

BUDDHAHOOD in THIS LIFE

*The Great Commentary
by Vimalamitra*

TRANSLATED BY

Ācārya Malcolm Smith

FOREWORD BY CHÖKYI NYIMA RINPOCHE

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Edited by Michael Tweed and Osa Karen Manell



This particular text, *The Great Commentary* known as *Buddhahood in This Life*, is a remarkable summary of the Seventeen Tantras and hence provides an in-depth overview of the Great Perfection itself. The teachings of the Great Perfection were predicted to blaze forth in this dark time, and with the publication of this translation modern practitioners unable to read the original Tibetan can now benefit by clarifying their understanding and avoiding possible misinterpretations of such precious and subtle teachings.”

— CHÖKYI NYIMA RINPOCHE, FROM HIS FOREWORD

“*I rejoice and praise Ācārya Malcolm Smith’s direct translation from Tibetan into English of the Aural Lineage of Vimalamitra from the cycle of the Pellucid Transcendent State of the Great Perfection. Since it is certainly of great benefit to faithful practitioners of Dharma around the world, I sincerely wish that once they have realized the secret of the mind in dependence on all of the book’s instruction, which appear through the intimate instructions of the guru, they will be able to accomplish liberation into the body of light in one lifetime.*”

— TULKU DAGPA RINPOCHE

“*An inspired translation of one of the classics of the Great Perfection, unveiling the extraordinary tradition of the eighth-century pandit Vimalamitra. This book introduces the reader to the secret visionary instructions of thögal practice, the core of Dzokchen itself. Extensively based on the corpus of the Seventeen Tantras, the text reveals the entire path of the Great Perfection in a fluid and inspiring style that carefully follows the original.*”

— JEAN-LUC ACHARD, AUTHOR OF *THE SIX LAMPS*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword by Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche

Introduction

Prologue

SECTION ONE: The Explanation for Those Inclined toward the Elaborate

SECTION TWO: The Explanation for Those Inclined toward the Unelaborate

Topic 1: The Basis

Topic 2: How Delusion Arises

Topic 3: How the Basis Is Present in Sentient Beings

Topic 4: The Location of Pristine Consciousness in the Body

Topic 5: The Pathway of Pristine Consciousness

Topic 6: The Doorway of Pristine Consciousness

Topic 7: The Field

Topic 8: The Method of Practice

Topic 9: The Authoritative Signs

Topic 10: The Bardo

Topic 11: The Great Stage of Liberation

Table of Tibetan Equivalents

Bibliography

Index

About the Translator

ABBREVIATIONS

- DD: Dorje Drag edition of the *Dgongs pa zang thal*
GZ: *Dgongs pa zang thal*
N: Nechung edition of the *Dgongs pa zang thal*
NB: *Nyi ma 'bum*
ADZ: Adzom edition of the Seventeen Tantras
TDD: *Tshig don mdzod*
Tsham: Mtsham brag edition of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*

FOREWORD

THE TEACHING of the Great Perfection is considered the highest of all the Buddha's teachings, the summit of the nine vehicles in a context where *highest* means the closest and most essential way to directly know reality, which is the purpose of all of his teachings.

The author of the present book is Vimalamitra, one of three main masters who brought the Great Perfection teachings to Tibet. Padmasambhava described him in these words:

The master Vimalamitra was an emanation of the Great Compassionate One. The Indian Dharma king Aśoka had a daughter named Dharmabodhi, whose ravishing beauty was like that of a divine maiden. Once, while sleeping in a flower garden, she dreamed that an extremely handsome white man came and anointed her with a full vase of nectar. As the liquid passed down through the crown of her head, her body was filled with bliss. After twenty-one days, she gave birth without any discomfort to a baby boy. Thinking of the dreadful shame to have a child without a father, she abandoned the baby in the desert. Later she returned to look for the child and found him sitting with his eyes wide open and alert. Feeling compassion for the baby, she took him home and nurtured him. Month after month and year by year, the boy grew much faster than other children. When only five years had passed, he went to the monastery of Nālandā. With the paṇḍitas there, he studied the five sciences and the three collections of scripture. In particular, he became learned in all the tantras. He took ordination from the master Śrī Siṃha and was given the name Vimalamitra, "flawless renown." Following that, he became the most eminent among the learned paṇḍitas. He acted as the officiating priest for the wheel-turning Dharma king and resided in the monastery of Vikramaśīla in the company of five hundred paṇḍitas."

Invited by the Tibetan monarch, Vimalamitra came to Tibet during the time of Padmasambhava. In addition to promulgating many teachings of sūtra and tantra, he was renowned for translating the famed Seventeen Tantras and for promulgating the secret instructions connected with them. After many years, having attained rainbow body, he left Tibet for Mount Wutai in China. It is now held that every hundred years he sends an emanation out into the world in order to spread and rectify the teachings of the Great Perfection.

The text translated here comes from the well-known treasure cycle called the *Gongpa Zangthal*, which was revealed by Rigdzin Gödem, one of the five great treasure-revealing kings. *Gongpa Zangthal* is an abbreviation that could literally be translated as “the teachings that directly reveal the realization of the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra.” Its four volumes contain incredibly profound teachings on the entire path according to the Great Perfection. Authored by no other than Vimalamitra himself, this particular text, the *Great Commentary* known as *Buddhahood in This Life*, is a remarkable summary of the Seventeen Tantras and hence provides an in-depth overview of the Great Perfection. Vimalamitra arranges the teachings in eleven topics that cover all aspects related to the basis, the path, and the result. It is intended for those who have received the empowerments, reading transmissions, and instructional guidance of the Great Perfection in general and the *Gongpa Zangthal* cycle in particular.

The teachings of the Great Perfection were predicted to blaze forth in this dark time, and with the publication of this translation, modern practitioners unable to read the original in Tibetan can now benefit by clarifying their understanding and avoiding possible misinterpretations of such precious and subtle teachings. May it bring great blessings to this and future generations!

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INTRODUCTION

Homage to the Adibuddha, Samantabhadra

THE GREAT COMMENTARY *on Attaining Buddhahood in This Life*, known simply as the *Great Commentary* (*'Grel tig chen mo*), is an important Tibetan Buddhist text outlining the key teachings of the Seventeen Tantras of the intimate instruction class of Great Perfection tantras.

The Great Perfection teachings, known as Dzokchen (*rdzogs chen*) in Tibetan, are considered to be the ultimate view and practice of the Tibetan Buddhist school known as Nyingma (*rnying ma*), or “Ancients,” so called because they follow the texts and teachings of the early transfer (*snga 'gyur*) of Buddhism to Tibet.

Historical Background

The *Great History* (*Lo rgyus chen mo*) found within the *Heart Essence of Vimalamitra* (*Bi ma snying thig*) tells us that the teachings of the Great Perfection were brought to Tibet in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, principally by three disciples of the Indian master Śrī Siṃha: Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, and the Tibetan translator Vairocana. Vairocana is responsible for introducing two of the three main divisions of the Great Perfection teachings, which came to be known as the mind series (*sems sde*) and the space series (*klong sde*). Vimalamitra was the promulgator of a number of different cycles of Dzokchen teachings, of which the most important is the intimate instruction series (*man ngag sde*). Padmasambhava, by all accounts, did not promulgate Dzokchen widely during his sojourn in Tibet but instead hid many cycles of the intimate instruction class for later discovery by those destined ones known as treasure revealers (*gter ston*).

Following the assassination of the last king of the Yarlung dyanasty, Lang Darma, Tibet entered a “dark” period between 840 and 1000 CE for which there

is very little historical material to provide a clear account of what occurred during that time. The later diffusion of Buddhism is generally considered to begin with the return of the translator Rinchen Zangpo (958–1055) from his first trip to India to learn Sanskrit and bring back the teachings. Simultaneous with this new movement to import Buddhist teachings to Tibet, another important development was taking place — the emergence of the treasure tradition.

While it is not clearly known how the treasure tradition got its start, tradition holds that the first treasure revealer was Sangyé Lama (1000–1080). What is clear is that the treasures, known as *terma*, began to be recovered at roughly the same time that many new teachings were brought from India.¹

The teachings of the Great Perfection spread widely during the eleventh century. To account for all the developments and movements would require a book dedicated to the topic. Hence I will confine myself only to some general observations.

First, the terms mind series, space series, and intimate instruction series do not make any appearance in the primary or secondary literature of the Great Perfection until their appearance in the *Heart Essence of Vimalamitra*, revealed by Zhangtön Tashi Dorjé (1097–1167) when he was eighteen years of age. This terminology has since defined the Great Perfection tradition as a whole, and it is nearly impossible to discuss the Great Perfection today without discussing these categorizations.

Second, it is important to note that there were several major Great Perfection lineages practiced during the eleventh century. The first of these was the three systems of the mind series meditation instruction connected to the twenty-one bodhicitta texts,² namely the systems of Kham, Aro, and Nyang.³ There are five early mind series extracts (*sems sde lung*) translated by Vairocana: *Cuckoo of Vidyā* (*Rig pa'i khu byug*), *Great Garuḍa* (*Khyung chen ldings pa*), *Innermost Great Potentiality* (*Rtsal chen sprugs pa*), *Vajrasattva's Great Space* (*Rdo rje sems dpa'i nam mkha'i che*),⁴ and *Cultivation of Bodhicitta* (*Byang chub sems sgoms*);⁵ the thirteen later mind series extracts translated by Vimalamitra; as well as *The Supreme Source* (*Kun byed rgyal po*), *The Marvelous Primordial State* (*Rmad du byung ba'i rgyud*),⁶ and the *Ten Summaries* (*Mdo bcu*). Important commentaries on these texts are also included in the *Tantra Collection of Vairocana* (*Bai ro'i rgyud 'bum*).

The *Vajra Bridge* (*Rdo rje zam pa*) system of Dharmabodhi (1052–1168) is the second major trend. This tradition counts Śrī Siṃha and Vairocana among its founders⁷ and is connected to the space-series tantras, such as the *Secret Tantra of Pristine Consciousness* (*Ye shes gsang ba'i rgyud*) and so on. Other texts related to the *Vajra Bridge* are a series of treatises on the nine spaces (*klong*) and ancillary texts generally attributed to Śrī Siṃha and densely annotated by Yeshé Jungden (dates unknown). It would be remiss not to mention that the only master currently teaching the practice of these two cycles of teachings is Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

Third, there is the *Brahmin Cycle* (*Bram ze'i skor*), named after Vimalamitra, who is held to have been born to a brahmin family. The core texts of this cycle are largely the treasure revelations of Drom Yeshé Nyingpo, who likely lived in the mid-tenth and early eleventh centuries.

The last important observation is that apart from the system of the mind series texts and that of the *Vajra Bridge*, beginning with the *Brahmin Cycle*, all later developments of the Great Perfection tradition are grounded in treasure revelations.

Of all the tantras in the Great Perfection tradition, the collection of texts known as the Seventeen Tantras have exercised the most influence and are certainly the most important tantras. These texts systematically describe the key points of the theory and practice that we know today under the rubric of the intimate instruction series. The earliest account of the origin of the Seventeen Tantras is the twelfth-century lineage account written by Zhangtön, the *Great History* (*Lo rgyus chen mo*), followed shortly thereafter by the one found in Nyang Ral Nyima Özer's *History of the Dharma*.⁸ Zhangtön maintains that the Seventeen Tantras were recovered by Dangma Lhungi Gyaltzen 265 years after Vimalamitra departed to China. He goes on to say that the Seventeen Tantras were granted by Vimalamitra to Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo and hidden in a small temple that Nyang erected some distance away from Lhasa. They remained hidden there for a hundred years, at which time Dangma, the caretaker of the temple, removed them from their place of concealment. Thirty years after Dangma recovered the Seventeen Tantras, he passed them on to Chetsun Senge Wangchuk. While Chetsun was having them copied, he received news that Dangma had died.

The Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra

A note about the most important of the Seventeen Tantras, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* (*Sgra thal 'gyur rgyud*). This tantra identifies itself as the root tantra from which stem all other Dzokchen teachings. It is therefore the most significant tantra for the Heart Essence tradition. However, because its commentary, *Illuminating Lamp*, only circulated in various forms among a very limited community of scholars in Tibet, it is not a well-understood text.

The full title of this text as given in the Adzom Chogar edition of the Seventeen Tantras is *Rin chen 'byung bar byed pa sgra thal 'gyur chen po rgyud*, or as it is given in Sanskrit, *Ratnākaraśabdamaḥāprasāṅgatantra*. *Rin chen 'byung bar byed pa* or *Ratnākara* literally means a jewel mine, or a source of jewels, such as the ocean. In the *Illuminating Lamp*, *ratna* is glossed as “qualities.” *Śabda* (*sgra*) means “sound” and *mahā* (*chen po*) means “great.” It should be noted here that the Mtshams brag edition of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum* gives a very different Sanskrit title,⁹ and no Sanskrit terms are given in the commentary. This leads one to conclude that the Sanskrit titles are back translations.

The term that presents us with difficulty is *thal 'gyur*. This term has been translated in a variety of different ways. In general, it has followed the usage found in Madhyamaka studies, as “consequence.” Otherwise, “penetration,” “reverberation,” and so on are also commonly found. I have elected to let the tantra itself guide me in how to translate the name. The tantra exegetically divides the term *thal 'gyur* into its separate components. Two separate chapters explain *thal ba* and *'gyur ba*. The tantra itself explains:

The location of realms (*thal ba 'i gnas*) are of eight kinds:
world system, buddhafield,
protecting commitments, source of fault,
place of throwing, union,
fame, and destination. There are eight categories.
These are asserted as the locations of the realms.

While here I have translated *thal ba* as “realm,” in reality the term is glossed in the *Illuminating Lamp* as buddhafields that are permeated or strewn (*brdal ba*)

with precious powders (*bye ma*) of gold, sapphire, rubies, and so on.

As for *'gyur*, this term is straightforward in Tibetan. The tantra states:

Since transformation (*'gyur ba*) is the miraculous display of the elements through time, months, and seasons,

the experienced and knowledgeable yogin
also has expertise in the phases of transformation.

Thus, in this translation, the *Sgra thal 'gyur rgyud* will be translated as *The Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*.

The Pellucid Transcendent State of Samantabhadra

The *Great Commentary* is drawn from the four-volume cycle called the *Pellucid*¹⁰ *Transcendent State of Samantabhadra*, commonly known as the *Gongpa Zangthal*,¹¹ which was revealed from a treasure cache in the Tsang province in 1366 by Rigdzin Gödem (1337–1409).¹² Considered one of the five major treasure revealers in Tibet, Rigdzin Gödem founded one of the most important terma lineages, which became known as the Northern Treasures because his treasures were found on the northern side of the Yarlung Valley. In total, Rigdzin Gödem revealed sixteen large volumes of treasures from a box he found in a cave called Zangzang Lhadrak. The *Pellucid Transcendent State of Samantabhadra* forms one of the most important collections of teachings related to the intimate instruction series and is very widely practiced, second only to the *Four Branches of the Heart Essence* (*Snying thig ya bzhi*).

The most famous and commonly recited text from this cycle is the popular *Powerful Aspiration* (*Smon lam stobs pa che*), which forms chapter 19 of the explanatory tantra of the cycle. However, the real heart of the *Pellucid Transcendent State of Samantabhadra* cycle is a collection of texts called the *Aural Lineage of the Self-Liberated Great Perfection*. Chapter 8 of the *Great Tantra of the Pellucid Transcendent State of Samantabhadra* explains:

The six tantras for confirming mind, vidyā, and pristine consciousness are Paṇḍita Vimalamitra's two aural lineages, Vairocana's two aural lineages, and Padmasambhava of Oḍḍiyāna's two aural lineages . . . The six intimate instructions of the three vidyādharas all together are referred to as the *Aural Lineage of the Self-Liberated Great Perfection*.

The six aural lineages are represented by a total of eleven separate texts: five by Padmasambhava, four by Vairocana, and two by Vimalamitra, of which the *Great Commentary* translated here is one.

The Text

The *Great Commentary* has two major sections. The first section concerns the hermeneutics of the *nidāna*, the opening scene providing the setting of a given sūtra or tantra. The second section outlines the eleven topics themselves.

In the commentarial literature of Indian Buddhist tantra, much attention was paid to the subject of the *nidāna*, the opening statement of a sūtra or tantra, due in part to the fact that some tantras, such as the *Laghusaṃvara Tantra*, lacked the famous opening formula, “evaṃ mayā śrutaṃ ekasmin samaye” or “Thus I have heard at one time.”¹³ On the other hand, many tantras of the Great Perfection contain two *nidānas*, which can be somewhat confusing when initially encountered. The purpose of this section is to clarify the purpose and function of the two kinds of *nidāna*.

First is the uncommon *nidāna*, a unique feature of Great Perfection tantras in general, in which the one who explains the tantra and the one who compiles the tantra are identical. This also generally serves to outline the ultimate principles of the Great Perfection teachings. In this case, the phrase “Thus did I explain at one time” establishes the ultimate principle to be enunciated by the tantra in terms of the familiar Mahāyāna scheme of place, teacher, retinue, teaching, and time.

There is also the common *nidāna*, which is a more conventional retelling of the scenario of the tantra in question, in which a compiler such as Vajrapāṇi recounts, “Thus did I hear at one time,” and goes on to describe how a buddha gave a teaching to a gathered retinue at a particular place and time.

The regent of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Sangyé Gyatso, makes an interesting claim in the *Blue Vaidurya (Bai du rya sngon po)*, a commentary on the four medical tantras:

In those texts, *śrutaṃ* is translated as “explained” by the translators when the teacher and the compiler are the same, as is the case in the early translation school texts that are undisputed, such as the *Guhyagarbha*. When the compiler is different [from the teacher], *śrutaṃ* is translated as “heard.”

The extended discussion of the meaning of the *nidāna* found at the beginning of the following text is highly technical, and though fascinating, those who are not interested in detailed textual analysis may prefer to postpone studying it until

a later time. It does however offer insight into the elaborate hermeneutics that the writers of the intimate instruction system themselves employed in interpreting the Seventeen Tantras as well as other Nyingma tantras.

The Eleven Topics of the Great Perfection

The other major section of the book concerns the scheme of organizing the subject matter of the Seventeen Tantras into eleven specific topics. The model for this organizational scheme appears in the eighth chapter of the *String of Pearls Tantra* (*Mu tig phreng ba*), which lists the eleven points in the following manner:

Although reality is inconceivable,
pristine consciousness has three aspects.
Though there are many bases of delusion,
it is natural perfection (*lhun grub*) and compassion (*thugs rjes*).
Abiding within oneself are the kāyas, families, and pristine
consciousnesses.
The location of buddhamind is in the center of the heart.
The path is the four nāḍīs; vāyu causes movement.
There are four gates of arising: the eyes and so on.
The field is the sky free of clouds.
The practice is trekchö and thögal.
The gauge is the yoga of four confidences.
The bardo is the meeting of the mother and child.
The stage of liberation comes first.

Vimalamitra's commentary on the *String of Pearls Tantra* entitled the *Clarification of the String of Pearls Tantra* states:

[W]hen the summary of the Seventeen Tantras is taught through the pure topics, the profound summation is the summation of all the topics into the eleven words and meanings (*tshig don*).

The *Great Commentary* provides a complete account of those eleven topics,

which are divided into three divisions: the basis, the path, and the result (*gzhi lam 'bras*).

All schools in Tibetan Buddhism base the scheme of the basis, the path, and the result on a citation from the *Guhyasamāja Uttaratantra*:

A tantra is called a continuum.

This can be divided into three aspects:

the basis, the nature,
and the incorruptible.

The nature aspect is the cause.

Likewise, the incorruptible is the result.

The basis is called “the method.”

These three include the topics of tantra.¹⁴

The *Compendium Introducing Highest Yoga Tantra*¹⁵ by Śraddhākaravarman comments on this passage stating:

Now then, the tantras of mahāyoga are of two kinds: natural tantras and designated tantras. In that respect, the natural tantras are of three types when categorized: the causal tantra, the resultant tantra, and the method tantra.¹⁶

The *Stages of the Mahāyāna Path*¹⁷ by Subhagavajra states:

“Tantras” are tantras because of connection, and further, because they connect the basis, the method, and the result. When divided, there are two kinds: tantras of words and tantras of meaning. Words are sounds. There are three in the tantras of meaning: the tantra of the basis, the tantra of the method, and the tantra of the result. Now then, the tantra of the basis is the nature of the two truths, the method is the two stages, and the result is the two kāyas, the dharmakāya and the rūpakāya. Therefore, since the result is obtained when the method is cultivated in dependence on the basis, a tantra is so called because it connects.

Vimalamitra uses the three tantras to map the eleven topics in the following way: the first seven topics correspond to the basis. Within these, the first and

second deal with the generic basis (*spyi gzhi*), while topics 3 through 7 describe the person as the basis in terms of defining human anatomy from the perspective of the intimate instruction class of the Great Perfection. Topics 8 through 10 set forth the path. Finally, the eleventh topic defines the result.

The first of the eleven topics, arguably the most important, deals with the generic basis, which is initially defined by Vimalamitra in the section on the *nidāna* as “one’s unfabricated mind” (*rang sems ma bcos pa*). This crucial point should not be overlooked, for it would appear that Vimalamitra’s stance contradicts the modern tendency to interpret the generic basis as a transpersonal entity of some kind.

Much of the difficulty in unraveling the thought of the Great Perfection is due to a lack of understanding of the four principal operative words used to describe the various modalities of an individual’s consciousness: *shes pa*, *ye shes*, *shes rab*, and *rnam shes*. In addition to these, there are two more related and crucial terms: *rig pa* and *sems*. The relationship between all these terms is the primary focus of the second topic.

To further confuse matters these terms are not used systematically. For example, *shes pa* generally renders the Sanskrit *jñā* (and also *jñāna*). However, it is used not only to refer to consciousness generically; it also refers to the six sense consciousnesses (the five senses plus the intellect),¹⁸ as well as the mental factors. *Shes pa*, in the context of being a “consciousness,” connects the pristine consciousness of the basis and the deluded consciousness of sentient beings. This is clearly explained in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*:

The pristine consciousness (*ye shes*) subsumed by consciousness (*shes pa*) pervades all buddhas and sentient beings inseparably and without a nature.

The *Illuminating Lamp* commentary clarifies this a little further:

In Ati, the pristine consciousness — subsumed by the consciousness that apprehends primordial liberation and the abiding basis as ultimate — is inseparable in all buddhas and sentient beings as a mere consciousness. Since the ultimate pervades them without any nature at all, it is contained within each individual consciousness.

In other words, after running through a list of tenet systems, from non-

Buddhist through all the Buddhist systems of the nine yānas, the *Illuminating Lamp* declares that in Ati Yoga, pristine consciousness is a mere consciousness that apprehends primordial liberation and the generic basis as the ultimate.

We should also add the various terms for mind, such as *sems*, which renders the Sanskrit term *citta*; *yid*, which renders *manas*; and finally *blo*, which renders *buddhi* or *mati*. When we discuss these terms, it is important to ground their definitions in the texts themselves. Fortunately, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* provides further clarification:

Sems enters the pure and impure
three realms, and also buddhahood.

Yid is defined by the *Illuminating Lamp* as follows:

The nature of *yid* is entering diversity. The definition is that since there is entering and movement dependent on the slightest (*yid tsam*), it is called *yid*. When it is divided, there are six — “the mind that seeks everywhere” and so on, which are taught elsewhere so it won’t be written about here. Those, *sems* and *yid*, are called *shes pa*.

Blo is simply another term for mind or thought. Thus all of these terms should be regarded as generic terms for consciousness or mind.

It should now be apparent that when we see terms like *ye shes*, *shes rab*, and *rnam shes* — pristine consciousness, wisdom, and consciousness — they are referring to modalities of *shes pa* (which depending upon context is translated here as either “consciousness” or “awareness”). *Ye shes* specifically renders the Sanskrit term *jñāna*, *shes rab* renders *prajñā*, and *rnam shes* renders *vijñāna*.

Furthermore, the term *rig pa*, or knowledge, is the Tibetan term for the Sanskrit *vidyā*, which is the opposite of *avidyā* (ignorance). We have opted to leave this term in its original Sanskrit form because of its specialized usage in the intimate instruction series. A text from the *Heart Essence of Vimalamitra* called the *Lamp Summarizing Vidyā (Rig pa bsdus pa’i sgron ma)* defines *vidyā* in the following way: “. . . vidyā is knowing, clear, and unchanging.” In Sanskrit, the term *vidyā* and all its cognates imply consciousness, knowing, knowledge, science, intelligence, and so on. Simply put, *vidyā* means unconfused knowledge of the basis that is its own state.

Thus the first topic lays the groundwork by defining the original basis

“before realization produced buddhas and nonrealization produced sentient beings.” It describes the fundamental state of reality, pristine consciousness, upon which all of our relative perceptions of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are predicated. It is from this state of reality that our ignorance, consciousness (Skt. *viññāna*), mind (*citta*), and mentation (*manas*), as well as our knowledge (*vidyā*) and wisdom (*prajñā*), arise. It is noetically potent, as it gives rise to both omniscience in the case of a buddha and delusion in the case of a sentient being. Despite this bifurcation, the basis itself never undergoes any change, and as we shall see below, it is defined as atemporal. As the basis is an idealized starting point posited prior to the emergence of buddhas and sentient beings, before saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, in this context it is called “original” (*thog ma*).

Seven common philosophical positions in regard to the basis are described, the first six of which are seen to be partial or incomplete. These seven positions may also be found in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* and elsewhere. Vimalamitra himself refers the reader to the presentation of these arguments in the *Six Dimensions Tantra* (*Kun bzang klong drug rgyud*). However, he dismisses such arguments as being not worth much attention for practitioners, for whom this commentary is clearly designed. Only the seventh position is considered to be flawless. Here, the basis is defined as “great original purity” (*ka dag chen po*):

Dharmatā, original purity, is free from all proliferation. Since it is unaffected by ignorance, it is free from all obscurations.

The basis is endowed with the three aspects of essence, nature, and compassion (*ngo bo, rang bzhin, and thugs rje*). The essence (Skt. *svabhāva*) is original purity or, simply, purity (Skt. *śuddha*) and refers to emptiness. The nature (Skt. *prakṛti*) is natural perfection (*lhun grub*, Skt. *anābhoga*), and refers to the aspect of clarity (*gsal*). It is important to note that we are basing our translation of natural perfection on the commentary of the *Six Dimensions Tantra*:

Since “natural” (*lhun*) is unfabricated, it is natural (*ngang*). Since that never stirs, it is the primal nature (*rang bzhin*). Due to existing in that, it is the absolute nature (*bdag nyid chen po*). “Perfection” (*grub*) is the result since no accomplishment is necessary. Because there is no fabrication in that, it is the basis. Since there is no alteration from that,

it is the path. Further, it is defined as the dharmakāya from the aspect of existing naturally, it is defined as the sambhogakāya from the aspect of natural clarity, and it is defined as the nirmāṇakāya from the aspect of its pervasiveness. As such, the three kāyas are called “complete” because they are pure in that they exist without anything to abandon.

Compassion (Skt. *karuna*) is all-pervasive and refers to the inseparability of clarity and emptiness. While these three aspects are discussed separately, the pristine consciousness to which they all belong is in fact considered to be one.

