transparent,  
Even if the Buddha resides in the center of the heart,  
The body, (made of) flesh and blood, cannot (cover) him.  
But manifesting transparently as he springs from the eyeballs  
He shines in the transparency of the eyes.

O Son of Noble Clan!

As for the description of the Buddha's mode of being,  
This Essence of the self-knowing Awareness, (namely)  
That which remains clear and unobstructed, is Reality itself.  
Self-Awareness abides as the unceasing Absolute Body.  
When one knows that this (self-) knowing Awareness which  
arises unceasingly in the center of our eyes is the Buddha,  
One discovers the Buddha within oneself.

As soon as the breathing ceases (at the time of death), all visions emerge as lights;

As Awareness comes out from the eyes, all visions emerge as the Absolute Body.

The emergence of the natural lights of Awareness within ourselves

Constitutes the encounter with the Mother, with Reality.

Knowing that this emergence of lights and visions of Bodies is the natural light of our own Awareness,

One merges non-dually with these visions of our natural light and this constitutes Buddhahood.

O Son of Noble Clan! As for the actual description of Buddhahood,

When the sentient beings of future (generations)

Shall concretely (perceive) the Buddha (described) at present,

Let them know that this unceasing vision which shines clearly

From within their own eyeballs

Is Buddhahood itself!

Such is chapter two, revealing how Buddhahood exists concretely within our continuum.

Samaya!

### CHAPTER III

Homage to Kuntuzangpo, the dynamism of self-arisen Awareness!

As for the precept (describing how) the Essence of the Absolute Body abides within oneself, (it says) :

« — O Son of Noble Clan! Within the Mansion of gold and turquoise

Appears a self-arisen stupa made of five kinds of jewels,  
Which abides surrounded by pearls.»

The gold (which symbolizes) the utterly pure Reality, free from the limitations of elaborations,

Is the Essence of our Awareness, immutable within the three times.

The turquoise Mansion is the Wisdom of Self-Awareness  
And this Wisdom of Awareness is the Essence that shines unceasingly.

The Mansion itself is the Tent of the heart and  
The Absolute Body (that dwells within) is what is designated as “the Self-Awareness shining brightly”.

The stupa made of five kinds of jewels  
Designates the Five Bodies and the Five Wisdoms.

The pearls are the two eyes.

“Surrounded” designates the pupils of both eyes,  
While its sanctuary is that of the Buddha located in the center of the eyes.

Such is the precept (enabling us) to know that our eyes are the Buddha.

O Son of Noble Clan!

As for the precept (showing how) to identify the Three Bodies,  
If you want to (reach) Enlightenment without leaving remains behind,

When you recognize this bright Clarity,  
— Which is unceasingly perceived by your eyes —,  
As the Transparent Wisdom, then  
You identify the Body of the Buddha.

For that reason, in the center of your eyes,  
The Bodies of the Victorious Ones of the Five Clans stand in the midst of the five lights, in the manner of Wisdoms and together with their retinue.

Their Bodies have hardly the size of mustard seeds and their Eyes remain (shining) in naked liberation.

The Essence of these (Buddha) Bodies abides as a Clarity which is transparent and free from conceptual grasping.

Even though they, at present, dwell in the center of the heart as (having) Bodies merely of the size of mustard seeds,  
When deluded appearances will be interrupted  
And when the size of these Bodies shall equal that of the

Supreme Mountain,  
That will be the Body of Perfect Rapture.

At the time of your death and in the sky of Reality, the illusory bodies of Wisdom will arise in you like clusters of flowers.

When the deluded appearances cease, all manifested existence shall arise as lights and Bodies.

At that time, as those pure visions emerge,  
Awareness will remain free from uniting or separating from these lights.

Awareness having come forth from the eyes,  
The whole manifested existence shall arise as fivefold lights.

When Wisdom shall blaze with lights and arise in your own visions,

You will merge into the state of Wisdom and reach Buddhahood.

Having merged into the visions of your own lights,  
You will obtain the Body of Perfect Rapture.

Focusing your eyes in the Mirror of Existence,  
During the day, you will see and realize through your own eyes  
The visions you had during the night :  
Thus you will see emerging in yourself  
This Body of Perfect Rapture which resides  
In the Citadel of Wisdom,  
In the center of your heart.

The support of the Absolute Body rests within your body;  
Its sanctuary resides in the center of your heart;  
Its Clarity shines outwardly through your eyes;  
This (very) Essence of your Awareness  
Is in no way made of matter or color :  
It is Reality, that which remains empty and luminous.  
Being just empty and vivid, without falling into empty nothingness,  
This very shining Clarity of Awareness is Primordial Wisdom.

Emptiness and Clarity do not become dual  
(Since) they exist neither as substance nor characteristic.

(Your) empty Essence, this very Awareness which knows itself and shines unceasingly,

Is called the "Primordial Purity of the Base, the Absolute Body".

This unceasingly shining Essence of your Awareness is the Contemplation of the Buddhas.

Since your Awareness does not exist as a substance,  
It is empty Reality.

Since the Wisdom of empty Essence is the Awareness that shines clearly without interruption,

It is called "Emptiness endowed with the quintessence of Primordial Wisdom".

Since the light of Wisdom shines as fivefold colors,

It is called "Wisdom endowed with the quintessence of lights".

Since all the visions arise as lights, they are designated as the "subject with lights devoid of limits and center".

In the middle of your heart,

The pure realms of the Buddhas abide as the visions of the threefold array of Wisdom.

These visions of the threefold array of Wisdom are that

Of the pure vision of Nature,

The pure natural radiance of Reality, and

The pure natural radiance of Wisdom.

The pure vision of Nature

Refers to what is called the "empty Essence of one's Awareness".

The pure natural radiance of Reality

Refers to the "Essence of one's knowing Awareness

Not existing as colors but remaining empty and clear".

The luminous and pure radiance of Wisdom

Is that which shines as fivefold lights.

Thus, in the center of your heart,

The pure realms of the Buddhas, abiding as a threefold array,

Refer to Kuntuzangpo who is Self-Awareness in the center of the heart, Kuntuzangpo who is the Absolute Body

And Kuntuzangpo who is the Essence of one's knowing Awareness.

As for Kuntuzangpo who is Self-Awareness,  
(He is) the clearly shining Essence of mind  
Which blazes as the Essence of Wisdom.

As for the Absolute Body, he abides as a deep blue-colored Body.

(Kuntuzangpo who is) the Essence of one's knowing Awareness  
Abides as an unceasing Wisdom, free from delusion and beyond  
word, thought and description.

Since the Light Body of Compassion is free of conceptions,  
And since in its manifestations, it is devoid of inherent nature,  
it abides in one's heart as self-emerging and self-originating, in  
the manner of a reflection in a mirror.

Reality, which is Kuntuzangpo, Emptiness, free of elaborations,

Abides in the union of the Father and the Mother, in the  
manner of the body and its shadow.

This will become clear when you focus your eyes in the Mirror  
of Existence.

The Essence of your Awareness, (that) totally uncreated void  
Which is indeed pure, that is Reality.

(Thus,) without falling into empty nothingness,

Your own Awareness, which shines unceasingly, is Primordial  
Wisdom.

Since both are undifferentiated, your eyes abide continuously  
in the contemplation of Transparent Wisdom

Which is called "Transparent Reality, Single Sphere".

Such is the third chapter, revealing how the Essence of the  
Absolute Body abides in oneself.

Samaya!



## CHAPTER IV

Homage to Kuntuzangpo, Self-Awareness free of elaborations!

The precept revealing the characteristics of the Absolute Body says :

“— O Son of Noble Clan! On the beautiful, golden meadow strewn with turquoise flowers  
Abide the sun and the moon.”

This precept means that  
The beautiful golden meadow  
Is the utterly pure Expanse of Reality,  
The Pure Realm which has neither birth nor cessation,  
The very Essence of self-knowing Awareness, which is pure,  
empty and totally uncreated.

The scattered turquoise flowers  
(Symbolize) the scattered clarity of self-knowing Awareness arising in various (modes).

The sun and the moon are the two eyes.  
The (way Awareness) abides means that it remains in the center of the eyes  
As the unceasing Clarity of the visions of the Buddhas.

O Son of Noble Clan!  
As for the revelation of the characteristics of the Absolute Body,  
The Absolute Body abides as the Single Sphere endowed with five characteristics.  
Thus, in the center of your heart,  
The Body of Wisdom abides in the manner of lights and domes of lights.

The Mirror (-like) Wisdom abides in the eastern direction, in the middle of the white-colored light;

The Wisdom of Equality abides in the northern direction, in the middle of the green-colored light;

The Discriminating Wisdom abides in the western direction, in the middle of the red-colored light;

The Wisdom of persistent Actions abides in the southern direction, in the middle of the blue-colored<sup>51</sup> light and

The Wisdom of Emptiness abides in the central direction, in the middle of the deep-blue- colored light.

In the center of your heart,

The Absolute Body, the Single Sphere, abides as the five Wisdoms (endowed with) the characteristics of the five lights;

It abides in the middle of the five lights of the five Wisdoms.

These five lights remain vibrant in your heart.

Furthermore, from the center of your heart

Extends a silk-like channel to the center of (each) eye,

Being coiled, supple and devoid of blood and lymph;

Wisdom circles up within, so that in your eyes your own Awareness abides unobstructed in the Visions of Wisdom.

This is called the all-embracing display of Wisdom (covering) Reality and visions (appearing) between.

In the center of your heart, the Absolute Body

Abides as the Five Clans of Buddhas having the nature of the Five Wisdoms,

Their visions being that which manifest (as) outer objects.

In between, they are encompassed by Wisdom

Which is this luminous, unceasing Clarity visible through the center of your eyes.

This is Transparent Buddhahood.

Since this unceasingly luminous contemplation of your own consciousness

Primordially abides in the radiance of the sky,

It is (designated as) Wisdom arising in its totality.

<sup>51</sup> The color should be yellow, but all the editions consulted (including that of the *Kanjur*, vol. 171, p. 292) give the same reading.

Forms shining within your eyes  
And sounds known through your ears,  
Scents sensed through your nose,  
Flavors tasted through your tongue,  
Contacts made through your body and  
Phenomena known through your mind,  
These consciousnesses are the Wisdom of the Absolute Body.

Within your non-conceptual Awareness arise the inconceivable qualities of Wisdom :

Since in this Awareness which is the Wisdom abiding in one's heart

Arise inconceivable qualities,  
This is called "Wisdom arising within oneself".

If you think : Isn't there any distinction between concepts and Wisdom?

Are discursive thoughts the self-arisen Absolute Body?  
Is Non-duality the Absolute Body? (then know that)

All discursive thoughts are coming from one's own Awareness and

Their pacification occurs within the state of one's own Awareness;

All these discursive thoughts arise in one's own Awareness  
And since they manifest in one's own Awareness, this is called the Essence Body.

Since these multiple (and various) manifesting concepts are the manifestations of Wisdom,

Know that these concepts are the Mind of Perfect Purity!

If you think : Is there no distinction between concepts and Wisdom?

Are concepts our own Wisdom?

(Then know that) when you let your mind (abide) in Reality, you know concepts as being empty,

You know that this emptiness is Reality,  
And when you know that concepts are Reality,  
Then you reach Buddhahood without duality.

At the time when the outer breath has stopped and the inner  
breath has not yet ceased,  
Wisdom arises really as illusory (displays)  
In the sky of the natural visions of Reality.  
When you recognize this, it is impossible for you not to  
reach full Enlightenment.

Such is the fourth chapter, revealing the characteristics of  
the Absolute Body.

Samaya!

## CHAPTER V

Homage to Kuntuzangpo, the triple Body devoid of union or  
separation!

As for the revelation of the oral instructions (concerning) the  
direct introduction to the Buddhas' pure realms,

The precept says :

"Within the mansion of the Sun and Moon abides a Jewel  
blazing with five different lights."

O Son of Noble Clan!

The Sun and Moon represent your heart :

It is said that the Sun is its roots, where the blood is,

While the Moon is its summit, where the fat is.

As for the five blazing lights, they are said to represent the  
Five Bodies and the Five Wisdoms

Of the Victorious Ones Abiding in the center of the heart;

Your own heart is (thus) the tent of Buddhahood.

The Jewel is said to be the Absolute Body;

The Absolute Body is this Clarity (shining with) the five-  
colored lights of your own Awareness.

As for the fivefold blazing, (it refers again to)

The Five Bodies and the Five Wisdoms of the Buddhas  
abiding within your heart.

In the center of your two pupils, the Five Bodies and the

Five of the Buddhas are this Clarity (shining) unceasingly in visions.

That which remains brightly clear within the center of your eyes, that is Buddhahood,  
And recognizing it is sufficient in itself.

O Son of Noble Clan! As for the way the Buddhas abide,  
In the center of your heart,  
The Absolute Body abides with the characteristics of the Five Wisdoms :

As the natural radiance of the Five Wisdoms has emerged as the five lights,  
The Buddhas abide within that orb of lights.

From these five lights, the Body of Perfect Rapture, emerging in a self-arisen manner,

(Appears) in the middle of your heart

As this radiant light of the Space of Reality, from which Dawns Kūnnang Khyabpa, shining in the center and being empty by nature.

He is surrounded by the lassos of the five lights without grasping

And holds in his hands the Wheel of Light

And the Never-Waning Victorious Banner.

His Body of Light is devoid of inherent nature

While he sits on a throne of powerful lions.

He abides within the fivefold orb of lights, in non-dual (union) with his Spouse, the Goddess of the Sky.

Towards the eastern direction of your heart,

(Coming) from the Mirror-like Wisdom,

Appears Selwa Rangjung, of yellow complexion,

Encircled by five lights.

Within the non-conceptual Mansion of Wisdom,

He holds his emblem, the golden Scepter,

Adorned with two inalterable swastikas.

On a throne of mighty elephants,

He remains in non-dual (union) with his Spouse, the Goddess of the Earth.

Towards the northern direction, from the Wisdom of Equality,  
 Appears the god Ghelha Garchuk, of green complexion,  
 His Essence being non-grasping Clarity and Awareness.  
 He is encircled by five lights  
 And holds a Sceptre of turquoise in his hand,  
 Adorned with Wish-fulfilling Jewels.  
 On a throne of turquoise blue dragons,  
 He remains in non-dual (union) with his Spouse, the Goddess  
 of the Air,  
 Within a five-colored orb of lights.

Towards the western direction, from the All-discriminating  
 Wisdom,  
 Appears the great god Jedrak Ngöme of red complexion,  
 His Essence being that of the unceasing Wisdom of Knowledge.  
 Encircled by a rim of fivefold lights,  
 He holds as his emblem the Sceptre of copper,  
 Embellished by lotuses.  
 On a throne of peacocks with intertwined necks,  
 He remains in non-dual (union) with his Spouse, the Goddess  
 of Fire.

Towards the southern direction, from the All-Accomplishing  
 Wisdom,  
 Appears the god Gawa Döndrup, of deep blue complexion,  
 His Essence being that of unimpeded Activities.  
 He holds in his hand a Sceptre of iron,  
 Embellished by wheels.  
 On a throne of all-wise horses,  
 He remains in non-dual (union) with his Spouse, the Goddess  
 of Water.  
 They abide there as clear and empty Bodies of Light,  
 surrounded by lassos of five lights.

All of them remain with Bodies the size of mustard grains,  
 having (bright) eyes (contemplating) in naked liberation.  
 As Bodies of Lights, they abide in the middle of your heart.  
 Moreover, they arise within oneself when one has opened  
 the door to the radiance (of the) white crystal.

Then, inside the Conch Mansion, which is the brain,  
Dwell the Wrathful Ones headed by the thirty Wrathful Gods  
of Wisdom, surrounded by fivefold lights, holding hooks of  
Compassion within the Conch Mansion of the brain.

Moreover, in the eastern direction abide Trose  
And the unimaginable (number) of wrathful (gods) of the  
Clan of the Body;  
In the northern direction are Ngamse and  
The unimaginable (number) of wrathful (gods) of the Clan of  
the Qualities;  
In the western direction abide Welse and  
The unimaginable (number) of wrathful (gods) of the Clan of  
the Speech;  
In the southern direction are Tumse and  
The unimaginable (number) of wrathful (gods) of the Clan of  
the Activities;  
In the center are Tsochok embracing his Spouse, (assisted  
by) the (gods) of the Clan of the Mind  
With innumerable Bodies transcending imagination,  
Projecting a clarity (shining) together with myriads of rays of  
light,  
Exquisite in their beauty  
And encircled by lassos of five lights.

Since the heart and eyes are connected with a channel  
And since the eyes are connected with the brain,  
(Owing to the fact that) the assembly of fierce deities sup-  
ported in the head abide within the brain,  
Their Clarity shines to your own eye-consciousness  
While they move through your marrow  
And gush out from the secret door.

The fact that the Wisdom of Awareness  
Abides as unseparated Bodies and Wisdoms within the  
Sheath of Light  
(Explains why) the Bodies of Tsochok and his Spouse appear  
as self-arisen in the central channel.  
(Thus,) these Bodies and Wisdoms in their blazing attire  
Abide without being separated from their self-arisen Body.

Similarly, the hosts of Wrathful (deities), that is  
 Trose (residing) in the channel of the spleen,  
 Ngamse, in the channel of the lungs,  
 Welse, in the channel of the liver,  
 Tumse, in the channel of the kidneys,  
 The eight couples<sup>52</sup> of Awareness Holders, within the eight  
 gatherings of consciousnesses,  
 The four couples<sup>53</sup> (guarding) the Doors, in the four limbs,  
 The twenty-eight Welmos, in the spinal cord,  
 The ten Champions, in the ten great articulations, (and finally)  
 The four great Kings in the four thumbs,  
 (All) of them indeed emerge as self-arisen Bodies within your  
 own body.

Their complexions and emblems appear in accordance with  
 (their description) in the *General Treatise of the Great Consecration*  
 (*dBang chen spyi gzhung*).

Associated with the Wisdoms subduing each and every passion,  
 which are the causes (for rebirth in) the six destinies,  
 They abide endowed with bodies made of five lights.

Furthermore, when one opens the door to the Treasury of  
 marvels,

The billions of myriad Bodies of Buddhas shine through  
 And this very unceasing Clarity of your Awareness is Full  
 Enlightenment.

The Clarity which is unceasingly perceived by our eyes in  
 the sky

And the unceasing Clarity of the Essence of our Awareness  
 Are non-dual (and express)  
 The Clarity of (our) Nature, the Perfection Body,  
 While the unceasing and impartial arising of our wakeful  
 Awareness in multiple (forms) is the Emanation Body.

Such is the fifth chapter, the direct introduction to the pure  
 realms of the Buddhas.

Samaya!

<sup>52</sup> Literally: "the sixteen fathers and mothers" (*yab yum bcu drug*).

<sup>53</sup> Literally: "the eight fathers and mothers" (*yab yum brgyad*).



CHAPTER VI

Homage to Kuntuzangpo, the manifestly free Self-Awareness!

As for the revelation of the View (through which one) realizes the natural state,

The precept says :

“— O Son of Noble Clan!

On the summit of the Supreme Mountain abides a precious blazing jewel.”

The Supreme Mountain is your body;

Its summit is your head;

The jewel is the Absolute Body abiding in the center of your heart;

The Bodies of the Wrathful (gods) abide in the center of the Conch Mansion;

The Emanation Bodies abide within the marrow;

The Body of Transparent Wisdom abides in the two eyes;

The precious jewel is called the Wisdom abiding in the center of your heart.

The Buddha is this very unceasing Self-Awareness.

The blazing light (of the jewel) is the Buddha in the center of the heart which is said to be your Self-Awareness radiating with lights.

If you wish to see the body of the Buddha,

Gaze into the fivefold rainbows!

The Buddha is the Body of Transparent Wisdom

Whose support is in your own body.

Its sanctuary abides in the center of (each) eye

And its Clarity radiates unceasingly.

Recognizing this unceasing Clarity seen by your very eyes

Is Buddhahood itself.

O Son of Noble Clan!

There are three Views of perfect and complete Buddhahood :

— The View of phenomena,

— The View of Reality, and

— The View of one's own natural characteristics.

As for the characteristics of the View of phenomena, those who cling to characteristics consider (phenomena as) marvels of Awareness.

(As for the View of) Reality, Awareness abides as your own natural light

(And therefore) Reality is that very unceasing Clarity of your Self-Awareness.

Know that this unceasing Clarity of the Essence of your Self-Awareness is the Buddha!

Recognize all manifestations of phenomena into characteristics  
As the marvels of your own Self-Awareness!

Know that Reality is the heap of lights of your own Awareness!

As for the View of Nature,

Since your own Awareness is primordially shining with lights,  
Recognize it as this View of Nature!

The Buddha Nature together with

The Nature of Reality

Are your own mind abiding in the orbs of lights of the  
Buddha's Body.

Know that the Blissful Ones abide as the nature of light.