Compassion deserves further discussion. While the *Illuminating Lamp* offers many definitions of *thugs rje*, the most salient is given in chapter 3:

Thugs is the affection (*brtse ba*) in the heart for sentient beings. *Rje* is the arising of a special empathy (*gdung sems*) for them.¹⁹

Hence, based on this citation, we have translated *thugs rje* as “compassion.”

It is here that we run into the first point of difficulty in an intellectual understanding of the basis. *Ye shes*, translated here as “pristine consciousness,” is the original, unadulterated state of consciousness. In fact, the underlying meaning of the term *ye shes* is connected to the identity of the basis as the nature of phenomena known in Sanskrit as *dharmatā*. The question then, which the second topic intends to address, is how beings arise from the basis. How is it that buddhas and sentient beings arise? Why is there delusion? Why is there liberation? What is saṃsāra? What is nirvāṇa? What is buddhahood? These are the questions that the Great Perfection seeks to answer.

The six faulty positions about the basis are each examined in terms of their suitability for the possibility of liberation. Although the path of the Great Perfection is often portrayed as being acausal, any position about the basis that seemingly interferes with the efficiency of cause and result is nonetheless rejected because it invalidates the path itself, which in turn would render liberation impossible. Vimalamitra cites the *Six Dimensions Tantra* as follows:

Since the cause and result are different,
[the basis] too is not [merely] naturally perfect.
Likewise, if the cause and result were the same,
effort would be meaningless.

This concern about the terminology of natural perfection stems from the tathāgatagarbha doctrine²⁰ upon which the teachings of the Great Perfection are based.

Within the context of original purity or emptiness, the language of natural perfection is acceptable to the Great Perfection teachings. Emptiness, or original purity, provides the escape hatch from any contradictions that might seem to arise from partial assertions about the nature of the basis. By defining the basis as originally pure, the tradition of the Seventeen Tantras is advocating a kind of generic basis, termed pristine consciousness, in which to ground instances of sentience as buddhas and sentient beings.

The first difficult question that such a theory must account for is how afflicted consciousness can arise. To this end we have the doctrine of clarity, which corresponds to natural perfection. I would like to suggest that what is intended by the term “original basis” (*ye gzhi*) is a pure empty consciousness. By the use of the term *ye shes* as a key descriptor for the basis, Great Perfection texts are referring to a noetic potentiality of consciousness that is innate, even when defined as originally pure or empty. Otherwise, it would become very difficult to account for the arising of buddhas and sentient beings in the second topic, the arising of delusion.

The fact that the basis has cognitive potential renders the basis animate, as opposed to the inanimate state of the four elements. As the *Six Dimensions Tantra* states:

If that aspect of pristine consciousness did not exist,
it would not be any different than the physical matter of the four elements.

Another key factor in the description of the basis, which is none other than the mind essence (*sems nyid*), is that it is luminescent (*gdangs*). As the *Six Dimensions Tantra* explains, the nature of the basis — clarity — possesses a luminescence that transcends visible light. This concept is addressed in the second topic.

The compassionate aspect of this empty consciousness is defined as the basis for omniscience. The *Six Dimensions Tantra* states:

As such, the pristine consciousness of omniscience
appears from the aspect of compassion.

The second difficult question is how we should reconcile the notion of a basis with standard Buddhist notions of conventional plurality. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* provides an answer:

Other than compassion arising as diversity,
it is not defined as one thing.

The basis has a single nature, but it is not in fact a single entity since a diversity is produced. The *Illuminating Lamp*'s comment on this line has another interesting definition of *thugs rje*:

Further, the mind (*thugs*) does not stir in any way; the experience (*'char sgo*) of diversity is engendered (*rje*) from its own objects that exist in differentiation.

The third difficult question concerns the issue of the temporality of the basis. Since time does not apply to the original basis, we must regard the use of terms such as “original,” “primordial,” and so on, as indicating a state in which time is irrelevant, rather than an actual conventional historical epoch or starting point that existed countless eons ago. From such a perspective, placing the original basis on a temporal spectrum is therefore a didactic myth. The net effect of this understanding is that the basis is *the* state of phenomena as they appear, in that all phenomena, both external and internal, appear within pristine consciousness. In employing this mythos of the basis as an ideal type, the state to which the practitioner will “return” at buddhahood, Vimalamitra makes the point:

[S]ince there is neither good or bad, nor large or small, in the reality of the original basis or in the reality of the individual vidyā of sentient beings in the present, it is said that the three times are one and undifferentiated. If it is asked why this is so, it is because that reality is self-originated, self-arisen, and self-liberated.

This statement renders superfluous the term “original” as well as any need to qualify the vidyā of sentient beings as being “in the present.” The basis can only be self-arisen and self-originated if temporality is not a factor. In other words, the constant references in Great Perfection texts to self-origination, self-arising, and so on only make sense in light of the absence of time. Vimalamitra's perspective excludes even pointing to a “now,” since the past, present, and future

are undifferentiated.

This also applies to the presence of the basis in sentient beings as vidyā. Since time is not a factor when it comes to the analysis of the basis, Great Perfection texts can define the liberation of sentient beings as timeless, meaning that the state of liberation is their unconditioned essential state. It is not something to gain; it is something to discover. More importantly, the basis is buddhahood and functions as buddhahood. We can understand this best through the detailed definition of how compassion exists in the basis while also appearing on the path and as the perfected result. Vimalamitra writes in the *Illuminating Lamp*:

When analyzed, there is the compassion that exists in the basis, the compassion that appears on the path, and the compassion of the perfected result.

Among those, since the compassion that exists on the path is undivided, it exists as the basis for the arising of the diversity. Since it is undisclosed, it has no activities.

There is the compassion that appears on the path. From among the three pristine consciousnesses of the basis, since the essence is intrinsically pure, [compassion] is not disclosed in any way. Since the nature self-appears, compassionate deeds are diverse. Since all beings are pervaded by compassion, compassion seems to appear as the one who tames those to be tamed.

The compassion of the perfected result intrinsically exists in the dharmakāya, comes from invocation and supplication to the sambhogakāya, and is produced when the nirmāṇakāya meets conditions and objects.

Therefore, given this, how do saṃsāra and nirvāṇa appear? How do the temporal processes start that give rise to buddhas and sentient beings as well as saṃsāra and nirvāṇa? This is the subject of the second topic: the arising of delusion.

It should be mentioned at the outset that the notion of the loss and recovery of our true nature is well-grounded in Mahāyāna sūtras. For example, the *Advice to the King Sūtra*²¹ states:

[A] great wishfulfilling gem, one's dharmakāya that has existed within

oneself from time immemorial,
was stolen by the enemy, self-grasping, at the very beginning.
Having concealed it amid the thicket of signifiers,
one is now bound and starts to wander in saṃsāra.

Having defined the basis, what is being described is reality “just as it is.” Buddhas are those who unerringly recognize this, and specifically, the idealized buddha known as Samantabhadra recognizes this not only in the absence of a teacher but without ever having become a sentient being. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* explains:

As such, in saṃsāra at the start and nirvāṇa at the end,
since the buddhas did not become deluded,
self-appearances were recognized as insubstantial (*rang bzhin med*)
by sense organs that rose up out of the basis.
There was no lapse into mental analysis of external objects,
and [the self-appearances] were ascertained to be their own movements.

This brings up another difficulty the Great Perfection texts must resolve: if the basis is essentially defined as the three kāyas, how does delusion arise? Vimalamitra answers:

[D]elusion arises from the difference between the basis and the conscious aspect of the basis. Apart from generally pervading, the so-called “basis” is totally undifferentiated, without any consideration of delusion or nondelusion. That so-called “knower” (*rig pa po*) or “mind” (the special assertion of a consciousness demonstrated in our own texts) is deluded.

At this point, the term *shes pa*, consciousness, is introduced. Here, deluded consciousness is described through the metaphor of illness:

[T]he delusion that a white conch is yellow is a delusion of the eye. That [delusion] likewise deludes itself. That which is called “undeluded” becomes deluded.

Here, one sees the first instance of mind or a knower in Vimalamitra’s

presentation of the eleven topics. When answering the question of where that consciousness comes from, the answer apparently lies in the concept of “the sense organs that rose up out of the basis.” Given that we have already discarded the notion of temporality with respect to the basis, it is logical to accept that “sense organs” refers to the consciousness that belongs to the basis. The commentary does not clearly define what sense organs are other than that they are “sharp.” This however does provide us with a clue. When it comes time to define how a sentient being is deluded, the *Illuminating Lamp* states:

[S]entient beings apprehend [objects] without delusion. Since they lapse toward external mentally apprehended objects, they are deluded.²²

Essentially then, when the appearances of the basis appear to the mental faculty (the sense organ that arises out of the basis) of some sapient beings, they immediately become buddhas since they suffer no distracting exteriorization of their experience. Others become distracted through the process of exteriorizing their experience, which by definition makes them “sentient beings.”

When discussing the process of how sentient beings, literally “mind possessors” (*sems can*), become deluded, according to the *Illuminating Lamp*:

Since the mind (*sems*) is adulterated with concepts within the body (an aggregate of assembled elements), the mind is dependent on the body. Thus the possessive particle *can* is used.

Thus, we can understand from this definition that a sentient being is an embodied mind. The *Illuminating Lamp* continues:

In reply to the question of how delusion occurs — as demonstrated above, because the delusion of phenomena releases the twelve fundamental members of the twelfold dependent origination and thus they deviate from their seats, delusion produces sentient beings based upon categories of the cycle [of dependent origination].

Having defined why sentient beings arise, the *Illuminating Lamp* then goes on to explain how sentient beings become deluded:

The mind (*blo*) of the conceptual analysis of the individual members

of dependent origination arises from the intrinsic luminescence of dharmatā manifesting as the five lights, i.e., conceptuality about the very clear luminescence of the five colors comes from thinking “I come from that” and “that comes from me.” Thus it is said that the mental faculty (*vid*) is captivated by the appearance of the light due to the buildup of external grasping. Since it is seen only as suffering, this nondelusion becomes delusion due to conceptual analysis.

The luminous aspect of delusion resulting from that is stirred by a subtle vāyu. Also, all the previous lights are stirred and obscured, such that the light’s own appearance grows dimmer and dimmer. After it becomes impure, the latent appearances of earth, water, fire, and air emerge and appear as subtle particles.

As was previously made clear, a mental faculty is proposed to “arise from the basis.” Despite the fact that time is irrelevant in the basis and makes such a notion of the arising of a sense faculty somewhat incoherent, the question remains: From where does the notion of “I” and “me” arise? In some sense, the tradition of the Great Perfection accepts that I-making is just a fact that happened to sentient beings as a natural product of the inherent dualism that arises when one’s consciousness does not recognize its luminescence to be its own. To put it another way, I-making happens when the mind exteriorizes its own manifestations. However, it is important to note that the tradition of the Great Perfection is very adamant that the light spoken of in this context is not to be confused with visible light but rather is the cognizant “light” of our own fundamental consciousness.

Having clarified how matter forms out of the reifications of the mental faculty that arise out of the basis, we have now laid the groundwork for discussing sentient beings and how they can escape from this state. Thus we now turn toward our next topic: the way in which the sugatagarbha, the essence of buddhahood, is present in sentient beings.

The third topic defines sugatagarbha as the basis present in sentient beings and explains how vidyā exists in the body. Above we saw how the *Illuminating Lamp* defines sentient beings as essentially “mind possessors.” This definition is important since the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:

Because mind pervades all embodied beings,
there are no buddhas without sentient beings.

At this juncture Vimalamitra adds two more crucial terms: “vidyā” and “wisdom.” Here, vidyā is presented as the instantiation of the basis (*sugatagarbha*) in a given sentient being. When describing vidyā as the nature of Buddha Amoghasiddhi,²³ Vimalamitra notes:

Because the aim of buddhahood exists in the manner of a seed in the pristine consciousness of one’s vidyā, there is definitely success through practice.

Vimalamitra clarifies wisdom:

Wisdom is nothing other than vidyā itself; it is called “self-originated pristine consciousness.”

Thus wisdom defines the discerning function of vidyā.

This section also defines a fairly standard tantric view about how the Three Jewels — Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha — are complete within the body. The essence is the dharmakāya, the Buddha; the nature is the sambhogakāya, the Dharma; and compassion is the nirmāṇakāya, the Sangha. Since the three kāyas are complete in vidyā and because vidyā is just the pure nature of the mind that inhabits the body, the Three Jewels are complete within any given sentient being.

This section also examines another standard theme in Buddhist tantras: how all phenomena are complete within the bodies of sentient beings.

The fourth topic concerns the “anatomy” (*gnas lugs*) of vidyā, where it is located in the body. Here, we turn from the more theoretical concerns to the practical human anatomy necessary to understand the foundation for Great Perfection practice. Like other tantric systems, the Great Perfection relies on the notion that anatomical facts about the human body can be used as aids and enhancements for Buddhist meditation practices. In this presentation pristine consciousness is located in the center of the human body, inside of the heart cakra.²⁴ For example, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:

The jewel present within the heart
in the center of one’s body is great pristine consciousness.

Compare this with the *Hevajra Tantra*:

Great pristine consciousness is present in the body,
perfectly free from all concepts,
pervading all things,
present in but not arising from the body.

The metaphor commonly used for this is “the youthful vase body.” This metaphor is also found in one of the ten tathāgatagarbha sūtras, the *Āṅgulimālā Sūtra*:

Indeed the dhātu resides inside of ten million afflictions, just as a lamp resides inside a vase. When the vase is broken, the lamp shines brilliantly and beautifully. [Likewise,] the sugatagarbha that is revealed is perfect buddhahood. The absence of afflictions is like the lamp. The sugatagarbha to be revealed is either encased in afflictions or without afflictions. Whatever the case, it is called “perfect buddhahood.” Venerable ones, when the afflictions, such as hundreds of millions of afflictions, are broken by entering the path of liberation, afterward one sees the original dhātu, like amalaki fruits in one’s hand.

The Sanskrit term *dhātu* itself is a complicated term with many meanings and uses. Its common meaning is to describe a source, like a mine, or the elements of which something is composed. In Abhidharma it is used in the scheme of the eighteen dhātus, such as the dhātu of the eye, the eye consciousness, form, and so on. In Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna texts it is commonly a contraction of the term *dharmadhātu*. Further, the Tibetan terms *dbyings* and *khams*, used to translate *dhātu*, have their own semantic connotations in Tibetan. *Dbyings* bears the meaning of space, source, and nature. *Dbyings* also carries with it the meaning of a bounded space (*klong*), another one of the ways it is used when employed in the praxis of Great Perfection meditation. *Khams* conveys the meaning of element or nature.

Here, dhātu refers to *buddhadhātu*. The *Uttaratantra* states:

If the buddhadhātu did not exist,
there would be no revulsion for suffering,
there would be no desire, no striving,
and no aspiration for nirvāṇa.

The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states:

[T]he transcendent state of the perfect buddhas is supported. It is supported on the material aggregate, for example, like an eagle sleeping in its nest. It has a location. It is located in the heart, for example, like a figure in a vase.

Having established the location of pristine consciousness, the text turns to its pathway, invoking the standard trio of nāḍīs, vāyus, and bindus (*rtsa*, *rlung*, and *thig le*).²⁵ While the treatment of the channels, known as nāḍīs, will be very familiar to anyone who is versed in the anatomical systems of Guhyasamāja, Hevajra, or Kālacakra, below we will discuss a slight but important variation that defines the key point of Great Perfection contemplation, which differentiates it from other tantric systems.

Vimalamitra introduces the fifth topic with a citation from the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*:

The pathways of the pristine consciousness of vidyā
are the cakras of one's nāḍīs.

From the location of the intrinsically complete three kāyas
arise the rasanā, lalanā, and avadhūti.²⁶

Based on the four cakras in the center,
[these] three nāḍīs maintain the body.

Since these exist on the right, left, and in the center,

the body and limbs develop
through the distinction of relative and ultimate,
and the lamps are ripened.

As we can see, this presents a very standard account of the nāḍī-cakra system found in Buddhist tantras. Vimalamitra then continues with a standard presentation of conception and gestation of the human embryo that shows how the nāḍīs, vāyus, and bindus develop in the body, and their classification and relevance to Dzokchen practice.

The sixth topic, the doorway of pristine consciousness, presents the special nāḍīs upon which the practice of thögal (*thod rgal*) is based. These nāḍīs are considered to be the ones that govern sense perception. They are described as running from the heart through the central nāḍīs and then winding through the right carotid artery before splitting into tips, each of which connects to one of the sense organs of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.

The nāḍī critical for Dzokchen practice is the one that penetrates the eyeballs. This anatomy is essential for understanding the subject of the four lamps, which receive their first mention here and are fundamental to the practice of thögal. The main thrust of this section is to demonstrate the primary components that enable one to have the quintessential Dzokchen experience: the direct perception of dharmatā.

The seventh topic demonstrates the field in which pristine consciousness appears. The forms (*kāyas*) in the bindus that exist within the heart are projected through the nāḍīs and seem to appear within the sky in front of the practitioner. This discussion necessarily involves the internal field, the basis for such a projection, and the external field, the screen upon which the bindus are projected.

Therefore we can see that Dzokchen practice is based on a very sophisticated understanding of the human body, as well as an interpretation of how the development and transformation of the entoptic phenomena of the stages of the four visions are related to the process of attaining awakening.

According to Vimalamitra, these seven topics demonstrate “the reality to be realized,” also known as the basis.

The eighth topic is the longest and presents the path. It can be divided into two main sections.

The first section involves a number of preliminaries, such as identifying a

qualified guru, receiving empowerment, and so on, together with the liberating instructions.

The liberating instructions are further subdivided into two sections. The first subdivision is for those who are inclined toward perceptual objects. This includes descriptions of what are termed the four yogas — conduct, meditation, view, and the result — following the sequence presented in chapters 3–6 in the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra*. The second subdivision is for those who are inclined toward the self-appearances of vidyā, the liberating instructions on the practices of trekchö and thögal.

Trekchö is defined as “the superior intimate instruction for the lazy who attain buddhahood instantly without meditation practice” and “the system of buddhahood through immediate liberation as a directly perceived realization that is not connected to appearances.” Here, the main content is the presentation of a variety of introductions to dharmatā.

The term *trekchö* (*khregs chod*) is normally defined in one of two ways. The first is to take the *chod* as the imperative form of the word *gcod*, meaning “to cut.” *Khregs pa* is understood to refer to something hard, solid, or unbreakable. Therefore, in this case it would literally mean “cutting solidity.” The second interpretation takes *chod* as an intransitive verb with the meaning “unravel” and the word *khregs* as “bundle,” meaning “an undone bundle,” like a hay bale with the twine removed.

Thögal on the other hand is defined as the path of “the diligent who gradually attain buddhahood through meditation” and “the practice of the direct perception of pristine consciousness.” Here, the gradual procession of the four visions is described in some detail. As for the meaning of *thögal*, the most common way to understand it is that *thod* means “top” or “summit” and *rgal* means “to cross.” Thus *thögal* is commonly glossed as “crossing the peak.” The other interpretation is that *thod* means “forehead” and *rgal* means “beyond,” referring to the visions that appear in the space before the practitioner.

The path of Dzokchen presented in this book is the practice of thögal. All that we normally consider part of the preliminary practices of Dzokchen, the separation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa and so on, are included here within the category of thögal practice.

The ninth topic concerns the signs of a successful practice. The commentary notes that the path thus described is confined to this life. If one attains all the signs described here, there will be no bardo, or intermediate state, between death

and one's next birth.

The tenth topic involves teachings for those who do not succeed in practicing the complete path but who do have all the instructions. This chapter presents the instructions for dying and for recognizing and attaining liberation in the bardo. If the practitioner does not succeed in being liberated in the bardo, this next section describes how he or she will take rebirth in the natural *nirmāṇakāya* buddhahelds and eventually attain buddhahood. Finally, it points out the consequences of not encountering the instructions of Dzokchen, meaning taking rebirth in the six realms.

The eleventh and final topic concerns the result, buddhahood. Here, there is an extensive presentation of the three *kāyas*, their modes and functions.

I was initially exposed to these eleven topics during the late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's visit to the United States in 1993. Later, while on a three-year retreat during the mid-1990s, I read and partially translated Longchenpa's short work on the eleven topics. Longchenpa himself wrote the famed *Treasury of Words and Meanings* devoted to a complete explication of the eleven topics, and they are also covered in his *Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle*. After attending the complete transmission of the *Pellucid Transcendent State* cycle in 2011 given by H. H. Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche, I spent the next ten months translating the bulk of that five-volume cycle, which also includes the separate but related cycle *Self-Arisen Original Purity*.

As I began to translate the texts of the aural lineage of Vimalamitra, I discovered that a text with the title *The Eleven Words and Meanings of the Great Perfection*,²⁷ attributed to Nyibum,²⁸ the son of Zhangtön Tashi Dorjé,²⁹ had been published in Tibet. I ordered this text and upon reading it discovered that Nyibum's text and the text found in the *Pellucid Transcendent State* were virtually identical in structure and content. I relied on both manuscripts in preparing this translation, reading them carefully side by side. In addition, I relied on Longchenpa's *Treasury of Words and Meanings*, which proved useful in clarifying a few points that were unclear in the other two texts.

I have tried as much as possible to note variant readings for the benefit of the scholarly, and I have also endeavored to show where I prefer readings found in one text or the other. But I have not made an effort to prepare a critical edition. While that is a desideratum, it is a task left to someone else.

I relied on two versions of the *Pellucid Transcendent State*, the Dorje Drag edition published in Delhi in 2000 and the Nechung recension published in 1979 by S. W. Tashigangpa in Leh.

I would like to express my thanks to the following people who have had a direct impact on this translation. First, I would like to acknowledge my primary gurus: His Holiness Sakya Trizin, from whom I received my first empowerment, the *King's Tradition of Avalokiteśvara* from the *Mani Kabum*, as well as many other empowerments, both major and minor; His Holiness Jigdral Dagchen, from whom I received Lamdré; Her Eminence Jetsun Kusho, from whom I first received the *Naro Khachö Lobshe*; Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, from whom I received the three series of Great Perfection completely and perfectly, and who has unsparingly helped me with any questions I have had for the past twenty-two years; the late Kunzang Dechen Lingpa, who treated me like a son, from whom I received all the transmissions connected with the *Nyingthik Yabshi*, as well as the *Chetsun Nyingthik*, *Thiklé Gyachen*, and so on; His Holiness Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche, from whom I received the *Gongpa Zangthal* cycle of teachings twice, once as a text blessing in Holyoke, Massachusetts, in 2001, and then again in 2011 in the more traditional form of the complete empowerments and reading transmissions; and Khenpo Migmar Tseten, Buddhist chaplain of Harvard University, from whom I received the uncommon *Naro Khachö* blessing as well as many instructions on the practice of Ārya Tāra, and learned Tibetan grammar and philosophical systems.

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Last, and by no means least, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my mother, K. Wilkinson, and my father, Barry Smith, without whom none of this would have been possible.

In closing, I would like to stress that this translation has been prepared primarily for the serious practitioner who has the transmission for the teachings contained here. The reader should have received the necessary empowerments and reading transmissions. The Great Perfection tradition, like the Buddhist tradition in general, is an orally transmitted tradition, and one cannot expect to make any progress in its teachings without having received transmissions in a proper way. Without proper guidance by a qualified master who has understood and realized the meaning of the Great Perfection, one is sure either to not understand or, perhaps worse, to misunderstand the subject matter. However, with proper guidance by a qualified master, it is certain that one will be able to gain confidence in one's view and practice, and to quickly traverse the path to perfect buddhahood.

I dedicate the merit of this translation for the benefit all sentient beings. May they all attain the two flowers of a precious human birth — freedom from illness and longevity — which in turn produces the three fruits — wealth, happiness, and Dharma.

I supplicate Mahākala, Mamo Ekajaṭī, Zadud Rahula, and Damchen Dorje Legpa. I openly confess and reveal to them any mistakes and errors that I have made in understanding or presenting these profound teachings, and I appeal to their compassion and patience. Samaya.

Malcolm Smith
Ashfield, Massachusetts

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1. For more information on the treasure tradition, see Tulku Thundup, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1994).
 2. This collection of texts is characterized by the near universal use of the term *bodhicitta* in their titles, indicating the subject matter of the text. Today, these texts are commonly understood as comprising the mind series. They are all found in the first volume of the Mtsham brag edition of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*.
 3. These three lineages of meditation instructions on the mind series system are preserved in the *Gdams snags mdzod*, compiled by Jamgön Kongtrul.
 4. See Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, *The Supreme Source* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1999).
 5. See Mañjuśrīmitra, *Primordial Experience* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1987).
 6. See Elio Guarisco, Adriano Clemente, and James Valby, *The Marvelous Primordial State* (Arcidosso: Istituto Shang Shung, 2013).
 7. See Sten Anspel, “The Space Section of the Great Perfection (rDzogs-chen klong-sde): a category of philosophical and meditative teachings in Tibetan Buddhism” (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2005).
 8. Nyang Ral Nyi ma 'od zer, *Chos 'byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud* (Bod rjongs bod yig dpe snying skrung khang, 2010). Nyang Ral writes, “The Unsurpassed Great Perfection was an instruction to the trio of Ka, Nam, and Cog, hidden as a treasure by Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo. He gave the instruction to Zhangchen of Samyé and Chetsun Senge Wangchuk. The latter instructed Chegom Nagpo; in turn, he instructed Kalden Yoso. The Dharma of the explanation and practice spread widely.” Note that Zhang chen was another title for Zhang ston.
 9. *Śabdatadrātramaḥāratnākaratantra*.
 10. *Zang thal* or *zang ma thal* is a term used predominantly in the Great Perfection tradition. The term means that pristine consciousness is simultaneously unimpeded and completely transparent, like a crystal ball.
 11. *Kun tu bzang po sgongs pa zang thal*.
 12. See Martin J. Boord, *Gathering the Elements* (Berlin: Wandel, 2013).

13. It instead begins, “Then, to explain the secret . . .”
14. See citation in Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991), p. 262.
15. *Yogānuttaratantrāthāvatārasaṃgraha*.
16. The causal tantra is the basis, the resultant tantra is the result, and the method tantra is the path.
17. *Mahāyānapathakrama*.
18. Cf. *Sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa*.
19. Vol. 1, p. 214.
20. The tathāgatarbha doctrine is an essential Mahāyāna Buddhist teaching concerning the “natural luminosity” or purity of the mind that forms the basis for attaining buddhahood.
21. *Rājadeśasūtra*.
22. Vol. 2, pp. 24–25.
23. In this section of the text, each of the five buddhas is described as an aspect of vidyā. Here, it is saying that Amoghasiddhi exists as the aspect of definite success because sugatagarbha exists as a potential in vidyā. The point is that the basis is not transpersonal but personal.
24. In other systems, this is considered to be the location of consciousness.
25. Rather than translate these terms, we have left them in Sanskrit. Nāḍīs run the spectrum from coarse physical structures — such as nerves, arteries, and blood vessels — to what are termed “subtle” physical structures, such as the avadhūti channel. Vāyu is the element of air inside of the nāḍīs that governs all movements. Bindus are of several kinds and are the elements moved around the body inside of the nāḍīs. These three physical aspects of the human body are discussed in this topic.
26. These three channels are the main channels described in all esoteric anatomy. *Rasanā* means “flavor” and is located on the right side of the body in males and the left side in females. *Lalanā* means “solitary” and located on the left side of the body in males and the right side in females. *Avadhūti* means “shaken off,” a reference to how it is free from the karmic vāyus that flow in the physical body.
27. Nyi ma ’bum, *Rdzogs pa chen po tshig don bcu gcig pa* (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2008).
28. *Zhang nyi ma ’bum*.
29. The tertön who revealed the Vima Nyingthik.