Such is Chapter VI, the revelation of the View of the true meaning of the natural state.

Samaya!

## CHAPTER VII

Homage to Kuntuzangpo, the Body of total non-conception!

As for the instructions on the Non-meditation of the Transcendent Great Vehicle,

The precept says :

“— O Son of Noble Clan!

In the two self-arisen caves

Abides the Ancestor, the Buddha of Essence itself.”

The two caves are the two eyes  
While the Buddha of Essence itself  
Is that which is unceasingly seen through the middle of the  
eyes.

What is concretely seen  
Is this Clarity of your Awareness.

The precept (thus refers to) that very Clarity which is seen  
unceasingly inside your own eyes.

If you recognize that, (you will know that) the Buddha  
abides inherently within yourself

And (simply) recognizing this is Buddhahood.

If you recognize that the Buddha abides inherently within  
yourself, (you will realize that)

The support of this Buddha abides within your own body :

Its sanctuary abides in your heart;

Its emergence arises as Bodies;

It exists as lights;

Its sublimation occurs within your body;

Its support abides within the eyes;

(Again), its sanctuary is in the pupils;

Its emergence arises as Clarity

And it exists in a translucent way.

Your own pupils thus abide as the Body of wakeful Awareness.

If they recognize this arising of the Buddha within themselves,

Even those who committed great sins will swiftly reach Buddha-  
hood.

When body and Awareness part (at death),

The outer breathing ceases

But, so long as the inner breathing has not yet ceased,

The five lights similar to rainbows arise

In the sky before you.

In the center of these iridescent fivefold lights

Arise the fivefold clusters of Buddha Bodies filling (space).

Recognizing the Essence of your Self-Awareness as mani-  
festing in the nature of these clusters,

You will dissolve within these visions of fivefold clusters

And reach Buddhahood without duality.

To realize such a principle is sufficient :  
There is nothing to meditate upon.  
Thus, to recognize one's own Awareness is sufficient  
Since the principle of Non-meditation  
Appears to all sentient beings before their inner breath stops :  
Consequently, recognizing this is sufficient.

This (teaching) is revealed (only) to those who have completed  
the outer, inner and secret initiations.

Such is chapter VII, the revelation of the principle of Non-  
meditation.  
Samaya!

## CHAPTER VIII

Homage to Kuntuzangpo, the dynamism of self-liberated  
Awareness!

As for the precept revealing the manner in which practitioners  
of best, medium and ordinary capacities liberate in the narrow  
path of the intermediate state,

The precept says :

“— O Son of Noble Clan!

From the depths of the Ocean, a precious hidden jewel has  
come forth to the summit of the Supreme Mountain  
And projects its rays of light in the sky.”

The Ocean is your heart;

Its depths are the inner (parts) of the heart;

The Jewel is the Buddha;

Its being hidden means it is concealed in the center of your  
heart;

The Supreme Mountain is your body;

Its coming forth (means that) although the Buddha abides in  
your heart,

The Three Bodies of the Buddha are concretely seen by the  
eyes.

Its rays of light projected in the sky

Express the vivid radiance of consciousness in the sky.

Consequently, this vivid Essence of your Awareness is the Buddha and

Your own Awareness is free from birth and death.

In the course of the three times, and within your heart,

The unceasing Essence of your Awareness shining vividly in the equality of the three times

Is the Contemplation of the Buddha.

Since the Body of the Buddha has neither face nor back, it is the Transparent Wisdom.

When you recognize that the Essence of Awareness unceasingly abides as that transparency within your own heart,

The radiance of (this) Wisdom remains without inner or outer (distinctions).

The visions of Wisdom being neither clear or dim,

The unceasing Clarity of the Essence of your wakeful Awareness remains immutable.

Since the radiance of Wisdom is immutable,

Awareness abides in the nature of the five lights.

Awareness having come forth through the eyes,

The natural radiance of Wisdom shines in its object

So that the whole manifested existence arises as lights and

Bodies.

The natural light of the Wisdom of Awareness having arisen in objects,

Samsara is overcome (to such an extent that)

Deluded appearances arise as Wisdoms.

The Wisdom of Awareness having emerged without partiality,

Visions are brought under the control of Awareness

And these visions are fused within the control of Awareness.

Having reached the ultimate stage of Primordial Purity,

Awareness is not tainted by the propensities of good or bad karma.

Thus, as for the yogis endowed with such a realization,

The best (among them) will achieve Buddhahood without residual aggregates,

The medium one will achieve Buddhahood as soon as body and mind part,

And the ordinary one will achieve Buddhahood in five moments during the intermediate state.

Such is the eighth chapter, revealing the manner in which yogis of superior, medium and ordinary capacities liberate.

Samaya!

\*

After uttering those words, the Emanation Body (of Tapihritsa) Disappeared like a rainbow fading in the sky.

Gurub Nangzher Löpo identified

Awareness as the Body of the Buddha and,

While being encircled by sounds and lights

(As he reached) the absence of residual aggregates

In the simultaneity of realization and freedom,

He proceeded towards the Space of Reality.

This profound Oral Transmission

Was then spread and gradually transmitted (from master to disciple).

May everything be auspicious!

\*

## Commentary on the General Meaning of The Precepts in Eight Chapters

[*Man ngag le'u brgyad pa'i spyi don gyi 'grel pa*]

Homage to the Primordial Protector, Kuntuzangpo!

As indicated by its title, the present section will describe the general meaning (*spyi don*) of the teachings contained in the root-text authored by Tapihritsa. The apparent redundancy of the original work is in fact a clear indication of the importance of the themes that are dealt with. As will be seen in the extensive commentary,<sup>54</sup> the way the teachings are disclosed is very direct and obviously needs detailed explanations. For this reason, I will here address the meaning of each precept from both a general (abridged) perspective and a contextual (detailed) explanation covering the elements gradually discussed by Tapihritsa. The present commentary has two parts: the meaning of the introduction, and the main body of the text.

### I. The meaning of the introduction

The elements of the introduction (*gleng gzhi*) are those pertaining to the meaning of the title, its homage and structure, as well as its historical preface. These will be discussed in detail in the extensive commentary. Here, the meaning of the introduction is concerned with the summary of the teachings and the themes forming the internal structure of the text.

<sup>54</sup> Forthcoming under the title *The Secret Vision of Awareness in its Nakedness*, Naldjor Institute.

### 1. The summary of the teachings

The teachings that are explained by Tapihritsa in the *Precepts in Eight Chapters* contain eight main themes which aim at introducing his disciple Nangzher Lōpo to the nature of his mind, to the existence of the Buddha within his body, to the main principles of the Path of Dzogchen, and to the way one reaches Buddhahood, according to one's capacities. Throughout these precepts and oral instructions, Tapihritsa explains that Buddhahood abides within ourselves, in the center of the heart. The natural radiance of this state manifests in a fivefold mode whose glow arises in a channel of light (*'od rtsa*) connecting the heart to the eyes. The visions that one thus contemplates are the glow of Awareness (*rig pa'i gdangs*) that one sees through the eyes. However, these are not objects of the sense consciousnesses but are rather "seen" in the state of Awareness, through the Water Lamp (*chu'i sgron ma*), namely the upper extremity of the light channel opening within the pupils.

### 2. The internal structure of the text

In the first chapter, Tapihritsa describes the Base (*gzhi*) of the natural state and all related representations, such as the natural state's abiding mode as Bodies (*sku*), Wisdoms (*ye shes*) and lights (*'od*). In the second chapter, he is concerned with the description of the way Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas*) concretely abides within ourselves, again in the mode of Bodies, Wisdoms, etc. In the third chapter, he describes how the Absolute Body (*bon sku*) abides within us, and also explains the nature of the two Form Bodies (*gzugs sku gnyis*). In the fourth chapter, he explains the characteristics (*mtshan nyid*) of the Absolute Body and their natural manifestations. In the fifth chapter, he gives an extensive explanation of the visions of Thōgel by describing the various pure realms (*zhing khams*) which form the visionary display of our own Awareness. Then, in chapter six, he teaches the View (*lta ba*) of the natural state, before moving on, in chapter seven, to the description of what Non-meditation (*sgom med*) precisely means in the context of Dzogchen teachings. Then in the final eighth chapter, he reveals the way in which Buddhahood is reached according to the three kinds of practitioners.



## II. The main body of the text

The main body of the root-text is divided into the eight successive chapters which make up the original work. Each of these chapters is presented according to the same scheme : an abridged summary giving the essentialized form of the teachings, and a detailed explanation concerned with the various themes that are covered by these teachings. The actual subdivisions of the original text, including homages, original allegorical precepts, etc., are dealt with in the extensive commentary.

### 1. The Precept on the Abiding Base

#### a. The abridged explanation

According to the teachings revealed by Tapihritsa in this chapter, the Base (*gzhi*) of our natural state abides in the center of our heart in an unceasing mode that nothing can obstruct in any way whatsoever.<sup>55</sup> This state is here designated as the Transparent Wisdom (*ye shes zang thal*), namely the spontaneous, primordial knowledge with which the empty, primordial state of our mind is naturally endowed.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> This Base is not an entity existing by itself or separated from us. It is actually the abiding mode (*gnas lugs*) of the nature of our mind. Thus, whenever one reads here about Essence, Nature, and Compassion, or about Bodies, Wisdoms, etc., all these representations are modalities of our natural state, not separate entities. Moreover, the Base is not a cosmic-like Base to which all our minds would be connected, as some people think. Each of us has his/her own Base. These Bases have the same "qualities" of emptiness (*stong*), clarity (*gsal*) and undifferentiation (*dbyer med*) but are different from one another, in the same way all bamboos are empty inside but are nevertheless distinct from one another. Another image which is used to illustrate this state is that of a fire which burns and always burns, whereas all fires are not the same. The idea of a cosmic-like consciousness to which one would be connected is a hinduistic representation which must be discarded as a wrong view by both Bönpo and Buddhist practitioners.

<sup>56</sup> It is transparent (*zang thal*) because nothing can obscure it in any way whatsoever and because it is naturally limpid and clear. It has three characteristics: it is unceasing, naturally luminous, and cannot be grasped discursively. Moreover, it is defined as a Wisdom (*ye shes*) because it is through such a wisdom mode that the natural state knows itself as it is. Such a Wisdom is beyond the reach of the ordinary mind and sensory consciousnesses. It is the discerning Awareness (*rig pa*) through which one experiences the true abiding mode of one's mind.

*b. The detailed explanation**b-1. The abiding mode of Reality*

In the center of the heart is the Cornelian Brown Tent (*mchong gur smug po*), the sanctuary in which the Self-Arisen Wisdom (*rang byung ye shes*) — another name for the knowledge of the natural state — abides in the mode of fivefold lights. This sanctuary is connected to the eyes by a channel known as the Crystal Tube (*shel sbug can*). The upper extremity of this channel divides into two branches opening into the pupils of the eyes. This opening in the pupils is called the Water Lamp (*chu'i sgron ma*), i.e., the arising door through which the visions of the fivefold lights of the natural state spontaneously arise. These visions form what is defined as the glow of Awareness (*rig pa'i gdangs*). When one uses the special key points of Thögel, then this glow appears in various colors, forms, Thigles, Bodies, and Wisdoms.

Furthermore, our body and aspects of the “spiritual” environment with which it is directly connected are to be envisioned as a kind of sacred landscape in which abide eleven main domains (*yuḷ*) hosting specific representations or modalities of our primordial state. Thus :

1. the upper part of the body is the domain in which resides the Absolute Body (*bon sku*);
2. the five Wisdoms (*ye shes lnga*) of the natural state abide in the two eyes, in the form of fivefold colors;
3. the head is the domain in which resides the Perfection Body (*rdzogs sku*);
4. the spinal cord is the domain of the Emanation Body (*sprul sku*), which also pervades the whole body;
5. Space is the domain of Self-Awareness (*rang rig*), i.e., the Space in which Awareness radiates in its natural, visionary mode;
6. the sky is the domain in which the four Lamps (*sgron ma bzhi*) manifest;
7. the mirror is the conventional object which illustrate the Essence of one's mind, within which arise the fivefold displays of our spontaneous Nature;
8. lights are the way in which Awareness appears in the

- twofold mode of an inner, subtle clarity, and an outer, grosser clarity;
9. the fivefold clusters of Buddhas which appears in visions are the way the Absolute Body abides in its dynamic expression;
  10. the Vehicles (*theg pa*), in which the teachings are explained, are taught according to the three kinds of capacities displayed by yogis, namely superior, medium, and lower capacities; and
  11. the Space of Reality (*bon nyid kyi dbyings*) is the secret object of one's realization.

This being said, Tapihritsa adds three points that need to be clearly understood : i. manifestations (*snang ba*) pertain to the domain of phenomena; ii. the five lights represent the abiding mode of Buddhahood; and iii. our own Awareness is the primordial Wisdom of this state of Buddhahood. The empty aspect of our Awareness is the Absolute Body, or in other words, the Single Sphere (*thig le nyag gcig*).<sup>57</sup> It is like the empty and limitless sky, which is never affected by the clouds, etc., arising within it. It is Reality itself (*bon nyid*) manifesting as the Clear-Light of one's mind.

This Reality abides in the mode of five Bodies which can be listed as follows :

- the Absolute Body (*bon sku*) located in the center of the heart;
- the Body of Transparent Wisdom (*ye shes zang thal gyi sku*) within the eyes;
- the Perfection Body (*rdzogs sku*) in the brain;
- the Emanation Body (*sprul sku*) in the spinal cord; and
- the Body of self-arisen Thigles (*thig le rang byung gi sku*) in the channels of the body.

<sup>57</sup> This Single Sphere is described below in Chapter IV as the abiding mode of the Absolute Body. It is also described in the last part of Chapter III.

Awareness is the spontaneous Wisdom of the Absolute Body, which manifests as what Tapihritsa defines as a body of light (*'od kyi lus*), referring to the various luminous visions that arise during the practice of Thögel. These visions or objects (*yu*) of our contemplation are seen, not through the physical eyes, but through the Water Lamp, as one abides directly in the natural state of Awareness itself. These visions are the spontaneous display of Awareness shining in an unceasing mode as the real expression of Buddhahood.<sup>58</sup> The Wisdom of this Buddhahood, technically rendered as the "Transparent Wisdom" (*ye shes zang tha*), radiates in the sanctuary of the eyes, in ever-increasing visionary marvels.

### *b-2. Essence, Nature, and Compassion*

As can be seen from Tapihritsa's teachings, the heart (*tsitta*) is a key sanctuary of the visionary anatomy of our body. It is of course not the fleshy heart *per se* but rather a hollow within it, and in which abides the Absolute Body free from characteristics and limitations. The Essence of this Body is that of an immutable Wisdom which nevertheless manifests in a fivefold mode expressing its spontaneous Nature and from which proceed five lights. Despite manifesting in this way, the Essence of this state remains entirely changeless. It is furthermore endowed with a Compassion which embraces all beings without any partialities.

This immutable Essence of the natural state arises in a luminous mode which corresponds to what is designated as the Clear-Light of Awareness (*rig pa'i 'od gsal*). Tapihritsa defines this mode as our Nature manifesting without bias or falling into partialities, which means that it does not fall into limitations such as eternalism or nihilism. It abides as it is, without fluctuations, while nevertheless arising as lights, Thigles, etc.

<sup>58</sup> They form what is designated below in § b-3 as the "Body of the Enlightened One" (*sangs rgyas kyi sku*).

The third mode of Awareness, that of Compassion, embraces all beings without any form of partiality.<sup>59</sup>

The spontaneously arisen lights forming the display of our own Essence emerge as Pure Visions since they express the enlightened modality of the natural state. Otherwise, for ordinary beings, they simply appear as impure visions, because of their karmic limitations.

At this point of the text, Tapihritsa adds an interesting statement : the visions of Wisdom appear simply as objects which Wisdom, as the subject, contemplates. In fact, Wisdom is contemplating its own display and there is no duality involved in this process. If visions seem to appear as objects, they are actually the dynamic expression of Wisdom itself which is thus directly “seen” as it is, without any obstruction. When this is realized, there is actually no Path to traverse anymore and the Fruit of Buddhahood does not appear as a distant result. It is seen directly as it is, in its bare nakedness. For this reason, conceptions regarding the length of the Path have no justification here. Thus, when one abides on the first stage of the Path (that of Intense Joy), one does not project any grasping toward the visions of Wisdom and one simply remains without fluctuation in the state of Awareness, naturally and effortlessly absorbed in the spontaneous visions of one’s own Nature.

<sup>59</sup> This is precisely why Compassion (*thugs rje*) must retain an ethical connotation in the translation and why it is not simply a resonance or some kind of energy, as can be seen in various translated works. The ethical aspect of *thugs rje* is crucial in Dzogchen thought, precisely because our Awareness is already naturally endowed with an altruistic mode through which it spontaneously strives for the benefit of all beings. Were it not so, such a mode would have to be added to it. The result would be that the state experienced would not be perfect (*rdzogs*) because it would be incomplete. I am convinced that translators who have by-passed this ethical connotation of Compassion have missed an important point and are unaware of the dramatic doctrinal consequences of their lexical choices. On the necessity of keeping this ethical notion in the semantic field of Compassion, see Achard, “Le mode d’émergence du réel”, pp. 69, 71, 76, 79.

*b-3. Bodies and lights*

As we have seen above, each of the Bodies described by Tapihritsa in this first chapter is envisioned as being located in a specific part of the body and as having a specific mode of manifestation.

The Body of the Enlightened One (*sangs rgyas kyi sku*) manifests in unceasing visionary displays, arising when one's mind remains perfectly stable in the natural state without elaborations, totally free of conceptual proliferations. In other words, the visions of Awareness manifest spontaneously during Thögel practice when one abides in a totally stable way in the state of Trekchö. This is the reason that both practices are combined together in this text and precisely taught in such a way.

The explanation for this visionary arising is based on the fact that the Absolute Body (*bon sku*) abides in the center of our heart : its Essence is the empty aspect (*stong cha*) of the natural state, while its Nature abides as its clarity aspect (*gsal cha*), arising in multicolored lights and rays whose diversity is equaled only by its luminous intensity. Since the beginning, this Body is totally immutable and manifests its own dynamism in the form of the fivefold clusters of the Buddhas of the Five Clans (*rigs lnga'i sangs rgyas*). Its support rests on the upper part of the body, and more precisely in the center of the heart. Its dynamism manifests as unceasing Bodies and Wisdoms, whose clarity is contemplated in the visions of the natural state appearing in the sky.

The Body of the Transparent Wisdom (*ye shes zang thal gyi sku*) is the Buddha's Wisdom abiding within the eyeballs. Its precise sanctuary is the center of the pupils, corresponding to the upper extremity of the Crystal Tube channel. It is through this double extremity — known as the Water Lamp (*chu'i sgron*) — that one contemplates the unceasing visions of the natural state in their fivefold manifestations.

The Body of Perfect Rapture (*long spyod rdzogs pa'i sku*) is located in the head. Its precise sanctuary is the Conch Mansion (*dung khang*) in which it naturally displays a crystal-like, transparent Clarity. Its luminosity is described as totally limpid in the sense that it is as clear as reflections appearing in the center of a mirror. It actually arises as the bodies of the Wrathful Deities (*khro bo'i sku*) dancing in the center of the Conch Mansion.

These deities manifest a spontaneous Compassion toward all sentient beings, and they themselves appear as small as mustard seeds. Despite their size, they are actually seen in such a perfect way that one can clearly distinguish their shining eyes, proportional to the size of their body. Their dance in the Conch Mansion fills this sanctuary with an infinite display of rainbow-like lights.

The Emanation Body (*sprul pa'i sku*) is said to encompass one's own body (*lus*) because we are indeed nirmanakāya emanations. More precisely, its sanctuary within us is the spinal cord, in the upper part of the body.<sup>60</sup> When one trains in the practice of Thögel (when the "door of the magical mirror opens"), then the various visions that are contemplated are actually Emanation Bodies manifesting in myriads. These visionary Bodies appears in infinite numbers, in very subtle and luminous manifestations which fill the space before one. Their splendid attire and inherent beauty manifest in the midst of luminous rays, lights, etc.

The Body of self-arisen Luminous Spheres (*thig le rang 'byung gi sku*) abides on the form aggregates constituting our physical body. Its sanctuaries are all the channels throughout the body. Its actual source is in the secret door (*gsang sgo*), in the lower wheel at the base of the spine. This Body arises when one enters physical union with a partner and engages in the related yogic techniques. At that time, the Clarity of the *thigles* will entirely embrace the three doors of the individual.

The five lights, which form the spontaneous dynamism of our own Clarity, are envisioned as pure realms (*zhing khams*) displayed within our own Awareness. These lights do not exist by themselves, but arise as our own dynamism in the form of pure Buddha realms that one actually contemplates "through the eyes",<sup>61</sup> in the state of Awareness.

<sup>60</sup> This is what is referred to in the original text as "the center of the chest".

<sup>61</sup> Again, here, this statement must not be taken literally since the visions are not seen by the eyes, but are seen through the Water Lamp in the condition of the natural state. These visions are not objects of the sense consciousnesses.

The various Bodies, Wisdoms and Lights which have been described here by Tapihritsa are nothing other than the dynamic manifestations of our own mind. They do not exist by themselves, and are actually defined as our own “natural manifestations” (*rang snang*).

## **2. The Existence of Buddhahood within Mind**

In this chapter, Tapihritsa discusses an important topic of Dzogchen teachings concerning the existence of the quintessence of Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas kyi snying po*) and the way it embraces our mind and body. Such a theme is central to the present “secret” (*gsang ba*) section of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü*, but it is also discussed quite extensively in the *Twenty-One Seals*.<sup>62</sup> The revelation made by Tapihritsa is described here according to an abridged and to a detailed explanation.

### *a. The abridged explanation*

Our Mind, in its unconditioned nature, resides in the heart, manifesting in the display of various kinds of qualities. These qualities can be subsumed to Bodies (*sku*) and Wisdoms (*ye shes*), which are the abiding mode of our own Awareness within the heart.

<sup>62</sup> See also the summary and the appendix in the present volume *in fine*, where the same themes are covered by Shardza Rinpoche (according to chapters from his *Treasury of Space and Awareness* and from the *Natural Arising of the Three Bodies*).



b. *The detailed explanation*

b-1. *The fivefold Qualities of Buddhahood*

The multifarious qualities which form the essence of our Buddhahood<sup>63</sup> are described according to a fivefold mode covering : 1. Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas*), 2. the Absolute Body (*bon sku*), 3. Awareness (*rig pa*), 4. the eyes (*mig*), and 5. the essence of Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas kyi ngo bo*) endowed with a Wisdom body (*ye shes kyi lus can*) manifesting as an unceasing clarity. In short, Tapihritsa explains that the Essence of our natural state (Buddhahood) is the Absolute Body (*bon sku*), empty and luminous. This Body is endowed with a knowledge which is Awareness. The visionary essence of this Awareness abides in the eyes which form its arising door (*'char sgo*). It is through this door that one contemplates the visionary splendors of one's own Buddhahood. This, as shown by several other sections of the root-text, is actually an abrupt summary of the principles of both Trekchö and Thögel practices explained together. It is also clear that the visionary nature of one's Awareness is a crucial representation in these teachings.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> In this chapter, Tapihritsa use the word Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas*) with the meaning of "natural state". Generally, Buddhahood in Tibetan is rendered by *sangs rgyas*. The first element of this binomial refers to the purification (*sangs*) of passions and to the intensification (*rgyas*) of Wisdoms. In other words, in Tibetan, Buddhahood has the meaning of an "intensified purification" which actually refers in this context to the Buddhahood of the Fruit (*'bras bu'i sangs rgyas*), not to either that of the Base (*gzhi'i sangs rgyas*) in which the purification and intensification are simply potential, or that of the Path (*lam gyi sangs rgyas*) in which both aspects are still in a process to be perfected.

<sup>64</sup> This visionary aspect is sometimes considered to be one particular element of the Precept Series (*Man ngag sde*), whereas similar representations (although maybe not as detailed and as explicit) do exist in the Mind Series (*Sems sde*), and in particular in the *Gabpa* (*Gab pa*) and in the bönpo *Cuckoo of Awareness* (*Rig pa'i khu byug*). The famed allegory of the bird with a long beak in the latter work has become an incontrovertible reference for the exposition of the forty-two key points of Thögel practice. On this subject, see Lopön Tenzin Namdak, *Heart Drops of Dharmakaya*, pp. 84 *et seq.*

*b-2. The Essence of Awareness*

What actually characterizes the essence of Awareness is Clarity (*gsal ba*), to the extent that both have become *de facto* synonyms. The nature of this Clarity is to manifest in an unceasing mode of visions which are perceived through the Water Lamp. This overall visionary process is nothing other than Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas*) which, as we have just seen, is used by Tapihritsa with the meaning of “the natural state” (*gnas lugs*). The Awareness of this state is equivalent to the Absolute Body (*bon sku*) but is also endowed with the two Form Bodies (*gzugs sku gnyis*). The first one, the Perfection Body refers to a pure, Sublime Knowledge (*shes rab*) which, as is shown in the practice of Thögel, is equivalent to Awareness itself. How is it so ? Simply because Awareness abides as the knowledge of the natural state itself. It is through this knowledge that one realizes how the natural state “knows itself by itself”, to quote a favorite *leitmotiv* of Yongdzin Rinpoche. This unceasing act of knowledge does not depend on the mind or mental consciousness but only on Awareness itself. However, Tapihritsa adds here another aspect to this sapiential modality of Awareness : a visionary one, according to which the true manifestation of this knowledge arises as Buddha Bodies endowed with “a face, eyes and ears”. This is not a theoretical representation at all, but rather a direct experience which arises in the course of advanced visions of Thögel.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> The visions of Buddhas appearing in the practice of Thögel shows that their manifestations within Thigles or as fivefold clusters (*tshom bu lnga idan*) clearly depict them as endowed with characteristics such as a face, arms, etc., but also colors, emblems, etc. Contrary to what one may think, these are not cultural projections or representations but archetypal ones which tend to be clearer if one has familiarized oneself with their depiction in former practices. Since it is precisely according to such a mode that the visions of the natural state arise — no matter one’s culture and country —, assertions according to which these Bodies are seen only by those who have received the corresponding initiation are entirely false and in contradiction, not only with all the descriptions of these visions in canonical texts, but also to personal direct experience (in dark retreats in general, and during the advanced stage of the Third Vision in particular). On this Third Vision, see Lopön Tenzin Namdak, *op. cit.*, 101-103.

The same applies to the visions of the Emanation Body (*sprul sku*) which are easily contemplated as fivefold lights when one indulges in the practice of Thögel for a sufficient duration.<sup>66</sup> Everything that is contemplated at that time forms the marvels (*cho 'phrul*) of Awareness. This means that all these visions are simply the expression of the dynamism of our Awareness which one sees in the state of Awareness, as if these were reflections on a mirror. The notion of Compassion is often associated in Dzogchen text with this representation of the Emanation Body<sup>67</sup> and in this case Compassion actually refers to the undifferentiation of Emptiness and Clarity, Emptiness pointing to the state in which one remains while contemplating the visions, and Clarity referring to the arising of the visions themselves.

### *b-3. The Transparency of the natural state*

The actual cause of these visionary manifestations is the natural state or Buddhahood which manifests within our body in a particular way : its luminous transparency (*zang thal*) embraces our channels, objects, eyes, Awareness and consciousnesses in such a way that everything actually “occurs” within this state. It is precisely this condition of fundamental transparency which allows for the arising of the visions of the natural state. In this respect, obscurations produced by the physical aggregates

<sup>66</sup> A few minutes or hours of training in applying the key points of Thögel are not sufficient. A preliminary retreat of nine days is required before starting such a practice, and a minimum of three months should be allowed for going beyond the stage of seeing a few Thigles and a few colors. In general, in the *Chaktri (Phyag khrid)*, the practice-manual of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü*, a minimum of a year is required for a “correct” Thögel retreat. I have sometimes heard Westerners talk about Thögel in daily-life but this is a totally fruitless approach which is not based on a clear understanding of the principles of this practice. Others claiming to contemplate myriads of Yidams every morning are just deluded individuals who do not suspect the depth of these teachings and the difficulty it implies to reach such a visionary stage. As Yongdzin Rinpoche says “it is very difficult and it takes a lot of time to arrive at the Third Vision” (Paris, 1999), this Third Vision being the stage where the whole mandala of the natural state is seen in its utter perfection.

<sup>67</sup> Just like Essence is associated with the Absolute Body and Nature with the Perfection Body.

made of flesh and blood cannot cover it in any way. This state of transparency is endowed with Awareness and constitutes Buddhahood manifesting within our body.

This idea of transparency is synonymous with its being unceasing and unblock. Both aspects of luminosity and absence of interruption are fundamental in understanding this particular representation. It is in fact not just another conception to add to the already vast Dzogchen lexicon : it is an actually very precise description of the spontaneous and unceasing clarity of the natural state, while at the same time illustrating the nature of its Awareness. Nothing can block it, not even by throwing the body into an iron prison. This point is important because it implies that if Awareness abides naturally within the body, the former is not overshadowed or limited by the latter.

When listing “objects” (*yuḷ*) above, as embraced by the transparency of the natural state, Tapihritsa was actually not directly referring to sense objects. Rather, he was pointing to the general support (*rten*) of the Absolute Body which rests in the upper part of the body. Its genuine sanctuary is the heart, the Brown Cornelian Tent. The Clarity of this Absolute Body is Awareness itself, and the way in which Awareness manifests is by shining in the sky, in the total transparency of the eyes. As we have seen, this is an explanation that aims at guiding the adept in his understanding of the process of the visionary arising of Awareness.<sup>68</sup> Visions do not appear *in* the sky, but rather *on* it. The sky is to be simply envisioned as the mirror in which the glow of Awareness arising within the Crystal Tube channel can be concretely (*mngon sum du*) contemplated. To be very precise, it is thus “seen” through the eyes, but not by the eyes. It is seen by the Water Lamp, in the state of Awareness. And what is seen is actually the progressively intensified glow of Awareness.

<sup>68</sup> These visions occur on four occasions : 1. during their primordial manifestations at the time of the epiphany of the Base (*gzhi snang*); 2. during special conditions such as direct introductions (*ngo sprod*); 3. during the practice of Thögel; and 4. during the Bardo of Clear-Light. See Achard, *The Four Lamps, passim*.

#### b-4. The visionary Nature of Awareness

In this fourth section, Tapihritsa summarizes again the whole process of the Path of Dzogchen, starting with the direct introduction (*ngo sprod*) leading to Thögel contemplation, before moving on to what happens at the end of the Path, when the body and the mind disconnect from one another. Thus, the real abiding mode of the natural state is that of our essential Awareness which discerns itself as it is, namely as the spontaneous and pure Knowledge of the primordial state. In other words, these representations directly point at the nature of the mind, not at an entity or a state of Buddhahood that would exist outside of this nature. This precisely means that “looking for the Buddha” is nothing other than the discovery of one’s authentic essence abiding as the undifferentiation of Emptiness and Clarity. This is what Tapihritsa defines as the Reality (*bon nyid*) remaining both clear and unceasing. Several methods of direct introductions (*ngo sprod*) are discussed in the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* corpus of teachings and some of these are described in the *Six Essential Points (gNad drug)*.<sup>69</sup>

After one has received these introductions, one should train in becoming gradually familiar with the natural state during specific retreats. Once stabilization is reached, one should resume the practice by applying the key points of Thögel meditation, and through these key points, one will progressively become familiar with the visionary nature of Awareness.<sup>70</sup> Such a familiarization constitutes the discovery of Buddhahood within oneself.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Forthcoming from the Naldjor Institute. Learning about the principles of the Base, the Path and the Fruit is also of crucial importance here, in order to understand the teachings correctly. On these three principles, see Achard, *The Three Precepts, passim*.

<sup>70</sup> On the details of this practice according to the present cycle of teachings, see Lopön Tenzin Namdak, *The Main Dzogchen Practices*, and *id.*, *The Meditation on Clear-Light*, both edited by Gerd Manusch for the Naldjor Institute. These two volumes contain the core oral instructions for the practice of Thögel, as they are handed over to retreatants.

<sup>71</sup> This is not full Buddhahood yet, but rather the Buddhahood of the Path (*lam gyi sangs rgyas*) which still needs to be brought to its ultimate aspect: that of the Buddhahood of the Fruit (*'bras bu'i sangs rgyas*).

Then, at the time of death, advanced yogis will be directly and effortlessly confronted with the spontaneous arising of the visions of their natural state manifesting as incredible, luminous displays.<sup>72</sup> Their consciousness will not be forced by karma to suffer another rebirth, but rather, their Awareness will shine through the eyes and be transferred through them. At that time, all visions will be recognized as the natural display of Awareness itself, namely of the Absolute Body (*bon sku*). In the typical lexicon used in Dzogchen and Bardo teachings, this constitutes the direct encounter with the Mother (*ma*), or Reality (*bon nyid*), the son (*bu*) being Awareness (*rig pa*). At that time, it is important to recognize that these multicolored visions Bodies, Wisdoms and Lights actually form the natural luminosity (*rang gsal*) of our own Awareness and if this recognition happens, then one will simply merge in a total non-dual way with their manifestation. This is the final stage of Buddhahood.<sup>73</sup>

#### *b-5. The Essence of Buddhahood*

In the last section of this chapter, Taphritsa insists quite strongly on the visionary nature of Awareness as constituting the real expression of what Buddhahood is. There is thus not only a sapiential aspect to it, but also a visionary one which appears to be clearly central to the understanding of Buddhahood itself. Does that mean that if this visionary aspect is lacking, Buddhahood is incomplete? From a Dzogchen perspective, the answer is definitely a straight “yes” because the real experience of this Buddhahood cannot be separated from its clarity aspect (*gsal cha*) and this clarity aspect is, as we have seen, entirely synonymous with Awareness (*rig pa*). In Dzogchen texts, the genuine, authentic experience of the latter comes with the contemplation of the Body of Awareness (*rig pa'i sku*) which groups together all

<sup>72</sup> This generally not the case for ordinary beings whose consciousness comes to, after death, only during the karmic Bardo of becoming (*srid pa'i bar do*). It is generally stated that the Bardo of the Clear-Light of Reality can only be contemplated by the yogis having at least reached the middle of the Second Vision of Thögel.

<sup>73</sup> This is full Buddhahood, the Buddhahood of the Fruit.

the visions of Bodies, Wisdoms, Lights and Thigles that arise during Thögel practice. The whole Dzogchen cosmology is centered on these manifestations forming the epiphany of the Base (*gzhi snang*); the whole Path of Thögel is centered on them; and the core instructions associated with the Bardo of Clear-Light are entirely centered on them too. For this reason, both aspects of emptiness and clarity have to be present in the expression of Buddhahood, otherwise the state reached is incomplete.

### 3. The Essence of the Absolute Body abiding within us

The teachings given by Tapihritsa in this chapter are very similar in meaning to the previous ones. Basically, he reiterates the same description of the abiding mode of Awareness in the heart and its arising door in the eyes. This is one of the core representations of Dzogchen and the entire Path of Trekchö and Thögel can actually be explained with just these elements.

#### a. The abridged explanation

This time, our true, genuine abiding mode (*gnas lugs*) is defined as the pure Reality (*bon nyid*) of the natural state free from elaboration. This refers to its Essence, while its Nature is that of the Wisdom of Awareness (*rig pa'i ye shes*) shining unceasingly in the form of the Five Bodies and the Five Wisdoms.<sup>74</sup> Its glow or radiance arises in the two eyes through which one sees the Buddha, namely the visionary aspect of the natural state.

<sup>74</sup> In the *Instructions Similar to the Clothes on the Body* (*Lus kyi gos dang 'dra ba'i gdams pa*, pp. 92-93), the Wisdom of Awareness is described as a transparency (*zang thal*) which arises without partiality, as a state free from object and that one can contemplate in a state without grasping, by simply gazing in the sky. This is of course an oblique reference to the three skies practice (*nam mkha' sum phrug gi nyams len*) which is one essential aspect of Thögel itself.

*b. The detailed explanation**b-1. The Visions of the Three Bodies*

The precept described in the abridged explanation above actually concerns the identification of the Three Bodies (*sku gsum*) : the Absolute Body, the Perfection Body and the Emanation Body.<sup>75</sup> In the first method—that leading to the identification of the Body of the Buddha—,<sup>76</sup> Tapihritsa insists on the necessity of recognizing the clarity of the visions as forming the Transparent Wisdom which is nothing other than Buddhahood itself. He specifies that if one recognizes it as it is, then one will reach enlightenment without leaving remains behind. The state that is reached is known as the Authentically Perfect Buddhahood (*yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas*), which is precisely characterized by the particular absence of physical remains at the time of the ultimate nirvana.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> The third one is not discussed by Tapihritsa in this chapter.

<sup>76</sup> By “Body of the Buddha” (*sangs rgyas kyi sku*), one must understand, as pointed out by Yongdzin Rinpoche, that this refers to the natural state abiding as the three Bodies.

<sup>77</sup> There are two ways of manifesting Buddhahood: 1. that of a Perfectly Manifest Buddha (*mngon par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas*), and 2. that of a Authentically Perfect Buddha (*yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas*). Of course, and as can be deduced from their name, both states refer to perfect (*rdzogs pa*) Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas*). They however differ from one another in a number of “details” such as the way they are realized (*rtogs lugs*) or the way those who have obtained such a state reach liberation (*grol lugs*). According to the mode of liberation, a Perfectly Manifest Buddha is characterized by the material remains that are left after his *parinirvana*, such as statues in the ashes, letters, etc., but also sounds, lights, and atmospheric manifestations affecting the surrounding environment, etc. An Authentically Perfect Buddha is characterized by an absence of physical remains (*phung po lhag med*), which means that all the materiality of the body is dissolved at the time of the *parinirvana*. This state is further characterized according to the four ways of dying (*'chi lugs bzhü*), which are on the one hand 1. dying like someone dissolving in the sky (*nam mkha'i 'chi lugs*), and 2. dying like a *däkini*



In order to reach such a level of realization, one needs to train in the practice of Thögel. By training in this yoga, one will contemplate the five Buddhas — Kūnnang Khyabpa, Selwa Rangjung, Gelha Garchuk Jedrak Ngömé, and Gawa Döndrup — appearing in luminous Thigles and accompanied by their entourage of emanations.<sup>78</sup>

Kūnnang Khyabpa has one face, two hands, and is of white complexion, like a crystal. In his right hand, he holds a wheel of light, and a lasso in the left one. He wears a tiara made of five kinds of jewels and his Body is dressed with a white robe. His consort is the Goddess of the sky, of white complexion too.

Selwa Rangjung has one face, two hands and is of yellow complexion, like gold. In his right hand, he holds a golden *chakshing*<sup>79</sup>, and a golden wheel in the left one. He wears a tiara of five kinds of jewels and his Body is dressed with a robe blazing like gold. His consort is the Goddess of the earth, of yellow complexion.

(which includes the way of dying of those who have taken a miraculous birth), both ways being characteristic of the practice of Trekchö; and, on the other hand, 3. dying like a mass of fire (*me dpung gi 'chi lugs*) and 4. dying like a Knowledge Holder (*rig 'dzin gyi 'chi lugs*) which both characterize the result of the practice of Thögel. Actually, the third aspect (mass of fire) means that, when Awareness eventually resorbs into Space at the time of death, the body simply vanishes in orbs of lights. As to the fourth aspect, it is similar to the preceding one but is characterized by numerous atmospheric events, sounds, etc. In all four cases, the three doors of the individual resorb into his inner Space (*nang dbyings*), which is his ultimate stage of extinction (*zad sa*) and at that time, the materiality of his body simply dissolves by itself, either by disappearing or by resorbing into lights. On this subject, see Shardza Rinpoche's *Treasury of Space and Awareness*, volume II, p. 376 *et seq.* On the nature of the Rainbow Body which characterizes the fruit or sign of having reached the ultimate stage of Thögel practice, see Achard, "Le Corps d'Arc-en-ciel (*'ja' lus*) de Shardza Rinpoche", *Revue d'Études Tibétaines*, no. 15, pp. 503-532.

<sup>78</sup> The following descriptions are intentionally repetitive in style, in order to ease memorization.

<sup>79</sup> The Bönpo equivalent to the *vajra*.

Gelha Garchuk has one face, two hands and is of green complexion, like a turquoise. In his right hand, he holds a turquoise *chakshing*, and a turquoise wheel in the left. He wears a tiara of five kinds of jewels and his Body is dressed with a robe blazing like a turquoise. His consort is the Goddess of the air, of green complexion.

Jedrak Ngōmé has one face, two hands and is of red complexion, like a fire. In his right hand, he holds a copper *chakshing*, and a corral wheel in the left. He wears a tiara of five kinds of jewels and his Body is dressed with a red robe. His consort is the Goddess of the fire, of red complexion.

Gawa Dōndrup has one face, two hands and is of blue complexion, like the sky. In his right hand, he holds an iron *chakshing*, and a blue wheel in the left. He wears a tiara of five kinds of jewels and his Body is dressed with a blue robe. His consort is the Goddess of the water, of blue complexion.

Their arising as visionary marvels of Awareness is very subtle, but they are clear enough so that one can definitely discern their eyes without problem and recognize their various emblems, etc.<sup>80</sup> Their incomparable displays and their spontaneous clarity are such that they cannot be grasped by the mind.<sup>81</sup> They arise simply in the true, direct experience of the natural state when one trains in the practice of Thögel.