THE GREAT COMMENTARY ON ATTAINING BUDDHAHOOD IN THIS LIFE

*Intrinsically Clear Pristine Consciousness:
The Commentary on the Utterly Secret Unsurpassed Great Perfection, the
Instruction to the King,
the Great Aural Lineage of Vimalamitra,
from the Pellucid Transcendent State of Samantabhadra*

༄༅ ཀུན་རྒྱུ་བཟང་པོའི་དགོངས་པ་ཟང་ཐལ་ལས། བི་མ་མི་འཁོར་སྤོང་བརྒྱད་ཆེན་པོ་
རྒྱལ་པོ་ལ་གདམས་པ་ཡང་གསང་བླ་ན་མེད་པ་རྫོགས་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་འགྲེལ་པ་
ཡེ་ཤེས་རང་གསལ། ། བི་མ་ལའི་སྤོང་བརྒྱད་འགྲེལ་ཏིག་ཆེན་མོ་ཡང་ཟེར།

PROLOGUE

To the Adibuddha, the guide Changeless Light,³⁰
to Vajradhara, the dharmakāya who engages in the benefit of beings, to the
four vidyādharaś who show the perfect definitive meaning, to the
assembly of peaceful and wrathful devatās, the self-appearance of
pristine consciousness, to the ḍākinīs who directly reveal great bliss,
and to the guru endowed with the essential lineage, I pay homage with
devotion of body, speech, and mind.

IN THE CHIMPHU CAVE at Samyé, the intimate instructions that King Trisong
Detsen requested from Ācārya Padmasambhava, Paṇḍita Vimalamitra, and the
translator Vairocana were taught in the six chapters of the aural lineage of the
vajra master, the intention of the utterly secret unsurpassed Great Perfection.

Padmasambhava of Oḍḍiyāna taught two: the precious aural lineage of the
perfect meaning and the aural lineage of introducing dharmatā.

Vimalamitra taught two: the aural lineage that causes understanding through
the method of explanation and the aural lineage that liberates through practice.

Vairocana taught two: the aural lineage of distinguishing mind and pristine
consciousness and the aural lineage of the practice of the five methods of
equipoise.

Those six are the condensed quintessence of the 6,400,000 tantras of the
utterly secret unsurpassed Great Perfection.³¹ [2b]

Ācārya Padmasambhava concentrated all the great intimate instruction
tantras, condensing their meaning into a few words. Vimalamitra extensively
analyzed and taught on the basis of the twenty-one tantras.³² When Vairocana
requested the Dharma of the Great Perfection from the great Vidyādhara Śrī
Siṃha, he was granted the critical points of the intimate instructions of the aural
lineages that he taught to the king without any additions or omissions.

This is the outline of the six chapters of the aural lineages of the vajra
masters.

Samaya. Sealed, sealed, sealed.

Having paid homage with devotion of the three doors to the lamas of the
lineage of the three kāyas,
Paṇḍita Vimālamitra

aurally transmitted the intimate instructions
to King Trisong Detsen.

Samaya. The symbol dissolves.

30. *'Od mi 'gyur.*

31. These texts of the aural lineage may be found in the GZ, vol. 2.

32. These are tantras belonging to the Seventeen Tantra corpus.

SECTION ONE:

The Explanation for Those Inclined toward the Elaborate

THE DHARMAKĀYA BUDDHA called “the Adibuddha, the Guide Changeless Light,” who is also known as Śrī Samantabhadra and whose form is endowed with the major and minor marks, exists without ever moving from the uniform transcendent state.³³ The potentiality³⁴ of his pristine consciousness manifests in five aspects as the sambhogakāya, the five families of victors with colors and complete ornaments, and the fathers and mothers along with their retinues. [3a] The sambhogakāya’s compassion arose as the Victor Mahāvajradhara, whose transcendent state never moves from the state of dharmatā, endowed with the six higher perceptions.³⁵ Through his great compassion and skillful means, Mahāvajradhara arrived on the Amolika rock in the Trāyastriṃśa heaven. Having seen the inconceivable variety of dispositions of the minds of sentient beings to be tamed, apart from teaching inconceivable doors of taming Dharma and categories of vehicles, for those of the very best capacity he taught the tantras of the unsurpassed secret natural Great Perfection. That is the position of Paṇḍita Vimalamitra.³⁶

It is said that the intimate instruction of explanation includes four subjects:

1. The external explanation of tantra through the perfections of the nidāna³⁷ for the benefit of those inclined toward elaboration
2. The internal explanation of the subjects of the text for the benefit of those inclined toward slight elaboration
3. The secret explanation of the definitive intimate instruction for the benefit of those inclined toward less elaboration [3b]

4. The utterly secret unsurpassed totally complete explanation of the concise meaning of the intimate instruction for the purpose of those inclined toward the least elaboration Sovereign King, listen! In the future here in Tibet the deceptive words of a clever māra will arise, “Teaching a Dharma that is not a sūtra or a tantra of the Buddha is wrong.” In order to sever such doubts, at that time the intimate instruction method of explaining the tantras taught by Buddha

Vajradhara should be explained.

1. Now then, in addition, the external explanation of the tantra of the perfections of the nidāna for the benefit of those with elaborate minds is explained with the five perfections: place, teacher, retinue, teaching, and time. Since it is the source of the Dharma, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: . . . and plants five kinds of seeds
in the first nidāna that produces the tantra.

And:

The basis is the five divisions.

The *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra* states: The great secret tantras are explained by the five perfections. [4a]

As such, by teaching it as fivefold, since the basis to be tamed in the continuum of the person to be tamed is located within the five aggregates, the five perfections are taught as the taming antidotes. The perfection of place is explained for the purpose of purifying the aggregate of matter, the teacher for consciousness, the retinue for perception, the teaching for sensation, and the perfection of time for mental formations.

Further, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: For each individual to be tamed

there are five aggregates to tame.

That which tames them is the nidāna.

If explained in detail, there are forty-five methods of explanation. In the context of practice, nothing is shown apart from symbolic understanding.

Further, the nidānas become two, meaning the secret uncommon nidāna explained in our own texts and the common nidāna explained in the same way as in other vehicles. Apart from these two, the validity together with the rejection of contradictions is explained. Further, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The body is the two kinds of nidānas:

[. . .] the specialness of the uncommon³⁸

is the sign of superiority over all vehicles. [4b]

This is the meaning of the statement from the *Union of the Sun and Moon*

Tantra: Common and uncommon.

The Uncommon Nidānas

1.1 The uncommon nidāna is comprised of three parts: (1) the five perfections of the character of reality,³⁹ (2) the five perfections of practicing the path, and (3) the five perfections of the ultimate result.

The Character of Reality The mode of existence of reality has two: (1) the basis of the essence, reality, and (2) the basis of the body's structure.

The Perfections of Reality

1.1.1.1 The five perfections of the essence, reality: The perfection of place is dharmatā free from proliferation,⁴⁰ not established through any characteristic, and not established within the experiential range of words and syllables. Since the teacher (the mode of the existence of things) does not exist even as a word upon which proliferation is based, he is not established in terms of faces and hands because he is not established as a nominal proliferation. The perfect retinue for such a teacher is the self-originated,⁴¹ self-arisen⁴² display of dharmatā. The perfect teaching for such a retinue is one's own vidyā, the ultimate teaching — though it originates, it is self-originated; though it arises, it is self-arisen without being created by any cause or condition; [5a] and it is free from arising and perishing. Though it is present pervading all, its characteristic cannot be understood by anyone. As such, since place, teacher, retinue, and the Dharma to be explained meet in the natural reality of things, the perfect time is called “without beginning or end.” The *Heap of Jewels Tantra* states: From the nonexistent empty source of phenomena

the primordial Adibuddha
has always turned the wheel of Dharma
as the intrinsic sound of empty dharmatā
through the special pristine consciousness of vidyā
without a beginning, middle, or an end.

The *Unwritten Tantra* states: Amazing! Listen retinue of sublime appearances! The vidyā of reality manifests as the unceasing vidyā of the method of appearances.

The *String of Pearls Tantra* states:

I am the teacher, the retinue, and the teaching.
I am the retinue that I gather. I am the collator.⁴³

The Structure of the Body

1.1.1.2 The five perfections of the body's structure: the perfect place is the celestial mansion of the precious heart cakra in which the nāḍīs in the maṇḍala of one's body meet. Since that is the location, [5b] it is the source of all qualities; it is perfect. The meaning is that an inestimable collection of kāyas and pristine consciousnesses exist in a single body with pure endowments and pleasures. That body causes liberation from bondage through subtle material particles. Through such a recognition of the body as the place, proliferation of other is severed. That is a critical point of the Great Perfection beyond activities and effort.

The perfect teacher in such a place as that is Samantabhadra, self-originated as the king, one's knowing consciousness.⁴⁴ Pervading all, he is the teacher present as the nature of the pristine consciousness that knows all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. Since he is the teacher, knowing consciousness arises as a diversity without ceasing. Since there is liberation on the basis of that diversity, there is liberation from objects and cognitions of consciousness.⁴⁵ Since such a teacher is self-arisen in oneself, it is a critical point of the Great Perfection that is beyond activities and effort.

If it is wondered what is the retinue for such a teacher, he exists surrounded by the five kāyas, the five pristine consciousnesses, the five lights, the five wisdoms, the five vāyus, and so on, which will be extensively explained below. [6a] Since those are the retinue, because they gather and attend, they appear as a

diverse pure display. Since those [five pristine consciousnesses] arise from one's body, they are called "the five self-originated pristine consciousnesses." Those pristine consciousnesses liberate one from the bondage of external and internal ideation.

If it is asked what Dharma is to be explained to such a retinue, it is the bliss of the nonconceptual pristine consciousness based on the nāḍīs, vāyus, and bindus. Since that is also the teaching, there is buddhahood based on this. Since it is perfect, the qualities of buddhahood are fully perfected because one practices based on any of those [nāḍīs, vāyus, and bindus]. That causes liberation from the bondage of sensations of pleasure and pain. Since those qualities originate from oneself and arise from oneself, it is a critical point of the Great Perfection free from other efforts.

As such, the location is the body, the teacher is vidyā, the retinue is the kāyas and pristine consciousnesses, and the teaching is the intimate instruction of the method of nāḍīs, vāyus, and bindus. When these meet in the present body, because it is the perfect time, the purpose is accomplishing buddhahood.

If the result of buddhahood is not accomplished now, since it is accomplished with difficulty later on, the purpose is to make progress. [6b] If one wonders why that is a perfection, it is perfect when there is a meeting of the sublime Dharma, the teacher, the special buddhafiield, oneself (born of a family of good karma and good fortune), and one's devotion to the utterly secret, unsurpassed, special Dharma. Since there is no impediment to awakening, therefore the bondage by the formations of karma, affliction, and secondary affliction are severed in the present. As such, because the basis, one's unfabricated mind, arose as the essence of the sole reality, there is no need to search elsewhere for the place, *etc.* Thus, that is called self-originated pristine consciousness. In that respect the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: At the beginning of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, the aggregates of combined elements arose

from the self-originated unfabricated state.

The vāyu and mind (the cause and condition) in the center of the four elements — earth, water, fire, and air — [all] merge, thus generating the celestial mansion.

Unfabricated self-originated vidyā,
totally pure of delusion

retinue, pure of confusion,

is the retinue of the method of great bliss gathered in the body.

Since the kāyas, pristine consciousnesses, wisdoms, and vāyus are inseparable and are not perceived to be diverse, the Dharma of the great bliss of the method of nāḍīs and vāyus [7a] is explained in accordance with individual experience.

The past, present, and future do not exist.
Never separated, completely inseparable,
all is self-originated pristine consciousness.

The Perfections of Practice

1.1.2 Now, the perfections of practice:⁴⁶ when practicing in such a place, the perfections are also explained in five subjects.

Within those are two: (1) the basis practiced as trekchö is the explanation of the reality of entities and (2) the path practiced as thögal is the perfect place, the external dhātu and internal dhātu.

The perfect teacher is the vajra chains. The perfect retinue is the kāyas and bindus. The perfect teaching is one's nonconceptual vidyā. The perfect time is the meeting of these in the gaze. [The *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra*] states:⁴⁷

Through the distinction of the outer and inner condition, already arisen,
one's vidyā is the teacher.

The kāyas, pristine consciousnesses, and bindus,
a nonconceptual category, arose as the retinue.

The practice instruction is the principle of the teaching.

Cultivating that is also the time. [7b]

The Perfections of the Result

1.1.3 As such, the ultimate result which that path manifests is the perfect place, the dharmadhātu. The perfect teacher is the essence, the pristine consciousness of one's vidyā, the all-knowing buddha. The perfect retinue is the enjoyment of

the inconceivable display of kāyas and pristine consciousnesses. The perfect teaching is immaculate great bliss. The perfect time is the manifestation of realization. The *Blazing Lamp Tantra* states: The great appearance (a nonindividuated and undifferentiated totally inseparable state) manifests from the maṇḍala of emptiness, the basis (manifesting as limitless). Unceasing vidyā self-arose from the dimension⁴⁸ of the basis of great primordial intrinsic clarity (self-arisen as the unceasing enjoyment of the great self-appearance). From this state, this inexpressible meaning was taught, is being taught, and will be taught.

That is the uncommon explanation of “the nidāna of the meaning to be explained.”

The Common Nidāna

1.2 Now, the explanation of the common nidāna in conformity with the common vehicles and mere citations. The words [8a] that illustrate the subject to be illustrated are realized on the basis of the discourses of the Buddha free from stains of addition and omission. Those words were spoken by the teacher of the three kāyas.

The dharmakāya teaches through blessing. The sambhogakāya teaches through its own essence. The nirmāṇakāya teaches through well-formed phrases, teaching by means of the sixty tones.

If it is asked in what place it is taught, it is taught in the place of the dharmakāya, the dharmadhātu palace, Akaniṣṭha; the place of the sambhogakāya, Gaṇḍavyūha; and the location of the nirmāṇakāya, Alakāvātī, pure Tuṣita, Vajrāsana, and so on.

If it is asked by which teacher it is taught, the dharmakāya teacher is Samantabhadra and the sambhogakāya teacher is Vairocana. There are three for the nirmāṇakāya. The actual nirmāṇakāya for the dharmakāya called “Mahāvajradhara” is Śrī Vajrasattva. The nirmāṇakāya of the Vajra family is Vajrapāṇi. The nirmāṇakāya for taming the six kinds of migrating beings with methods is the six munis.

If it is asked to which retinue it is taught, the dharmakāya teaches to the retinue of the assembly of devatās of self-appearing pristine consciousness, the inconceivable five families of peaceful and wrathful deities. [8b] The sambhogakāya teaches with symbols to the retinue that arises for the benefit of migrating beings, which is none other than the five fathers who are the nature of

method, Akṣobhya and so on; the five mothers who are the nature of wisdom, Akāśadhateśvarī and so on; the bodhisattvas, Kṣitigarbha and so on; and the eight female bodhisattvas, Lāsyā and so on. The nirmāṇakāya teaches through words to an inestimable transcendent retinue of buddhas, bodhisattvas, mahāśrāvakas and so on, together with an inestimable mundane retinue of the eight great devas, the guardians of the directions, planets, asterisms, devas, nāgas, asuras, and gandharvas who have all taken worldly forms. Those are explained in the nidāna of the *String of Pearls Tantra*.

If it is asked what perfect Dharma is taught to such retinues, the dharmakāya taught the inexpressible meaning. The sambhogakāya taught the six self-originated syllables.⁴⁹ [9a] The nirmāṇakāya taught inconceivable sūtras and tantras.

If it is asked when these were taught, the dharmakāya unceasingly teaches when realization self-appears. The sambhogakāya teaches when dharmatā appears as aspects,⁵⁰ meaning in a pure vision. The nirmāṇakāya teaches for as long as saṃsāra is not emptied through the generation of supreme bodhicitta, teaching from an infinite lifespan down to that of one hundred years. Such teachings are called “the temporary perfect time.” The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The basis has five divisions.

The location is held to be three . . .

Thus the perfections are extensively explained through three. The *Heap of Jewels Tantra* states: The dharmakāya (intrinsically free of grasping)

teaches Dharmas without proliferation
(which come from the nonabiding, intrinsically exhausted mind
without having been spoken and without being spoken now,
in a state of total uniformity)

with speech free of characteristics
in the self-appearing palace free of proliferation
to a retinue inseparable from himself.

The sambhogakāya (pure intrinsic clarity) [9b]

disseminates Dharmas of pure insubstantiality
(which come from the mind that unifies the five pristine consciousnesses)
from the tongue of pure light rays
with speech of great bliss without proliferation
in the palace of the five pure lights

to the retinue of the kāyas of the five families.

Also, the six syllables
are explained as totally self-originated without being spoken.

The nirmāṇakāya (without clinging),
the source of the Dharma in his own place for taming,⁵¹
disseminates the Dharmas for any capacity
(which come from his mind of intrinsically clear memory)
with his tongue (an organ free of grasping)

with verbally proliferated speech
teaching the Dharma of the enumerated vehicles.

As such, the self-arisen three kāyas
satisfy the minds of all sentient beings,
bodhisattvas, and buddhas
and likewise fulfill the hopes of migrating beings.

Thus, the common nidāna is explained.

1.3 As such, the validity of demonstrating two kinds of nidānas: the so-called uncommon nidāna, “Thus I explained at one time,” intends the depth of the intrinsic meaning because it shows the teaching is not spoken by someone else. [10a]

The common one, “Thus I heard at one time,” intends broadness because it is spoken in conformity with what is widely known.

Further, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: For the purpose of superiority over others,

the uncommon is applied to the body;
the essentials are gathered into the essence [. . .]⁵²
and for explaining compatibility with the other vehicles,
there is the common nidāna.

If it is asked what is the purpose for such a teaching as the two nidānas, “Thus I taught at one time” is teaching within the retinue with the discourse of the teacher because it is shown to be ultimately superior to other lineages. It is a phrase for the purpose of creating confidence in the collator, which means “because other migrating beings attained buddhahood, you should have confidence and listen to this tantra that I have taught, which is secret to others in other buddhahelds.” The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The speech of the teacher teaches the retinue;

the supreme amazing collator is the lord of the teaching. [10b]

“Thus I heard at one time” is a phrase of the collator. Through fear that others will not have confidence in the collator himself, “Heard by me” removes doubt in order to generate confidence in his own retinue because there is no intermediary between the teacher and himself.

The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The common
nidāna

is explained for creating confidence
in the collator's own retinue.

The tamer arises from the field to be tamed
to make the dispensation remain.

Regarding the rejection of contradictions, if it is claimed that demonstrating two *nidānas* is contradictory, are “taught” and “heard”⁵³ then contradictory? Is there a contradiction between these two categories?

1) If it is claimed that there is a contradiction between “Thus I explained⁵⁴ at one time” and “Thus I heard at one time,” the consequence would be that the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*'s statement, “Thus I explained at one time, ” is contradicted.

2) If it is said that “Thus I explained at one time” exists, but “Thus I heard at one time” does not exist, is this absence true or false? If it is true, the existence of “Thus I heard at one time” is truly contradicted. [11a] If false, that directly contradicts your claim.

3) Further, if it is claimed that “Thus I explained at one time” is a substitute for “Thus I heard at one time,” does this statement originate from the teacher of the tantra or is it your own concept? If the former, you are confused. If the latter, it is an exaggeration. If it is claimed to be interpretable, here it is also claimed to be interpretable.

4) Further, if the existence of “Thus I heard at one time” is correct, it also is established as correct because its absence would be incorrect; in other words, there is no contradiction with the teaching by the teacher being heard by the collator.

If it is claimed that there is a contradiction, then clearly it is the claim of a *māra* or a type of non-Buddhist *tīrthika* who speaks confusing words.

In general, when the facts are stated, some *sūtras* and *tantras* say “taught” and some say “explained.” Other *tantras* say “heard.” Others say both, yet others say neither. However, this must be understood to be noncontradictory.

If it is claimed that there is a contradiction between these two categories, then the following are contradictory because two occur as a pair: the explanation of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* as a pair; the two truths in the perfection vehicle; both name and text in common Secret Mantra; [11b] creation and completion, and method and wisdom as a pair in Secret Mantra.

Thus the outer explanation of the tantras through the principle of the nidāna for the benefit of those with elaborate minds is explained.

Samaya. Sealed, sealed, sealed.

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33. *Dgongs pa*.
 34. *Rtsal*.
 35. Skt. *abhijñā*; Tib. *mngon shes*.
 36. This section is an expansion of the introduction in NB.
 37. The opening line of a sūtra or a tantra; for example, “Thus have I heard at one time.”
 38. The last two verses are drawn from reply 9, as given in the *Illuminating Lamp* concerning the nidānas.
 39. *Gnas lugs*.
 40. To be “free from proliferation” means that dharmatā cannot be thought of as existing, not existing, both, or neither.
 41. *Rang byung*.
 42. *Rang shar*.
 43. Following ADZ.
 44. *Shes rig*.
 45. *Rnam shes*.
 46. The text departs here from NB.
 47. The text presents a truncated citation: *rang rig sngon 'byung ston pa rtse/*. The full citation is: *rang rig ye shes sngon byung bas// shes rab rang byung ston pa chi/*.
 48. *Klong*, often translated as “space” or “dimension,” translates the Sanskrit word *āvṛta*, which bears the connotation of hidden, covered, enclosure, etc.; hence here I am translating it as “dimension.” It also can render *dhātu*.
 49. NB: *rang 'byung yi ge med pa*. These are རམ་ཉལ་མཐ་
 50. This is a pun on the Tibetan name of the sambhogakāya, Vairocana, i.e., *rnam par snang mdzad*.
 51. These two lines are missing from NB.
 52. This line is drawn from reply 9, as per note 38 above.
 53. *Bstan* and *thos*, respectively.
 54. *Bshad*.

SECTION TWO:

The Explanation for Those Inclined toward the Unelaborate

NOW, FOR THE BENEFIT of those inclined toward the unelaborate, there are five topics in the inner explanation of the definitive intimate instruction, the meaning of the text: 1. The topic of the narrative account in order to create confidence 2. The topic of the divisions of yoga in order to recognize the introduction into the general and specific characteristics of the vehicles 3. The topic of the purpose in order to be free from the illness of fever through the effort of verbosity 4. The topic of the words that disclose the context in order to conquer the syllables of the words 5. The explanation of the names of the root topics in order to explain that all phenomena are gathered into the state of one's vidyā free from a basis of proliferation Further, the *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra* states: Recognize the name with the root topic.

Explain the entryways with the topic of yoga.

Rest in one's own state with the topic of the purpose.

Present the main section with the topic of the words.

Satisfy minds with the topic of the narrative account. [12a]

Regarding the validity of defining these five topics, since the five afflictions that are the basis of taming exist in the continuum of a single person to be tamed, those five topics are explained to be the taming remedy. Nonreferential meditation is intended for those afflicted with ignorance. The nonreferential view is intended for those afflicted with hatred. The conduct free from accepting and rejecting is intended for those afflicted with desire. The basis free from deviation and obscuration is intended for those afflicted with pride. The result without abandonments or obtainments is intended for those afflicted with jealousy. As such, there is no need for more than five topics. The topics would be incomplete if there were fewer, therefore, five topics are defined.

The [*Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra*] states: If the topic of the narrative account is not explained, there will be the fault of lack of confidence

in this great secret definitive discourse.

If the root topic is not explained,

there will be the fault of endlessness

because all phenomena will not be included in vidyā.

If the topic of yoga is not explained,

the greater and lesser stages will be meaningless

because vehicles are not differentiated. [12b]

If the topic of the words is not explained,

there will be the fault of not conquering the syllables of the words that clarify the tantras in stages.

If the topic of the purpose is not explained,

there will be the fault of lack of purpose

for the Great Perfection free from efforts.

2.1 First, there are two in the explanation of the subjects of the narrative account to create confidence: (1) the narrative account of buddhahood, the method of buddhahood for a single person (the support) and (2) the narrative account of sentient beings that confirms the precious oral tradition.

2.1.1 First, the narrative account of buddhahood for the person (the support): Some people with incorrect views make the claim, “As such, though an explanation through the five perfections may be profound, the method of buddhahood, the tantras, the techniques of practice, and signs of realization do not exist.”

Ultimately, the texts of the tantras are explained with eleven topics: 1. Demonstrating how the basis (the natural reality of entities) is present in the beginning before realization produced buddhas and nonrealization produced sentient beings 2. Confirming the way delusion occurs regarding the basis present in that way [13a]

3. Demonstrating the principle of how that basis is present as the basis or seed of perfect complete buddhahood in sentient beings at the time of delusion
4. Demonstrating where such a basis is located within oneself in this life
5. Demonstrating through which path the pristine consciousness of vidyā (present in such a way) travels
- 6.

Demonstrating the path that the pristine consciousness of vidyā emerges from or the door through which the pristine consciousness of vidyā arises 7. Demonstrating in which field that pristine consciousness (which has arisen through the doorway) appears 8. Demonstrating how a person (the support of that pristine consciousness of vidyā that appears in the field) practices 9. Identifying the signs of practice 10. Demonstrating how the bardo of dharmatā arises when the lazy do not make time to practice even when they possess the intimate instructions for this 11. Demonstrating what are the great stages of ultimate liberation Further, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: What are the critical points of the origin of saṃsāra? [. . .]⁵⁵

How does the delusion of sentient beings occur?

What is the reality of the pristine consciousness of one's vidyā?

In what location is it located?

Through what path does it arise?

What is the door to the arising of pristine consciousness? [. . .]⁵⁶

What is the critical point of the field in which it arises?⁵⁷

How does one practice? [13b]

What are the signs of that and what are the authoritative appearances?

What are the appearances of the bardo?

Into what liberation is one's mind liberated?

The *String of Pearls Tantra* states: Although reality is inconceivable, pristine consciousness has three aspects.

Though there are many bases of delusion,

the basis of delusion is natural perfection and compassion.

Abiding within oneself are the kāyas, families,⁵⁸ and pristine consciousnesses.

The location of buddhamind is in the center of the heart.

The path is the four nāḍīs;⁵⁹ vāyu causes movement.

There are four gates of arising: the eyes and so on.

The field is the sky free of clouds.

The practice is trekchö and thögal.

ཏཱིཌ་མཆོག་གི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་དུ་བཞུགས་པའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་དུ་

The gauge is the yoga of four confidences.
The bardo is the meeting of the mother and child.
The stage of liberation is first.⁶⁰

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55. Two lines are elided from the citation: *'das pa'i tha ma gang gis bzung// sangs rgyas ma 'khrul gnad 'di ci/*.
56. Two lines are elided from the citation: *sgron ma'i gnad ni ji lta bu// de'i mtshan nyid ji lta snang/*.
57. Two lines are elided from the citation: *nges rten khyad par gang gis sgrub// blo rims gnad ni ji lta bu/*.
58. Following the reading given at 264b in the *Clarification of the String of Pearls*.
59. These four nāḍīs will be explained below.
60. Following ADZ.