At present, these Bodies are located within the center of our heart and are described as having the size of mustard seeds.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup> In other words, some visions may vary in size but they are nevertheless extremely precise. The uncertainty that is sometimes said to characterize visions is something that is actually applied to early stages of the visionary practice, even if the infinite variety of the visions which arise in, for instance, the Third Vision of Thögel, implies a certain degree of uncertainty, in particular in the identification of emblems or ornaments, which render the identification of deities somewhat indeterminate (*ma nges pa*). In general, as can be seen in Shardza Rinpoche's *Treasury of Space and Awareness* (vol. II, p. 321 *et seq.*), uncertainty characterizes the size and number of Thigles, (including their contents), etc.

<sup>81</sup> This also means that they are only seen in the state of Awareness (*rig pa*) itself, not in the state of the ordinary, conditioned mind or state of consciousness.

<sup>82</sup> As Yongdzin Rinpoche points out, this is just a metaphor, since these Bodies are not limited by characteristics such as size. Their comparison to mustard seeds is essentially a way to express their utterly subtle nature.

However, when one performs the practice of Thögel, especially when one reaches the Third Vision, the size of these Buddhas will be such that it will equal the Supreme Mountain itself. Their collective manifestations form the Body of Perfection (*rdzogs sku*).<sup>83</sup>

At the time of death, the same kind of visions will arise and these five Buddhas will manifest in innumerable fivefold clusters (*tshom bu lnga ldan*) during the manifestations of the Base (*gzhi snang*) in the course of the Bardo of the Clear-Light of Reality (*bon nyid 'od gsal gyi bar do*). This moment is crucial because it is actually the same as that of the Third Vision experienced during one's lifetime. The arising of these manifestations occurs when all deluded appearances have ceased, when Awareness is actually neither separated from nor newly united to these lights and Bodies.<sup>84</sup> At that time, Awareness comes forth from the eyes and is contemplated in its nakedness. "Nakedness" here does not mean that there is nothing : it means that it is seen as it is, in the infinite displays of its fivefold lights. When one contemplates one's Awareness in this way — properly experiencing the fact that *we* are precisely *that* which manifests in fivefold lights —, one reaches Buddhahood, merging with the lights and therefore obtaining the Perfection Body.<sup>85</sup>

At that point of the text, Tapihritsa goes back to the practice as it is performed, not during the Bardos, but during one's lifetime, and he actually discusses briefly both daytime and night-

<sup>83</sup> In the Bön lexicon, texts use Perfection Body (*rdzogs sku*), Body of Perfect Rapture (*longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku*), etc., indifferently to refer to the same Buddha Body. The Sanskrit equivalent is *sambhogakaya*.

<sup>84</sup> "Neither union or separation" (*'du bral med pa*) is a typically Dzogchen way to say it is undifferentiated, but there is actually more to it. It means that Awareness is not *at that stage* becoming united with these lights and Bodies (because they have always been the expression of its dynamism), nor is it *at that stage* separating from anything so that it would *now* appear as united with these.

<sup>85</sup> The ultimate sign (*rtags*) of this obtainment will manifest as the Rainbow Body (*'ja' lus*), at the end of the Path.

time practices. In fact, at the stage of Thögel practice that he is referring to, the visions of the Perfection Body are contemplated throughout day and night, to the extent that the visions of the day are also contemplated during the night, in a mode that is described as “the horizon of day and night” (*nyin mtshan 'khor yug*), i.e., the continuous contemplation of the visions of the natural state, throughout day and night.<sup>86</sup>

### *b-2. Further considerations on the visionary nature of Awareness*

As has already been stated by Tapihritsa several times, the Absolute Body resides within our own body. This means that it is not some distant conception or philosophical representation that would be distinct from us. On the contrary, it abides within the center of our heart and manifests itself in a Clarity mode which is seen through the Water Lamp. This abiding mode reveals Awareness as not being made or dependent on substance, matter, color, size, etc. It is Reality itself (*bon nyid*), inexpressible and manifesting as empty and luminous. Because of its inherent emptiness, it does not fall into the extreme of eternalism or substantialism, and owing to its luminous nature, it does not regress into the limitations of nihilism or nothingness. Rather, its discerning (*rig*) essence is such that it is naturally endowed with a self-knowledge which is designated as Primordial Wisdom (*ye shes*) or Awareness (*rig pa*).<sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> In his *Treasury of Space and Awareness*, Shardza Rinpoche quotes (vol. II, p. 286) three verses attributed to Lopön Drenpa Namkha, saying: “When, owing to the samadhi of the sun, / Clarity is entirely perfected without distraction, / The Perfection Body arises in the horizon of day and night.” These lines sum up the principles of the Third Vision, during which all the qualities of the Perfection Body arise. These qualities are those of Awareness itself since the state of Awareness primordially abides as the primeval perfection of the three Bodies. During the Third Vision, these qualities reach their ultimate measure (*tshad*), their complete sublimation (*smin pa*) or perfection (*klong du gyur pa*).

<sup>87</sup> It is precisely in this sense that *rigpa* cannot be and will never be a *presence*. See *infra* note 92.

In fact, both aspects of Emptiness (*stong cha*) and Clarity (*gsal cha*) are like water and the fact of its being wet. They cannot be separated since what is empty in the natural state is at the same time endowed with clarity, and what is luminous is devoid of inherent existence and therefore empty. Emptiness and Clarity have no matter, color, etc., that would reduce them to a substance, nor any size, mark, etc., that would characterize them in a limited way. From the point of view of its being empty, this state is styled as “primordially pure” (*ka dag*) and as directly referring to the Essence of the Absolute Body (*bon sku*). From the point of view of its being luminous, it is designated as Awareness (*rig pa*) or as the “Contemplation of the Buddhas” (*sangs rgyas kyi dgongs pa*). As is demonstrated by direct experience of this state in the practice of Dzogchen, the nature of the Emptiness of the primordial state is particular: it is not a negation like that principally developed in the rhetoric of absence (*med pa*) specific to Madhyamaka thought. Rather, it is endowed with a Clarity (*gsal ba*) which directly corresponds to Awareness (*rig pa*) itself and this is a particularly important point that distinguishes it from the approach of the Middle Path.<sup>88</sup> What is lacking in the latter is the visionary, liberating and direct experience of Awareness contemplated in its genuine, fivefold dynamism, in a mode that Tapihritsa defines as “Wisdom endowed with the quintessence of lights”. This quintessence of lights precisely refers to the visions of Awareness which are further defined as without limits and center. This means that, even though visions clearly appear as organized according to the four directions, they have “actual” visionary sizes, colors, forms, dimensions, etc., which cannot be reduced to limited characteristics and are in fact immeasurable. Their intensity is only equaled by their infinite diversity.

<sup>88</sup> The dualistic approach of the Madhyamaka and its rhetoric of absence have been discussed by Yongdzin Rinpoche in comparison with Dzogchen in numerous of his oral teachings. Some of his most interesting points can be read in Lopön Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, *Primordial Wisdom in the Continuity of the Mother*, ed. by Gerd Manusch (forthcoming from the Naldjor Institute), *passim*.

*b-3. Visions, Kuntuzangpo and the Single Thigle*

In this section of the text, Tapihritsa discusses what he calls the threefold array or pile of Wisdom (*ye shes gsum rtsegs*). This is simply another way of describing the natural state itself, its clarity and the fact that it is naturally endowed with a spontaneous Knowledge of itself or Wisdom. Thus, in the center of the heart, in the Brown Cornelian Tent, our natural state abides as what Tapihritsa technically describes as the pure vision of Nature (*rang bzhin dag pa'i snang ba*). This “pure vision” directly points to the empty Essence of Awareness and thus to its primordial purity.<sup>89</sup>

Then, the second modality of the threefold array mentioned above is that of the “pure natural radiance of Reality” (*bon nyid dag pa'i rang gdangs*). This radiance is the Clarity aspect (*gsal cha*) of the natural state, its luminous nature which is not diffracted into variegated colors. Tapihritsa defines it as Awareness (*rig pa*) not yet appearing in its visionary mode but rather remaining empty and luminous.

The third modality is that of “the pure natural radiance of Wisdom” (*ye shes dag pa'i rang gdangs*) or “the luminous and pure radiance of Wisdom” (*ye shes dag pa'i 'od gdangs*). This is a stage of the natural luminosity of the primordial state which manifests in fivefold lights. These lights form the visions of Awareness itself (*rig pa nyid kyi snang ba*). These three modalities are furthermore designated as the “three pure realms of the Buddha” (*sangs rgyas kyi zhing khams gsum*) abiding in the center of the heart.

In relation to these pure realms of Wisdom, Tapihritsa then describes the three forms of the primordial Buddha Kuntuzangpo :  
 1. Kuntuzangpo being our natural Awareness in the center of the heart;  
 2. Kuntuzangpo symbolizing the Absolute Body; and  
 3. Kuntuzangpo being the Essence of one's Awareness. The first aspect refers to our Awareness or Wisdom blazing with an *ab*

<sup>89</sup> In this context, Nature (*rang bzhin*) refers to the natural state itself, not to the triad of Essence, Nature and Compassion. It is in this sense that, in his oral teachings, Yongdzin Rinpoche often refers to the natural state by simply using “Nature”. With a little bit of familiarization with the contexts in which this word is used, this does not create confusion.

*aeterno* present, intense clarity. The second aspect is used to symbolize or illustrate this state, using the image of a blue, naked Buddha. The third aspect slightly differs from the first in the sense that, if it indeed refers to the same Essence of Awareness, its description actually stresses the transcending nature of Awareness itself. Thus, Awareness transcends delusion, words, thoughts and any kind of reductionist description.

These three modalities make up the natural state of the individual defined as what is known in Dzogchen texts the Single Thigle (*thig le nyag gcig*). In other words, all the visionary manifestations that Tapihritsa has just described in the context of describing the arising mode of the natural state are free from conceptual grasping or dependence on the conceptual mind. They are not created by it nor are they objects of the conditioned mind. Rather, they appear as reflections on a mirror, self-emerging and self-originating. This Reality (*bon nyid*) symbolized by the state of Kuntuzangpo is Emptiness devoid of mental elaboration. It arises in the visionary form of Buddhas in union, symbolizing the natural, undifferentiated abiding mode of Clarity and Emptiness. When one focuses “the eyes on the Mirror of Existence”, i.e., when one practices Thögel, one can clearly see these visionary manifestations in the form that were just described. In other words, our empty and pure Awareness is known as Reality itself (*bon nyid*). If this state is indeed empty, it is not a condition of nothingness because its own Awareness spontaneously radiates without obstacle. This is what is designated as Primordial Wisdom (*ye shes*). These various aspects or characteristics (being empty, luminous, and discerning) make up what our natural state is, while the natural state’s own spontaneous dynamism can be contemplated in visions which are not different from the state itself. For this reason, the clarity and overall unique nature of the primordial state are technically defined as the Single Thigle (*thig le nyag gcig*) or as Transparent Reality (*bon nyid zang thal*).<sup>90</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Transparent Reality is the state of undifferentiation itself, naturally endowed with the spontaneous arising of primordial Wisdom. See Shardza Rinpoche’s *Treasury of Space and Awareness*, vol. II, pp. 149, 181.

#### 4. The characteristics of the Absolute Body

In this fourth chapter, Tāpīhritsa comes back to some of the key representations he just described in the three preceding chapters of the text. He now discusses the characteristics (*mtshan nyid*) of the Absolute Body. Actually, using the word “characteristics” in the context of the description of the Absolute Body may sound contradictory, whereas this word should be understood more as the specificities of the Absolute Body rather than referring to a set of necessarily reductive and reductionistic marks or particular elements aiming at defining a state which stands obviously beyond description.

##### a. *The abridged explanation*

The totally untainted Expanse of Reality (*bon nyid kyi dbyings*) is a pure realm beyond creation and destruction<sup>91</sup>. This state is endowed with an Essence (*ngo bo*) whose real expression is to know itself as it is, namely Awareness (*rig pa*)<sup>92</sup>. This discerning state of Awareness is pure, empty of characteristics and utterly

<sup>91</sup> In the *Commentary to the Twenty-One Seals* (*gZer bu nyer gcig gi 'grel pa*), Nangzher Lōpo defines this “pure realm” (*zhing khams*) as a state which is actually the all-embracing Universal Base (*kun gzhi*). In Dzogchen teachings, two generic names are given to this state: “Pure and Perfect Mind” (*byang chub kyi sems*) and “Space of Reality” (*bon nyid kyi dbyings*); see Nangzher Lōpo, *gZer 'grel*, p. 594. It is beyond creation and destruction because it is not produced from anything whatsoever, and therefore cannot be destroyed by anything (see *id.*, p. 627).

<sup>92</sup> In other words, it discerns (*rig*) itself as it is and also discerns (*rig*) itself from the ordinary functions of the discursive minds. This clearly demonstrates that *rig pa*—in this fundamental aspect of discerning its own reality and distinguishing it from consciousnesses and ordinary mind—is not a *presence* because the latter is simply a mental sensation and the bare opposite of *absence*. The direct, liberating and discerning experience of *rig pa* shows that it stands beyond such a dualistic approach. The reason is even more evident in Thōgel practice and in the totally evident relation between *rig pa* and the Lamp of Self-Arisen Sublime Knowledge (*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*). On this point, see Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, pp. 116-117.



uncreated<sup>93</sup>. The natural dynamism of this Awareness abides in various luminous modes which refer to the visionary displays that spontaneously arise in the natural state<sup>94</sup>.

*b. The detailed explanation*

The above description concerns the abiding mode of the Absolute Body (*bon sku'i gnas lugs*) as it is directly experienced by the practitioner<sup>95</sup>. This state cannot be reduced to characteristics, but in the way teachings are given here, it is described in particular ways according to the levels that are dealt with. For instance, the abiding mode of its Essence or empty aspect (*tong cha*) is not the same as that of its Nature or clarity aspect (*gsal cha*). Tapihritsa thus enumerates eight modalities which are listed as follows<sup>96</sup> : 1. the Essence of the Absolute Body, 2. its Nature, 3. its Pathway or the way through which it arises, 4. its abiding mode, 5. its definition as the Transparent Buddhahood, 6. the Wisdoms of the Absolute Body, 7. the Qualities of its Wisdoms, and 8. its fundamental non-duality.

<sup>93</sup> This state is of course beyond the ideas of purity and impurity, but from the point of view of the individual immersed in its discerning experience, *rig pa* is clearly "pure" from whatever conceptions may arise in the continuum. Its limpid clearness is the definition of its being empty of characteristics and its being fundamentally not produced by anything.

<sup>94</sup> As we have seen elsewhere, the spontaneous arising of these visionary displays occurs on four "occasions": 1. during the primordial arising of the manifestations of the Base (*gzhi snang*), just before one became deluded in the dualistic grasping of samsaric existence; 2. during special direct introduction (*ngo sprod*); 3. during the practice of Thögel; and 4. during the Bardo of the Clear-Light of Reality (*bon nyid 'od gsal gyi bar do*). See Achard, *The Four Lamps*, *passim*, for more details.

<sup>95</sup> This state is identical with that of Awareness (*rig pa*). In other words, whatever Tapihritsa describes as the Absolute Body (*bon sku*), actually refers to this primordially pure (*ka dag*) condition of the natural state, which is at the same time endowed with a totally pure knowledge which discerns (*rig*) itself as it is.

<sup>96</sup> A kind of summary or synthesis is given by Tapihritsa in between sections 3 and 4, but it has been summarized here under section 3.

*b-1. The Essence of the Absolute Body*

This Essence is that of the Single Sphere (*thig le nyag gcig*), the natural empty aspect (*stong cha*) of the natural state endowed with five characteristics. These five characteristics are the five lights (*'od lnga*) which spontaneously arise as the luminous Clarity aspect (*gsal cha*) of this state. For the individual, this means that the Single Sphere abides in the center of the heart, in the Brown Cornelian Tent. In its luminous mode, it is defined as a Body of Wisdom (*ye shes kyi sku*) which spontaneously manifests itself in a display of fivefold lights and domes of lights.<sup>97</sup>

*b-2. The Nature of the Absolute Body*

The way the Nature of the Absolute Body abides is that of the five Wisdoms (*ye shes lnga*) manifesting in specific directions and with a specific light.<sup>98</sup> The correspondences can be summarized in the following table :

Wisdom	Direction	Light
1. Mirror-Like	East	White
2. Equality	North	Green
3. Discriminating	Western	Red
4. Activities	South	Blue <sup>99</sup>
5. Emptiness	Center	Deep Blue

At that point of the text, Tapihrtsa synthesizes the specific representations he has just revealed to Nangzher Löpo, explaining that the Absolute Body abides in the center of the heart, manifesting as the five Wisdoms. These Wisdoms arise in the displays

<sup>97</sup> *'od kyi gur khang*. I translated *gur khang* as “dome” (instead of “tent”), since it is precisely in this way that these visions of lights appear in practice.

<sup>98</sup> Details are given in the commentary to chapter V below.

<sup>99</sup> This should actually be the yellow light, but I have kept the reading of the original text itself.

of the five lights which form the spontaneous dynamism of the natural state. He thus points to the fact that the representations he discusses are not outer or self-existing entities that would be the object of the analysis of the ordinary mind. Rather, he points to the fact that these are the real abiding mode of the ultimate nature of our own Mind (*sems nyid*). Thus, his description, which may seem to exclusively deal with theoretical representations, actually uncovers the genuine abiding mode of the Single Sphere (*thig le nyag gcig*), the true expression of our natural state.

### *b-3. The Pathway of the natural state*

According to the specific anatomical representations of Dzogchen, a silk-like channel known as the White Silk Thread (*dkar 'jam snal ma*) connects the heart to the eyes.<sup>100</sup> Inside the skull, this single channel divides into two branches which open within the pupils of the eyes.<sup>101</sup> Inside the channel, there is no blood or lymph, nor karmic winds. The natural glow of Awareness (*rig pa'i rang gdangs*), elevated by the wind of Wisdom, spontaneously enters this channel, and rises up to the arising doors of visions (*snang ba'i 'char sgo*) which are the pupils of the eyes. The visions forming the natural glow of Awareness are thus "seen", not by the fleshly eye, but by the eye of Awareness, in the state of Awareness. They are simply the manifestations of the dynamism of Awareness itself.

### *b-4. The abiding mode of the Absolute Body*

The Absolute Body abides thus in an empty and luminous mode within the center of one's heart. As seen above, its empty aspect is a space-like immensity free from characteristics, within which

<sup>100</sup> This channel is one of the four (or sometimes five) channels of light (*'od rtsa*) described in Dzogchen texts. See for instance, Lopön Tenzin Namdak, *Heart Drops of Dharmakaya*, pp. 90-91; Achard, "The Light Channels and the Visionary Anatomy of Dzogchen", *Dzogchen Electronic Notes*, no. 1, 2001, *passim*.

<sup>101</sup> This opening in the upper extremity of the light channel is the Water Lamp (*chu'i sgron*).

the clarity aspect arises in a natural and fivefold way. This fivefold manifestation precisely appears as the display of the five Bodies (*sku lnga*) and the five Wisdoms (*ye shes lnga*). The five Bodies are : Kūnnang Khyabpa, Selwa Rangjung, Ghelha Garchuk, Jedrak Ngōme and Gawa Dōndrup. The five Wisdoms are : the Wisdom of Emptiness, the Wisdom Mirror-Like Wisdom, the Wisdom of Equality, the Discriminating Wisdom and the All-accomplishing Wisdom.<sup>102</sup>

The visions of these Bodies and Wisdoms appear in the Space (*dbyings*) of the natural state, as if they were outer objects. In fact, they just reflect themselves on the mirror of the sky and are the actual, visionary dynamism of Awareness itself. For this reason, they cannot really appear as outer objects.

#### *b-5. The Nature of the Transparent Buddhahood*

The visions that arise during the practice are totally “embraced by the natural state”. This means that they occur within the individual’s experience of this state. In other words, they are not recognized when one remains in one’s ordinary state of mind. The whole set of extremely various visions form the Clarity of the natural state and are known as Transparent Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas zang thal*), a key representation which refers to the visionary aspect of the natural state displayed within its own empty Essence. There exist three examples that illustrate this transparent Clarity : 1. it is unceasing like the rays of the sun; 2. it is naturally clear like a crystal sphere; and 3. it cannot be grasped, like reflections on a mirror.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup> The description of these fivefold visions is given in chapter V.

<sup>103</sup> This is in this way that the Clarity of the natural state is described by Orgom Kūndül in the *Instructions Similar to Clothes on the Body* (*Lus kyi gos dang ‘dra ba’i gdams pa*, p. 77). As explained by him, the unceasing (*‘gag med*) nature of Clarity is synonymous with its Transparency (*zang thal*); its being naturally clear (*rang gsal*) is synonymous with its being without obscuration (*sgrib med*); and its being without grasping is synonymous with its luminosity (*gsal ba*).

### b-6. *The Wisdoms of the Absolute Body*

The visionary manifestations that arise in this way during practice are nothing other than the unceasing clarity of our natural state. Contemplated in their reflections on the mirror of the sky, they are totally embraced by Wisdom which also entirely encompasses our sense consciousnesses. However, this does not mean that such visions are objects of the senses, even if they may seem so. Sensory manifestations such as sounds, etc., are perceived in Thögel practice but they are not grasped at or judged. They just arise spontaneously by themselves.

This happens because Awareness is connected to our whole body and consequently to the senses. Thus, forms are seen through the eyes ; sounds are heard through the ears ; perfumes are sensed through the nose ; flavors are tasted through the tongue ; contact are felt through the body ; and phenomena are known through the mind. All these perceptions are unhindered during the practice and simply left as they are. Their corresponding consciousnesses spontaneously arise within the state of the Absolute Body and, when left as they are while one remains in the natural state, they simply form the display of the Wisdoms of the Absolute Body itself.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>104</sup> This might sound contradictory to the teachings of Mu Shōtram Chenpo included in the *Instructions Similar to the Heart Inside* (*Khong pa'i snying dang 'dra ba'i gdams pa*, p. 182) in which he says that forms, sounds, smells, etc., are all rejected as vomit (*skyug*). However, it is clear from Shōtram's teachings that it is grasping (*'dzin pa*) at these manifestations which is to be discarded. Attachment (*chags pa*) is the factor that affects the perceptions of the objects of the senses and implicates the individual into dualistic and ego-centered approaches to phenomena. Phenomena are in themselves neutral, but to the consciousness that grasp them, they appear as either attractive, repulsive or neutral. Thus within the liberating experience of the Absolute Body, these continue to arise in an unceasing mode, but without any grasping at all.

*b-7. The Qualities of its Wisdoms*

Our Awareness is not conceptual, i.e., it does not depend on concepts and actually transcends all discursive activity.<sup>105</sup> However, it has qualities (*yon tan*) which are enlightened ones. Such qualities manifest as primordial Wisdoms (*ye shes*), spontaneously arising within our heart. The various qualities which manifest in this way form the Wisdom arising within oneself. This actually means that Wisdom arises within the individual and is the abiding mode of his Mind (*sems nyid*).<sup>106</sup>

*b-8. Its fundamental non-duality*

The five aspects of Wisdom are naturally present in the natural state and are not external conceptions or entities that could be added to the natural state itself, to potentially give it its spontaneous perfection. This perfection is already present since the beginning (*ye rdzogs*).<sup>107</sup> When one remains in this state without artifice, then thoughts can arise but are not dualistically

<sup>105</sup> This exactly the reason why it is stated in the *Instructions Similar to the Body* (*Lus dang 'dra ba'i gdams pa*, p. 139) that the Base of Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas kyi gzhi*) is defined as non-conceptual (*rtog pa med pa*), while that of ordinary sentient beings — who have no direct access to the experience of Awareness — is conceptual (*rtog bcas*). For this reason, sentient beings have an aggregate of defects (*skyon gyi phung po*) whereas Buddhas have an aggregate of Wisdom (*ye shes kyi phung po*). See Shardza Rinpoche, *dByings rig mdzod*, vol. I, chap. I, pp. 7-28.

<sup>106</sup> As stated in the *Instructions Similar to the Heart Inside* (p. 177), our Mind (*sems nyid*) primordially abides as the Buddha Kuntuzangpo, as the state of the Single Thigle. It is entirely devoid of grasping at a self and everything which arises in this state actually manifests as one's self-liberated Wisdom (*rang grol gyi ye shes*). In this utterly pure condition, passions and discursiveness are thus automatically liberated while simultaneously our self-arisen Wisdom dawns in all its spontaneous luminosity.

<sup>107</sup> However, on this point, Yongdzin Rinpoche has repeatedly warned practitioners not to identify their own condition (as persons on the Path, still to be purified) with the utterly limpid and pristine condition of the Great Perfection itself. Many people — Milarepa was a dramatic example of this — still misunderstand the state of Dzogchen and the Dzogchenpa. They end up in nihilistic views in which they often confuse their startled consciousness (*he de ba*) with genuine discerning Awareness (*rig pa*).

grasped at. On the contrary, they arise as qualities of the Wisdom of Awareness and can be used in altruistic perspectives. Thus, when one is clearly abiding in this pristine condition, thoughts are likely to arise from the natural state, to manifest within it and to then dissolve into it in a totally spontaneous manner.

Therefore, from this perspective, all thoughts are clearly experienced as the natural dynamism of Awareness : they arise, abide and dissolve within Awareness, in the space of our own Essence. They do not arise, abide, etc., in any other place or location. They have only one source, one abiding place and one destination : the empty nature of the primordial state. This empty aspect is designated as the Essence Body.<sup>108</sup>

Therefore, the various concepts that arise in this way are nothing other than the Pure and Perfect Mind (*byang chub sems*) because they occur within this Mind and are actually not separated from it. Thus, in the practice of Trekchö, when one simply remains in the actual discerning experience one's own nature, at that time concepts are experienced as empty (*stong pa*) and emptiness as being Reality itself (*bon nyid*). This statement must be nuanced, because it is true only from the perspective of the practitioner who has a direct experience of the natural state. It is not true from the perspective of the deluded individual. The difference is actually gigantic.

Thus, the non-duality (*gnyis med*) that is stressed here by Taphritsa has nothing to do with the projections that immature practitioners indulge in when thinking that non-duality refers to a fusion of all minds into a single cosmic-like consciousness. Such a perspective is actually that of heretics like Hinduists. Non-duality precisely refers to the absence of dualistic grasping and to the realization of the fundamental nature of thoughts and Wisdoms. When this nature is realized, then one has simply reached Buddhahood without duality.

<sup>108</sup> In the *Instructions Similar to the Hat on the Head* (*Klad kyi zhwa dang 'dra ba'i gdams pa*, p. 28), this Body is described as the Great Generic Stage (*spyi sa chen po*, corresponding to the Generic Base) in which there are no object of senses. For this reason, Awareness remains devoid of any discursive support (*rtan*) and simply manifest in its essential mode. This Essence Body (*ngo bo nyid kyi sku*) is like the sky in which its self-knowledge is like the sun shining in the sky.

At the time of death, such a realization will have tremendous consequences for the ultimate, final liberation from the cycle of existence. Indeed, in between the cessation of the outer breathing and that of the inner breathing, the multifarious manifestations of Wisdom will dawn in the form of infinite illusory displays filling the entire space. Through the familiarization of this visionary nature of the primordial state (with the practice of Thögel), one should then easily recognize these visions of Reality as one's own display and therefore reach full enlightenment without effort. However, such a realization is limited to highly advanced practitioners, and not to the everyday adept.

### **5. The Direct Introduction to the Pure Realms of the Buddhas**

This fifth chapter is entirely dedicated to the nature of the visions of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities (*zhi khro*) arising during the practice of Thögel. As the previous ones, it has two parts : a. the abridged explanation, and b. the detailed one.<sup>109</sup>

#### *a. The abridged explanation*

The Bodies of the Five Buddhas symbolizing the Five Wisdoms abide in the mode of the five lights in the center of the heart, of the Brown Cornelian Tent. Their essence is that of the Absolute Body (*bon sku*) abiding in a Clarity manifesting itself in the five-

<sup>109</sup> One point should be made clear on this subject. We can read here and there that the visions of these Deities are cultural ones and that, as Westerners, we shall not see the same visions as Tibetans. This is an utterly, completely wrong idea which has deep roots in the mind of dilettante practitioners who have no actual experience of what they discuss. These visions come from the natural state of Awareness (*rig pa*). Such an Awareness has no cultural bias or disposition. Those who say that the visions of Peaceful and Wrathful Deities are not seen by Westerners have actually not brought their own experience to a level where they can concretely contemplate these visions. This is a terrible drawback that is affecting many "practitioners" who do not engage into long retreats but who nevertheless formulate opinions which are simply displays of their ignorance.



colored lights of Awareness. The glow of Awareness arises in the pupils as the visions of the Five Wisdoms. Recognizing this without ever regressing from it is said to be sufficient in itself to ultimately lead to Buddhahood.<sup>110</sup>

### *b. The detailed explanation*

The manifestations of Buddha-Bodies from within the center of the heart appear as Peaceful and Wrathful Deities (*zhi khro*). More precisely, the Peaceful Ones are located within the heart (*tsitta*), while the Wrathful Ones dance in the Conch Mansion (*dung khang*) of the head. Thus, from the fivefold orb of lights that blaze in the heart appear various Buddhas, starting with the Peaceful Ones.

#### *b-1. The Peaceful Deities*

All these peaceful deities appear holding specific emblems, sitting on a throne, in a halo of fivefold lights and in union with their Spouse. Thus, in the central direction Künngang Khyabpa, of white complexion, appears within an aura of five lights, holding a luminous wheel and a victorious banner, in union with the Goddess of the Sky.

In the eastern direction appears Selwa Rangjung, of yellow complexion, holding a golden scepter, and in union with the Goddess of the Earth.

In the northern direction appears Gelha Garchuk, of green complexion, holding a turquoise scepter, and in union with the Goddess of the Air.

<sup>110</sup> In other words, when one has reached this stage of the visionary practice during one's lifetime, even if one were to pass away at that time, one would undoubtedly recognize the visions of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities during the Bardo of the Clear-Light of Reality (*bon nyid 'od gsal gyi bar do*) and one would instantaneously reach Buddhahood, without having to take another rebirth.

In the western direction appears Jedrak Ngöme, of red complexion, holding a copper scepter, and in union with the Goddess of Fire.

In the southern direction appears Gawa Döndrup, of blue complexion, holding an iron scepter, in union with the Goddess of Water.

All their Bodies have the size of mustard seeds, with luminous bright eyes. These Buddhas can be contemplated in spontaneous visions, during specific practices such as sky-gazing, sun-gazing and dark retreats.<sup>111</sup>

### *b-2. The Wrathful Deities*

In the center of the Conch Mansion are the thirty Wrathful Gods of Wisdoms, dancing and holding hooks of Compassion.<sup>112</sup>

Furthermore, in the eastern direction appear Trose and the wrathful emanations belonging to the Clan of the Body (*sku*).

In the northern direction appear Ngamse and the wrathful emanations of the Clan of the Qualities (*yon tan*).

In the western direction appear Welse and the wrathful emanations of the Clan of the Speech.

In the southern direction appear Tumse and the wrathful emanations of the Clan of the Activities (*phrin las*).

In the center appear Tsochok and the wrathful emanations of the Clan of the Mind (*thugs*). All these deities project numerous rays of light and dance within halos of fivefold lights.<sup>113</sup>

Through the channel that connects the Conch Mansion to the doorway of the eyes, the Clarity of these Wrathful Deities

<sup>111</sup> The practice of sky- and sun-gazing is described in Achard, *The Four Lamps*, as well as in *id.*, *The Six Essential Points*. The practice of the dark retreat in the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* is performed according to *The Seven Cycles of Clear-Light*. Kurt Keutzer and I have translated into English the relevant source work and variants of these *Seven Cycles* which should see the light in a forthcoming publication.

<sup>112</sup> These deities represent the dynamic aspect of the natural state, in a mode that is complementary to that of the peaceful nature of the eponymous deities in the heart. They are thus not wrathful in the sense of being overwhelmed by egotical anger.

<sup>113</sup> This means that they are endowed with the five Wisdoms.

can be seen through the eyes, while they can also move through the spine and actually come out through the secret door.<sup>114</sup>

Furthermore, Tsochok Khangying and his Spouse reside in the central channel, as a symbol of our Wisdom of Awareness expressing itself in the mode of undifferentiated Bodies and Wisdoms. The rest of these wrathful gods are also associated with one of the main organs of the body. Thus Trose resides in the channel of the spleen, Nagmse in the channel of the lungs, Welse in the channel of the liver, and Tumse in that of the kidneys.

Similarly, the eight Awareness Holders are associated with the eight gathering of consciousnesses.<sup>115</sup> These are : 1. Thangma Medrön (Thang ma me sgron), 2. Khate Muya (Kha ste mu ya), 3. Trimang Gyelwa (Khri rmang rgyal ba), 4. Dewo Sungchen (lDe bo gsung chen), 5. Barab Lingzhi (Ba rab gling bzhi), 6. Barab Lingsöl (Ba rab gling rtsol), 7. Nangwa Dogchen (sNang ba mdog can), and 8. Tsukchen Gyelwa (gTsug gshen rgyal ba).

In the four limbs<sup>116</sup> appear the four Door Keepers which are : 1. Dütsi Gyelwa (bDud rtsi rgyal ba), 2. Zhidel Künnyom (Zhi dal kun snyoms), 3. Tsukphü Gyelwa (gTsug phud rgyal ba), and 4. Jampa Darchö (Byams pa gdar gcod).

In the spinal cord appear the twenty-eight Welmos, divided into three groups : that of the Nine Thorny Ones (gZe ma dgu), that of the Nine Athletes (Gyad mo dgu), and that of the Nine Clawed Ones (spar ma dgu).<sup>117</sup>

In the ten main articulations of the body<sup>118</sup> are the Ten Champions, namely : 1. Sergyi Mithung, 2. Dungi Mithung, 3. Yuyi Mithung, 4. Zangkyi Mithung, 5. Chakyi Mithung, 6. Weltak Trawo, 7. Weldruk Ngönpo, 8. Welyak Karpo,

<sup>114</sup> Which here, according to Shardza Rinpoche, refers to the Water Lamp. This part is discussed in detail in the extensive commentary.

<sup>115</sup> The five sense consciousnesses, the mental consciousness, the defiled mental consciousness, and the all-ground consciousness.

<sup>116</sup> The two legs and the two arms.

<sup>117</sup> The complete list is given in the extensive commentary included in *The Vision of Awareness in its Nakedness*, forthcoming.

<sup>118</sup> As listed in the extensive commentary, these are: 1-2. the two shoulders, 3-4. the two elbows, 5-6. the two knees, 7-8. the two hips, and 9-10. the bones of the neck (*ltag rus*) and the bones of the coccyx.

9. Welkhyung Ngönpo, and 10. Trochü Mipho Welmepor.

In the four thumbs<sup>119</sup> are the four great Kings : 1. Gyelchen Yülkhorsung, 2. Gyelchen Namthöse, 3. Gyelchen Chenmigzang, and 4. Gyelchen Böngyi Phak.

All these divine manifestations simply arise spontaneously within our own body : they are “made” of fivefold lights which symbolize the subjugation of the five poisons.<sup>120</sup>

### *b-3. The infinite manifestations of the Perfection and Emanation Bodies*

Altogether, there are forty-five Peaceful Deities and sixty Wrathful ones. Tapihritsa states that if one opens the Treasury of Marvels (*'phrul gyi bang mdzod*), one can then contemplate their infinite displays in the state of Awareness. This “Treasury of Marvels” is obviously a code expression pointing to the practice of Thögel. In other words, it means that if one practices sky- or sun-gazing or performs a dark retreat, one will undoubtedly contemplate myriads of these deities arising within the experience of the natural state. The contemplation of this unceasing Clarity of Awareness is Buddhahood itself.

This point is of extreme importance, since what Tapihritsa explicitly says here is that the Clarity associated with these visions and that of the Essence of our own Awareness are actually one and the same thing. Recognizing this is experientially realizing the Perfection Body, while contemplating the impartial and unceasing arising of Awareness in the manifold visions that arise during practice is experientially realizing the Emanation Body. This is how, within the state of wakeful Awareness (i.e., the Absolute Body), the two form Bodies (i.e., the Perfection and Emanation Bodies) are concretely realized.

<sup>119</sup> The two thumbs of the hands and the big toes of the feet.

<sup>120</sup> Desire, anger, delusion, pride and jealousy.

## 6. The View of the Natural State

This chapter is concerned with the View through which one comes to realize the natural state of the mind. It has two parts : the abridged explanation and the detailed one.

### *a. The abridged explanation*

Within our body abide several precious sanctuaries forming the specific visionary anatomy of the Dzogchen teachings. In the heart abides the Absolute Body (*bon sku*). In the Conch Mansion abide the Bodies of the Wrathful deities (*khro bo'i sku*). In the marrow abide the Emanation Bodies (*sprul sku*). In the two eyes abides the Body of the Transparent Wisdom (*ye shes zang thal gyi sku*). Basically, the wisdom of the natural state abides in the heart and is nothing other than Buddhahood itself : it is our own Self-Awareness (*rang rig*) manifesting in the luminous mode of radiating lights.

### *b. The detailed explanation*

#### *b-1. Recognizing one's own Essence through Thögel practice*

In order to contemplate the visions of the Body of the Buddha, one should apply the techniques of Thögel practice and gaze toward the sky, the sun, the moon or to a butter lamp. By applying the correct key points of Thögel, one will thus start seeing the five-colored lights constituting the visionary mode of one's Awareness. When one practices in this way, one should be in the authentic experience of the natural state. At that time, the glow of Awareness (*rig pa'i gdangs*) which arises from the heart into the Light Channel blazes in the center of the eyes, in the form of the Body of Transparent Wisdom. The clarity of this Body is defined as unceasing because it is not caused : it spontaneously arises without having been produced or created by anybody. It is the natural, abiding mode of the Mind. If one is able to recognize — through direct experience, not through mental deductions — that this Clarity seen through the Water Lamp is

our own Essence in its dynamic mode, then this is Buddhahood. However, for such a recognition to be efficient, one must not regress nor fluctuate from this realization in any way whatsoever.

### *b-2. The three kinds of Views*

Tapihritsa enumerates three kinds of Views related to perfect Buddhahood : a View centered on the nature of phenomena (*bon*), a View centered on Reality (*bon nyid*), and a View centered on Nature, or the true abiding mode of one's Awareness (*rig pa*).

According to the first View, all phenomena are seen and envisioned as marvels of Awareness, namely as manifestations forming the illusory display of Awareness. This means that, since Awareness embraces everything, all that appears occurs within the state of Awareness itself<sup>121</sup>.

The second View describes Reality as it is : since our Awareness abides in a luminous mode of radiating lights, Reality is nothing other than the unceasing Clarity of Awareness itself. This actually lies at the core of Thögel teachings, in which the visions of Awareness (*rig pa'i snang ba*) are defined as forming Reality itself (*bon nyid*)<sup>122</sup>. If one recognizes the visionary manifestations as one's own Awareness during Thögel practice, then there is nothing else to look for, since this itself is Buddhahood. Again, as stated above, this recognition must be without regression.

<sup>121</sup> It is important here not to conclude that whatever is *embraced by* Awareness has an Awareness. This is the immature viewpoint of people who have not intellectually or experientially grasped the real nature of Awareness. This viewpoint is a terrible wrong view, which leads to ridiculous, pantheistic conceptions according to which inert objects (*bem po*) would have an Awareness. Such a childish mistake has been answered in *The Lamp that Clarifies the Advice on the Universal Base* (*Kun gzhi zhal shes gsal ba'i sgron ma*) in the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü*. See the French translation and commentary of this text in Achard, *La Lampe Clarifiant les Conseils sur la Base Universelle*, Khyung-Lung Editions, 2009.

<sup>122</sup> This is also rendered in the lexicon used to refer to these visions. For instance, the first visionary stage of Thögel practice is called "the Vision of Manifest Reality" (*bon nyid mngon sum gyi snang ba*), in which Reality (*bon nyid*) directly points to the visionary nature of Awareness displayed in the Space (*dbyings*) of the practitioner. In this way, both Space and Awareness are undifferentiated (*dbyings rig dbyer med*).

This is precisely what the third View, that of the Nature of Awareness, is all about. In fact, Buddha Nature and the visionary mode of Reality are not two different things. Rather, they are the real expression of our Awareness, our own mind manifesting itself in the radiating lights of its own nature. Tapihritsa stresses the particular representation according to which the true nature of the Mind abides as Clear-Light, as an unceasing Clarity which manifests in fivefold displays without any fluctuations. Familiarization with this is the purpose of the practice of Thögel.

## 7. Non-meditation

In this seventh chapter, Tapihritsa describes the practice of Non-meditation (*sgom med*) in two main sections : a. the abridged explanation and b. the detailed one. In the present context, Non-meditation is to be considered, not as signifying that meditation in itself is not necessary, but rather that specific forms of meditations such as Calm Abiding, as well as the Phases of Development and Perfection, etc., are not used in the main practice of Dzogchen, because this practice precisely relies on the visionary nature of Awareness (which itself does not depend on the various phases of tantric practices, etc.).

### *a. The abridged explanation*

The teachings covering the principles of Non-meditation in the context of Dzogchen practice say that our Buddha Essence is directly seen through the eyes<sup>123</sup>. In other words, and in typical Dzogchen jargon, the Body of Transparent Wisdom (*ye shes zang thal gyi sku*) abides in the Water Lamp (*chu'i sgron*) and is seen through this Water Lamp in the direct experience of the natural state itself.