TOPIC 1: *The Basis*

2.1.1.1 The first of the eleven topics is how the basis (the natural reality of things) is present before realization produced buddhas and nonrealization produced sentient beings. In general, the positions of the tradition of the Great Perfection do not exceed seven: 1. The position that asserts the basis is naturally perfect⁶¹

2. The position that asserts the basis is unfixed⁶²

3. The position that asserts the basis is ultimately fixed⁶³

4. The position that asserts the basis is totally mutable [14a]

5. The position that asserts the basis can be accepted as anything at all

6. The position that asserts the basis is polychromatic 7. The position that asserts the basis is originally pure Further, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Naturally perfect reality

also has seven modalities:

naturally perfect from the perspective of diversity;

unfixed from the aspect of the gauge of movement;

fixed from the aspect of stillness;

the gauge of appearance changing into anything;

accepted [as anything] because of producing everything;

because delusion is pure, originally pure;

and asserted as polychromatic because of its differentiated mode of appearance.

The *Six Dimensions Tantra* states: The basis that is naturally perfect at the beginning

is nothing other than one thing.

However, if it is confirmed with authoritative understanding

through the positions of deluded appearances,

there is an appearance of seven stages

appearing in this way because oneness was not recognized
in the mode of the appearance of a single entity.
Now then, the meaning of this is as follows:
the basis is present as naturally perfect,
appearing as the essence that subsumes the diversity.
It is present as unfixed,
appearing as an aspect of mental movement. [14b]
It is present as fixed in its own state,
appearing without change in recollection.
It is present as transformable,
appearing as an aspect of mind because of effort.
It is present as any sort of entity,
whatever appears, appears as its own essence.
It is present as polychromatic,
appearing in the form of each individual element of diversity.
It is present as pure from the beginning,
having always appeared as immaculate.
Among all of these stages of intellect,
the essence is pure from the beginning.

When the asserted positions about the seven bases that are the object of knowledge are divided into two, there are six defective positions concerning the basis and the faultless position of original purity, which is confirmed in our own texts.

Among people who think about such things, there are two intellectual dispositions: people who follow philosophical tenets and people who follow the path.

A follower of philosophical tenets asserts that all objects of knowledge are confirmed from the seven positions because assertions about the basis are confirmed through proofs, refutations, contradictions, and replies. Those other six defective philosophical tenets are clearly explained in the *Six Dimensions*, and so on. However, those who follow philosophical tenets [15a] resemble someone who has not seen Vajrāsana telling stories about Vajrāsana. Simply put, they do not confirm the profound meaning that is to be understood.

Here, it is primarily people who follow the path, those who severed all proliferation concerning objects of knowledge in order to understand the intrinsic nature of the reality of the basis. A tantra states: Out of all these different intellectual dispositions,

the intrinsic essence is pure from the beginning.

Since the six assertions about the basis are recognized as the potential of original purity, the practice of the faultless philosophical tenet is like explaining Vajrāsana having been there. That is without error. In addition, it is so because the explanatory description is faultless. People who follow philosophical tenets can only partially explain how the six assertions about the basis are defective.

The Basis as Naturally Perfect

2.1.1.1.1 Nevertheless, first, the assertion of the basis as naturally perfect is confirmed by understanding the four wheels: [Thesis] Naturally perfect reality is unfragmented and whole.

[Refutation] The refutation states that this assertion that the basis is naturally perfect is defective. If it is claimed that at the time of the cause [the basis] is naturally perfect, the result also will be naturally perfect, [15b] like the example of butter already being naturally perfect in milk.

In the same way, is the cause established or not established in the result? If it is established, the result becomes a cause. Since a result is then pointless, the cause (deluded sentient beings) would then turn into the result (buddhas). In that case, there would be no need for anyone to make effort. If the cause is not established in the result, the assertion of the natural perfection [of the basis] is defective.

Further, if it is said, “[The basis] is established at the time of the cause, but it is not established at the time of the result,” then natural perfection would alternate and become a view that falls into the extremes of existence and nonexistence.

If it is said, “Because [the basis] is naturally perfect, it isn’t anything at all,” then this is no different than the Cittamātra assertion that the dependent nature is ultimate. The *Six Dimensions Tantra* states: Since the cause and result are different,

[the basis] too is not naturally perfect.

Likewise, if the cause and result were the same,
effort would be meaningless.

The two replies to the objection can be inferred. Here they will not be mentioned.

Since the essence is pure from the beginning, saṃsāra is not established. [16a] Since the nature arises as a diversity, nirvāṇa is not established. Since the essence and nature are nondual, they are present as an intrinsic nature⁶⁴ that has never experienced delusion.

The Basis as Unreal

2.1.1.1.2 Asserting the basis as unreal, [the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*] states:⁶⁵

Other than various unfixed names,
meanings are empty due to being mere designations.

Since the nature⁶⁶ is not fixed as singular, it appears in whichever way it is designated.

“Unfixed” means that there is no valid argument for a phenomenon if it is neither fixed by a name nor fixed by a meaning. If it is asked why, it is because all phenomena are single names. If not fixed through a meaning, since the meaning dharmatā becomes a nominal saṃsāra, water will come from fire. This cannot be refuted on the basis of direct perception.

If it is said, “There is no contradiction with fire coming from water,” then for what reason would water come from fire? If it is said, “It is known through the name,” it is replied that water which also does not come from fire will be known by the name “water.” If one asserts that the unfixed name and meaning are the same, this is the third alternative. [The *Six Dimensions Tantra*] states: The result would switch

or would otherwise be endowed with concepts;
the unfixed could be fixed [16b]
and the fixed could be unfixed.

Also, Vimalamitra states:

If names and so on are not fixed.

then the separate actions of the elements could switch.

Since this does not separate name and meaning at all, “arising in the present is not possible in the dharmatā that has never arisen.”

The Basis as Substantial

2.1.1.1.3 Asserting a substantial, ultimately fixed basis as the basis: [Thesis] Its essence is unchanging like space and its mode of appearance cannot change, like fire and water.

[Refutation] Is that assertion of “a fixed basis” asserted as fixed through realization or asserted as [fixed] without realization? If [the fixed basis] is asserted through realization, it cannot possibly be the basis because realization would arise as both an object to arise and an agent of arising. If it is like the latter, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa would not be able to avoid the fault of annihilation.

If it is said that realization is defined as the absence of nonrealization, it is clearly evident then that saṃsāra and nirvāṇa also could not be negated by anyone’s refutation. Assertions such as these are no different than those of the eternalist tīrthikas. [The *Six Dimensions Tantra*] states: Therefore these too are not true;

and further, since the cause is fixed and the result is fixed,
there is no difference with the permanent self. [17a]

Vimalamitra states:

Because that cause appears in that result,
there can be no liberation.

Here, the essence is intrinsically pure through realization. Since the nature of realization and nonrealization are nondual, the characteristics of original purity are called “unchanging.”

The Basis as Mutable

2.1.1.1.4 The assertion that the basis is totally mutable:

[Thesis] Since the essence is not divided into sides and parts, its mode of

appearance is that it can turn into anything at all.

[Refutation] Is that mutability permanent or is that mutability impermanent? If permanent, this contradicts the premise of mutability.

If it is like the latter, does that impermanence exist or not exist?

If it exists, does it exist through arising or does it exist through nonarising?

If it exists through arising, does it arise from itself or from another?

If it is self-arisen from itself, there will be an infinite regress. If it arises only once from itself, a difference between asserting the basis as defined cannot be found.

If it self-arises from another, is the cause the same or different? If the cause is the same, the premise of arising from another is damaged. [17b] If the cause is not the same, cause and result are in contradiction, such that fire could arise from water.

If it is asserted as nonarisen, then the premise of mutability is damaged. Also, if the impermanent is asserted as nonexistent, the premise of mutability is damaged. For example, the color in the sky could be changed by something else, but it cannot be. If it is said that it is mutable from the perspective of being neither permanent nor impermanent, the existence and nonexistence of objects of knowledge are mutually opposed. The [*Six Dimensions Tantra*] states: If one's reality is mutable,

 this is equivalent to being undefined
 because the result could revert to the cause,
 because there would be no purpose in making effort,
 and because it reverts again and again —
 just as the insentient cannot
 become sentient.

Since this is not permanent, it is empty without anything to identify. Since this is not impermanent, it is called “clarity” from the perspective of knowing consciousness.

The Basis as Anything at All

2.1.1.1.5 The assertion that the basis can be accepted as anything at all: [Thesis] Because the initial substantial basis of everything self-arose as everything

impartially, it can be valid as anything at all. [18a]

[Refutation] As such, is that validity valid through existence or valid through nonexistence?

If it is existence, does it exist as permanent or impermanent?

If it exists as permanent, then the premise of being valid as anything at all is flawed. Also if it is impermanent, then it is clarified by the word “exists.” If it is accepted as nonexistent, it is negated by the reasoning of the child born to a barren woman and so on.

Further, if it is asserted to be neither existent nor nonexistent, again there is a mutual contradiction within the object of knowledge. The tantra states: Since everything is established from the perspective of being,

there will be the fault of infinite regress.

Since this is not established as existent or substantial, it also cannot be confirmed through any argument. Since it is not a blank emptiness,⁶⁷ cognitive clarity⁶⁸ arises manifesting as the essence of one’s vidyā.

The Basis as a Diversity

2.1.1.1.6 Asserting the basis as a diversity:

[Thesis] Because the essence self-arises as everything, its mode of appearance is to arise as polychromatic.

[Refutation] Is the basis asserted as a diversity in terms of appearance or in terms of cognition?

If it is asserted in terms of appearance, while cognitions have different modes of appearance, since the basis also appears as a diversity, [18b] there will be no way to avoid different minds being larger and smaller. This assertion will be no different than the Vedānta claim that because the bodies of migrating beings are different, their minds are larger and smaller, and also appear in various different shapes.

If asserted in terms of cognition, while a cognition undergoes a hundred changes in an instant, since the basis also undergoes change, either there is no point in making effort, or alternately, there is liberation without the need to make effort. The [*Six Dimensions Tantra*] states: Since one cause has different results,

that entity of something which appears

is equivalent to meaning that there are different results.⁶⁹

Since this [basis] is not established as any sort of entity, it is free from a basis of designation. It is liberated naturally, meaning the moment it appears, there is nothing to adopt or reject, nor negate or prove.

As such, the identification of the faulty basis through these six is explained.

Now then, these six realities are not essentially faulty but become erroneous when investigated through seeking and partiality. In that respect, perceiving the essence as existent is extremely deluded. For example, given an elephant surrounded by many blind men, [19a] the ones who touch the trunk say an elephant is like a hook, the ones who touch its side say the elephant is like a mountain, the ones who touch its leg say the elephant is like a tree trunk, and the ones who touch its tail say the elephant is like a snake. These cannot be confirmed by anyone. Furthermore, it is like any man or woman being attached to the individual appearances of the members of a family or the sight of a single barberry bush on a mountain pass perceived as nine plants.⁷⁰

The Faultless Position about the Basis

2.1.1.1.7 There are two subjects in demonstrating the faultless position in our own texts: rejecting criticisms against faultless original purity and the actual explanation of the reality of original purity.

First, establishing original purity as faultless. Dharmatā, original purity, is free from all proliferation. Since it is unaffected by ignorance, it is free from all obscurations. The *Six Dimensions Tantra* states: Dharmatā free from proliferation is originally pure;

it is the basis of an intrinsically pure nature;

it is free from words and syllables;

it cannot be confirmed through expression;

it is free from all conventional reification;

it is without concepts of apprehended objects and apprehending subjects;

[19b]

it is without buddhas and without sentient beings;

it is without phenomena and without perception of phenomena;

no one, no thing, nothing at all.

When the essence of such nonexistence is confirmed with some words:
the essence is original purity
and the nature is natural perfection.

Now then, to avoid the faults of disputation:

The bodhisattva again addressed

Teacher Samantabhadra:

“The essence has always been originally pure;⁷¹
saṃsāra is not reasonable for these sentient beings
because the taints of ignorance have always been exhausted.”

The teacher said, “Great being,
because the nature is naturally perfect,
it appears as a totally unimpeded display.”

Again, since the great being asked:

“If the nature is naturally perfect,
is it reasonable that these sentient beings are self-liberated
because of having always been naturally perfect?”

[Reply] Because the essence of these sentient beings
has always been originally pure,
the liberated also appear as a display.

Those arguments are from the perspective of followers of philosophical tenets.

Now come the intrinsic characteristics of the faultless position, the actual extensive explanation of the reality of original purity. The reality of the original basis that exists permeated with the intrinsic nature of the three pristine consciousnesses — essence, nature, and compassion — is the inwardly illuminated original purity. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Neither dwelling in saṃsāra nor nirvāṇa, [20a]

empty dharmatā pervades everything.

The pristine consciousness dwelling in its own essence is inseparable in three modalities.

The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states:

Also, the basis of great original purity
is endowed with essence, nature, and compassion.

The *String of Pearls Tantra* states:

Although reality⁷² is inconceivable, pristine consciousness has three
aspects.

The *Six Dimensions Tantra* states:

Because pristine consciousness has three aspects,
the basis is explained in different words.⁷³

As such, if it is asked what is the characteristic or reality of the three pristine
consciousnesses, Ācārya Vimalamitra states: The intrinsic nature of the three
pristine consciousnesses:

the pristine consciousness of the originally pure essence
is pure of concepts of ignorance and so on.

The pristine consciousness of the naturally perfect nature
is present as self-apparent clarity.

The pristine consciousness of all-pervading compassion
is an unceasing display that appears as anything at all.

If the extensive meaning of that is explained, the *Realms and
Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The name “ignorance” is impossible
in the pristine consciousness of the originally pure essence. [20b]

There is no enumeration of a first or a second.

Not even mere pristine consciousness can form out of dharmatā that is
wholly undivided [. . .]

Since the naturally perfect nature [. . .]
has unceasing potentiality and qualities,
it is the basis of a complete diversity
through appearing as a mere display.

The pristine consciousness of all-pervading compassion⁷⁴

is the door that gives rise to unfabricated diversity,
seeming to be fabricated but perfected in essence.
Because omniscient pristine consciousness is perfect
in the nature of the empty dharmakāya,
[compassion] arises for sentient beings through its power.
Without that, since saṃsāra and nirvāṇa would be interrupted,
it is knowing and clear through omniscience.

As such, since ignorance never existed in the essence, it is not established as mere vidyā because it is beyond the conventions of vidyā and ignorance. It is also not established as merely “undeluded” or “deluded.” The *String of Pearls Tantra* states: In the initial original purity,
nothing was called mere “delusion.”
Likewise, how can there be nondelusion?
Therefore, delusion is originally pure.

As such, so-called “original purity”⁷⁵ is called “pure from the first,” “pure from the beginning,” and “pure from the start.” A tantra⁷⁶ states: *Ka* occurs at the start. [21a]

Dag means countless taints are exhausted.⁷⁷

As such, the essence has always been pure, the nature is pure, and compassion is pure through its potentiality. Since the essence is present as emptiness, it cannot be designated through any kind of convention. Since the nature is present as clarity, it does not depend on any cause or condition. Since compassion is present as all-pervading, it is present free of multiplicity and parts. The [*Six Dimensions Tantra*] states: The originally pure essence is free from expression.

The naturally perfect nature is totally perfected.

All-pervading compassion self-arose.

The *Mind Mirror of Vajrasattva Tantra* states: All phenomena of the basis must be recognized as essence, nature, and compassion. All phenomena of the essence must be recognized as empty. All phenomena of the nature must be recognized as clarity. All phenomena of compassion must be recognized as all-pervasive.

Due to the aspect of emptiness, the essence does not fall on the side of grasping the extreme of permanence. Due to the aspect of clarity, the nature does not fall on the side of grasping to the extreme of annihilation. [21b] Due to the aspect of being all-pervasive, compassion does not fall toward either side of permanence or annihilation. As the *Self-Liberated Vidyā Tantra* states: The taints of the four extremes self-purify . . .

If those are described in a concise form: the essence is inseparable emptiness and clarity, the nature is inseparable light and clarity, and compassion is inseparable vidyā and emptiness.

What is the example for how these are present? The pristine consciousness of the originally pure essence is present like pure space; the pristine consciousness of the naturally perfect nature is present like planets and stars reflected on the surface of a calm ocean; and the pristine consciousness of all-pervasive compassion is present like a flawless gem. Those are the intrinsic characteristics of the pristine consciousness present in that way.

The essence is present as kāyas, the nature is present as light, and compassion is present as continuous. Though the essence is present as kāyas, apart from being the mere basis of the three kāyas, it is not established in terms of faces and arms. Here, someone says that the mouth, eyes, and ears of wisdom and light exist after being differentiated; however, that does not avoid the defective position of Mahāyoga. If there are a mouth, eyes, and ears, [22a] then do the sense organs [of the kāyas] exist as matter or as mind? If they exist as matter, then they are no different from the ordinary six kinds of migrating beings. If they exist as mind, then there is no difference between [the kāyas and] the four formless realms or the pretas. The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states: Because there is nothing substantial that can be apprehended

in the pristine consciousness of the pure dharmakāya,
it is not designated as a possessor of signs.

If there were a sign,
the dharmakāya could be apprehended.⁷⁸

The nature is present as light from the perspective of light, but it is not established as mere color and shape. Here, someone explains that it possesses the character and color of the five lights, but this is truly unacceptable because then there would be no way to avoid the defect of an absence of difference between the dharmakāya and the rūpakāya. Again, that tantra states: If there were a sign,

the dharmakāya could be apprehended.

This [explanation above] contradicts the explanation of the so-called emptiness within all phenomena.

Since the basis that arises through the aspect of compassion is present as unceasing, it is the pristine consciousness that pervades all. [22b] Here, some say that pristine consciousness is interrupted. If there is no basis for the arising of pristine consciousness, is the pristine consciousness of the omniscience of buddhahood nonexistent like a void or insentient? The *Perfection of Wisdom*⁷⁹ states: If pristine consciousness does not exist, qualities will not increase, awakening will not exist, and also buddhadharmas similar with an ocean will not exist.

Now, in particular, the following is the unsurpassed position. This incontrovertible reality is present as kāyas since the essence is unchanging. It is also present as the basis of the arising of the inseparable three kāyas. It is not established in terms of faces and hands, the signifying attributes. The nature is present as luminosity because it is clear. Though the three luminescences are self-illuminating,⁸⁰ they are not established with attributes of color. Compassion is present as the pristine consciousness of vidyā; though manifesting individually, since there is no cessation in the aspect of omniscience, it is neither an agent nor an action. As such, the aspect of omniscience is present as the trio of pristine consciousnesses that are present in the basis. In order to clarify this, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The initial [basis] is present in the three aspects of

essence, nature, and compassion. [23a]

Further, since the essence is present as kāyas,
the aspects of dharmakāya, sambhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya
cannot be divided and are inseparable;

they are naturally perfect

without mental objects,

such as complexion and so on.

The mode in which the nature's light manifests

is white, red, yellow, green, and blue,

which are not signifying attributes.

The naturally perfect object of knowledge is free from attributes.

Other than compassion arising as a diversity

Quieter than compassion arising as a diversity,
it is not defined as one thing, “it is like this.”
Because a diversity appears, it is called “the basis.”

Having given the concise explanation with these words, now, the extensive explanation is given in the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra*: The basis is called “great original purity” that is present as the essence, nature, and compassion. The pristine consciousness of the unchanging essence manifests without impediment and is called “the reality of the youthful vase body.” The nature is the unimpeded five lights. For example, the appearance of compassion is like the absence of clouds. That is called “the reality of original purity,” meaning unlimited and not falling into any position. [23b]

The meaning of this is explained in the *Six Dimensions Tantra*:⁸¹

Through the pristine consciousness of the originally pure essence, there is freedom from the taint of ignorance.

Through the pristine consciousness of the naturally perfect nature, there is freedom from the harm of deluded words.

Through the pristine consciousness of all-pervading compassion, everything appears as interrelated in a single dhātu.

Also, for instance, when merely illustrated with words,
as such, in originally pure dharmatā
there is no pristine consciousness, no kāyas,
no light, and also no color.

Since there is no entity established at all,
there is no need to speak of the appearances of ignorance and afflictions.

Apart from the appearance of the nature itself,

there has never been a signifier to perceive;

apart from intrinsic clarity without color,

the aspect of consciousness and knowing are complete;

because there is no object apprehended through an apprehension,

the aspect of conceptual grasping does not exist;

omnipresent from the primordial beginning

in the primordial luminescence that transcends light;

present as pure mahāmudrā
in the intrinsic luminescence that transcends the kāyas.
Yet a signifying object has never existed
in the appearances of the nature.
This is how it is present in the ultimate aspect:
the white generated by the intrinsic luminescence [24a]
is present as total profound clarity.
Since profound clarity generates the brightness of the essence,
the intrinsic exhaustion of appearances is the yellow aspect,
intrinsically manifesting from the dhātu without showing externally.
Existing in its own state without attachment, thoroughly clear radiance is
free from being bound by itself,
the intrinsic exhaustion of attachment is the red aspect.
Profound clarity appears totally differentiated,
free from activities and agents
that grasp individual differentiated signifiers,
unfabricated green
is present as rays of the original [basis].
The aspect of profound clarity that does not show externally
is the interconnection that pervades profound clarity,
the blue of perfect immutability
is present without ever having to have been perfected.
As such, in the nature of that, the kāyas are free from characteristics of
appearances.
The perfected ones exist at the tips [of the rays of light]
in primordial total intrinsic purity;
this is not an appearance for the sense organs.
Because physical signifiers are intrinsically pure,
present as the totally profound clear basis,
empty of both pervasion and pervader,
present without being a blank void,
the aspect of illuminating appearances is unceasing.
The essence that gathers the quintessence of everything

The essence that gathers the quintessence of everything,
immaculate and intrinsically pure, [24b]
is present in the aspect of the nature
as the great secret of the buddhas.

Apart from the unceasing emptiness

of the arising of diverse appearances of compassion,
appearances manifest from the aspect of appearances
as the two kinds of pristine consciousness of objects of knowledge.

Since the appearance of the nonexistent is intrinsically pure,
having never existed, the actions of deeds
appear without ever having been performed
in modes of appearance, which do nothing.

Just like the light in the sun,
it has no action

but appears according to its nature.

If the two pristine consciousnesses did not exist,
it would not be different than the insentient.

Alternately, this would only turn into
a vacant emptiness.

Knowing all objects of knowledge
through the pristine consciousness of the compassion aspect,
one's reality is known.

If that aspect of pristine consciousness did not exist,
it would not be different than the matter of the four elements.

Knowing all objects of knowledge, the inclinations of those to be tamed is
known

through the pristine consciousness of compassion.

If this [pristine consciousness] does not exist, it would be equivalent to
space.

As such, the pristine consciousness of omniscience
appears from the aspect of compassion. [25a]

This cannot be perceived through anyone's memories.

This is present as the nature itself

but is not present as the coarse apprehended object and apprehending
subject.

It appears as the subtle aspect of profound clarity.

If this is applied to the continuum of a single person right now, since the essence of vidyā has never been deluded, delusion is not present in the nature. Since delusion is not present in the nature, delusion is impossible for compassion. As such, a person who understands that his or her vidyā has never been deluded, no matter what body and speech do and have done in this life, understands that delusion is not present now. With such an understanding, the understanding that delusion is not possible later on is a critical point of never returning to the three realms.

The basis is not possible if it is not originally pure. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: In the beginning, the way it pervades the basis;

in the middle, the way it is perfected on the path;

and in the end, that way it pervades the body of migrating beings.

At the time of the body, it is as follows:

in the celestial mansion of the precious heart

of the aggregates of the assembled elements,

the aspect of the originally pure essence,

the luminescence of the kāya that combines emptiness and clarity in the
form of the vase body complete with faces and hands, [25b]

is present in a ball of naturally perfect light manifesting as the individual
colors of compassion.

The *Inlaid Jewels Tantra* states:

Like those sentient beings pervading the area of space,

that itself is the meaning of vidyā;

also this vidyā is without limits,

present as a single intrinsic nature.

Perfect buddhahood is one's vidyā.

The essence never changes in the three times.

The nature is always unceasing.

Compassion self-appears to all.

The *Six Dimensions Tantra* states:

Also, the aspects of the essence, nature,
and compassion

appear to the intelligent.

Since the essence is not established at all,

that nature clearly appears as the apparent aspect

and the two pristine consciousnesses come from compassion's aspect
having risen without action or agent.

As such, since there is neither good or bad nor large or small in the reality of the original basis or in the reality of the personal vidyā of sentient beings in the present, it is said that the three times are one and undifferentiated. If it is asked why this is so, it is because it is self-originated, self-arisen, and self-liberated. Other citations can be applied in their individual context.

That demonstrates the first subject. [26a] Up to this point, the natural reality of the basis (before realization produced buddhas and nonrealization produced sentient beings) has been explained.

61. See definition in the commentary of the *Six Dimensions Tantra*, p. 253.

62. *Ma nges pa*.

63. *Nges par don*.

64. *Bdag nyid*.

65. ADZ, p. 176: this citation does not appear in this order in the text: '*di 'dra gcig tu ma nges pas// gang ltar btags pa de ltar snang// sna tshogs ming gi gdags gzhi las// sgra tshig du ma'i spros par snang// nges med ming ni sna tshogs las// don yang btags pa tsam gyis stong/*'. This passage is identified as being a position of the mind series (*sems sde*) in the TCD.

66. In ADZ this line reads '*di 'dra gcig tu ma nges pas*'.

67. NB gives *cham ma chad* instead of *phyar ma chad*.

68. *Gsal shes*.

69. The *Commentary of the Six Dimensions of Samantabhadra*, p. 281, clarifies this passage: *de phyir na dkar po'ang yin ser po yang yin zhes gang gis ngo bo de ltar snang bas ba/ 'bras bu tha dad pa'i phyir don gcig tu mi grol te sna tshogs kyi 'dod pa de dang mtshungs so/*.

70. Text gives: *la kha'i skyer phung gcig/ mthong snang rim pa dgu ru mthong ba dang 'dra 'o/*. NB gives: *la kha'i skyes drung cig la mthong ltas rigs dgur mthong ba dang 'dra 'o/*.

71. ADZ gives *ngo bo nyid la ka dag pas/* and in NB it is rendered *ye nas ngo bo ka dag la*.

72. *Gnas lugs*.

73. ADZ gives /gzhi yi khyad par tshig tu bstan/; the text reads *gzhi yi khyad par gsum tu bstan*.
74. The *Illuminating Lamp* gives: *nges tshig thugs snying la sems can la brtse ba/ de la gdung sems khyad par du skye bas na rje/ de ltar gnyis 'dus las 'da' med pas na thugs rje zhes bya 'o/*.
75. *Ka nas dag pa*.
76. *Ka shes thog mar byung ba la/ dag pa dri ma'i grangs mta' zad/*. TDD identifies this as the *String of Pearls Tantra*. However, in NB, it is not clear that he is citing anything other than the second line as a direct citation, in which case the proper attribution is the *Blazing Lamp Tantra*.
77. This passage is a gloss of the technical term *ka dag*. *Ka*, being the first syllable of the series of Tibetan consonants, means “original,” while *dag* means “purity.”
78. The DD edition incorrectly gives *gzugs* for *gzung* in the root text, NB, and TDD. Further, this passage comes from chapter 69 of the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra*, which is about refuting incorrect positions.
79. *Āryaprajñāpāramitāsaṃcayagāthā* and *Āryāṣṭadaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitānāmamahā-yānasūtra*.
80. This is described more fully by Longchenpa at TDD 21a–b.
81. See the *Clarification of the String of Pearls Tantra* at 148b–152b.

TOPIC 2: *How Delusion Arises*

2.1.1.2 Now, second, the explanation of how delusion arises from that basis.

As such, when the generic basis divided into saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, Samantabhadra attained buddhahood without even an iota of virtue and all sentient beings fell into saṃsāra without doing even an iota of misdeeds.

First, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: As such, in saṃsāra at the start and nirvāṇa at the end, since the buddhas did not become deluded,

the sense organs that rose up out of the basis
recognized the self-appearances as natureless;
there was no lapse into mental analysis of external objects; and [the self-
appearances] were ascertained to be their own movements.

Second, the delusion due to not recognizing one's appearances: if it is asked how delusion came about, delusion arose from the difference between the basis and the conscious aspect of the basis. Apart from generally pervading, the so-called basis is totally undifferentiated, without any consideration of delusion or nondelusion. That so-called knower [26b] or "mind" (the special assertion of a consciousness explained in our own texts) is deluded. For example, the delusion that a white conch is yellow is a delusion of the eye. That [delusion] likewise deludes itself. That which is called "undeluded" becomes deluded. As such: In the basis, totally undifferentiated

and undefined,
consciousness is grasped as moving, vanishing,
and spreading out, and holding taints through accumulation.⁸²
Consciousness grasps [the basis] as its continuum.

That is deluded into the twelve nidānas. [The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:]

The twelve related with the perception of objects

The twelve related with the perception of objects arise as the start of saṃsāra.

Ignorance, formations, consciousness, name and matter, six sense gates, contact, sensation, craving, addiction, becoming, birth, and aging and death are also deluded because of their cause, ignorance; in other words, the cause of delusion is ignorance. [The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:]

Ignorance has three types:

it is considered the foundation of delusion because it has the same identity, duality is conceived through the connate, and imputation turns into objects.

The meaning of this is elaborated by Ācārya Vimalamitra:⁸³ [27a]

Since it is defined as the cause, it has the same identity, the first of the ignorances;

the connate arises from that,

the sight of pure pristine consciousness appears externally; as such, the apparent objects are imputed.

The trio of the essence, nature, and compassion of the original basis becomes the three ignorances. Since the essence is made the cause of delusion, it is designated “the ignorance of the same identity” and becomes so. Once the nature is made the condition of delusion, since the vāyu of the impelling karma manifests as color, it is designated “the connate ignorance” and becomes so. Compassion is made the result of delusion. Since pristine consciousness manifests as different names, that is designated as “the imputing ignorance” and becomes so. As such, from not recognizing that knowledge and ignorance⁸⁴ have the same cause, like the front and back of one’s hand,⁸⁵ the ignorance of the same identical cause arises from not arriving at ultimate nonduality. The connate ignorance (arising from the preceding) is a term of duality, meaning as soon as the conceit “this is originally pure” occurs, [27b] it is inseparable from that ignorance. Thus, ignorance depends on knowledge and delusion depends on nondelusion. As such, knowledge itself becomes ignorance and nondelusion becomes delusion. From that delusion grasping on to subject and object arises.

The imputing ignorance imputes through four conditions: From the different

apparent objects of that [pristine consciousness], there are the aspects of the four conditions of imputation identified through the causal and dominant conditions; and because of being collected and apprehended

through the object and simultaneous condition, there is delusion.

Thus, by summarizing the three ignorances, the cause of delusion, for example, is called that because it is analogous to the face of a man: “the causal condition” is the three ignorances. The “object condition” from those [three ignorances] is like the surface of the mirror because each individually perceived object arises. As such, since one’s likeness arises within the mirror, when considering them both — “this is the surface of the mirror” and “inside of this my likeness arises” — the thought that “this likeness arising in the mirror is my face” is the dominant condition. From the various objects and apprehensions of “I and mine,” countless afflictions arise.⁸⁶ [28a] Since those three are simultaneous, it is said to be “the immediate and antecedent condition.” Becoming an impure thing, though asserted as the ultimate original purity, is like the example of a person losing his or her name.⁸⁷ Delusion concerning the six sense mental consciousnesses arises from that. The *Unwritten Tantra* states: During the time of the beginning there were no appearances.

Since the six minds quick to make judgments were uninterrupted, recollection was uninterrupted; the sixfold group arose without restraint.⁸⁸

Those [six minds] include the mind that searches everywhere, the mind that confirms, the mind of certainty, the mind that grasps movement, the mind that gathers diversity, and the afflicted mind.⁸⁹ The traces of affliction from those sustain afflictive conceptuality.

It is held that traces become the basis of delusion. The external universe and the inhabiting sentient beings form out of apprehended objects and apprehending subjects. The way these form is extensively described in the first part of the first chapter of the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*.⁹⁰ The *String of Pearls Tantra* states: The generic basis is called “the basis of delusion”⁹¹ [28b]

because of ignorance and contamination.

Further, the object of knowledge itself appears tainted because memory and thought arise in the mind.

The essence itself is contaminated by concepts

because the grasping aspect of the six minds is unceasing.

Further, dharmakāya is bound by apprehension
due to being associated with subtle atoms.

Further, luminosity forms traces
due to the impure perception of the four conditions.

Further, appearances arise as multiplicity
because those appearances are apparent objects.

Now then, if it is asked how the outer universe forms, the above tantra states:
In space air [forms]; supported on that, water

tortured with the barbs of ignorance and so on,
oppressed by the thick darkness of saṃsāra,
attached to the salty taste of desire,
bound by the neck with the noose of confusion,
burned with the hot fire of hatred,
head covered with pride,
setting a rendezvous with the mistress of jealousy, surrounded by the army
of enmity, [. . .]⁹³
tied by the neck with the noose of subject and object, [29b]
stuck in the mud of successive traces,
and handcuffed with the ripening of karma.
Having been joined with the ripening of karma,
one takes bodies good and bad,
one after another like a water wheel,
born into each individual class.
Having crossed at the ford of self-grasping,
one sinks into the ocean of suffering
and one is caught by the heart on the hook of the three lower realms.
One is bound by oneself; the afflictions are the enemy.
The body of a hell being appears as fire or water.
Pretas are frightened and intimidated.⁹⁴
There is a fog-like appearance for animals.
The aggregates, sense gates, and sense elements
of humans appear as the five elements,
and also as happiness, suffering, and indifference.
They appear as armor and weapons to asuras
and as desirable qualities to devas.⁹⁵
For example, such dualistic appearances⁹⁶
are like a quickly moving wheel
spinning continuously for a long while.
As such, forming as both the outer universe and inhabitants, diverse
appearances
are like seeing a snake from a rope;

that [rope] is not [a snake] but is apprehended as a [snake]; if it is investigated, it is [found to be] a rope.⁹⁷

The universe and inhabitants have always been empty, the ultimate endowed with the form of the relative. [30a]

The system of delusion is taught in several ways in other tantras. Up to this point is the explanation of how delusion arose.

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82. All editions give *sbags*, but the *Illuminating Lamp* clearly gives *bsags*, i.e., “accumulate.”
 83. NB gives *bye ma la*.
 84. Skt. *vidyā* and *avidyā*, respectively.
 85. This metaphor is mentioned in the *Illuminating Lamp*, vol. 2, p. 166.
 86. This metaphor of the mirror is summarized in the *Illuminating Lamp*, vol. 2, p. 6.
 87. DD gives *dper na bu med kyang ming btags ba lta bu'o*. NB gives *dper na mi ming med du song lta bu'o*.
 88. Though this last line is not found in the Tibetan text, I have included it here for context.
 89. Longchenpa gives a slightly different list: the mind that is simultaneously endowed with ignorance, the mind of mental consciousness, the mind that seeks everywhere, the mind that confirms, the coarse mind, and the mind of certainty.
 90. Reply 20 according to the ADZ enumeration; reply 18 according to the *Illuminating Lamp*.
 91. ADZ gives *spyis gzhi 'khrul gzhi zhes bya ba*; this text gives *spyi sa 'khrul gzhi shes bya ba* — the term *spyi sa* is used twice elsewhere in the tantra as a synonym for *spyi gzhi*.
 92. The citation here abruptly switches to chapter 6.
 93. *Dran nyid kyis g.yas g.yon brtan* is missing in the citation.
 94. *Yi dags rnams la bkres dang skom*.
 95. Here, the citation returns to chapter 5.
 96. Provided for context, not in the original citation.
 97. *Thog*; ADZ reads *thag*.

TOPIC 3: *How the Basis Is Present in Sentient Beings*

2.1.1.3 Now, the explanation of how the basis or seed of buddhahood is present in deluded sentient beings. The sugatagarbha permeates sentient beings the way oil permeates sesame seeds. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The pristine consciousness of one's vidyā located in the body is like the oil that comes from sesame;

the brightness and complexion of the body
is caused by the permeating moisture of pristine consciousness.

And the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states: The transcendent state of the perfect buddhas

is present in the form of kāyas and pristine consciousnesses in the nature
of all sentient beings.

The *Inlaid Jewels Tantra* states: Just as oil has always been naturally perfect within sesame seeds and mustard seeds,

the seed of the sugatas

with corresponding light is present
in the deceptively appearing bodies of sentient beings.

Since the nature of sentient beings is naturally perfect buddhas, [30b] the divisions of five, such as the five kāyas,⁹⁸ the five pristine consciousnesses, the five families, the five lights, the five vāyus, the five wisdoms, and so on, are present within the bodies of migrating beings. The indication of existing in that way is the existence of the divisions of five, such as the five aggregates, the five elements, the five sense organs, the five objects of desire, the five afflictions, and so on, that are present in the impure appearances. Yet they are also pure appearances by nature. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: All sentient beings abide nowhere
other than in buddhahood.

And:

The aggregates have the nature of the five buddhas.

The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states:⁹⁹

The aggregates of migrating beings are the kāyas of buddhahood.

If it is asked why, the *String of Pearls Tantra* states: The aggregates, sense elements, and sense gates
are liberated into the families and the masters of the families.

If it is asked what are they, the *Powerful Lion Tantra* states: The five pristine consciousnesses arise from the five afflictions.

The five objects are the kāyas of five lights.

The five buddhas arise from the five aggregates.

The five mothers are perfected from the five elements.

The three realms are a buddhafiield.

This is our system of nondual view.

The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states: As such, the meaning of the great maṇḍala

is perfect in each and everyone's body. [31a]

The *Lightning Flash of Wisdom Tantra* states: The meaning of the profound naturally perfect nature [. . .]

the great mind of all sentient beings

is taintless because it is naturally pure.

The meaning of the five aggregates is the five buddhas.

The meaning of the five elements is the dhātu mothers.

All of the many sense elements and sense gates

are the maṇḍala of the male and female bodhisattvas.

Therefore, the three realms are a great maṇḍala.

This text extensively explains the principle that the guru's material aggregate is Vairocana and so on.

The explanation that the nature of vidyā is naturally perfect buddhahood is that such kāyas and pristine consciousnesses are perfected in the essence of one's vidyā. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Everything has the nature of being fivefold:

the five pristine consciousnesses, the five kāyas,

the five vāyus, as well as the five potentialities of consciousness.

And the *String of Pearls Tantra* states: As such, arising from that essence,

the five kāyas and the five pristine consciousnesses, the five lights and the five colors,

the five wisdoms, and the five vāyus . . .

Therefore the pristine consciousness of vidyā is present in divisions of five.¹⁰⁰ Now then, that pristine consciousness of vidyā present as the five kāyas is addressed in the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra: Vairocana and Vajrākṣobhya*,¹⁰¹ [31b]

likewise, Ratnasambhava,

Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi.

That pristine consciousness of vidyā is present as Vairocana. Since the pristine consciousness of vidyā appears from that object's aspect, it emerges as the form of Vairocana. Since it is not necessary to search for that elsewhere, it is free from the illness of fatigue.¹⁰²

Akṣobhya, the unchanging vajra, stops concepts. As such, since vidyā itself arises as the kāyas of Vajrākṣobhya, fatigue is surpassed.¹⁰³

Further, since many doors of qualities such as the increase of experience and so on are shown in that pristine consciousness of vidyā, it arises as the kāya of Ratnasambhava. For example, just as one supplicates a wish-fulfilling gem for whatever wants and needs one has, likewise, whichever higher or lower realm is wished for in one's vidyā, it arises based on the present body.¹⁰⁴ This is a critical point for present-day¹⁰⁵ yogis who have no need to meditate on any other yidam. Further, one's vidyā is practiced on the basis of the intimate instructions of the guru.

Because the appearance of light appears beyond limits, it arises as the kāya of Amitābha, [32a] but it does not need to be sought out elsewhere.

Because the aim of buddhahood exists in the manner of a seed in the pristine consciousness of one's vidyā, there is definitely success through practice. Because [vidyā] arises as the kāya of Amoghasiddhi, one does not need to search elsewhere.

That vidyā also appears as the five families. The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states: The tathāgata family, the vajra family, the ratna family, the padma family, and the karma family.

Since vidyā departs on the track of the buddhas of the past, it is the tathāgata family. Since vidyā also exists everywhere in the higher realms or the lower realms, and since there is no good or bad, no large or small, and no change or reversal in its essence, it is the vajra family. Since all qualities are intrinsically perfect, as there are no flaws in vidyā, it is the ratna family. Also, though vidyā is present in saṃsāra, since it is not affected by faults, it is the padma family. Since vidyā itself can gather negative actions, it can go to lower realms; since it can accumulate positive actions, it can go to higher realms. [32b] Since the essence of one's vidyā is buddhahood based on the samādhi free from an apprehended object and an apprehending subject, it is the karma family.

Further, vidyā is present as the five pristine consciousnesses. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* enumerates: Mirror, uniformity, individually discriminating,

successful activity, and dharmadhātu pristine consciousnesses.

Since vidyā itself is without the cover of the obscuration of ignorance, it is

the mirror-like pristine consciousness. Since abiding in that state does not fall onto any side, it is the pristine consciousness of uniformity. Since all saṃsāra and nirvāṇa manifest without ceasing when vidyā abides in its own essence, it is the individually discriminating pristine consciousness. Since buddhahood is attained in that state without need for other efforts, it is the pristine consciousness of successful activity. Since the four visions have the same flavor in emptiness because they are not substantially established, it is the pristine consciousness of the dharmadhātu.

Vidyā appears as the five lights. The *Ornament of Introduction Tantra* states: White self-originate because of being beyond all taints. Yellow self-originate because all qualities are perfected. Red self-originate because there is rest free from searching. Green self-originate because activities are perfect. [33a] Blue self-originate because of pervasive changelessness.

Vidyā itself arises as white light because it is not affected by any karma or affliction. It arises as yellow light because qualities are perfected. It arises as red light because the four empowerments are perfected in oneself due to resting without seeking. It arises as green light due to being beyond activity. Though vidyā itself arises as a diversity, it arises as blue light because there is no change in its essence.

Further, vidyā arises as the five vāyus. The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states: The nature of the five vāyus is present in all sentient beings.¹⁰⁶

The warmth¹⁰⁷ of the pristine consciousness of vidyā is called “the wind that accompanies fire.” Since it maintains the life force of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, it is called “the life-sustaining vāyu.” Since the pure and impure parts of pristine consciousness are separated into lamps and kāyas, since the pure and impure elements are separated into ultimate and relative, and since the sense organs, objects, and the five colors of light are separated, it is called “the vāyu that separates pure and impure.” Since there are no sentient beings and buddhas [33b] that are not pervaded by vidyā, it is called “the all-pervasive vāyu.” Since one is propelled to the stage of nirvāṇa having severed the life force of saṃsāra, it is called “the vāyu of the compassionless eon.”

Vidyā itself is present as the five wisdoms. The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states: Further, from the essence of vidyā arises

wisdom endowed with five aspects.¹⁰⁸

Since wisdom is recognized as the source of all saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, it is

present as the separating wisdom. Since wisdom does not transcend¹⁰⁹ the essence of the clarity of one's vidyā, it is present as the gathering wisdom. Since wisdom arises as the essence of everything, it is present as the pervading wisdom. Since wisdom enjoys the space of vidyā in dependence on the vāyu of pristine consciousness, it is present as the enjoyment wisdom.¹¹⁰ Since wisdom severs the life force of both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, it is present as the liberating wisdom. As such, since wisdom is nothing other than vidyā itself, it is called “self-originated pristine consciousness.”

Further, the kāyas, lights, and pristine consciousnesses exist in three layers. [34a] The *Powerful Lion Tantra* states: The three-layered pristine consciousness is the essence in all sentient beings of the three realms.

Further, since the essence is present as dharmakāya, it is present as dharmakāya at the time of equipoise. When not divided in any way into equipoise and post-equipoise, it is the sambhogakāya. When in post-equipoise, it is the nirmāṇakāya. The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states: The nonconceptuality of vidyā is the essence of the dharmakāya.

The unobstructed clarity of vidyā is the sambhogakāya.

Vidyā appearing in any way at all is the nirmāṇakāya.

Further, the nature is present as inner clarity within the basis. The result manifesting as the lamps is explained below. The aspect of compassion is present as pristine consciousness.

As such, one's mind, present as the nature of all the phenomena of buddhahood, is realized as buddha.¹¹¹ As the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Because mind pervades all the embodied, there are no buddhas without sentient beings.

And [the *Hevajra Tantra*] states: The mind is the perfect buddha.

Buddhahood from anywhere else is not taught.¹¹² [34b]

Those three realities are present as the Three Jewels. As stated in the *Six Dimensions Tantra*: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are primordially perfect, present within one's body.

The *String of Pearls Tantra* states: Dharmakāya, sambhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya,

sūtra vinaya and abhidharma

śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas,
and the positive phenomena of nirvāṇa
are all complete within body and mind.

These explain that body and mind are perfected as the nature of buddhahood. Since it is shown that all external appearances are also complete within the body and mind, demonstrating appearances to be the naturally perfect nature is addressed in the previous tantra: Earth, water, fire, air, space,

the sun, the moon,
the forms of men and women,
planets, stars, clouds,
trees, mountains, cliffs,
roots, trunks, branches,
leaves, flowers, fruit,
the aspects of scents, tastes, sounds, textures,
music, streamers, umbrellas, [35a]
victory banners, and canopies —
these apparent phenomena of saṃsāra
are present in the body of the yogin.
Earth is flesh and substantial.
Water is blood and cohesive.
Fire is heat and matures the whole body.
Air is breath and maintains the physical constituents.
Space is mind that maintains the luster of the body.
The sun and moon are the eyes that clarify.
Men appear as birth.
Women appear as death.
Planets are orifices.
Stars are light.
Clouds are hair. Trees are nāḍīs.
Mountains are the body. Cliffs are the bones.
Roots are the heart. Trunks are the legs.
Branches are the limbs

BRANCHES ARE THE LIMBS.

Flowers are the five sense organs.

Fruits are the formation of the body.

Scents are the pores. Tastes are the skin.

Sound is the voice. Textures are the illnesses.

Music is the internal organs. Streamers are the urine.

Umbrellas are the legs. The victory banner is the name.

The canopy is moistness.

[Those] are perfect as such in the body of the yogin.

For vidyā it is as follows:

the five elements are the five lights.

The sun and moon are wisdom and method.¹¹³

Men are the basis. Women are the path.

Planets are the mass of concepts. Stars are phenomena.

Clouds are all-pervasive compassion. [35b]

Trees are the path of expanding dharmatā.

Mountains are the unchanging view.

Cliffs are the dharmakāya free from fear.

Since roots are the single nature of all phenomena, branches are the limbs
of awakening.

Trunks are the same flavor in emptiness.

Leaves are the pervasive dharmadhātu.

Flowers are the pristine consciousness lamps.

Fruits are the intrinsically perfect three kāyas.

Sound is the sound of the field of dharmatā.

Scent is renowned as buddha speech.

Taste is the taste of blissful experience.

Texture is total concentration.

Music is the maṇḍala of the five objects of desire and so on.

Streamers are the radiance of clear color.

Umbrellas are the protection of wisdom.

Canopies are the critical points of intimate instructions.

Victory banners are the full buddhahood to be realized.

Such phenomena are present in the essence of the nature of the mind,
having always been naturally perfect.

As such, since all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are complete within the body and mind of the yogin, both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are present as the buddhahood of the naturally perfect nature. These realities of buddhahood are stated in the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra*: The transcendent state of the perfect buddhas

is present in the form of the kāyas and pristine consciousnesses in the nature of all sentient beings.¹¹⁴ [36a]

Since these are complete in external appearances, they are complete in the body and mind. Also, the body is complete in appearances. Furthermore, if these are not complete in the trio of the essence, nature, and compassion of the basis, how can they be complete in the body, mind, and appearances of the yogin? Due to being complete in the basis, it is said, “They will be complete.” As such, in order to understand saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as inseparable, the *Śrī Hevajra Tantra* states: This so-called “saṃsāra,”

this is nirvāṇa.

Nirvāṇa will not be realized

having given up saṃsāra for something else.

And:

Thus, there is no one in saṃsāra’s three realms who is not a buddha.¹¹⁵

Those citations explain how the basis or seed of buddhahood is present.

98. In this context, kāyas refers to both the forms and nature of the five buddhas that gradually unfold in the second and third visions of thögal.

99. This citation actually comes from the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*, p. 135.

100. This section shows marked differences from NB: the citation from the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* is absent and the following passage is given, p. 37: *sku sna lnga/ rigs sna lnga/ ye shes lnga/ 'od lnga/ rlung sna lnga/ shes rab sna lnga gnas so/ de la rig pa'i ye shes sku lngar gnas pa ni/ rig pa'i ye shesde nyid rnam par snang mdzad du gnas te/ snang ba yul de nyid rig pa'i ye shes su snang bas/*.

101. ADZ: *rnam snang dang ni rdo rje sems/*.

102. *Tshi chad*; NB gives *tshig chad*, i.e., omission.

103. This passage is entirely absent in NB.

104. NB gives *las* instead of *lus*.
105. NB gives *de ltar*.
106. Citation absent in NB.
107. NB gives *rgyas 'debs*.
108. The citation is absent in NB and is incorrect in the DD edition. Original citation is *de yang rig pa'i ngo bo las/ shes rab rnam pa bzhi dang ldan/*.
109. NB: *gang la yang ma grub pa*.
110. This wisdom is wholly absent both in ADZ and NB.
111. This passage with these citations is absent from NB.
112. *Hevajra Tantra*, section 2, chapter 4.
113. In NB, the citation is elided and is concluded with */zhes pa nas//sems nyid ngo bo'i chos rnams ni//ye nas lhun grub tshul du gnas/*. However, here the citation is supplied in full after *zhes pa nas*, starting from *skyes pa gzhi la bud med lam, etc*.
114. This section, from the end of the last citation to the end of this one, is not present in NB.
115. This citation is unidentified.

TOPIC 4: *The Location of Pristine Consciousness in the Body*

2.1.1.4 Now, fourth, there are three subjects in the explanation of where the pristine consciousness of vidyā is located: the location, the anatomy, and the example of how it is present.

The Location

2.1.1.4.1 First, it is located in the celestial mansion of the precious heart in the center of the body. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: In the celestial mansion of the precious heart, [36b]

the precious juncture has doors on the eight facets.

And:

Pure unfabricated dharmatā is present
inside the nāḍīs of the crown and heart.

The *Ornament of Introduction Tantra* states: The jewel present in the heart in the center of one's body is great pristine consciousness.¹¹⁶

The *Inlaid Jewels Tantra* states: The celestial mansion of the eight-faceted jewel,

the celestial mansion of the nāḍīs of movement,
the celestial mansion of the conch fortress skull, the celestial mansion of
the seeing eyes and so on — in those four celestial mansions
the great secret of all secret mantra is located.

The Anatomy of the Pristine Consciousness of Vidyā

2.1.1.4.2 Then, the anatomy of the pristine consciousness of vidyā is the essence present as kāyas, the nature present as bindus of light, and compassion present as the lamps of pristine consciousness. The first is present inside the heart as the peaceful kāyas. The potentiality of that is present as the wrathful kāyas in the conch fortress. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: In the bodies of all sentient beings

dharmatā is pervaded by the principle of air,
subtle, light, and motile;¹¹⁷

the luminescent kāya,

a kāya present inside the heart, has five aspects bearing the characteristics
of each individual family.

The *Powerful Lion Tantra* states: [37a]

In the secret juncture, an eight-faceted precious treasury, the pristine
consciousness of vidyā is present in the form of fathers and mothers.

In the life force juncture, a precious four-faceted treasury, the pristine
consciousness of vidyā is present as bindus.

In the treasury of the conch skull,

the pristine consciousness of vidyā is present as the wrathful ones.

In the treasury of the two doors of unimpeded clarity, [the pristine
consciousness of vidyā] is present as the dhātu and chains.

The *Inlaid Jewels Tantra* states: Amazing! The reality of vidyā

is present in the center of everyone's heart

in the form of the pairs of fathers and mothers.

The kāya of method bears the aspect of the father; the kāya of pristine
consciousness bears the aspect of the mother, present in the form of
light and light rays [. . .]

That is the way the peaceful ones exist [. . .]¹¹⁸

The wrathful ones are present in everyone's head,¹¹⁹

visibly apparent as pairs of fathers and mothers, present in the form of
male and female wrathful ones, each endowed with five pristine
consciousnesses.

The nature is bindus of light:¹²⁰

The bindus appear like kāyas in the nāḍīs.

The largest is equal to space.

The smallest is the size of a horse hair split into ten parts.

The extent of clarity is like the sun and the moon that are also clear,
bright, brilliant, blazing,
going, coming, and staying.¹²¹ [37b]

Compassion is present as the lamp of pristine consciousness: Compassion produces light rays like a lamp.

The light rays of that lamp are fathomless.¹²²

The secret light¹²³ is located inside of the heart.

The natural light manifests in the vista of the sky.

The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states: The lamp of the dhātu of vidyā,¹²⁴
the lamp of the empty chains,
the lamp of the self-originated wisdom,
and the lamp of the watery far-reaching lasso
are present in all sentient beings.

The Way the Basis Is Present in the Body 2.1.1.4.3 The explanation of the way the basis is present in the body: further, since the essence is present as kāyas, all kāyas are present like the body of a vase. The nature is present as light, present like a lamp inside the body of a vase.¹²⁵ Compassion is present like light rays, i.e., pristine consciousness manifests as the unceasing radiance of a lamp. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: In the celestial mansion of the precious heart

is the aspect of the originally pure essence,
the luminescence of the kāyas that unifies clarity and emptiness, with
perfect faces and hands, in the form of the body of a vase.

Natural perfection is present as a ball of light.

Compassion is present as individual colors.

Ācārya Vimalamitra said: [38a]

Kāyas are inwardly illuminated like the body of a vase.