<sup>123</sup> When the essence of Buddhahood is thus seen directly or manifestly (*mngon sum du*), effortful meditation techniques appears not pertinent. This is true only if this recognition is non-regressive, otherwise various techniques (such as *gegs sel*, *sems 'dzin*, etc.) may obviously be necessary in order to subjugate the continuum. Tapihritsa does not address beginners here but rather seasoned yogis experienced in the advanced practices of Dzogchen.

*b. The detailed explanation*

This explanation has three subdivisions : 1. the direct introduction, 2. the practice to perform in this life, and 3. the practice at the time of the Bardo.

*b-1. The direct introduction*

The recognition of the Body of Transparent Wisdom is crucial for progressing on the Path of Thögel practice. Its abiding in a visionary mode is in itself a direct introduction to the real expression of Awareness manifesting as Bodies (*sku*) and Wisdoms (*ye shes*). The visions that arise as the glow of Awareness (*rig pa'i gdangs*) have their source in the direct experience of the natural state<sup>124</sup>. In the context of Thögel, it is held that this source is in the center of the heart; its glow itself manifests as Bodies in the display of the visions of the Perfection Body, the Emanation Body, the Body of Transparent Wisdom, etc.<sup>125</sup> When one is engaged in the practice of Thögel, these are clearly discerned (*rig*) in their various manifestations as half-Bodies, couples, etc. However, Awareness also manifests as fivefold lights which simply represent the spontaneous display of its own clarity<sup>126</sup>.

<sup>124</sup> This means that the visions of Thögel are seen in the condition of the natural state. They are not objects of the sensory consciousnesses, even though they may appear to be such. Indeed, in addition to visions, other sensory experiences can arise during the practice of Thögel (this is due to the fact that branches of the Light Channel open within each of the five sense organs) but they are not objects of the corresponding sense consciousnesses. For instance, spontaneous sounds or music heard during the practice of Thögel are only heard by the individual during his practice, not by a third party.

<sup>125</sup> This glow rides on the wind of Wisdom (*ye shes rlung*) moving inside the Light Channel (*'od rtsa*) connecting the heart to the eyes.

<sup>126</sup> In other words, all these manifestations form the display of Awareness in its visionary mode; they are collectively known as the "marvels of Awareness" (*rig pa'i cho 'phru*).



*b-2. The practice in this life*

These visions manifest through the Water Lamp and are displayed in the visionary Space (*dbyings*) of the practitioner<sup>127</sup>. The eyes play a central role here but, as we have seen repeatedly, not as material organs but rather as the arising doors (*'char sgo*) of the visions of the natural state. The visions themselves are not contemplated in the state of ordinary consciousness, but exclusively in the condition of the natural state. The liberating nature of this contemplation is such that Tapihritsa says that even those who have committed terrible actions will without doubt reach Buddhahood swiftly (but only if they recognize this visionary arising as the real expression of their natural state).

*b-3. The practice at the time of the Bardo*

The fact that this visionary mode is the true, actual abiding mode of the natural state is proven by the experiences arising during the Bardo, when the mind is not covered anymore by the materiality of the body<sup>128</sup>.

When the conditions for the moment of death are collected and when there is no way to counter them, at a certain stage the mind and the body separate from one another. During that process of death, the elements dissolve gradually into one another, in a specific order, giving rise to various visionary experiences.

<sup>127</sup> This Space is an inner one, despite the fact that the visions seem to appear outside in the outer sky. This outer sky is just a support on which one contemplates the actual inner display of Awareness. The notions of outer and inner spaces are not dual as it would seem from the description, but it is simply for the sake of explanation that such a duality is put forward. There are thus a secret space (*gsang dbyings*) in the center of the heart, an inner Space (*nang dbyings*) corresponding to the inner cavity of the Light Channel, and an outer Space (*phyi dbyings*) which is simply like a mirror in which one contemplates the visionary displays of one's own nature.

<sup>128</sup> At that time, for a duration varying according to the individual, Awareness arises in its bare nakedness and then starts to display in its visionary mode. It is only after this that the power of karmic impregnations arises and affects the consciousness (this occurs in the karmic Bardo of becoming, *srid pa'i bar do*).

Death proper occurs when the outer breathing has ceased. However, there is still an inner breathing which is active, due to the ultimate movements of the winds within the channels. After death, the deceased sees rainbow-like visions arising in the sky, a moment characterizing what is designated as the Bardo of Clear-Light of Reality (*bon nyid 'od gsal gyi bar do*). In the course of that Bardo, the manifestations of sounds, lights and rays spontaneously arise<sup>129</sup>.

Within these five-colored visions appear “clusters” (*tshom bu*) of Buddhas, i.e., one central, main Buddha, surrounded by four others. These fivefold clusters appear in such gigantic numbers that they literally fill the space in which they manifest. This vision is of crucial importance since, if it is recognized as the visionary expression of one’s own Awareness, then one will simply and naturally unite with these clusters and reach the ultimate stage of Buddhahood in a state of total non-duality. Non-duality (*gnyis med*) refers here to its real meaning as a state in which one is not separated from one’s real nature; in this context, it means having recognized the visionary displays that appear at that time as being one’s own nature in its dynamic manifestations.

In reality, there is nothing else that needs to be meditated upon, which means that this recognition — in its non-regressive mode — is itself sufficient for reaching Buddhahood. This is precisely the case of those yogis who have practiced Thögel during their lifetime but not to the stage where the whole Path has been perfected (the Fourth Vision)<sup>130</sup>. These yogis will have to face the Bardos and may thus be able to recognize their own Essence in the spontaneous displays of sounds, lights and rays that appear during the after-death process. The teachings that are concerned with this visionary practice — both during one’s lifetime

<sup>129</sup> This Bardo has four stages, namely: 1. the visions of the Clear-Light forming the epiphany of the Base (*gzhi snang 'od gsal gyi snang ba*), 2. the visions of clusters (of deities) in union (*zung 'jug tshom bu'i snang ba*), 3. the visions of the union of the four Wisdoms (*ye shes bzhi sbyor gyi snang ba*), and 4. the visions of the precious Spontaneity (*lhun grub rin po che'i snang ba*).

<sup>130</sup> This ultimate stage is the Vision of the Exhaustion of Reality (*bon nyid zad pa'i snang ba*) during which appearances, as well as the illusory body and discursive thoughts, are totally exhausted. Ultimately, all phenomena are exhausted, as well as the mind and the visionary displays of Reality. See Shardza Rinpoche, *dByings rig mdzod*, II, p. 293 *et seq.*

and in the course of the *post-mortem* Bardo states — is only given to those who have already received the outer, inner and secret empowerments. They are then given the fourth initiation — the Verbal Initiation (*tshig dbang*) — during which the direct introduction to Awareness (*rig pa'i ngo sprod*) is given<sup>131</sup>. When one has been thus empowered, one is then trained by the master in the various stages of Dzogchen practice, including Trekchö and Thögel.

## 8. The way to reach Liberation

The eighth and final chapter of the text deals with the way in which practitioners liberate according to their capacities. It is in particular concerned with the instructions on how to reach liberation during the *post-mortem* intermediate states (*bar do*).

### *a. The abridged explanation*

The natural state abides within the confines of the heart, and its manifestation in the form of the three Buddha Bodies is seen through its own display in the mode of visions appearing in the sky. They actually appear in the Space (*dbyings*) of the individual rather than in the sky proper, the latter being simply envisioned as a mirror on which the natural dynamism of our Awareness manifests in a visionary mode.

### *b. The detailed explanation*

#### *b-1. Unceasing radiance*

In the previous chapters, Tapihritsa has repeatedly defined the utterly pure Essence of Awareness as the “Buddha” (*sangs rgyas*) and referred to the unconditioned nature of this Buddhahood as

<sup>131</sup> There are quite complex forms of this initiation in the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* tradition. For the structure of one initiation ritual associated with the present cycle, see Achard, *Enlightened Rainbows*, text no. 364, pp. 406-408.

the “natural state” or genuine abiding mode (*gnas lugs*) of the Mind. It is designated as “free from birth and death” precisely because it is unceasing : it remains as it is, without fluctuation, throughout the three times, in the center of the heart.<sup>132</sup> Contemplating this is contemplating the natural state (the “Buddha”, as Taphritsa states it).

Even though Taphritsa also describes this state as a “Body” (*sangs rgyas kyi sku*), the latter is not a material entity having “a face and a back” : it is the Transparent Wisdom (*ye shes zang thal*) which arises as a pure radiance shining without inner or outer distinctions. In this respect, it does not appear as a physical body, even if it is sometimes symbolized in iconographic depictions by a blue, naked Buddha — in this case, one must not mistake the reality of this Body with the way it is illustrated according to specific iconographic rules. These rules are indicators or symbols that are commonly used to illustrate something which evidently transcends the way it is illustrated.

When one trains in the practice of Thōgel, it clearly transpires that this Clarity or Transparency of the natural state does not exist as an outer object or as something distinct from us. It is not an object of the mind either. It is Awareness itself, in its natural abiding mode. When this is experientially recognized, then all the visions that arise are seen as the true “face” of Awareness, as the reality of Mind itself.

These visions arise in an unceasing mode which is that of Wisdom : because Wisdom itself is unceasing, they cannot be stopped or blocked by anything. In fact, they do not fluctuate if the stability of the natural state is clearly established. Their stability is actually an indication of the degree of stability one has reached in the experience of the natural state itself. Taphritsa

<sup>132</sup> Of course, this does not mean that it remains in the *same* heart throughout all your lifetimes. Rather, it means that it is *always* within your heart, whenever you have new body in a new rebirth. The heart is, as we have repeatedly seen, its genuine sanctuary. During the Bardo, when you don’t have a physical body, Awareness “manifests itself to itself”, which means that it is not located in a body nor is it obscured by the physical aggregates: it simply manifests its own spontaneous displays to itself in a state of empty clarity (this is what is referred to as non-duality in Dzogchen, which also shows that such a non-duality has nothing to do with ideas that we are all “one consciousness”. This is a heretical conception from a Bōn and a Buddhist perspective.

states that the visions do not fluctuate, not in the sense of varying in intensity or luminosity, but in the sense that they spontaneously arise from the natural state itself. The arising of this unceasing Clarity is said to remain immutable, in this sense of a constant spontaneous arising. Thus, “immutable” (*gyur ba med pa*) is to be understood in a very dynamic way (that of the unceasing radiance) and not as a static representation which, in any case, does not correspond to the reality of the natural state. As nothing can block or impede the arising of Wisdom, the visions of Awareness can manifest as they are, namely endowed with the nature of fivefold lights.<sup>133</sup>

### *b-2. The sublimation of all visions*

When one uses the key point of Thögel, the glow of Awareness enters the Crystal Tube channel and comes forth through the Water Lamp. It is said that at this time the natural radiance of Wisdom shines in its object (*yuḷ*). The “object” in this case has nothing to do with the subject/object dichotomy as is sometimes claimed : rather, it refers to the “place” or location (*yuḷ*, the same word in Tibetan) in which the glow of Awareness reflects itself. This object is the sky, and more precisely, the Lamp of the Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings mam par dag pa'i sgron ma*) itself.

At that time, when the manifestations of Awareness start to fill the entire visionary space, everything is seen as lights and Bodies. All appearances are seen as filled with lights and Bodies, to the extent that all samsaric manifestations are naturally overcome. When one has reached such a stage, one actually sees all deluded appearances arise as manifestations of the five Wisdoms.

The state in which one abides when contemplating such manifold displays is entirely free from partiality, and entirely under the control or power (*dbang*) of Awareness. The visions themselves arise within the state of Awareness and express its dynamic nature. In other words, all that is “happening” at that time is Awareness : the state in which one is practicing contem-

<sup>133</sup> This is how the seal of the five Wisdoms naturally adorns the Essence of Awareness.

plation is Awareness, the visions that arise are those of Awareness, and the nature of these visions express the dynamism of Awareness itself. Since this constitutes having attained the ultimate stage within the direct experience of the primordial purity (*ka dag*) of Awareness, it is impossible that one then becomes tainted by the karmic impregnations associated with either good or bad karma. In other words, Buddhahood is fully obtained, without regression.

### *b-3. The three kinds of practitioners*

In this section, Tapihritsa discusses the way realization manifests for the three kinds of practitioners. Thus, for the best yogis — those who have been able to entirely perfect the Path in a single lifetime — Buddhahood is achieved during their life and manifests at the time of death by various signs pertaining to the realization of the Rainbow Body (*'ja' lus*). More precisely, Tapihritsa states that such yogis do not leave any physical remains behind and thus obtain the state of an Authentically Perfect Buddha (*yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas*), as discussed in chapter 3. Such yogis do not endure the narrow path of the *post-mortem* Bardo states.<sup>134</sup>

Practitioners of medium spiritual capacities have been unable to reach Buddhahood in their lifetime and have thus not been able to perfect the Path entirely before reaching the time of death.<sup>135</sup> However, their realization is such that their Awareness is liberated as soon as their mind separates from their body. Or,

<sup>134</sup> There are three main *post-mortem* Bardos: 1. the Bardo of the primordially pure Absolute Body (*ka dag bon sku'i bar do*), which lasts as long as one has been able to remain in the natural state during one's lifetime; 2. the Bardo of the Clear-Light of Reality (*bon nyid 'od gsal gyi bar do*), during which the visionary essence of the natural state clearly appears to yogis who have engaged in the practice of Thögel; and 3. the karmic Bardo of Becoming (*srid pa las kyi bar do*) during which it is still possible to perform a *post-mortem* Phowa (*'pho ba*), before one becomes inexorably attracted by a new matrix.

<sup>135</sup> Most often such people have karmic obstacles that have prevented them from spending enough time in retreat in order to perfect the Path of Dzogchen.

according to their individual karma, they enter Bardo states but are able to perform a *post-mortem* Phowa in order to take a miraculous rebirth in a pure realm.<sup>136</sup> There, they can follow the teachings of Dzogchen for five hundred years, before eventually reaching total Buddhahood.

Practitioners of lower capacities are confronted with the *post-mortem* Bardo states. Generally, they are unable to recognize the first two Bardos because they have fallen unconscious after the disconnection of the mind and the body. Usually, they come to during the Bardo of Becoming, and must rely on prayers for a better rebirth. For those who are able to actually regain consciousness during the Bardo of Clear-Light of Reality, Buddhahood is obtained in five successive moments of gradual recognition of the nature of the visions that are arising. As explained in the extensive commentary, these five moments correspond to :

1. the time when the visions arise spontaneously during the Bardo of Clear-Light,
2. the time when the practitioners actually contemplate these visions,
3. the time when they keep their mind concentrated on the visions,
4. the time when they recognize them as their own manifestations (*rang snang*), and
5. the time when they eventually liberate in the state of Primordial Purity.

At the time of death and after death, ordinary beings who have not practiced anything during their lifetime are confronted with

<sup>136</sup> In this way, they escape the narrow path of the Bardos and their related terrors.

the terrors of the Bardos, during which they only encounter confusion. Good karma will most certainly help them to get a good rebirth, while bad karma will inevitably lead to the lower realms. A widespread saying affirms that even great sinners can reach Buddhahood after death if they realize what is occurring after death and if they can perform a *post-mortem* Phowa. This is theoretically true but, actually, very few of them manifest *post-mortem* signs indicating a possible success in Phowa practice.<sup>137</sup> For this reason, the practice of collecting virtues and knowledge, living an ethical life of sincere humility, serious practice and continuous study, is of tremendous importance.

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When the time for the revelation of these teachings to Nangzher Lōpo was over, Tapihritsa simply vanished like a rainbow in the sky.<sup>138</sup> At that time, Nangzher Lōpo was able to identify in own Awareness without doubt and could practice until he reached the manifestation of the Rainbow Body (*'ja' lus*). However, the line of transmission did not end with him : he transmitted the teachings he received from Tapihritsa to his own disciple Gyelzik Sechung, and from him the revelation was gradually handed on from master to disciple. For a time, it followed the tradition of the Single Transmission (*gcig brgyud*), which means that the teachings were only revealed to a single disciple. In the course of time, however, several lines of transmissions branched out, but the principle of the Single Transmission (with only a single student becoming the official receptacle of the teachings) has remained valid till the present day. Since several branches of the lineage exist, there are now several official lineage holders (in particular in Tibet), according to each of these branches.

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<sup>137</sup> Because of the thickness of their karmic impregnations and bad karma, they are unable to recognize that they are in Bardo states. Actually, being in a Bardo is like being in a dream: one generally does not recognize that one is dreaming and one simply follows karmic impregnations. This is exactly the same in the Bardo, except that the power of karmic impregnations is increased beyond limit.

<sup>138</sup> This is a sign of his having reached the Body of the Great Transfer (*'pho ba chen po'i sku*), through which one can manifest at one's will and under any circumstances.



## **A Summary of the teachings according to Shardza Rinpoche**

The teachings associated with the *Eight Chapters* as described by Shardza Tashi Gyeltsen are directly based on the precepts (*man ngag*) opening each and every chapter of the present text. However, in Shardza Rinpoche's *Treasury of Space and Awareness* (*dbyings rig mdzod*), several variants occur and have been retained in the present summary. This should not confuse the reader as the main contents of the teachings have exactly the same purpose and intent in both sources (even if the order of chapters appears on specific instances different).

### **1. The teachings of Chapter I — The fivefold manifestations of Buddhahood**

The teachings of the first chapter aim at illustrating the unceasing arising of the glow of Awareness (*rig gdangs*) through the eyes *via* the pathway of the pure channel linking the heart to the eyes. In this respect, the teaching describes Awareness abiding within the center of the heart, inside the Brown Cornelian Tent (*mchong gur smug po*); its natural glow arising within the Pure and Smooth Channel (*dkar 'jam rtsa*); and its shining forth through the eyes which are styled as its arising door (*'char sgo*). To illustrate the process, Tapihritsa uses a precept (*man ngag*) serving as a direct introduction (*ngo sprod*) which has the following content :

« — O Fortunate Son of Noble Clan! On the top of the Supreme Mountain, in the Mansion of the Sun and the Moon, abide five men : do you see them ? »

The meaning of each of these elements is then described as follows : the Supreme Mountain (*ri rab*) is one's own body. Its top or summit (*rtse mo*) is the head. The Mansion of the Sun and the Moon (*nyi zla'i khang pa*) are the two eyes. The five men who abide there (*mi lnga 'dug pa*) are the five pure realms of the Buddhas (*sangs rgyas kyi zhing khams lnga*) shining naturally through the Water-Lamp of the Far-Reaching Lasso (*rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*). Thus in short, the precept means that the Wisdom of Awareness (*rig pa'i ye shes*) abides within the center of one's heart and that its glow (*gdangs*) unceasingly shines within the light channel (*'od rtsa*)<sup>139</sup> and arises through the Water-Lamp.

The five pure realms of the Buddhas are the five lights, the five rays, the five Thigles, the five Wisdoms, etc., namely all the fivefold visionary manifestations of Buddhahood. For instance, the five lights are of five colors, namely : white, yellow, red, green and blue. The five rays have specific forms appearing as being bent, elongated, piled up, round and like silk cloth displayed in space. The Thigles have also precise forms such as rounds, squares, half-moons, triangles, and ovals.

The size of these manifestations varies from that of mustard seeds, to pupils, shields, etc., eventually becoming as big as a house, a valley, etc.

The five Bodies are those of the peaceful and wrathful Buddhas with their entourage of Mind Heroes (*sems dpa'*). Some appear as half-bodies (*phyed sku*), others as single deities (*sku rkyang*) and still others as couples (*yab yum*), manifesting in clusters (*tshom bu*) forming mandalas. Their size is also very variable and their number is also beyond calculation.

These visions are apparently seen through the eyes but they are in fact contemplated within the direct experience of the natural state and are not objects of the eye consciousness. They appear as the transparent and non-discursive Emptiness of the natural state manifesting in visionary displays. This represents the Wisdom of Emptiness (*stong nyid ye shes*). Being empty, they nevertheless manifest in a very clear and unceasing manner which corresponds to the Mirror-like Wisdom (*me long lta bu'i ye shes*) in

<sup>139</sup> It is the same as the White and Smooth Channel mentioned above.

which the real visionary nature of Mind is seen just like one sees one's face in a mirror. The fact that this state abides as the inseparability of Clarity and Emptiness expresses its being the Wisdom of Equality (*mnyam nyid ye shes*). Its discriminating aspect arises as the Discriminating Wisdom (*sor rtogs ye shes*) which clearly owing to which its visionary manifestations appear clearly and separately, in a state free from grasping at objects. Finally, it manifest as the All-accomplishing Wisdom (*bya grub ye shes*) because it spontaneously abides within oneself without effort and because it concretely accomplishes the altruistic activities of a Buddha.