Lights are like a lamp in a vase.

Wisdom is like the egg of a peahen.

The intention of the claim that the kāyas are the size of a mustard seed and their eyes are the diameter of a thread is cause and result. Though some may explain that pristine consciousness shifts and stays, the shifting is the shifting of vāyu. If pristine consciousness shifts, the body and mind will separate. This topic demonstrates how the basis is present.

116. NB and TDD give *don ni rang gi lus dkyil na//snying na ye shes chen po gnas/*.

117. Both NB and this text give *yang dag* for *yang dang*.

118. ADZ gives: *de ni gnas lugs gzhi yi bzhugs tshul lo/*; NB and this text give *de ni zhi ba'i bzhugs tshul lo*.

119. ADZ has *dung khang*.

120. This line appears as part of the citation but does not exist in citation, made clear by reference to TDD, p. 924. The following citation is also from the *Inlaid Jewels Tantra*.

121. In NB and this text, this citation has been trimmed to seven syllable stanzas.

122. Lit. *gting la thog ma med*, “never hit a bottom.”

123. *Gnas pa'i don ni tsi tta'i dkyil na gnas*; NB gives *gnas pa'i 'od ni tsi tta'i nang du gnas*; ADZ gives *gsang ba'i 'od ni tsit ta'i nang du gsal*. I am following the latter.

124. This line is missing in NB. The order of this line has been switched, i.e., it appears that this line, *rig pa dbyings kyi sgron ma dang*, was added out of order.

125. The origin of this metaphor appears to be one of the ten classical tathāgatagarbha sūtras, *Āryamahābherīhāarakaparivartanāmamahāyānasūtra*. See introduction.

TOPIC 5: *The Pathway of Pristine Consciousness*

2.1.1.5 Now, fifth is the explanation of the pathway through which the pristine consciousness (that is present in the above manner) moves.¹²⁶ The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The path of the pristine consciousness of vidyā

is the cakras of one's nāḍīs.

From the location of the intrinsically complete three kāyas arise the rasanā, lalanā, and avadhūti.

Based on four cakras in the center, three nāḍīs maintain the body.

Since these exist on the right, left, and in the center, the body and limbs develop

through the distinction of relative and ultimate; the lamps are ripened.

The Formation of the Body

2.1.1.5.1 As such, in order to recognize the characteristics of the nāḍīs, it is necessary to recognize the characteristics of the body. First, if the characteristics of the formation of the body are not recognized, [38b] in the middle, the characteristics of the locations will not be recognized. If those are not recognized, in the end, the characteristics of the perishing of the body will not be recognized.

Now then, since the characteristics of the nāḍīs will not be recognized if the characteristics of the body are not recognized, start with the characteristics of the formation of the body. After passing away in the previous life, the consciousness of the mental body of the bardo exists here and there, back and forth. Through the power of previous karma, like a cloud of insects on meat in the summer,¹²⁷ those bardo beings will appear at the door of the womb of a woman having intercourse.¹²⁸ For some it will appear like a death sentence.

Next, through the power of positive and negative karma, one takes birth. Seeing a refuge in the womb of the parents,¹²⁹ one enters the rectum.¹³⁰ Having been encased in the seal of the womb, the [inseparable] vāyu and mind of one's appropriated body, the white cause of the father and the red condition of the mother (like a mixture of blood and milk) come together and are the basis. It is said that both the cause and the condition have the action of the four relative elements. The action of the four ultimate elements comes from both the vāyu and the mind. The eight weeks in the formation of the body are addressed in [39a] the *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra*: After that, having been implanted in the womb

from the cause and condition of father and mother, there is the oval,
oblong,
lumpy, round,
hardening, fish-like,
tortoise-like, and tadpole-like.
In that way there are eight weeks.
Bodies develop from the navel.

The *String of Pearls Tantra* states: From the union of method and wisdom [. . .].

To arrive at a division of seven, there is a single day for each element, two days each for two at a time, and a single day for all four.

First, the oval state: on the first day, the action of water gathers those elements together into a single basis. The oval basis is one-hundredth the size of a mustard seed. On the second day, the action of the earth element solidifies them into one and stabilizes them, and the size becomes a tenth of a mustard seed. After that, on the third day, the action of fire vibrates the oval making it shudder like quicksilver. Without being mixed with others, it becomes the size of a third of a mustard seed. [39b] On the fourth day, after the action of air scatters that tiny sphere into hundreds and thousands of pieces, again it gathers together into one like quicksilver and ripens to half the size of a mustard seed. On the fifth day, after both water and earth merge, since there is an action of coalescing and stabilizing, it ripens to the size of a mustard seed. Further, on the sixth day, through the action of fire and air ripening individually and clarifying, it changes into the size of two mustard seeds. After that, on the seventh day, on the inside of that oval sphere, which is the size of two mustard seeds, two very tiny eyes

form. At this time, it is disturbed by the action of the four elements. It is broken up by the moistness of water and pressed down by the heaviness of earth. The heat of fire burns the cause and condition that are interrelated with vāyu and mind.¹³¹ That sphere is now the size of a subtle particle and, having been scattered by wind, has no specific form.¹³²

Further, through the power of karma and traces, on the eighth evening, the effect of water coalesces it into one. The oblong support becomes the size of one-tenth of a bean and the eastern nāḍīs develop. [40a] On the ninth evening, it is one-ninth the size of a bean and the southern nāḍīs develop. After that, on the tenth evening, because it is puffed by the heat of fire, it is one-seventh the size of a bean, inside of which the western nāḍīs develop. After that, on the eleventh evening, since it is moved by wind, it becomes one-fifth the size of a bean and inside of it the northern nāḍīs form. As before, since there are two elements at work, finally it is the size of a round bean. The two eyes are small and clear. The four nāḍīs of the four elements are like threads extending into the four directions.

Since it is disturbed by the action of the four elements, after it is destroyed as described above, on the evening of the fortnight the innate cause, the lumpy stage, is two beans in size. As above, it grows to the size of a thumb. Again it is destroyed.

On the twenty-second day, air repeats the sundering once more. Through water it gathers into one. Through earth it is stabilized and turns into the round stage. Fire ripens it for a period of seven days, ripening the nāḍī-petals of the four cakras and the nāḍīs that support the five sense organs. The two eyes also ripen. [40b]

Next, since that cause is split up due to being moved by the karma vāyus, gathered into one by water, and hardened and stabilized by earth, the so-called hardened stage is becoming a very solid thing. Since it is ripened by fire, in its center three pillar-like straight nāḍīs develop and mature.

After that, even though [the fetus] has hardened, it is destroyed and becomes like a fish four finger-widths long. Since it is gathered into one by water, having established its form, it does not fragment. Since it is ripened by fire, the gates of the five senses protrude, and the eyes and so on become clear.

After that, since the action of being destroyed by fire becomes an intrinsic force, [the fetus] becomes the shape of a limbless tortoise, five finger-widths long.

After that, the limbs develop, flesh and blood manifest, and the shape of the

tadpole is generated six finger-widths long.

That is the activity of the formation of the body in one month and twenty-six days [or eight weeks].

Next come the stages of gestation and birth. The body is developed through the mother eating and drinking; the hair and pores form. After three months [41a] and twenty-two days [sixteen weeks], there is movement and kicking within the mother's womb. Following that, the development of the body is gradually completed. After nine months and ten days [forty weeks], there is birth from the womb. The *String of Pearls Tantra*¹³³ states: On the ninth month and tenth day

the body is completed and emerges from the mother's womb.

The Three Levels of Location

2.1.1.5.2 Now, there are three levels of the locations of the body: (1) the anatomy of the nāḍī locations, (2) the anatomy of the motile vāyus, and (3) the anatomy of the structured bindus of bodhicitta.

The Nāḍīs

First, in general 72,000 nāḍās are present in the body. They are all included in 472 nāḍīs. Those are further included in four cakras. The essence of those is included in the three main nāḍīs. Vimalamitra states: Though the cakras of nāḍī knots of the body

have many interconnections like a web,

the supreme have the form of pillars in a straightened body, present as the three pristine consciousness nāḍīs that generate the three kāyas.

Since the power of the three nāḍīs gathers at the crown, the individual functions are created for the five sense organs.

The Vāyus

With respect to the anatomy of the motile vāyus, since karma vāyus and mind are mixed, there is movement. [41b] The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Both vāyu and mind are mixed together.

All actions are created by vāyu

All actions are created by vāyu.

The way vāyu moves: The 21,600 vāyus
are supported on the nāḍīs
and are held to be the winds of great movement.
They have two actions:
moving up and voiding down.

“Moving up” means that after the power of the four elements (the vāyus of earth, and so on) merge, they move through the right and left nostrils. “Voiding down” means moving through the lower gate, expelling feces and urine.

That is how both the vāyu and the mind move through the nāḍīs. The *Blazing Lamp Tantra* states: Existing as movement, pulsation, vibration,

lightness,¹³⁴ motion, and the nature,¹³⁵

the four generative nāḍīs

surround the maṇḍala of the heart [. . .]¹³⁶

The clarifying clarity and knowing knower of consciousness are the five
[wisdoms] and the four [nāḍīs] together with the karma vāyus.

Clarity exists as the great wisdom
inside of the rasanā,

lalanā, avadhūti, and the hollow crystal tube

as the nature of the [five] wisdoms [. . .] [42a]

The clear and unclear energies¹³⁷

come from the stirring and vibration of the vāyu abiding inside the nāḍīs
of the body.

The Bindus

Now comes the anatomy of the array of bindus of bodhicitta. The bindus exist abiding in the straight form of the upper part of the three nāḍīs inside the four cakras. The ultimate bindu moves through the left nāḍī, the relative bindu moves through the right nāḍī, and the naturally existing bindu moves through the central nāḍī. Ācārya Vimalamitra states: Self-originated pristine consciousness moves in the form of a bindu.

The kāyas are generated

through the stirring and vibration of the vāyu abiding inside the nāḍīs

through three kinds of bindus.

The seed of the *nirmāṇakāya* is created
by the relative causal bindu.

The father's semen and mother's blood,
the basis of the body, move through the *nāḍīs*
and, after they are still, generate the glow of the body.

The father is the right *nāḍī*; the mother is the left *nāḍī*.

The ultimate bindu of light,

the size of a mustard seed, arises clearly;

its self-illuminating light exists as round,

immaculate, and beyond the extremes of permanence and annihilation.

The *vidyā* that is moved and stirred by *vāyu*

is subtle; its stirring is difficult to understand.

The male is on the right and the female is on the left.

The pristine consciousness present in the basis seems like three [pristine
consciousnesses]

in the originally pure natural essence. [42b]

Since the light, *kāyas*, and *vidyā* of pristine consciousness are not
established,

the trio of pellucid emptiness, pellucid clarity, and *vidyā*

stir through the central *nāḍī*.

The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: A bindu is inside
the *nāḍīs*.

There are three kinds of entering bindus

that plant the seed of connecting *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.

Five kinds of bindus of arising

define the *maṇḍala* of the experiential yoga.

The six structural bindus
gather many phenomena into one.
Based on the above,
all phenomena have a uniform intrinsic nature.

The *String of Pearls Tantra* extensively states: The bindus from the nāḍīs
have the intrinsic nature of being subtle and quick, and beautified by
patterns of light rays.

Further, their aspect is threefold:
right, left, and center.

The right-hand relative bindu . . .

With regard to their function, the relative bindu creates the cause, condition, and function of the four relative elements. The relative cause is the four elements. The relative condition is flesh, blood, [43a] warmth, and breath. The relative function is creating the body. From the first day the relative bindu spreads upward from the soles of the feet, meaning the relative bindu has the function of increasing the aggregates through the pure essences of the consumed food and spreads upward from the feet from the first day. Since the vital element¹³⁸ increases into the navel on the fourth day, into the heart on the eighth day, into the throat on the twelfth day, and into the crown on the fifteenth day, whatever accumulations are gathered increase greatly. If moxibustion and bloodletting are performed on the bodies of practitioners when the vital element is increasing there will be an obscuration of damage; it should not be done. Since experience and realization develop when bodhicitta is increasing, it is not appropriate to lose the relative bindu. When the sense gates and sense organs are increasing, if one massages the hair on the crown of the head about a thumb width in length with a mixture of sesame oil, musk, and sandalwood, disturbances in the elements of the body will be prevented.

After the sixteenth day, based on the impurities of the consumed food, the relative bodhicitta spreads downward. The vital element spreads into the throat on the nineteenth day, [43b] into the heart on the twenty-second day, and into the navel on the twenty-fifth day. On the day of the new moon, the vital element and the aggregates increase at the soles of the feet. At that time, apply a paste of various grains, oils, rhubarb root,¹³⁹ and ground nutmeg powder and warm in the sun. Because the vital element increases, verbal virtues are accomplished;

because bodhicitta increases, one can rely on a mudrā; and because the bindu increases, bliss arises.

The relative resultant bindu is the function of the increase and decrease of the relative four elements. If the bindu is damaged, the functionality of the relative four elements decreases.

The ultimate cause bindu is present in the heart, as well as in the conch palace. It is the cause of expanding pristine consciousness. Its function is generating the lamps. It ripens the bindu in the nāḍīs. It gives rise to the far-reaching lamp in the eyes, the lamp of the empty bindu, the lamp of self-originated wisdom, and the lamp of the pure dhātu. The ultimate result is present in the state of the inseparability of the dhātu and pristine consciousness.

The natural bindu [44a] is the bindu of dharmatā when one is in equipoise. When experiences arise from that [equipoise], the natural bindu is the bindu of pure dharmatā. When the natural bindu appears, it is the bindu of the dhātu. When the natural bindu spreads from that appearance, it is the bindu of the pure dhātu. When spreading is perfected, the natural bindu is the bindu of Samantabhadra. When the natural bindu's sign arises externally, it is the bindu of pristine consciousness.¹⁴⁰

Up to this point, the location of the bindus has been described.

126. In TDD, Longchenpa moves the material here to the second topic on how delusion occurs.

127. NB gives *rnal 'byor gyi sha la sbrang bu 'phur ba ltar 'phungs*.

128. NB gives *tshangs* instead of *chags*; it must be a scribal error because TDD and this text agree.

129. This line is missing in NB.

130. NB gives *bshad pa'i lam*, but TDD gives *bshang lam* and the DD edition gives *gshang ba'i lam*.

131. NB is unintelligible on this point, while TDD reflects this text on the main points.

132. TDD, p. 858: *rlung gis shugs kyis gtor bas nam mkha' la sbrin chad pa'i rnam pa ltar dum bu long gyis song ngo*.

133. This citation is actually from the *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra*.

134. *Yang ba*, the quality of lightness as opposed to the quality of heaviness.

135. According to the *Clarification of the String of Pearls*, pp. 189–90: “The natures of the consciousnesses are the aspect of being propelled by vāyu, pulsated by the intrinsic potentiality of vidyā, vibrated by the action of the elements, made light by the intrinsic potentiality of wisdom, placed in motion because of the expansion and contraction of consciousness, and existing as the absolute nature (*bdag nyid chen po*), the essence of pristine consciousness.”

136. This line and the next two are missing in the manuscript and NB.

137. Both NB and the DD edition give *rtsa*; ADZ gives *rtsal*.

138. *Khams*.

139. NB gives *zhim tshe*; TDD gives *zhim tso*; this text gives *zhim rtse*. I am reading this as *rtsa ba*.

140. NB: *de phyir shar ba'i dus ye shes che po'i thig le*.

TOPIC 6: *The Doorway of Pristine Consciousness*

2.1.1.6 The explanation of the critical point of the doorway through which arising occurs: the doorway of arising is through the eyes.

Further, the pure essence of the five elements is the two eyes [which form] at the nāḍī knot of the navel connected with the three nāḍīs.¹⁴¹ These also connect the navel location with the heart. From the heart, it is connected to the throat. From the throat, the four nāḍīs wind to the right into the conch palace of the brain called “the nāḍīs that create clinging to the objects of the senses.” Having separated into five tips, the five tips become the individual supports for the gates of the five sense organs. Among those are the so-called “nāḍīs of the pure organ that separates faults and qualities.” Wide at the mouth and narrow at the base, the two nāḍīs that resemble gaur horns¹⁴² pierce the two eyeballs. [44b] Since both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are grasped based on the pure essence of the eye, it is divided into black and white.¹⁴³ Since this doorway arises with the nature of water, it is called “the lamp of far-reaching water” — this is the actual eye.¹⁴⁴

Based on that, the lamp of the empty bindu arises like a peacock feather. Its radiance is the lamp of the pure dhātu that resembles the *naro*.¹⁴⁵ Its potentiality arises as the potentiality of consciousness, the lamp of self-originated wisdom. The luminescence¹⁴⁶ of the kāya of nonconceptual vidyā arises from the aperture of Brahma¹⁴⁷ at the crown. Further, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: From among the tips that emerge connected to the generative nāḍīs, there emerges one nāḍī.

Five branches exist on that one,
which cause the objects of the sense organs to arise and appear in the
doorway of each sense organ.

In particular, the pure essence separates faults and qualities.

Coming from [the nāḍī] that is curved like a gaur horn, the so-called mango is divided into white and black.

It knows and grasps shapes
and shows the intrinsic potentiality of consciousness to be perfect. [45a]
Wisdom manifests in actuality.

The *Blazing Lamp Tantra* states: Three nāḍīs exist winding to the right
inside the white conch palace of the brain.

One of these nāḍīs has a shape resembling a gaur horn.

Having gathered all the pure essences of the sense organs, this [pure
essence] abides within the nāḍīs causing objects to arise in the sense
organs [. . .]

Furthermore, from both nāḍīs of the father and mother, the white and
black are mixed.

The gateway of arising is one's two eyes.

The *String of Pearls Tantra* states: The pathway, the door that causes sight,
is right, left, and center.

Present in the form of blazing lamps,
the lamp of the empty bindu,
the lamp of the pure expanse,
[the lamp of] self-originated wisdom,
and the lamp of far-reaching water
appear as the object of sight.

The chains of nonconceptual vidyā
appear through the brahmarandhra of great bliss, for example, like a
golden chain

formed of links
well-strung by a skilled craftsman.

Ācārya Vimalamitra states:

Although inside of the avadhūti (that is clear and straight), appearing in the field like a string of pearls. [45b]

Based upon those, the vision of the direct perception of dharmatā can be confirmed right now. As such, the critical point of the direct perception of dharmatā is to transcend intellectual views because it is not an intellectual reification.

141. TDD, p. 985: *de yang 'byung ba bzhi'i dangs ma lte ba'i rtsa mdud du spyan gnyis chags pa la rtsa gsum gyis sbrel te lte ba nas snying par 'brel.*

142. The gaur is also known as the Indian bison.

143. In other words, the pupil and sclera.

144. TDD notes on p. 986: “Though past generations have asserted that it is the actual eye, it appears that they have not distinguished the piercing aspect of the light nāḍīs.”

145. TDD (pp. 986–87) inexplicably elides the lamp of the pure dhātu at this point, as well as the example of the peacock feather. The *naro* is the diacritical mark in Tibetan language that indicates the “o” vowel.

146. Text gives *dnagos*, whereas NB and TDD clarify that it should be *gdangs*.

147. The *brahmarandhra*, the upper end of the central channel, held to be the place where one ejects one’s consciousness at the time of death.

TOPIC 7: *The Field*

2.1.1.7 Now, seventh, the explanation of the field in which pristine consciousness (that has arisen in a doorway) arises. The external field is the dhātu appearing in an empty sky free from clouds. That empty field is the basis for the arising of empty vidyā. Also, the *Perfection of Wisdom*¹⁴⁸ states:

What is the meaning of that? Look into the pure sky.

*Vajrasattva's Great Space*¹⁴⁹ states:

. . . the yoga is like the path of a bird abiding in space.¹⁵⁰

And:

The concept of space is nonarising . . .

There are other inconceivable citations. The following will be discussed through clearly demonstrating our own system.¹⁵¹

The internal field¹⁵² arises inside as the lamp of the pure dhātu. As such, [the *Innermost Great Potentiality*] also states:

In the dhātu of all outer and inner phenomena,
the pure experiential field,
buddhas and sentient beings are nondual. [46a]
How can there be fabrication with a path?¹⁵³

There are many citations about this internal field.

Now then, how the mode of appearance appears: the nondual union of the appearance of the inseparable dhātu and vidyā, nondual appearance and emptiness, nondual object and mind, and so on, are the ultimate nonduality called “the view free from extremes.”¹⁵⁴ The *Realms and Transformations of*

Sound Tantra states:

The characteristics of the appearance of the field
are characteristics of light, color, shapes,

and pristine consciousness manifesting
in a windless blue sky.

And:

The dhātu is external and internal:
the external is apprehended as the sky free of clouds;
the internal is apprehended as the path of the lamps.

And:

In the empty field free of clouds,
the yoga is like the path of a bird abiding in space.

The *Unwritten Tantra* states:

Also that manifests as an aspect in the state of space . . . [155](#)

And:

Arising as the dhātu from the two corners of the eyes . . . [156](#)

Thus, there are many citations in the Seventeen Tantras.

Because that field visibly appears as dharmatā, [46b] the *Mañjuśrīmayajvala Tantra*¹⁵⁷ states:

The direct perception of all the buddhas . . .

The *Guhyagarbha Tantra* states:¹⁵⁸

Through four realizations —
a single cause, the form of a syllable,
blessings, and direct perception —
everything is the fully perfected great king.

The *Unwritten Tantra* states:

Directly perceiving the nonarising,

buddhas see pure vision without objects.¹⁵⁹

The *Unified Transcendent State of All Buddhas Tantra*¹⁶⁰ states:

As soon as direct perception is realized clearly,
buddhahood is in the bodies of migrating beings.

That demonstrates in which field there is arising.

Up to this point the reality to be realized has been explained. The first and second chapters explain the reality of the original basis. The anatomy of the supporting person is explained from the end of the second section and the third section up to the seventh section. Their method of realization is explained in the three following sections, numbered eight, nine, and ten. Liberation, the ultimate result of having actualized realization, [47a] is explained in the eleventh section.

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148. TDD identifies this as a citation from *Āryaprajñāpāramitāsamcayagāthā*; however, this citation is not found in any current edition. The closest citation is *chos thams cad kyi don shes pa la ni dri ma med pa'i nam mkha' la blta zhing bzlas brjod bya'o* from the *Śrīparamādyanāmamahāyānakalparāja*.
149. *Byang chub sems mi nub pa'i rgyal mtshan lta ba nam mkha' che* or *rdo rje sems dpa' nam mkha' che*. This line also occurs in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*, chapter 2, reply 10.
150. NB incorrectly identifies this as being from the *Prajñāpāramitā*.
151. Following NB, reading *lugs* for *lung*.
152. Based on reading in NB, *yul* and *dbyings* have been switched in the DD edition.
153. This line is missing in NB.
154. NB gives *spang bya sems gnyis med las don gyi gnyis med mu mtha' dang bral ba'i lta ba zhes bya'o*. TDD, p. 1033: “Looking at one’s own state, the direct perception of the target of this system of the Great Perfection is asserted to be the so-called ‘transcendent state of the nondual dhātu and vidyā’” */rdzogs pa chen po 'di'i lugs kyi gtad so'i 'bem mngon sum rang ngo la blta ba dbyings rig gnyis su med pa'i dgongs pa zhes bya bar 'dod pa del*.
155. This line refers to the unfettered equipoise of the mountain (*ri bo cog bzhag*).
156. ADZ gived *zur gnyis*; here, it is given as *zum nyid*.
157. *Mañjuśrījñānasattvasyaparamārthanāmasaṃgīti*.
158. This citation and the following are in reverse order in NB.
159. Manuscript gives *yul med rnam par dag pa'i sangs rgyas mthong*; NB correctly gives *yul med rnam par dag pa'i snang ba mthong*.
160. *Sang rgyas thams cad kyi dgongs pa 'dus pa'i rgyud* identified as the *Rin po che bdud rtsi bcud 'thigs kyi rgyud*, a tantra of the *spyi ti* class. This citation is absent from NB and is unidentified at present since it does not exist in the cited text.

TOPIC 8: *The Method of Practice*

2.1.1.8 Now, eighth, there are two subjects in the explanation of how to practice: (1) the conferral of empowerment, the preliminary method of ripening the special support, the person, and (2) the explanation of the intimate instruction that liberates the ripened one.

Empowerment

2.1.1.8.1 In the first subject, the conferral of empowerment, a qualified guru and a disciple who is a suitable vessel are necessary. There are two subjects in the investigation of the characteristics of both master and disciple.

Investigating the Guru

2.1.1.8.1.1 To begin, the investigation of the characteristics of the guru. One should avoid a guru who does not possess the characteristics of secret mantra and instead rely upon one who possesses these characteristics.

The first, a guru who has no qualities other than a smattering of instructions, must be avoided. He leads both [himself and the disciple] to lower realms because he is unable to bring forth the result. The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states: A master who lacks a connection with a lineage of scholars,

has huge pride,

is stupid, literal-minded,

does not understand the meaning of secret mantra,

has harsh words for others, is boastful, [47b]

has entered false paths, has not seen the maṇḍala of the empowerment,
disregards samaya, is unable to answer questions,

has little learning and great pride —

the unexamined master is a māra for the disciple.

Such a one should be avoided. Since he binds himself, his liberation and qualities cannot arise.

The qualities of a master upon whom to rely: he is broadminded and expert in the tantras. In general, he knows many tantras of secret mantra. In particular, he knows how to extract the point of the tantras. He knows how to show the practical import of the words of the tantras. Furthermore, that itself is not sufficient. He must also be expert in meditation and practice, know how to explain the four branches of approach and accomplishment, and have produced skills in repelling disturbances with the mantras of exhortation, curses, and slaying. Yet not even that is sufficient. He must also be realized and expert in the view: knowledgeable in the general view and the views of the nine vehicles. Since he is expert in the inner view, he has seen dharmatā as a personal experience. On the basis of that he practices and is expert in experience. He practices having given up thoughts of the world with his mind. His mind does not enter into activities and work. Having abandoned companions, he relies on mountain caves and retreats. [48a] As such, he also never leaves his practice. When he introduces others to practice, uncommon experiences arise. He also has abandoned worldly behavior and has great compassion. He has a very loving mind. He is very generous and so on. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Gurus of perfect characteristics

are the source of all qualities,

the ones who sustain the basis of perfect awakening.

The individual characteristics of
both the root and branch gurus are complete.

If it is asked who is such [a guru], the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states:

Expert in the secret tantras of secret mantra,
engages in all outer and inner accomplishments,
never leaves the meaning of the view,
gives up outer, inner, and secret activities,
endowed with qualities like a precious jewel,
and enjoyed as an inexhaustible treasury.

Investigating the Disciple

Second, the two subjects in the guru's investigation of the vessel of the disciple are the faults and qualities of the vessel. The above tantra states: Not making offerings or paying respect,

practicing secret mantra incorrectly,
lacking a good family, insincere,
unintelligent, [48b]
contemptuous of kindness,
praising himself, [. . .]¹⁶¹
engaged in pointless activities —
the unexamined disciple is the enemy of the master.

That type of vessel has little respect, cannot accomplish the practice, practices secret mantra incorrectly, is ill-tempered and mentally unstable, with great avarice.¹⁶² Since that type is a poor vessel they should be avoided.¹⁶³

The vessel to be accepted has great faith in the qualified guru and does not engage in distracting thoughts that are not Dharma activities. They are willing to be generous and give everything to the guru. They are very intelligent. They are devoted to Mahāyāna Dharma. They are very diligent and at all times are never separate from the instruction of the guru. Since they have already purified incorrect clinging to saṃsāra, they are suitable vessels for the Great Perfection. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Since he is faithful,

intelligent,
devoted, and undeluded,
unmistaken in the topics of discussion, [49a]
with clear sense organs, reliant on the guru, [. . .]
the bearer of view and meditation
is very faithful and diligent,
generous, and devoted to the guru,
with very strict conduct, careful of misdeeds,
and maintaining immovable stability.¹⁶⁴

Also from that tantra:

Strong faith and very diligent,
very intelligent, and free from the attachment of grasping,
possessing samaya, and diligent in practice,
doing whatever the guru says.

The proper vessel for the natural Great Perfection has a minimal flow¹⁶⁵ of concepts, spacious behavior, few traces of dualistic grasping, is totally relaxed¹⁶⁶ in body and speech, is calm, and does not create suffering. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Further, since he is good-natured, naturally relaxed,

relaxed like a simpleton,¹⁶⁷ at ease, with few concepts, naturally calm, with activities of body and speech that are calm, and intelligent, he should be accepted.

After such a master and disciple meet, it is said that the disciple should offer [49b] a precious maṇḍala to the guru and ask him for empowerment for seven, five, or three years. After the guru has given his consent, the disciple should gather tormas, feast substances, offering substances, and so on. Then he should make a request.

The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:

Further, the fortunate are ripened
with the four kinds of empowerment:
the elaborate, unelaborate

the elaborate, unelaborate,
very unelaborate,
and likewise, the extremely unelaborate.
Through the principle of the four divisions
the continuum of the faithful is ripened.

Next, the guru confers the elaborate empowerment based on colored powder.
The empowerment of the disciples' continuums arises from that.

Also, for the purpose of those inclined toward the elaborate,
there is the approach, the accomplishment, and the near approach,¹⁶⁸
which are performed by the qualified guru.

Further, the rite of the earth, the preparations, the drawing of the lines and
the colors

are done according to the maṇḍala that comes from the tantras.

After that, also the rite of conferring empowerment,
beginning from the śrāvakayāna,
is completed in eight stages.

Thereafter the Dzokchen empowerment of the potentiality of vidyā is
conferred. [50a]

One should explain the difference in purpose, entry,
and effect of each one.

At this time, the samayas and vows are received,¹⁶⁹ and permission granted.

After that, the disciples should offer gifts and have a celebration. Again, a
tantra states:¹⁷⁰

Serve with retinue and enjoyments.

Please with behavior of body and voice.

Serve the guru who is equal to a buddha.

The qualities coming from that service
are like a wish-fulfilling tree, a wish-fulfilling gem,
or a wish-fulfilling cow.

One attains unfathomable qualities.

With this in mind, serve the guru

in order to defeat the armies of saṃsāra.

The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states:

As such, a guru of intimate instructions
is served with one's body, precious things,
and the very rare.

Also, in other tantras it is said:

As much gold as the size of one's body
should be offered to the guru as a gift.

And:

The man free of deceit in his three doors
offers that which is most important and pleasing
to the master of the intimate instructions and citations:
his uncle, father, mother,
sons, daughters, and his best jewels. [50b]

If one has a celebration at this time, siddhi¹⁷¹ will be attained. Likewise: A
great celebration of compassion.

And:

The conferral of empowerment along with a celebration.

The *String of Pearls Tantra* states:

If there is no celebration, the meaning will not be accomplished.

Whoever offers
one, two, three,
one hundred, or one thousand feasts
to the guru, the guru's retinue,
and one's vajra siblings,

offering a great celebration
satisfies yogis,
accomplishes all good,
and liberates one from all faults.

Then, after one month passes, confer the unelaborate empowerment based on a vase and a maṇḍala. [The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states]: In order to introduce and ripen those inclined toward the unelaborate,

the supreme unelaborate empowerment
is the empowerment of verses bestowed
on the basis of a maṇḍala and vase.

A prediction and so on are made. Offer gifts for the empowerment and hold a celebration.

After that, the very unelaborate [51a] empowerment is conferred based on signs and dependent origination. At this time, there is an introduction into a special maṇḍala. [The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states]: For those inclined toward the very unelaborate,

having separated saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, divided as below,¹⁷²

at that time the obscurations of body, voice, and mind
can also be definitely determined by the sign
from the characteristics of the sky.

If the obscuration is not purified,
purify with virtues corresponding to each one.

The empowerment that is based on the sign
is the introduction to one's state, the luminosity of one's vidyā.

One should be expert in the intimate instruction that unravels the symbol.

This very unelaborate empowerment is taught clearly in the fourth chapter of the *Heap of Jewels Tantra*. Again offer gifts and have a celebration.

After that, the extremely unelaborate empowerment is conferred based on one's own mind. At that time, the critical points of body and speech are emphasized. [The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states]: For the extremely unelaborate empowerment,

open the door of the maṇḍala of mind.

Start well with physical posture,
become familiar with that and apply the gazes.

Direct perception introduces vidyā with a citation. [51b]

Again offer gifts, have a celebration, and so on. Though there is no contradiction with offering the four empowerments at the same time, there is also no contradiction if the empowerments are interrupted by months and years. The *Heap of Jewels Tantra* states: Having fully entered into this,

having obtained the supreme empowerment to begin with,
the causal conferral possesses effort;
through the empowerment of the trackless symbol,
one masters the unchanging basis.

The faults of not obtaining the empowerment and the qualities of obtaining it are stated in the *Mind Mirror of Vajrasattva Tantra*: Where will accomplishment be without relying on the empowerments of secret mantra? For example, like a boatman without a paddle,¹⁷³ how will one be able to cross to the other side? If the empowerments are fully obtained, all secret mantras not accomplished will be accomplished.

Therefore, to ripen the unripened basis, it is necessary to confer the empowerment. On the basis of having done that, it is necessary to protect samaya. In general, it is necessary to protect the samayas explained in the tantras of secret mantra. The protection of what is to be protected such as the samayas of body, voice, and mind, [the samayas mentioned in] the *Bright Light*, the root and branch samayas, and so on, are [52a] stated in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*: Though the different explanations of the samayas that support the empowerment

cannot be covered by speech,
in brief, [the vows of] body, speech, and mind
are to be applied to the yogi's body, voice, and mind.
The object is the guru and vajra siblings.
The divisions of the field of protection
are the vows of body, voice, and mind,
and maintaining the place of the secret vajra.

Also, the samayas are explained extensively in the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra*. The *Heap of Jewels Tantra* states: Protect the two kinds of samaya

as a branch to stabilize that [empowerment].
Having these beforehand,
enter into the king of the supreme vehicle.

Guard the samayas of the natural Great Perfection beyond the boundary of different samayas to protect, meaning nonexistent, ubiquitous, single, and

naturally perfect.¹⁷⁴ From the same tantra: At that time, beyond a boundary to protect,

those [samayas] — nonexistent, single, and ubiquitous —
become supports for that [empowerment].

If it is asked from which tantra those empowerments with their samayas originate, the *Self-Originated Perfection Tantra*, *Mind Mirror of Vajrasattva Tantra*, *Powerful Lion Tantra*, and *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* state [the empowerments with samayas] exist to be conferred. [52b] The *Inlaid Jewels Tantra* and so on state both positions: the empowerments with samayas exist and do not exist to be conferred. Though it is claimed that the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*, *String of Pearls Tantra*, and *Heap of Jewels Tantra* show that the empowerments with samayas do not exist to be conferred, all four are shown in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*. Nevertheless, the very unelaborate empowerment that illustrates the symbol of the mind is therefore primarily explained. Further, the result of buddhahood arises without impediment from the conjunction of a qualified guru, a disciple who possesses samaya, and the blessings of the empowerment. For example, like grain ripening after a seed is planted in fertile soil, well-tended with water, and so on, the result ripens based on not damaging samaya after the empowerment has been conferred upon one's pure continuum. It is not enough to leave grain such as barley and so on in their ripened state; they must be harvested. Like grain being suitable to eat after it has been harvested, the crop milled, and so on, having ripened that result of the mind, it is also necessary for the guru to correctly teach the instructions. [53a] If it is asked what the purpose is of ripening and liberation, just as ripened grain will be of no benefit if it is not harvested, even if one's continuum is completely ripened through purification, it is wasted if one does not practice the liberating intimate instructions of the guru.

That demonstrates the four empowerments that ripen the practitioner, the special support along with samaya.

Liberating Oral Instructions

2.1.1.8.2 The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states:

Having perfected the maṇḍala of conferring the empowerment,
one should explain the instructions extensively.

Now, there are two subjects in the practice of the liberating oral instructions: the practice according to how the person behaves and the actual methods of practicing those instructions.

The Two Kinds of Practitioners

2.1.1.8.2.1 Two kinds of practitioners practice the guru's instructions: people who practice like beggars and people who practice like deer. The former are disguised as commoners in a land they do not know, practicing unknown and alone.¹⁷⁵ Not boasting about one's qualities to people is a sign of absence of grasping. Not asking about or relying¹⁷⁶ on the signs of the amazing accomplishments of others [53b] is a sign of confidence in one's own intimate instructions. The *Intimate Instruction Tantra*¹⁷⁷ states:¹⁷⁸

Stay like a beggar
in a place without friends or enemies.

Practicing in the manner of a deer means going to a charnel ground or a place without negative conditions, such as a mountain cave or an empty valley. Having given up the three activities, practice. Further, first, since one gives up the activities of the body, including work, farming, and so on, the body is relaxed, and in turn the nāḍīs are relaxed. Since the nāḍīs are relaxed, the vāyus arise in their own condition. Since the vāyus arise in their own condition, concepts will not arise. For the voice, one should not engage in much conversation. Since one stops talking, the meaning of inexpressibility arises in one's mind. One should give up activities of the mind with its many different concepts and practice. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The faithful one, free of thoughts of saṃsāra,
should make offerings to the guru, give up activities,
abandon all connection with saṃsāra,
and reside alone without companions.

The Methods of Practice

2.1.1.8.2.2 Next, the two subjects regarding the method of practice are (1) the method of liberation, and (2) the practice of the two stages and the supports for accomplishing them. [54a]

Their supports are also twofold: (1) relying on the conditions of the implements of the yogin dependent upon the basis of delusion and (2) accomplishing the common siddhis dependent upon the application of the dependent origination of the stages of various methods.

The Creation Stage

2.1.1.8.2.2.1 First, the two stages of the method of practice are the paths of the creation stage and the completion stage. There are two creation stage paths: the creation stage through wisdom and the creation stage through method. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Amazing! Though there are countless stages

or ultimate secret practice,
by dividing the principle ones,
[the one of] method and [the one of] supremely profound wisdom
are summarized from them.¹⁷⁹

Those are then shown in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*.

The Completion Stage

2.1.1.8.2.2.2 There are two subjects regarding the completion-stage paths: demonstrating the practice of those inclined toward perceptual objects and the practice of those inclined toward the self-appearance of vidyā. The *Heap of Jewels Tantra* states: [54b]

The actual basis of all of those [paths]
are those [persons] of two kinds of inclination
practicing the essence of the meaning.
Teach all the methods and objects of meditation
to those inclined toward perceptual objects.
The methods of the view alone are explained
to those inclined toward the self-appearances of vidyā.

For Those Inclined toward Perceptual Objects

2.1.1.8.2.2.2.1 Here, the practice of those inclined toward perceptual objects is based on enumerations and stages. Within that there are the continuous yogas, conduct, meditation, view, and result. The *Inlaid Jewels Tantra* states: The continuous yoga of meditation comes

from the continuous yoga of conduct;
the continuous yoga of the result comes¹⁸⁰
from the continuous yoga of the view.

The Four Yogas

These four yogas are explained in twenty subjects. The *Heap of Jewels* states:

What are the different stages of these?

Practice in sequence.

The four essential topics are grasped

with the mode of the four lords.¹⁸¹

Their object, the four appearances of vidyā,

stop the stream of the arising of appearances. [55a]

Remain in the place of unsupported vidyā

with the four kinds of intimate instructions of the method of equipoise.

The strength¹⁸² of all phenomena of the universe and beings¹⁸³ is severed
with the four transcendent states of the meaning of that [meditation].

One should master¹⁸⁴ all phenomena according to the seasons of the four
kinds of individuals.¹⁸⁵

One should overcome afflictions
with the four appearances of the liberated pure state.
If one reaches the full measure of the nature of those four,
explain confidence in one's state with the four examples.

Whoever meditates on this
will be established in the innermost of all the pristine consciousnesses
and obtain the great secret mahāmudrā.

Thus twenty categories are explained. In that respect, first, the continuous yoga of conduct is the behavior that overcomes appearances. The intimate instruction for that is the method of unfettered equipoise¹⁸⁶ on appearances. In that case, if it is asked how the transcendent state arises, it is the transcendent state of the universe and beings arising as the basis. If it is asked where the afflictions went¹⁸⁷ at that time, they “transformed” when the person entered the Dharma.

Now then, there are three kinds of conduct. The conduct of beginners is performing the unerring sequence of the ten Dharma practices. [55b] *The Inlaid Jewels Tantra* states: The one who has not seen the essence of dharmatā
will cling to the ten Dharma practices.

The enumeration of those practices is taught in the *Progressive Stages of the Practice of All Dharmas Tantra*:¹⁸⁸

Writing, questioning, making offerings,
listening, reading, upholding,
explaining, reciting,
reflecting on that, and meditating on the meaning —
these ten are the door to the Dharma
and the footpath of the guides.

The Yoga of Conduct

The conduct of separating saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is the basis of conduct, meaning one reaches the full measure of body, voice, and mind. In that respect, although there are twenty-one conducts for controlling the breath with strict discipline, here in this case, there are seven. The *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra* states:
Taste the flavor of all Dharmas

with conduct resembling that of a bee.

Abandon objects that are conditions for delusion

with conduct resembling that of a deer

with conduct resembling that of a deer.

Abandon deluded speech
with an attitude resembling that of a mute.
Stop doubts in the meaning of secret mantra
with conduct resembling that of a swallow.¹⁸⁹
Abandon objects while staying in one place
with conduct resembling that of a madman. [56a]
Go to a charnel ground abandoning all fearful thoughts
with conduct resembling that of a lion.
Give up concepts of clean and dirty
with conduct resembling that of pigs and dogs.

First, enter a door like a bee searching for a hive in a cliff. Differentiate what is Dharma and what is not Dharma through hearing. Stop and suppress afflictions with reflection. Absolutely prevent afflictions with meditation. That tantra also states: Wisdom is threefold: external reifications are stopped with the wisdom of hearing; internal reifications are stopped with the wisdom of reflection; and secret reifications are stopped with the wisdom of meditation.

As an aid to that, the one who has no doubts is like a swallow entering its nest. Having already stopped reification about being harmed by people and so on, free of doubts, the swallow enters its nest. Since beforehand one has already stopped reification through hearing, next, one has confidence in oneself and practices by taking a personal devatā.

As an aid to that, [there is] the conduct resembling that of a deer who is not seen in the open. [56b] Just as a wounded deer fleeing from people (due to being aware of the wound) always goes to a cave in a valley or to the top of a mountain, the yogin aware of the faults of saṃsāra should be scared of people and should head where there are no people.

As an aid to that, the conduct resembling that of a mute is ceasing to talk and not engaging in conversation with anyone.

Since one does that, the conduct resembling that of a madman with amnesia is impulsive chatter disconnected from one's surroundings, spontaneous like the words of a madman.

At that time the behavior arises resembling that of an animal without [discriminating between] good and bad food, like a pig or a dog that has no concept of clean and dirty.

Since one has triumphed by completing the six conducts, the conduct resembling that of a lion arises. Just as there is no fear or shame in a lion, since the yogin in this life has no clinging or attachment to this life at all, having become free of the yoga with characteristics, he is able to overcome appearances.

If one is to give a designation to those conducts, they would be called “the conducts that overcome appearances.” [57a] One has the power to convert those who have no faith. One can revive the dead and accomplish miracles. Like one intoxicated with wine, after one’s consciousness transforms, it arises as dharmatā and one is able to control appearances of earth, water, fire, and air.

The intimate instruction for that is the method of naked unfettered equipoise¹⁹⁰ on appearances. Since one trains on fragments of phenomena,¹⁹¹ reflections¹⁹² are totally purified. Since one trains on the form of general phenomena, their nature is totally purified, which comes from naked unfettered equipoise on whatever appears. At this time, the transcendent state called “the universe and beings arising as the basis” arises by directly overcoming¹⁹³ the mind without training in all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.

When that occurs, after the five afflictions transform into the five pristine consciousnesses and the five aggregates transform into the five families, it is like white wool dyed in various colors. The *String of Pearls Tantra* states: The aggregates, sense elements, and sense gates

are liberated into the nature of the families and the lords of the families.

At this time, when that person is given a name, [57b] he is called “the family of those who have entered the Dharma.” None of those conducts are different, but they are intended for the stage¹⁹⁴ of the conduct of the path. There is no such meditation based on conduct, but since there is self-liberation through this conduct, it is explained to be a harmonious condition of a person.

The Yoga of Meditation

Now, the five characteristics¹⁹⁵ of continuous meditation are unifying day and night in meditation. The intimate instruction for that is the transcendent state of the unfettered equipoise of the ocean. At that time, the transcendent state is the transcendent state of the universe and beings. That is when the five afflictions have been sealed and the person dwells in the Dharma.

Further, meditation is the concentration of bodhisattvas, the meditation of profound secret mantra, the mental fixation of devas and men, and the transcendent state of the sugatas. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: A naturally occurring flow

is described as pure concentration.

Focusing on the nāḍīs, vāyus, bindus,
and the points of the body

is asserted to be “meditation.”

Syllable, light, color,

and the radiation and gathering of emanations [58a]

is explained to be “samādhi.”

Since the reality of unfabricated natural equipoise
never changes from how it is,

it is the transcendent state of the buddhas.

The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states:

. . . held to be the mental focus of devas and humans,¹⁹⁶
the concentration of bodhisattvas,
and the transcendent state of tathāgatas.

The *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra* states:

There are three kinds of meditation:

meditation with the minds of devas and humans,

the concentration of Mahāyāna,

and the transcendent state of the buddhas of the three times.

The Concentration of Bodhisattvas

There are three kinds of concentration. Natural¹⁹⁷ concentration is the concentration arising toward neutral objects. Further, for the concentration arising in dependence on an object, concentration exists in the eye of an archer,¹⁹⁸ in the eye of a hare, in the eye of a harrier in its nest, in neutral devas and humans, and it also exists when the consciousness of sentient beings is

latent. [58b]

The concentration of those dwelling on the stages is a specific concentration that exists on each stage, from seeing the truth up to the continuous samādhi of the tenth stage.

Cutting Attachments

The unfabricated samādhi has two kinds of risks for the yogin. There is the direct risk of food and clothing, and the indirect risk of entering into the three realms based on dreams and traces.

Now then, training in the four sessions of samādhi includes: (1) training in a session of concentration to cut attachment to food, (2) training in a session of concentration to cut attachment to clothes, (3) training in a session of samādhi to cut attachment to dreams, and (4) training in a session of samādhi to cut attachment to traces.

Now then, training in a session of concentration to cut attachment to food is cutting attachment to food based on profound dependent origination and cutting attachment to food based on various rasāyāna practices.¹⁹⁹ Among those rasāyana practices, the rasāyana of gems is profound. The rasāyana of consuming the vāyu that cuts the stream of the elements is profound; [59a] it is the critical point of the upper and lower [vāyus]. The rasāyanas of earth, water, fire, air, and space balance the elements. There is a method of preparing the ambrosia of feces, as well as a method of preparing urine. The attainment of many qualities through their application is explained in their individual sections. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Rasāyana is as follows:

one's lifespan will be equal with the sun and moon
by relying on the rasāyana of precious metals.
One's body cannot be penetrated by weapons
by relying on the various rasāyanas of stone.
One's white hair and wrinkles vanish
by relying on the rasāyana of herbs.

One becomes radiant and youthful
by relying on the rasāyana of essence preparations.
One will increase the physical constituents
through the rasāyana of meat.
Moreover, it is explained that the amazing rasāyana
that depends on vāyu,
called “cutting the stream of the elements,”
is understood by [controlling] the upper and lower vāyus.
The experts conceal vāyu in the place.
Further, through calculating the changes of the vāyu,
it becomes the yoga of food.
As such, the torments of migrating beings are cut
through rasāyana. [59b]

The profound dependent originations of cutting attachment to clothing include the meat preparations, the stone preparations, the essence preparations, and the herbal preparations.

Cutting attachment to clothing based on samādhi and vāyu is sitting in an upright posture with the belly filled with fire, which is then gradually released. By doing that, heat arises in the body. Since heat arises, there are no creatures on the body. Since heat arises in the mind, concepts²⁰⁰ naturally vanish. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The yoga of clothing is vāyu and profound dependent origination.

From the exhalation²⁰¹ and inhalation of vāyu, there is also the critical point of inhalation, exhalation, and retention.

Training in each visualization should be done corresponding to the yogi's body type. Accompanying the yoga of dependent origination is the preparation of a powdered pill of two,²⁰² six, seven, or three [ingredients], which is administered orally or by smearing.

For training in the session of concentration that cuts attachment to dreams, [60a] first, there is the critical point of examining dreams and second, meditating according to the intimate instruction of examining dreams. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The application of the critical points of dreams

includes preliminary activities and hitting the critical points.

The preliminary training of body, voice, and mind includes identifying the trio of signs, suppression, and traces.

Then, at the time of hitting the critical point of purifying, transforming, stopping, mixing, subduing, and eliminating, all karmic dreams are brought to an end.

The delusion of traces is uprooted by using the critical point of retaining and reversing.

At that time, through diligence, the best stop dreaming, the medium know they are dreaming, and the average will definitely be able to transform their dreams.

The best of these will forget the beginning of the dream and cut it short.

For the medium, dreams will be very clear, and at the end, they will be recognized.

For the average, dreams will be unclear and then will be transformed.

Those are the gauges of the training.

For examination, during the day one should be relaxed. One should briefly massage the body with oil. [60b] After that, one should investigate what one

dreams. If one dreams mostly of objects of previous clinging, then the traces of previous clinging are very strong, in which case the transformation is medium. If one dreams mostly of the present, then it is very easy. By meditating in this way for three days, dreams will be purified. If one dreams of people one has never met before in a land one has never been to, it is very difficult to stop. If one has dreams of a combination of all three, the combination of three traces is extremely difficult to stop.

For such investigations, the meditation on the intimate instructions of dreams is (1) the critical point of purifying dreams, (2) transforming dreams, and (3) stopping dreams. For very difficult dreams, it is necessary to use transforming, stopping, and purifying. Two are sufficient for medium [dreams]. Following that, it is enough to focus upon any one of them and meditate. For ease, meditating for just a single day on any one of them is enough.

The first of those, purifying dreams, is cultivating²⁰³ whatever appears in a dream as an image that emanates as a mere hollow appearance. This is sealed with emptiness. [61a] By purifying in that way, mere appearances will be recognized and understood as illusory dreams.

Transforming dreams is displaying the personal devatā in a mirror and meditating.²⁰⁴ Since that transforms, mere appearances manifest as the personal devatā.

Stopping is stopping dreams by meditating according to the critical points of vidyā. The gauge of purification is that dreams are recognized as dreams by the medium type. For the average, all dreams transform into Dharma.

These intimate instructions are extremely important.

The gauge or resulting sign of accomplishment is stated in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*: The illusory body is purified in dreams;

also, the illusory body is the purified body

that is like the appearance of a shadow.

After that, the body of the bardo

is maintained in these states.

Having explained the purification of dreams based upon sleep, now the purification of luminosity based upon sleep is taught in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*: After training on the concentration of sleep,

since there is no day or night through the training,

outer appearances are luminous [61h]

outer appearances are luminous. [61c]

Through this training total luminosity is accomplished.

It is also stated in the *Perfection of Wisdom* that the original nature of the mind is luminosity. The intimate instruction for this states: In the evening, the sense organs withdraw into a point.

At midnight, consciousness is placed in a vase.

In the morning, pristine consciousness manifests.

At noon, appearances are to be sealed.

How to take luminosity into the path with this intimate instruction is only briefly explained by the guru, but it can be understood in detail as an intimate instruction for unifying the four time periods within one's continuum.

Fourth is training in the session of concentration for stopping the clinging to traces. All worldly sensual enjoyments should not be abandoned where they exist and should not be sought out where they do not exist, nor should one cling to their existence.

With respect to inner conceptuality, do not follow the past, do not anticipate the future, and do not rely on a process²⁰⁵ that uses antidotes for the present traces. Since appearances are liberated where there are appearances, grasping to substantiality self-purifies. Further, appearances are liberated within appearances, arising like a marsh hawk²⁰⁶ carrying a small bird. [62a] Movement is liberated within movement, like a breeze in the sky. Consciousness is liberated into nonduality, just like a drop of water dissolves into a river.²⁰⁷

Having transcended the object of deluded traces, one is liberated from the view of the self. The *Six Dimensions Tantra* states: If a person does not follow the past nor anticipate the future, but rests the present movement of consciousness in its own state, then, having integrated the past and future, the so-called “essence that is gathered into one” is the yoga that realizes the three times to be the same.

The Meditation of Secret Mantra

Nonconceptuality is used as the path based on the profound meditation of secret mantra, the yoga of nāḍīs, vāyus, and bindus.

The vāyu yoga is explained first. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound*

Tantra states:

There are two purposes for vāyu:²⁰⁸
generating the mundane body [. . .]
and meditating upon the transcendent body.
Pristine consciousness, the bindu,
pervading the body with emptiness and clarity,²⁰⁹
exhausting the elements of the body,
stopping mental concepts,
generating nonconceptual pristine consciousness, [62b]
exhausting external appearances,
and merging vāyu and mind
are therefore all actions of vāyu.

The stages of these vāyu practices can be understood in the intimate instructions.

Further, the nāḍī yoga is explained in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*:

The critical points of the body are the nāḍīs.

The method of practicing the nāḍīs can be understood in the intimate instructions.

The method of practicing the bindu²¹⁰ yoga is explained in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*: From among the ultimate and relative,

some²¹¹ assert that buddhahood is
based on the relative bindu.

A vidyā²¹² of perfect characteristics [. . .]

Begin with the yoga of summoning.

Complete the body with the use of substances,
the nāḍīs, and impressions.

Then, the relative bindu

descends, is retained and reversed,
flows into the nāḍīs, and merges with the vāyu.

Relying on emptiness to cut the traces of thought,²¹³
both body and mind are reversed

The methods of practice — the critical points of the postures of the body, the critical points of visualization, and [63a] the critical points of meditating on emptiness — should be understood from the root tantra and the intimate instructions.

The Mental Fixation of Devas and Humans

There are two subjects in the mental fixation of devas and humans: training with a support and training without a support.

Training with a support is training on the five objects of desire. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The focus — form, sound, scent, taste, and touch — purifies²¹⁴ the location of the five objects of desire.