## 2. The teachings of Chapter II — The Essence of Buddhahood

The teachings exposed in this chapter deal with the Essence of Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas kyi ngo bo*) abiding within oneself. Here the symbolic teaching given by Tapihritsa says that in the center of the Supreme Mountain, a Wishfulfilling Jewel abides in a casket where it projects fivefold lights. According to the explanation of Shardza Rinpoche — following that of the root-text itself —, the Supreme Mountain symbolizes one's body. The casket is one's heart. The Wishfulfilling Jewel is the Essence of Buddhahood or the Precious Mind of Perfect Purity (*byang chub kyi sems rin po che*) abiding within the center of one's heart. This Essence (*ngo bo*) is free from characteristics and thus abides as being totally limitless. Its Nature (*rang bzhin*) is immutable and thus abides in a naturally luminous mode. Its Compassion (*thugs rje*) is beyond partialities and thus abides as being all-embracing.

When one's channels are not obstructed,<sup>140</sup> the glow (*gdangs*) of this Essence of Buddhahood manifests as Bodies (*sku*), rays of lights (*'od zer*) and Luminous Discs (*thig le*). Usually, it is said

<sup>140</sup> Tsalung ("Channels and Winds") practices as well as Magic Wheels (*'khrul 'khor*) may help the practitioner in opening the channels. They are however often practiced in order to "progress" (*bog 'don pa*) on the Path itself. There are also highly esoteric teachings explaining how to open the channel linking the heart to the eyes by means of mantras and ointment.

that recognizing this as the Essence of Buddhahood is sufficient in itself<sup>141</sup>.

The diffusion of the five lights arising from this casket shows that the Five Bodies (*sku lnga*) abide naturally within oneself. As to the manner in which these abide within one's body, he text says that the Absolute Body abides within the center of one's heart in the mode of the non-differentiated Emptiness and Clarity. It abides as a blazing Wisdom, radiating with fivefold lights, rays, etc. In his manifestations, it appears as the clusters (*tshom bu*) of the Couples of the Five Clans (*rigs lnga yab yum*) arising in fivefold modes beyond partialities.

In these teachings, Tapihritsa also tackles various notions about Bodies (*sku*) and describes the five following modalities : 1. the Absolute Body (*bon sku*), 2. the Body of Transparent Wisdom (*ye shes zang thal gyi sku*), 3. the Body of Perfect Rapture (*longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku*), 4. the Emanation Body (*sprul pa'i sku*) and 5. the Body of self-arisen Thigles (*thig le rang byung gi sku*).

1. The Absolute Body abides in the center of one's heart and that its Clarity (*gsal ba*) unceasingly radiates within the Space of Awareness.

2. The Body of Transparent Wisdom abides within the fleshy eyes and remains more precisely in the two pupils. Its clarity is clearly visible at the doorway of the eyes where it arises in unceasing visionary manifestations appearing in a transparent (*zang thal*) mode devoid of any obscuration.

3. The Body of Perfect Rapture abides in the Conch Mansion within the head. Its clarity is similar to a pure and perfect crystal egg or a pure mirror reflecting various kinds of visionary manifestations. Within the Conch Mansion abide the Wrathful Bodies (*khro bo'i sku*) endowed with a powerful Compassion. These Bodies are said to be as small as mustard seeds with proportional blazing eyes. They manifest among rainbows which literally fill the Conch Mansion of the brain.

4. The Emanation Body abides in the whole body and more precisely in all the channels (*rtsa*). Its clarity shines through the

<sup>141</sup> This means it is sufficient in terms of recognizing, not in terms of practicing. If one is able to maintain this recognition during one's practice without fluctuation, then *this* is sufficient, not just recognizing.

eyes in myriads of Emanations manifesting in subtle, perfect, clear, beautiful, blazing and radiating modes.

5. The Body of Self-Arisen Thigles abides within the spinal cord and comes out from the *vajra*. Its Clarity blazes when the *vajra* is inserted into the petal of the lotus and it manifests in Bodies as small as mustard seeds with proportional eyes<sup>142</sup>.

### **3. The teachings of Chapter III — The Essence of the Absolute Body abiding within oneself**

The purpose of this third chapter is to explain that the Essence of the Absolute Body (*bon sku*) abides naturally within oneself. To illustrate this teachings, Tapihritsa says in a symbolic manner that within the Mansion of Gold and Turquoise appear a spontaneously arisen Stûpa made of five kinds of precious jewels, the Stûpa itself being adorned by pearls.

The Gold represents the empty and immutable Space of the Base (*gzhi'i dbyings*). The Turquoise symbolizes the tent of five lights which is displayed in the center of this Space. The Mansion represents the Flesh-Lamp of the Heart (*tsitta sha yi sgron ma*), the actual sanctuary of the Absolute Body within oneself. Thus the symbolic illustration used by Tapihritsa means that in the very center of one's heart — which is the Space of the Base — appears a tent of fivefold lights in the middle of which the Essence of the Absolute Body (*bon sku'i ngo bo*) abides as one's own Awareness (*rig pa*). This Awareness is insubstantial and is not limited to forms, colors, etc. It is primordially empty and represents Reality itself (*bon nyid*) or Kuntuzangmo. Its empty aspect does not mean that it is a nihilistic void since it naturally radiates with a profound Clarity. This is precisely what the Absolute Body is and this corresponds to Kuntuzangpo himself. Therefore, the empty and clarity aspect of one's Awareness is represented by the union of Kuntuzangpo and Kuntuzangpo who symbolize respectively the Absolute Body (*bon sku*) and

<sup>142</sup> Here Shardza Rinpoche indirectly quotes Longchenpa who said that the expression *spyan phul thag tsam* comes from a local dialect and means "having proportional eyes".

Reality (*bon nyid*). The undifferentiated union of these two principles abides as what is defined as the Essence of Great Bliss (*bde ba chen po'i ngo bo*).

The Stûpa made of five kinds of jewels represents the five Bodies (*sku lnga*) which arise from the dynamism of Awareness (*rig pa'i rtsal*). In a more generic way, this dynamism manifests in the infinite visions of Clear-Light (*'od gsal gyi snang ba*) which fill up the primordial Space of Awareness.

The pearls represent one's eyes through which one can contemplate the natural arising of the visions of Clear-Light since the eyes are the arising door (*'char sgo*) of the light channel linking the heart to the pupils.

#### **4. The teachings of Chapter IV — The arising of Wisdom as the dynamism of Mind**

In the fourth chapter, Tapihritsa explains that the dynamism of Mind (*sems nyid kyi rtsal*) reveals itself as the display of Wisdom (*ye shes*). The allegorical terms he uses in his precept (*man ngag*) say that on the splendid golden meadow filled with precious flowers, appears a turquoise house whose doors radiate outwardly.

The golden (*gser*) aspect of the meadow symbolizes the Space of Reality (*bon nyid kyi dbyings*) whose Essence is totally uncreated, empty and luminous. The splendid meadow (*spangs bzang*) represents the Universal Base (*kun gzhi*) free from all kinds of stains. On this meadow are blooming precious flowers (*rin po che'i me tog bkra ba*) which symbolize the multiple dynamism of one's consciousness.

The turquoise house (*g.yu'i khang pa*) is the body and its doors are the doorways of the six associations of consciousnesses (*tshogs drug gi sgo*) from which Wisdom manifests in manifold displays. There is one channel of the heart (*snying rtsa*) known as the "Channel which illuminates the senses" (*dbang po gsal byed kyi rtsa*) which is connected to the heart and to the doorways of the senses. Thus, from its single root (*rtsa ba gcig*), this channel divides into five branches within the skull, opening in the five senses : in this manner, one can see forms through the eyes; hear sounds through the ears; smell fragrances

through the nose; taste flavors through the tongue; and feel contact through the body.<sup>143</sup>

Thus, the dynamism of Awareness (*rig pa'i rtsal*) manifests in manifold displays which are defined as those of Wisdom (*ye shes*), not those of discursive thoughts (*rtog pa*). However, due to the constant manifestations of outer sizable objects and to the classification of these objects operated by discursive mind (defined as "endowed with object" [*yul can*]), the dynamism of Awareness manifests in dualistic conceptions but, upon examining the real nature of these conceptions, one realizes that they are devoid on inherent nature, thus letting the dynamism of Awareness ultimately manifest as Wisdom. In this respect, such a dynamism is defined as the prodigious or manifold displays of Wisdom (*ye she yo lang*).

## 5. The teachings of Chapter V — The perfection of all mandalas within oneself

In the fifth chapter of the text, Tapihritsa introduces Nangzher Lōpo to the displays of visionary manifestations which form the mandalas of the Buddhas. In a symbolic way, he says : « — O Fortunate Son of Noble Clan! In the center of the Supreme Mountain, in the house of the Sun and the Moon, abides a precious Wishfulfilling Jewel blazing with fivefold lights. Do you see it ? »

As in the previous chapters, the Supreme Mountain symbolizes the body. The sun and the moon stand for the heart (*snying*) : the sun represents its red point and the moon is white base. The house itself refers to the empty space within the heart. The precious jewel is the Wisdom of Awareness (*rig pa'i ye shes*) which abides in the center of the heart.

The five lights which are blazing there are the five luminous Wisdoms and the Five Bodies which spontaneously abide as the dynamism (*rtsal*) of Awareness. All this expresses the abiding

<sup>143</sup> Feelings are actually sensed by the skin, not the body proper, but this is precisely what is meant in tibetan works when dealing in this context with something felt through the body.

mode of the Absolute Body and the Five Wisdoms within the center of the heart.

From the natural glow (*rang gdangs*) of these Five Wisdoms proceed the five lights, in the following manner :

- from the Wisdom of Emptiness, the blue light arises in the center of the heart;
- from the Mirror-like Wisdom, the white light arises in the east;
- from the Wisdom of Equality, the green light arises in the north;
- from the Discriminating Wisdom, the red light arises in the west; and
- from the Wisdom Accomplishing all Actions, the blue light arises in the south.

From these five lights appear the five Buddhas of the Perfection Body, namely :

- From the Wisdom of Emptiness, Kūnnang Khyabpa of white complexion appears in the center of the heart, surrounded by fivefold lights; his Essence is that of an all-embracing Emptiness; in his hands, he holds a wheel of light and a victorious banner; he sits on a throne of powerful lions and embraces his *Yum*, the Goddess of the Sky.
- From the Mirror-like Wisdom, Selwa Rangjung of yellow complexion appears in the eastern direction, surrounded by fivefold lights; his Essence is that of a naturally luminous Wisdom; he holds in his hands a golden scepter adorned with immutable svastikas; he sits on a throne of elephants and embraces his *Yum*, the Goddess of the Earth.
- From the Wisdom of Equality, Gelha Garchuk of green complexion appears in the northern direction, surrounded by fivefold lights; his Essence is that of undifferentiated Clarity and Emptiness; he holds in his hands a turquoise scepter adorned with wheels; he sits on a throne of dragons and embraces his *Yum*, the Goddess of the Air.
- From the Discriminating Wisdom, Jedrak Ngōme of red complexion appears in the western direction, surrounded



by fivefold lights; his Essence is that of the unceasing All-Knowing Wisdom; he holds in his hands a copper scepter marked with lotuses; he sits on a throne of peacocks and embraces his *Yum*, the Goddess of Fire.

- From the Wisdom Accomplishing all Actions, Gawa Döndrup of blue complexion appears in the southern direction, surrounded by fivefold lights; his Essence is that of unobstructed activities; he holds an iron scepter adorned with Wishfulfilling jewels; he sits on a throne of horses and embraces his *Yum*, the Goddess of Water.

All these deities have a body whose dimension is approximatively that of mustard seeds, with proportional blazing Eyes (*spyang*) and attires. It is said that when the door of the blazing white crystal has been open, these will concretely arise in visions. This means that when the Crystal Channel is open, the dynamism of Awareness will manifest as the visionary displays of these deities.

In the center of the Conch Mansion in the brain, abide the Wrathful Deities known as the ten Couples of the Wrathful Gods of Wisdom :

- in the center abide Tsochok and his *Yum*, representing the Clan of the Heart (*thugs kyi rigs*);
- in the east abide Trose and his *Yum*, symbolizing the Clan of the Body (*sku yi rigs*);
- in the north abide Ngamse and his *Yum*, representing the Clan of the Qualities (*yon tan rigs*);
- in the west abide Welse and his *Yum*, symbolizing the Clan of the Speech (*gsung rigs*); and
- in the south abide Tumse and his *Yum*, representing the Clan of Activities (*phrin las rigs*).

All these deities are surrounded by an entourage of wrathful emanations and by fivefold lights, emanating infinite rays of various colors.

In terms of their manifesting in visions, there exists a channel which goes from the Conch Mansion to the eyes : it is owing to this channel that the hordes of Wrathful Deities shine through the Water-Lamp and appear in visionary displays.

In conclusion, Tapihritsa explains that the dynamism of Awareness which has been described here shows that Bodies and Wisdoms are not separated but abide as the visionary (or real) nature of Awareness itself.

## **6. The teachings of Chapter VI — The View of ultimate realization**

In Chapter VI, it is said that a precious Jewel is hidden in the splendid Crystal Mansion where it spread rays in the ten directions. According to Tapihritsa's explanation, the splendid Crystal Mansion is the heart (*snying*). The precious Jewel is one's Awareness (*rang gi rig pa*). Its being hidden means that Awareness is not material and cannot be seen by anyone<sup>144</sup>. Its blazing in the ten directions means that the Essence of Awareness (*rig pa'i ngo bo*), its dynamism (*rtsal*), its sanctuary (*gnas*), its object (*yu*) or domain in which it manifests, its pathway (*lam*) and its arising door (*sgo*) are all abiding in a transparent mode. To clarify further the discourse of Tapihritsa, Shardza Rinpoche adds the following information :

- since the Essence of Awareness is free from all kind of material characteristics and is not seen as an object of the senses, it abides in a transparent mode;
- since its dynamism is unceasing and manifest in various non-material ways, it abides in a transparent mode;
- since its sanctuary is that of the heart where it remains hidden but subsequently arises in a manifest way (when the key-points are applied), it abides in a transparent mode;
- since even if it were thrown in an iron jail it would nevertheless manifest in its visionary displays, its domain of manifestation abides in a transparent mode;
- since the glow of Awareness (*rig pa'i gdangs*), its luminosity, rays, *Thigles*, etc., manifest in the Crystal Tube (*shel sbug can*) and arise through the Water Lamp (*chu'i sgron ma*), its pathway or channel (*rtsa*) abides in a transparent mode; and

<sup>144</sup> This means that Awareness is not an object of the senses nor of consciousness.

- since the outer visions of the natural state are seen by one's inner Awareness (*nang gi rig pa*) and since the glow of this inner Awareness manifest outwardly, the eyes which are the arising door of Awareness abide in a transparent mode.

Thus everything — the body and the mind, as well as their objects — are primordially devoid of any materiality and abide simply in a transparency similar to the empty sky itself.

### **7. The teachings of Chapter VII — The experience of Non-Meditation**

In the seventh chapter, Tapihritsa explain the meaning of Non-Meditation as the fact that the realization of the transcending great Vehicle of the Great Perfection does not need to be meditated upon. This rather paradoxical statement — in the sense that one's deluded state definitely needs to be purified in order for one to experience the natural state in a non-regressive way — is explained by the following cryptic precept : « — O Son of Noble Clan! In the two self-arisen rock caves dwells the Ancestor, the Essence Buddha. Do you see him ? »

The meaning of the precept is as follows : the two self-arisen rock caves (*rang byung gi brag phug gnyis*) are the two eyes (*mig*). The Ancestor (*yang mes*) illustrates the abiding state of primordial liberation (*ye grol*) from all conditioned phenomena which does not need to be liberated anew. It symbolizes the Essence Buddha (*ngo bo nyid kyi sangs rgyas*) dwelling within the center of one's eyes and being concretely visible. Its support (*brten pa*) is one's own body. Its sanctuary is the center of one's heart. Its arising mode is that of Bodies (*sku*). Its abiding mode is that of lights ('*od*). It is sublimated within the center of one's eyes.

If one recognizes this, one should swiftly reach Enlightenment within this lifetime or at the time of the Bardo, even if one has committed great sins.

If one is able to reach the ultimate stage of the visionary displays manifesting at the doorway of the eyes, then without

fluctuating in the experience of the Essence itself, all the elements will manifest in visions and this will mark the emergence of the visions of Clear-Light (*'od gsal gyi snang ba*) : this is actually the arising of the pure realms of the Perfection Body abiding within oneself. Then, at the time of death, in an instant characterized by the fact that the outer breath (*phyi dbug*) has ceased whereas the inner breath (*nang dbug*) is not interrupted yet, one will see the arising of five-colored rainbows in the sky before us. In the center of these fivefold visions, one will envision the five clusters of the Buddhas filling the whole sky. At that very moment, by knowing how to manifest one's Awareness within these clusters, one will merge with these and obtain Buddhahood in a totally non-dual state. It is said that realizing such a visionary principle in true, concrete, experience is sufficient in itself and does not need to be meditated upon. In brief, Shardza Rinpoche concludes this section by saying that to simply recognize one's own visions (*rang gi snang ba*) is sufficient in itself. It has to be added here that such a recognition implies the fact of not regressing from such a stage.

### **8. The teachings of Chapter VIII — The Conduct expressing the manifold displays of Wisdom**

In this ultimate chapter, Tapihritsa explains in a symbolic way the Conduct (*spyod pa*) of the practitioner and the visionary splendors of Primordial Wisdom (*ye shes*). In the root-precepts, he says :

« — O Son of noble Clan! Within the depths of the Ocean, a precious Wishfulfilling Jewel which lied hidden is now bursting out on the summit of the Supreme Mountain, filling the sky with blazing rays of light. Do you see it ?»

The Ocean (*rgya mtsho*) is the heart (*tsitta*) and its depths are the empty inner part of the heart. The Jewel (*nor bu*) is one's natural Awareness (*rang rig*) which lies hidden within the confines of the heart. The Supreme Mountain (*ri rab*) is one's body and its summit (*rtse mo*), one's head. The arising or bursting out (*'thon pa*) of this Jewel means that the glow of Awareness abiding in the center of the heart enters the pathway of the channel (*rtsa'i lam*) opening within the Lamp of the Far-Reaching Lasso

in the eyes : this glow then manifests as the Body of Light (*'od kyi sku*) of the Three Bodies (*sku gsum*). The rays of lights filling the sky are all the visionary marvels forming the dynamism of Awareness (*rig pa'i rtsal*) manifesting in an outer manner (*phyir*) and forming the displayed splendors of Wisdoms (*ye shes yo lang*).

All these visionary manifestations form the "marvels of Awareness" (*rig pa'i cho 'phrul*) : these visions are devoid of inherent existence and manifest when one remains in a state free from conceptual grasping. However, these discursive thoughts are not to be conceived of as obstacles; rather, they form the "dynamism of Awareness" (*rig pa'i rtsal*). All these thoughts and the related passions and poisons which arise with them are entirely devoid of material existence and are simply the expression of the dynamism of Emptiness. On a slightly different perspective, the Buddha-Bodies (*sku*) and pure realms (*zhing khams*) which arise in the visions are considered as the "glow of Awareness" (*rig pa'i gdangs*) which can only be seen or contemplated by oneself and not by a third party. In this respect this glow is defined as one's natural glow (*rang gdangs*), an expression which occurs recurrently in Dzogchen works. This glow pervades the whole body but it is more precisely located within the secret confines of the heart, where it abides in the equipoise state of Emptiness and Clarity.

Such is Shardza Rinpoche's approach to the symbolic teachings contained in *The Eight Chapters*.

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## Appendix

### The use of the direct introductions (ngo sprod) during Empowerments

From the *sKu gsum rang shar spros bcas kyi dbang*, pp. 61-68. See also the *sPros bcas* from the *Yang zab nam mkha' mdzod*, p. 51 *et seq.*

The principles revealed in the *Eight Chapters* are also used in the context of initiations (*dbang*). This is a reason why some lineage holders of the *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud* have argued that the *Eight Chapters* should be the first text of the collection since it contains the core of the actual Initiation to the Dynamism of Awareness (*rig pa'i rtsal dbang*). This is definitely an approach which seems reasonable and most logical. However, it has been rejected by Shardza Rinpoche in his *Treasury of Space and Awareness* (*dByings rig mdzod*) because, according to him, the text contains the direct introductions (*ngo sprod*) to Awareness and to the Lamps (*sgron ma*) and in this respect, it should come after the *Instructions on the Six Lamps* (*sGron ma drug gi gdams pa*). In fact, since the text is essentially concerned with the visions of Clear-Light (*'od gsal gyi snang ba*) and those of Awareness (*rig pa'i snang ba*), it must rely on key-points which are actually described in the *Six Lamps* and more precisely in the *Six Essential Points* (*gNad drug*) which is an offshoot of the *Six Lamps*. Also, given the nature of the text itself — which simultaneously deals with the teachings of Cutting-through-Rigidity (*khregs chod*) and Passing-over-the-Crest (*thod rgal*) —, it must necessarily follow the Initiation to the Dynamism of Awareness proper. Moreover, its use of an highly esoteric vocabulary (*shin tu gsang ba'i tshig*) definitely justifies its classification among the Secret Section (*gsang ba*) of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü*.

In the initiation rituals of his *Natural Arising of the Three Bodies* (*sKu gsum rang shar*) and in his *Most Profound Treasury of the Sky* (*Yang zab nam mkha' mdzod*), Shardza Rinpoche directly refers to five of the eight chapters in order to explain the abiding mode of the natural state within one's body. These explanations — which however do not cover all the eight chapters — are compiled in this appendix.

1. *The abiding mode of one's body as the mandala of the Peaceful and Wrathful deities*

During the initiation, the master says to the disciples :

« — Ô Fortunate Sons of noble clan ! Listen ! The interior of the Brown Cornelian Tent adorned with the Sun and the Moon is filled with five kinds of precious gems. Do you see that ? »

The meaning of this symbolic question is as follows : the Brown Cornelian Tent is one's heart. The moon symbolizes the brain styled as the Conch Mansion. The Sun refers to the channels which fill the body just like the rays of the sun embraces everything. The fact that the heart is filled with five kinds of precious gems means that the natural glow (*rang gdangs*) of the five Wisdoms abides within one's heart. These Wisdoms arise as five lights (*'od lngar*) and abide as the luminous aggregates of the five Buddhas. Thus :

- from the Wisdom of Emptiness arises Künnang Khyabpa,
- from the Mirror-like Wisdom arises Selwa Rangjung,
- from the Wisdom of Equality arises Gelha Garchuk,
- from the Discriminative Wisdom arises Jedrak Ngöme,
- and
- from the Wisdom of Activities arises Gawa Döndrup.

The size of these Buddhas is that of mustard seeds and they have proportional luminous eyes.

Inside the Conch Mansion in the brain, the hordes of Wrathful Deities abide in the following manner :

- Trose stands in the eastern direction,
- Ngamse stands in the northern direction,
- Welse stands in the western direction,
- Tumse stands in the southern direction, and
- Tsochok Khangying stands in the central direction.

These Wrathful Deities are surrounded by an infinite entourage of manifestations representing their Body, Speech, Mind, Qualities and Activities.

The key-point to keep in mind here is that the heart and the eyes are linked together by a channel and that the eyes and the brain are also linked together in a similar way. Throughout the whole body, the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities pervade our channels, together with their assistants, entourage, etc., like sesame seeds.

The actual meaning of the symbolic question above is that one's body is since the beginning the very mandala of all deities and that these deities should not be searched for elsewhere. It is therefore important for those who train in the Generation Phase (*bskyed rim*) and who master its principles not to consider one's body as a simple ordinary body of flesh and bones.

## 2. *The Wisdom of the Buddha abiding within one's heart*

Then, the master declares :

« — Ô Sons of noble clan ! The precious casket is the heart and the Wishfulfilling Gem is one's Mind who fulfills all one's wishes. »

The basic meaning of this stanza is that all the qualities of Buddhahood actually come from one's Mind (*sems nyid*). The Essence of the Authentic and Perfect Buddhahood (*yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas*) is one's Mind and the latter abides as Transparent Wisdom within the center of one's heart, in the upper part of the body.

This Transparent Wisdom cannot be affected or covered by flesh, blood or physical aggregates because it precisely abides as one's own Natural Awareness (*rang rig*) embracing one's whole being. In particular, it abides within one's eyes, in the upper extremity of the Crystal Tube channel, without being covered by anything.

It is said that even if one were to put this Transparent Wisdom within an iron house, it would be impossible to keep it inside because it cannot be physically restricted by anything. It abides in as the immutable Essence of one's mind, beyond birth and death.

Therefore, this Transparent Wisdom which is the real nature of one's mind is nothing else than the Buddha itself which abides within oneself since the beginning. This also means that there is no other Buddha that should be looked for elsewhere.



### 3. *The Transparent Wisdom abiding within the eyes*

Then the master says :

« — Ô Sons of noble clan ! The Supreme Mountain is one's body. Its summit is one's head. The two cities on its summit are one's eyes. The five wild men living there are the Five Wisdoms translucently abiding within the two eyes. »

The meaning of this symbolic introduction is as follows : one's own mind abides within the center of the heart and arises through the pathway of the Crystal Tube channel in order to arise at the doorway of the eyes. The nature of this mind is luminous and perfectly free from obscurations. Its Essence is such that it is beyond characteristics and free from creation and destruction. Basically, it remains immutable and free from transformation. So one has to realize that the Buddhahood which abides within the two eyes since the beginning is the real state of Buddhahood and that it should not be looked for elsewhere. Therefore, one should not be bound by the fetters of dualistic grasping when one has reached such a clear understanding.

### 4. *The unceasing arising of the glow of Wisdom within visionary Space*

Then the master declares :

— Ô Sons of noble clan ! Within the Mansion of gold and turquoise appears a self-arisen stupa made of five kinds of jewels, remaining surrounded by pearls.<sup>145</sup>

The Gold symbolizes Reality (*bon nyid*), the utterly pure Space of Reality, free from all kinds of mental elaborations. The Turquoise Mansion symbolizes the Wisdom of one's Natural Awareness (*rang rig pa'i ye shes*). The Stûpa made of fivefold jewels which appears spontaneously represents the glow of Awareness manifesting in visions of uncreated Bodies and pure realms. The fact that this Stûpa is surrounded by pearls refers to the two eyes as doorways for the arising of visions within Space.

<sup>145</sup> The quotation of the precept is lacking in the original.

Thus, one's Awareness abides within the orbs of light within the heart — forming the Lamp of the utterly Pure Inner Space (*nang gi dbyings mam dag sgron ma*). From this abiding mode arise chains of lights which travel within the luminous channels up to the doorway of the eyes where the glow of Awareness manifests in the form of the Lamp of Empty Thigles (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*) blazing within the outer Space (*phyi'i dbyings*). These visions manifest in this cloudless sky in the form of the chains of Awareness (*rig pa lu gu rgyud*). Thus, it is said that when the five glows of the inner Space manifest in the sky, one should concentrate one's mind without distraction and hold the breath. At that time, the *Thigles* will stop moving or vibrating and will intensify in color and number. This visionary manifestation is called the "Vision of the Triple Pile of Wisdom" (*ye shes sum brtsegs kyi snang ba*), referring to :

- the vision of one's pure Nature (*rang bzhin dag pa'i snang ba*),
- the natural glow of pure Reality (*bon nyid dag pa'i rang gdangs*), and
- the luminous glow of pure Wisdom (*ye shes dag pa'i 'od gdangs*).

The "vision of the pure Nature" actually refers to the Essence of one's Awareness (*rang rig pa'i ngo bo*), which is styled as empty and free from concrete characteristics. The "natural glow of pure Reality" means that this empty aspect is unceasing and cannot be covered by anything, abiding in a translucent mode which is contemplated through the eyes. The "luminous glow of pure Wisdom" refers to the glow of Awareness located within the heart : this glow enters the Crystal Tube channel and goes up to the Water Lamp (*chu'i sgron*) from where it manifests as the Chains of Awareness in the sky.

Furthermore, one ought to recognize that the manifestations of phenomena are just the marvels of one's own Awareness; that all the visions of Bodies and pure realms are the glow of one's Awareness; and that all these visions are primordially uncreated and simply abide in the mode of the Single Thigle. For this reason, from now on, as a practitioner having power over the meditation of Thögel through which one has recognized everything as one's natural visions (*rang snang*), one should not remain on the com-

mon level of ordinary appearances and be brought back under the control of dualistic grasping.

### 5. *The spontaneous nature of Wisdom's dynamism*

This nature is illustrated by the following precept : « O Son of Noble Clan! On the beautiful golden meadow strewn with turquoise flowers abide the sun and the moon.»<sup>146</sup> The beautiful golden meadow is the Expanse of the Universal Base which abides in a totally neutral mode. The previous flowers that are scattered on this meadow represent the variety of virtuous and non-virtuous discursive thoughts. The clarity shining through the door of the turquoise mansion refers to the discursive activities of the six associations of consciousnesses projected through the doorway of the senses. Thus, through the eyes, ones perceives beautiful and ugly forms; through the ears, one hears melodious and dissonant sounds; through the nose, one perceives attractive and repulsive smells; through the tongue, one experiences sweet and bitter tastes; through the body, one feels soft and coarse contacts; and through the mind, one experiences the arising of joyful and sad thoughts. If we look at the essence of these perceptions, one realizes that they cannot be grasped at because they entirely lack any inherent existence. When one realizes this experientially, then one enters the knowledge of Wisdom and one realizes that thoughts and Wisdom are not really different from one another : thoughts are just the multifarious discursive expression of the manifestations of Wisdom. In this respect, thoughts are thus entirely subsumed under the expressions of the Wisdom of Awareness itself. For this reason, since the dynamism of this Wisdom is primordially unceasing, there are no thoughts that are to be rejected. And since from now on, one clearly experiences the single flavor of Wisdom in our Conduct (i.e. the flavor of Emptiness), one can easily recognize that there are no thoughts to produce or to reject and that these thoughts are simply a manifestation of the dynamism of Wisdom (*ye shes kyi rtsal snang*).

\*

<sup>146</sup> The quotation was lacking here too.



## Glossary

### **Absolute Body** (*bon gyi sku*)

The coalescence of Emptiness and Clarity abiding as the primordially pure mode of the natural state.

### **Awareness** (*rig pa*)

The direct, non-discursive knowledge of the natural state. It discerns (*rig*) its own nature in the same way a butter-lamp illuminates itself and its surroundings. This has nothing to do with an idea of “presence” which is a mental event and is basically a more or less subjective mental sensation. Obviously, the Awareness of Dzogchen is entirely different and does not depend on such sensations, consciousnesses, etc.

### **Base** (*gzhi*)

The ground or foundation of the natural state expressed in the triple mode of a primordially pure Essence, a spontaneously accomplished Nature and an unceasing Compassion.

### **Base of the Natural State** (*gzhi yi gnas lugs*)

The abiding mode of the real nature of the mind.

### **Bodies** (*sku*)

One of the two modalities (with Wisdoms) expressing the true essence of the Natural State and the fruit of Buddhahood.

### **Body of Perfect Rapture** (*longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku*)

See under Perfection Body (*rdzogs sku*).

### **Bön** (Bon)

The original spiritual tradition of Tibet, existing before the advent of Buddhism in the Land of Snow. Modern Bönpos recognize three kinds of Bön : 1. Ancient Bön (*bon rnying ma*), 2. Eternal Bön (*g.yung drung bon*) and 3. New Bön (*bon gsar*). What we are referring to Bön in this collection of works is the second kind of Bön.

### **Buddha** (*sangs rgyas*)

An enlightened being, having purified (*sangs*) his passions and having increased (*rgyas*) his Wisdom.

### **Clear-Light** (*'od gsañ*)

See under Passing over the Crest.

**Cutting through Rigidity** (*khregs chod*)

The practice consisting in cultivating the experience of the natural state, without artifice. It involves, after an initiatory stage, the capacity of integrating everything to this experience. Simply indulging in this experience without integration is of no use (for instance at the time of death).

**Dru Gyelwa Yungdrung** (Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung, 1242-1290)

One of the lineage holders of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* and *Nyamgyü* traditions. He wrote the main practice manual of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü*, entitled *Chaktri* (*Phyag khrid*).

**Dynamism** (*rtsal*)

The Dynamism of the Natural State is the expression of one's real nature arising as sounds (*sgra*), lights ('*od*) and rays (*zer*).

**Dynamism of Awareness** (*rig pa'i rtsal*)

This Dynamism arises as sounds, lights and rays at the time of the Base, when special circumstances are collected, during the practice of Thögel and during the Bardo of the Clear-Light of Reality.

**Dzogchen** (rDzogs chen)

The Great Perfection represents the natural state of the individual and the 9<sup>th</sup> Vehicle of Tönpa Shenrab's teachings. It is defined as a *Perfection* (*rdzogs*) because there is no need to add anything to it since it is already entirely perfected since the beginning. It is furthermore styled as *Great* (*chen*) because there is nothing that surpasses this state and Vehicle.

**Emanation Body** (*sprul sku*)

The Body used by the Buddha Tönpa Shenrab and other Buddhas to manifest on this plane of existence. In the restricted context of Thögel meditation, this Body refers to all the visionary marvels that form the natural display of Awareness.

**Essence** (*ngo bo*)

The primordially pure (*ka dag*) and empty aspect (*stong cha*) of the natural state, corresponding to the abiding mode of the Absolute Body (*bon sku*). When applied to the notion of Wisdom (*ye shes*), this Essence is defined as an empty and luminous state devoid of conceptualizations, dualistic grasping, etc.

**Eternal Bön** (*g.yung drung bon*)

The Eternal Bön tradition diffused by Tönpa Shenrab and supplanted the ancient Bön beliefs in Zhangzhung and Tibet. What is officially termed "Bön" in Bön monasteries and circles essentially refers to Eternal

Bön (and to New Bon, however to a lesser extent).

**Gyerpung Chenpo Nangzher Löpo** (Gyer spungs sNang bzher lod po)  
See under Nangzher Löpo.

**Instructions on the Six Lamps** (*sGron ma drug gi gdams pa*)

The root-text of the second section of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü*. It contains the basic teachings of the main practice of Dzogchen — namely Trekchö and Thögel —, as well as instructions on the Fruit and the Bardo. It has been commented by Dru Gyelwa Yungdrung and Uri Sönam Gyeltsen.

**Kama** (*bKa' ma*)

Uninterrupted line of transmission of teachings, as opposed to Terma or Treasure revelations.

**Khyabpa Lakring** (Khyab pa lag ring)

The Pervader-with-Long-Hands, the nemesis of Tönpa Shenrab, he eventually converted to Bön.

**King of Awareness** (*rig pa'i rgyal po*)

Awareness expressed as the ruler of all other consciousnesses and in particular of the mental consciousness. Identical to the King of Self-Knowing Awareness (*rang shes rig gi rgyal po*).

**King of Self-Knowing Awareness** (*rang shes rig gi rgyal po*)

See under King of Awareness.

**Kuntuzangpo** (Kun tu bzang po)

The primordial Enlightened One who is the source of the Dzogchen teachings. He is depicted as a blue naked Buddha, without ornaments.

**mind** (*sems*)

The process of inner discursiveness.

**Mind, Mind itself** (*sems nyid*)

The nature of the mind.

**Nangzher Löpo** (sNang bzher lod po)

The 26<sup>th</sup> lineage holder of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü*, he is said to have played a key-role in the protection of the teachings of Zhangzhung from the persecution launched by king Trisong Detsen. Together with his master Tapihritsa, he is responsible for the written codification of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

**Natural state** (*gnas lugs*)

The abiding mode of the real nature of the mind.

**Objects of Awareness** (*rig pa'i yul*)

Sounds, lights and rays.

**Oral Transmission of the Great Perfection in Zhangzhung**

(*rDzogs pa chen po zhang zhung snyan rgyud*)

The cycle of oral teachings that were eventually put into written form in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century by Tapihritsa and Nangzher Lōpo. It is divided in four main sub-cycles. See Achard, *La Structure du Zhangzhung Nyengyū* for a complete description of this cycle.

**Passing over the Crest** (*thod rgal*)

The Dzogchen practice of Clear-Light (*'od gsal*), centered around six key-points involving special postures, gazes, breathing techniques, etc. During this practice, one is confronted with Four Visions (*sngang ba bzhi*) which are signs indicating the intensity of our integration of Awareness (*rig pa*), these visions being variously intensified manifestations of the glow of Awareness (*rig pa'i gdangs*). This practice leads ultimately to the 16<sup>th</sup> stage of the Path and to the Fruit of the Rainbow Body (*'ja' lus*).

**Perfection Body** (*rdzogs sku*)

The spontaneous aspect (*lhun grub*) of one's Nature (*rang bzhin*), abiding in fivefold displays and multicolored manifestations. It is the first of the two Form Bodies (*gzugs sku gnyis*).

**Precepts in Eight Chapters** (*Man ngag le'u brgyad pa*)

The root-text of the secret section (*gsang ba*) of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyū*, mostly centered on the abiding mode of Buddhahood within oneself. This text actually contains the precise teachings used for the Initiation to the Dynamism of Awareness (*rig pa'i rtsal dbang*).

**Precepts Section** (*man ngag sde*)

One of the three Sections or Series (*sde gsum*) of the Great Perfection. This system essentially characterizes the Dzogchen tradition of India and is not used in the texts originating from Zhangzhung. The main practices performed in this Precepts Section are the cultivation of the natural state (styled Trekchō in the Indian tradition) and the practice of Clear-Light (styled Thōgel in the Indian tradition).

**Primordial Purity** (*ka dag*)

The Primordial Purity refers to the Essence of the natural state which is defined as stainless from the beginning and empty.



**Rainbow Body** (*'ja' lus*)

Sign of the realization of the Perfection Body (*rdzogs sku*), manifesting within the display of rainbows, lights, Thigles, and various atmospheric phenomena. This Body is the fruit of the practice of Thögel.

**Self-Arisen Wisdom** (*rang byung ye shes*)

The Primeval Knowledge being equivalent with Awareness (*rig pa*).

**Single Thigle** (*thig le nyag gcig*)

The unitary expression of the natural state. Its aspect of singularity or unicity means that it transcends all dualities, such as the two truths, etc. Its abiding as a *Thigle* is simply an expression of its perfection illustrated by its absence of edges, etc.

**Space of the Universal Base** (*kun gzhi'i dbyings*)

The Space of the Single Thigle embracing all beings without exception. This state is illustrated by the sky without limit which embraces everything.

**Spontaneity** (*lhun grub*)

The Spontaneity refers to the Nature (*rang bzhin*) of the primordial state and to its luminous aspect. It thus concerns the arising mode of the state and its dynamism. It has nothing to do with the Conduct as some deluded people think. Spontaneity precisely refers to the luminous nature of our mind and to its potential expressed in the variety of its arising modes.

**Tapihritsa** (*Ta pi hri tsa*)

The 25<sup>th</sup> lineage holder of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* and master of Nangzher Löpo. He reached the Body of the Great Transfer (*'pho ba chen po'i sku*) and is responsible, together with his disciple, for the codification of the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* into written form.

**Tazik Ölmo Lungring** (*sTag gzigs 'Ol mo lung ring*)

The birth-place of Tönpa Shenrab. Tazik is situated west of the Zhangzhung kingdom. Ölmo Lungring was its capital.

**Terma** (*gTer ma*)

Texts, objects or substances hidden by an enlightened master, to be revealed in future times by predestined individuals called Treasure Revealers (*gter ston*).

**Tönpa Shenrab** (*sTon pa gshen rab*)

The founder of the Eternal Bön tradition (*g.yung drung bon*).

**Trisong Detsen** (Khri srong lde btsan)

King of Tibet, described by the Buddhist as a *dharmaraja* and by the Bönpos as a persecutor of their faith. His role in the *Zhangzhung Nyengyü* is mentioned in a text entitled *The Reason why Bön was not abolished* (*Bon ma nub pa'i gtan tshig*) which most evidently compiles ancient material similar to that found in the Dunhuang caves but placed under the reign of another king.

**Universal Base** (*kun gzhi*)

The Base (*gzhi*) of all (*kun*) manifestations of Samsara and Nirvana. Not to be confounded with the consciousness of the Universal Base (*kun gzhi mam shes*) which corresponds to *alayavijñāna*, the consciousness-store of all karmic impregnations.

**Wisdom of Self-Awareness** (*rang rig ye shes*)

The Wisdom of the Natural State abiding in the heart of all sentient beings. It is the totally pure Knowledge of the real nature of Mind.

**Wisdoms** (*ye shes*)

One of the two modalities (with Bodies) expressing the true essence of the Natural State and the fruit of Buddhahood.

**Zhangzhung** (Zhang zhung)

Country located in what is nowadays modern western Tibet. It was conquered by Tibetans in the 7<sup>th</sup> century but the eventual conquest was, according to Bon sources, completed only in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

**Zhangzhung Nyengyü** (*Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*)

See under the *Oral Transmission of the Great Perfection in Zhangzhung*.

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*sPyi spungs khro bo gtso mchog gi zhal thang bkod pa khro bo'i pho nya ltar dang/ gyad dmag rnams rang gi sku bstod ltar bkod pa, sMan ri'i yongs 'dzin slob dpon bstan 'dzin rnam dag rin po che'i gsung 'bum, vol. 7, Triten Norbutse Library, 2005, pp. 54-60.*

**Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan**

*dByings rig rin po che'i mdzod, Shar rdza bka' 'bum, vol. I & II, Chamdo, 1990.*

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*sGron ma'i 'grel pa nyi 'od rgyan, Zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi gsung pod, n.p., n.d. (extra-large edition), pp. 355-416.*

**Anonymous**

*gSas mkhar rin po che spyi spungs yang gsang gab pa dgu 'grel khro bo 'bum pa dbang chen gyi gzhung, Bon gyi brten 'gyur chen mo, vol. 151, pp. 113-270.*

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