Form is colors and shapes,
manufactured objects, sporting equipment,
and various optical illusions.

Sound is tambura, tablas,
vinas, mridangas, flutes,
cymbals, conch, laughter,²¹⁵ and so on.

Scent is the profound dependent origination
of fragrances, preparations, and what is agreeable to the mind.

Taste is jaggery,²¹⁶ arura,²¹⁷
wine altered with various preparations,
and secondary preparations for dependent origination.

Touch is a scholar sitting on a throne,
a crossbow, a preparation of the elements,²¹⁸
a leaf of a tree, and so on.

Through mere touch, the mind abides²¹⁹
without being separate from dharmatā.

The method of practicing [63b] should be understood by looking in other tantras and intimate instructions.

The training without relying on a support is explained in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*: Do the twenty-one trainings of mental

fixation.²²⁰

That tantra and the *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra* explain twenty-one [techniques] of mental focus. The methods of practicing those are explained in the intimate instruction known as the *Great Nail of the Heart*.²²¹

Here, the abbreviated training in the seven techniques of mental focus is stated in the *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra*: Clinging to things is removed on the spot

by focusing the mind on *A*.

Taints of the voice are purified

by focusing the mind on *hūṃ*.

Whoever focuses on *raṃ*

purifies everything.

All confusion is exhausted
by focusing the mind on *hā*.
Someone whose mind dwells on *phaṭ*
becomes free of all harm to body and voice.

Clinging to things ceases
by dwelling in emptiness.

Whoever meditates on sudden emptiness
immediately empties memory.

A faithful person should first please a teacher and gather accumulations.
[64a] Then, in a pleasant comfortable retreat, one should sit cross-legged on a comfortable seat.

Focus the mind on the symbol of white *A*. Meditate on a white *A* at the tip of one's nose. While exhaling, place the mind on that *A* which travels far away. While inhaling, the white *A* comes all the way back and the mind is again focused on the *A* at the tip of the nose. Further, if one has an illness of heat in one's body, imagine the white *A* as cold to the touch. Then, by meditating on that twenty-four hours a day, it is impossible that an experience of nonarising free from thoughts will not arise.

If one is not interested in that one, then focus the mind on the strong *phaṭ* that dispels obstacles. Relax the body as before. One's breathing should be slow. For a short while allow the mind to be distracted. Uttering a very loud *phaṭ* causes one's awareness to become free from focus. At that time, pristine consciousness can be identified. One should establish the clarity of awareness with *phaṭ* again and again. Then, by practicing for twenty-four hours a day, [64b] it is impossible that an experience of natural total purity will not arise.

If one becomes tired of that one, focus the mind on the laugh of wrathful joy. The body and breath are as before. Recite a short forceful *hā* and focus one's awareness on the *hā*. When any concepts or mental unhappiness arise, recite *hā* forcefully. Focus the voice and awareness on the *hā* and mingle it with the breath. Since one meditates all the time in that way, one recognizes dharmatā. There is no doubt that an experience of freedom will arise.

If one becomes tired of that one, focus the mind on the struggle of the asuras. [The point of the body is as before.]²²² Go to the top of a tall mountain without any cliffs. Sit comfortably, either cross-legged or with the knees up. First, roll one's head slowly. Also, move the body slowly. Do that for just three or four days. Then, rotate as much as can be withstood by one's elements. As such, since one never goes beyond the mudrā of moving the body, [65a] in one hour all external appearances become dazzling red. After that they become vivid yellow, then they become evanescent blue, then thick black, and finally limpid grey. Then by doing that for a long while, since all appearances cease, no essence can be established in any way at all. Thus it is impossible that an

experience of the self-liberation of all visual appearances will not arise. At this time, one should rely on food to reduce vata.²²³ A critical point is to focus one's awareness on the syllable *raṃ*.

Furthermore, when one grows weary of that, one should focus the mind on herding concepts with *hūṃ*. Reciting very long and melodious *hūṃs* with the voice is a critical point of merging one's awareness with the vāyu. When tired of that, one can on occasion do short *hūṃs*. As such, since one should do this for a long time without relaxing, the mind is fastened and no distractions at all will arise. An experience of concepts arising as dharmatā will occur.

When tired of that, focus the mind on emptiness. [65b] Divide²²⁴ the body into many parts and break it up into names. Though one has only one head, it can be divided into many names. By examining the names, one recognizes that the head is not established as real. Then, since the whole body is examined, it too cannot be found to be established as real.

Next, since one searches and examines external things through many names, in the same way, nothing can be established at all. As such, everything designated by names is understood to be empty and also unreal. It is impossible that one will not gradually arrive at emptiness.

When one tires of that, one should place one's awareness on any form of appearance. One should instantly rest one's mind vividly in emptiness. In just an hour, whatever is seen will become insubstantially empty. Since one meditates in that way for a long while, all appearances vanish into emptiness like a breath on a mirror. Also, first they appear; second, they are empty; and third, appearance and emptiness are not established at all.

In the section on the concentrations based on the voice, it is very important to place awareness in the ear [66a] and audibly recite without interruption. In the section on the struggle of the asuras, the concentration is based on the body. The critical point is to not only²²⁵ move the body [but move the head as well]. At the time of the two remaining mental focuses, the critical point is to have unerring focus and a mind that is without distraction.

The Transcendent State of the Sugatas

The transcendent state of the sugatas is beyond all sessions, not established as day or night. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The reality of unfabricated natural equipoise . . .

The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states:

There is no rise or decline
in the transcendent state of the tathāgatas.

The *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra* states:

The transcendent state of the tathāgatas²²⁶ is of two kinds: sensations
cease through unfabricated equipoise
and heat is obtained through the unmeditated view.

When such a meditation is given a name, it is called “the meditation of the union of night and day.” One part is beyond daytime and the other part is beyond nighttime. At this time, the experience of meditation [66b] is neither clearer during the daytime nor unclear during the nighttime — one’s experience is continuous.

The intimate instruction for that is the unfettered equipoise of the ocean. The eyes are called “oceans” because they have the nature of water. No matter what is meditated upon, the critical point is leaving the eyes where they are. If one is not meditating, do not meditate. If one is meditating, then not closing the eyes is a critical point. That is how it is to be done. For example, though the reflections of planets, stars, clouds, mountains, tree trunks, and so on, all vividly²²⁷ appear in the great ocean; likewise, they exist as apparent objects, but do not affect the ocean and are not established as apprehensible objects.²²⁸ When meditating like this, all external appearances appear in the intrinsic state of appearance. Also, remaining where it is, one’s awareness does not get lost within external appearances. The internally undifferentiated awareness of appearances that remains where it is, is called “meditation.” In addition, as the *Unwritten Tantra* states: The primordial, unfabricated, self-originated, unfettered equipoise

is not altered by appearances nor fabricated with the mind.

If one dwells in the space of dharmatā, it is explained as the transcendent
state itself, [67a]

the pristine consciousness of dharmakāya free from all thoughts.

If there is no movement, it is the state of meditation.

If there is absolutely no grasping to objects,
it is like planets and stars arising in the ocean.

The clarity aspect free from grasping is uncessing

The clarity aspect free from grasping is unceasing.
The way the transcendent state exists is just like that.

As for the explanation of the deviations of meditation, if one's mindfulness disappears after one blocks the six senses when meditating, it is called "śamatha becoming one-sided." The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:
Partiality is not clarity,

division does not become emptiness,
bliss is not continuity,
equanimity does not become calm,
knowing mindfulness becomes relaxation,²²⁹
purification becomes the false path,
bliss becomes internal grasping . . .

The *Unwritten Tantra* states:

Not lethargic, not agitated by nature.

"Unaffected" means that since awareness is unaffected by appearances and appearances are not fabricated by awareness, they are each clear in their own state. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The doors of the sense organs are clear;

mental concepts do not stir; [67b]

consciousness is the conduct
and is not lost outside.

When there is neither equipoise nor post-equipoise because śamatha and vipaśyanā are placed together, it is called “the transcendent state existing as the universe and beings resting in the basis.” To begin with, “the universe and beings arising as the basis” was explained above. If it is asked why it is that here it is said to be resting in the basis, all words are at rest in the basis, or in other words, self-liberated. Since everything (arising as names of the universe and beings, and the assembly of letters) rests where it is, self-liberation (that is not present in words) is called “resting in the reality of the basis.”

Sealing afflictions at this time means afflictions arise as pristine consciousness. For example, similar to clay arising in the exact form²³⁰ of a stupa when put into a mold, it is certain that all various phenomena of appearance and sound arise precisely as the dharmakāya.

At this time if one gives a name to such a person, it is “the time of dwelling in the Dharma.” Without training, all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa dwell in one’s mind. [68a] Dwelling in one’s own state without dividing or separating them is called “meditation.” The continuous yoga of meditation has been explained.

The Yoga of the View

The continuous yoga of the view [consists of five parts]:

1. The view that cuts the stream of the city
2. The intimate instruction is the unfettered equipoise of a mountain
3. The transcendent state is the total liberation of the three realms
4. Afflictions are pure in their own place
5. The time when people dispense with Dharma

First, for the view, there are two in the continuous yoga: the general view and our own view.

The general view is the different positions of each of the nine vehicles. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The positions of the eight vehicles

are held to be intellectual grasping.

These views are intellectual grasping of verbal views.

Our view is the view of the Great Perfection, the great dimension free from activity. Externally, since one looks at a phenomenon, one sees that a phenomenon inherently does not exist. Internally, since one looks at the essential feature of a phenomenon, one sees that the essential feature of a phenomenon is that it inherently does not exist. Secretly, since one looks at one's vidyā, one's vidyā manifests in direct perception.

Further, if it is asked how one should look, [68b] since one looks at a fragmented phenomenon with the vajra eye, the way the aspect of the phenomenon is seen is like illusions or as last night's dream. Since one understands that delusion is not established truth, one does not return to the three realms and one is happy.

Since one looks at differentiated phenomena with the eye of wisdom, just as the aspects of the relative are natureless or not established ultimately, appearances are also seen as natureless. It is realized that there is nothing to identify in emptiness. Since karma and traces do not exist in vidyā, one is happy. The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states: The phenomenon appears as a sign,

the sense organ of sight is unobstructed,
the observing mind is good,
and one's vidyā is clear.

If the apparitional external appearance
is understood as great self-origination
in the state of nonconceptual clarity,
it is the view that observes phenomenon.

The *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra* states:

For whoever meditates on perceived apparent objects
as natureless, [69a]
appearance and emptiness are nondual.

Internally, since one looks at the nature of a phenomenon with the eye of
pristine consciousness and it is perceived as undifferentiated, there is no
grasping to the nature of a phenomenon as intrinsically true. Since the nature of
a phenomenon is seen to be illusory or like a dream, it is understood to be
natureless. Since phenomena are exhausted due to having pacified thoughts of
one's own philosophical tenets, one is happy, free from a consciousness that
grasps phenomena. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:
Internally, since one looks at the nature of a phenomenon,
the nature of its essence is seen as illusion.

Secretly, since one looks directly at one's vidyā with eyes of pure dharmatā,
the way of looking is that one's vidyā is seen in direct perception as the
inseparable dhātu and vidyā. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*
states: By looking at one's vidyā,
it is seen to form connections in chains.

The *Powerful Lion Tantra* states:

The final view of all the buddhas
does not transcend the pair of the dhātu and vidyā. [69b]
There is no buddhahood through intellectual words.

Contentment (since one does not trust in intellectual words) is the critical
point of dharmatā seen as a direct perception in the experiential field of the sense
organs.

The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:

See the essence of the view
unmoved by intellectual words.

If the above is given a name, it is called “the view that stops the stream of the city.” Having stopped the stream of the city of the womb, it is the view that does not return to the three realms. Here, the most diligent one attains buddhahood without the appearance of the defiled body.

One of medium diligence who practices moderately (one who has the intimate instruction of the guru and practices with concentration,²³¹ without taking breaks) attains buddhahood in the bardo of dharmatā through the strength of his [direct perception of] dharmatā.

Having been distracted by laziness in this life, one of average diligence requests the guru’s intimate instructions and practices without interruption. He finds solace in the natural *nirmāṇakāya* buddhafiels through the blessings of the truth of dharmatā. Having been miraculously born, he definitely attains buddhahood in that buddhafiels. [70a] The *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra* states: The best do not need a second birth;

the medium [attain buddhahood] between two births;

the average find solace and
their continuums are liberated in a nirmāṇakāya buddhafield.

That is the view that stops the stream of the city. Its intimate instruction is the view of the unfettered equipoise of the mountain. For example, it is like going to the summit of Mount Sumeru in the center of the four continents and seeing all four at once. By looking from the perspective of the view of the Great Perfection, the positions of the various vehicles are understood in their own way. Mahāyānists do not see the meaning of the Great Perfection. It is known as a mountain from the perspective of being immutable.

That transcendent state is the transcendent state of the total liberation of the three realms. There is nothing at all that is not liberated when seen by a realized yogin of the Great Perfection. As such, the yoga of the realized one is called “the self-liberated group of six.” At that time, afflictions are intrinsically pure like a cloud that vanishes into the sky or mud that settles in water. [70b] First, delusion was never experienced; right now, delusion does not exist; in the end, one arrives at the critical point that delusion is impossible. At that time, such a person who lacks a mentally fabricated Dharma is given the name “the person who gives up Dharma.”

The Yoga of the Result

The continuous yoga of the result means an ultimate result that does not revert to the cause, like the nut of the Bhallataka tree.²³² Also at this time it is like the king taking his throne, in that he cannot be deposed. For example, just as when a member of a royal family is anointed he takes the royal seat and cannot be deposed, since one’s vidyā takes its own seat, one then does not return to saṃsāra.

The “unchanging samādhi that conquers the subjects” is like a king leading an army who conquers the subjects when a country has been defeated. Since the basis of the arising of the consciousness of the five sense gates is emptied, the name of saṃsāra is not possible.

Having thrown the ministers into prison without being deposed, it is very important for a king to replace them. [71a] After throwing the ministers into prison, it is similar to the king of those [imprisoned] ministers listening to the other [ministers who replaced them]. Having stopped the movements of

consciousness, one obtains power over vidyā. If that result is given a name, it is called “the naturally pure result.” However, this result too does not come from effort. The meaning of primordial purity arising in one’s continuum is conventionally termed “the result.”

If it is asked where the intimate instruction of the unfettered equipoise of the mountain originates from, it originates from resting vidyā itself on top of any appearance that arises anywhere. That transcendent state is called “the originally pure three realms.” Since one’s karma and traces, as well as good deeds and bad deeds, do not exist there at all, it is called “the transcendent state of the originally pure three realms.” The *Mind Mirror of Vajrasattva Tantra* states: The phenomena of the result must be understood as the irreversible three kāyas.

At this time, afflictions become self-liberated. [71b] For example, it is similar to a coil of a snake becoming immediately free; in the same way, afflictions are self-liberated into dharmatā. At this time, such a person is said to be “beyond Dharma.” In other words, such a person is free from a consciousness that grasps saṃsāra and nirvāṇa in any way.

That is the practice of those inclined toward perceptual objects, explained for those who delight in a proliferation of topics.

For Those Inclined toward the Self-Appearance of Vidyā

2.1.1.8.2.2.2.2 Now, the practice of those inclined toward the self-appearance of vidyā will be explained. This is superior to the common practice because of seven critical points: 1. The critical point of the nonexistence of those sharp or dull in capacity

2. The critical point of words being of no benefit for achieving buddhahood
3. The critical point of the absence of positive and negative in vidyā
4. The critical point of the absence of good and bad deeds in karma
5. The critical point of the intellectualism of other vehicles
6. The critical point of confirmation through sense organs
7. The critical point of the three kāyas being the appearances of the path

Further, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:

Through the critical point of the direct perception of dharmatā, it is understood that there is nothing positive or negative in karma. [72a]

As such, in this superior intimate instruction, the lazy who instantly attain buddhahood without meditation practice trekchö and the diligent who gradually attain buddhahood through meditation practice thögal.

The Practice of Trekchö

2.1.1.8.2.2.2.1 The first of those, the practice of the transcendent state of dharmatā, is the confirmation of the reality of the mind to be realized and the intimate instructions of the guru, the critical points that cause its realization.

Now then, the confirmation of the reality of the mind to be realized: the nature of the mind is free from a basis or foundation, self-originated, pure from the start, free from extremes, and beyond the experiential field of the mind. The meaning of that does not exist elsewhere. One’s mind is realized as the essence of buddhahood. The *Vajrasattva Māyājāla Tantra* states:²³³

The mind itself, free from foundation or root,
is the foundation of all phenomena.

The *Perfection of Wisdom*²³⁴ states: Pure from the beginning, where can the mind itself arise?

And the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:

Since there is no basis or foundation, dwell in emptiness and clarity.²³⁵
[72b]

The *Unwritten Tantra* states:

The king of self-originated vidyā . . .

The *Heap of Jewels Tantra* states:

Therefore “self-originated”²³⁶
is self-originated²³⁷ and self-arisen through²³⁸ itself.

The *String of Pearls Tantra* states:

Delusion never existed.

One's nature is pure.²³⁹

The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:

Due to being free from extremes, do not dwell in the middle.

And:

It is not within the experiential field of sound, authority, or reasoning.²⁴⁰

The *Heap of Jewels Tantra* states:

Oh Speech Vajra! Look at the natural state of things without shedding the coat of this appearance or changing its color. Amazing! No matter what happiness or suffering is imagined, in reality nothing changes. Ha ha!

If the reality of the mind is realized, that alone is called “buddhahood.” The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Since the embodied are pervaded by mind,

there are no sentient beings that are not buddhas.²⁴¹

And:

Perfect buddhahood is one's vidyā.²⁴²

The *Pristine Consciousness at the Time of Death Sūtra* states: [73a]

Since there is buddhahood if the mind is realized,²⁴³ one should cultivate the idea of not seeking buddhahood elsewhere.

If it is asked, “If they are buddhas, what are these afflicted conceptual appearances in sentient beings?” the *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra* poses a question: are those afflictions (to be abandoned, purified, and pacified in their own place) subdued with an antidote, are they the potentiality of dharmatā, or will they self-liberate by themselves? The reply is: These are not abandoned.

If they are not realized as suchness . . .

The sequence of replies should be examined in the tantra.

For example, this mode of the appearances of one's mind is like the sky and clouds or like an ocean and waves. The *String of Pearls Tantra* states: Just as clouds arising from the sky

are a temporary condition,
the five afflictions of sentient beings
do not exist in the ultimate.²⁴⁴

If one recognizes that the cloud arising from the sky [73b]
similarly disappears into the sky,
it is called “the state of inseparability.”

Likewise, if the taint of afflictions
is recognized to be naturally self-originated,
where will sentient beings be bound?

If one holds those afflictions to truly exist in that [ultimate],
even the buddhas would be bound.

Sentient beings are not bound by anything.

If one recognizes that true existence is inherently nonexistent,
taints are purified intrinsically,
like muddy water purifying itself.

All phenomena are the same in lacking inherent existence.

If the tracks of conceptuality are erased,
delusion is liberated where it is.

Vajrasattva's Great Space states:

The concept of space is nonarising;
that concept is similar to space.

As such, conceptuality is liberated into dharmatā. If it is asked whether or not there is liberation based on an antidote, the *Heap of Jewels Tantra* states: Oh Speech Vajra! Look at the appearances of completely liberated empty vidyā, intrinsically supreme as its own antidote. Amazing! The afflictions are naturally self-liberated. Ha ha!

As both the *String of Pearls Tantra* and the *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra* state: [74a]

Stone is crushed with stone.

If it is objected, “If afflictions are liberated into dharmatā without antidotes, there is no need for purification on the path. Otherwise, liberation would require no effort,” for what reason would those who do not understand be liberated? Asserting that those who understand are liberated merely by recognizing concepts as dharmatā is the fruit of one’s wishes. As such, in order to recognize that concepts are dharmatā, the intimate instructions of the guru are important. The *Unwritten Tantra* states: Though the nature of vidyā pervades all,

the dharmakāya is encountered in the intimate instructions.

Introduction based on the intimate instruction of the guru is necessary, for example, like directing a stream into a trough.

Second is the method of generating realization.

Cut external philosophical reification. The confirmation of appearances and consciousness as dharmatā based on premises of citation, reasoning, and axioms can be understood elsewhere.

Cutting internal reification with intimate instructions [74b] is the introduction of one’s mind as dharmatā, which can be understood in the *Great Garuḍa*²⁴⁵ and the *Six Topics*.²⁴⁶

Here, if the meaning of the text is summarized and discussed, it is taught in three sections: the intimate instruction of placing the mind free of activity through the critical point of dharmatā being free from effort; the intimate instruction of concepts arising as pristine consciousness through the critical point of introducing dharmatā as one’s own state; and the intimate instruction of nothing to negate or prove in appearances through the critical point of the self-liberation of dharmatā.

First, the necessity for the trio of body, voice, and mind to be free from the activities of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is explained in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*: Further, dharmatā free of activity

is liberated because it is free of activity.

The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states:

If one gives up activities, one is happy.

Vajrasattva’s Great Space states:

Liberation, because liberated from activities, [. . .]
originates from oneself, not from another.

The *Six Topics* states:²⁴⁷

Rest in the basis free of activities.

The *Great Garuḍa* states:

Therefore, if one is free from the activities of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa,
how can there be anything apart from the Great Perfection?²⁴⁸ [75a]

Further, since one's mind essence does not fall under the influence of the five afflictions and general conditioned phenomena, abiding vividly without being fabricated, it is the essence that is free of activity and without effort.

The intimate instruction of concepts arising as pristine consciousness through the critical point of introducing dharmatā as one's own state is that since appearances are introduced as mind, all appearances are liberated as they appear. Since appearances are clear while they appear, [the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states]: Like an image and a mirror,
if one is liberated, the other is liberated.

Since the mind is introduced as empty, consciousness is self-originated. Movement is liberated while moving. [The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states]: Since the movement of consciousness is an empty field,
seeing, recognizing, and vidyā are not different.
[Movement] is liberated in its own state.

Since empty vidyā is introduced as the dharmakāya, appearance and consciousness are liberated as nondual. [The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states]: Since one [thing] is recognized, all [things] are liberated.

The *Ornament of Introduction Tantra* states:

Amazing! Since appearances were introduced as mind, the mind is mastered. Since the mind is introduced as empty, [75b] emptiness is sealed with bliss. Since emptiness is introduced as vidyā, vidyā alone (the nonduality of the dhātu and pristine consciousness) is the

dharmakāya.

As such, at the time of introduction there are three modes of introduction: in the first moment there is recognition; in the second moment there is trust; and in the third moment there is decisiveness. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: From entry, seeing, and cultivation

through introduction, recognition, and seeing liberation,²⁴⁹

the recognition of one's state²⁵⁰ is encountered with trust.²⁵¹

Decisiveness establishes one in confidence.

The first of those is relaxing the group of six senses. Since the sense organs are allowed to be effortlessly free, one should leave them relaxed where they are. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Since the gates of the sense organs are unaltered,

it is the critical point of unfettered equipoise.

Never altering that is the intimate instruction.

[And:]

Genuine, unspoiled, unconstrained,

existing only as [they] ordinarily²⁵² are — the sense organs are free.

The *Unwritten Tantra* states:

In a state of nondistractedness, rest in total nongrasping . . .

[And:] [76a]

Rest without fabrication in the great consciousness, the great transcendent state of the nondual field and vidyā.

The *Six Dimensions Tantra* states:

Do not block the gates of the senses,

do not engage in physical conduct,

do not even avoid sleep,

and do not analyze with the mind.

In brief, the body and voice are in their own state.

The mind is not lost to external elements.
Also, there is no movement of the attentive mind
toward the six objects of the sense organs.
An experience of intrinsically clear nonconceptuality arises
in the great nonconceptual self-appearance.

The *String of Pearls Tantra* states:

Unfettered equipoise, equipoise on direct perception, and intrinsic
equipoise . . .

If the meaning of these is summarized, the critical point is that one's mind
rests in radiant clarity without falling to one side.

The explanation of the intimate instruction of nothing to negate or prove in
appearances through the critical point of the self-liberation of dharmatā is as
follows: since the awareness of appearances is recognized as dharmatā, no
matter what kind of behavior one engages in, one never leaves dharmatā. [76b]
However they might appear, since appearances are self-liberated, they are free
from all negations and proofs. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*
states: As such, apart from the dharmatā of everything,

there is nothing to adopt
nor the slightest thing to abandon —
the dharmatā of nothing at all.

[And:]

Other than the intrinsic dharmatā of whatever appears,
there is no other fabricated dharmatā.
Also, no matter what one does, nonconceptuality arises,²⁵³
self-appearing without being accepted or rejected.

The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states:

Free from phenomena to abandon, there is nothing to abandon.
Also, an abandoner cannot be perceived. So where can there be an object
to abandon?

[And:]

[. . .] no clinging to appearances, not establishing the nonexistent, not
rejecting the existent, not having desire for the nonexistent, not having
a lack of desire for the existent, not establishing the fabricated, not
rejecting what has arisen, not seeing faults in what has arisen, not
abandoning the afflictions, not accomplishing buddhahood, not
meditating, not seeing a view, not blocking deluded appearances, not
seeking pure appearances . . .

The *Inlaid Jewels Tantra* states:

When the wisdom²⁵⁴ that causes realization appears in the field, its
appearance is a self-appearance. [77a] At that time, let one's
awareness go free.

The *Heap of Jewels Tantra* states:

Look at the essence of one's empty awareness appearing as
everything. All that appears arises as one's companion. Amazing!
Whatever appears never moves away from its basis. Ha ha!

And:

If the strong clinging²⁵⁵
of confusion, hatred, and desire arises,
it is my nonconceptual vidyā.

Furthermore, if it is asked how that mode of liberation liberates, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Since one's vidyā is free from all concepts,²⁵⁶

it is endowed with four modes of liberation.²⁵⁷

[And:]

Since it has always been liberated, there is no basis for repetition;²⁵⁸
since it is self-liberated, there is no antidote;
since it is liberated upon direct perception, it disappears right where it is
seen;
and since it is totally liberated, there is no effort.

The *String of Pearls Tantra* states:

Since this has always been liberated, it is utterly superior;
since this is self-liberated, the condition of objects is exhausted;
since this is liberated from extremes, the four alternatives cease;
and since one is liberated, it is empty of many. [77b]

For example, when one goes to an island of gold, the name²⁵⁹ of other soil and stone does not exist. Just as everything is experienced as gold, when a person of fortunate karma meets with this Dharma, all external and internal appearances are liberated into the great emptiness of dharmatā. This [principle] is common with all Dharmas, but not this specific intimate instruction.²⁶⁰ [Therefore, the practice of trekchö]²⁶¹ is the system of buddhahood through immediate liberation as a directly experienced realization that is not connected to the visions.

Samaya. Sealed, sealed, sealed. Ithi.

The Practice of Thögal

2.1.1.8.2.2.2.2.2 [Thögal] is superior to the preceding through seven special differences:

1. The special feature of the appearance of light
2. The special feature of practice and technique being connected
3. The special feature of emphasizing its own point, direct perception
4. The special feature of the nāḍīs, the critical point of the body
5. The special feature of the doorway that gives rise to appearances
6. The special feature of the sense organ of sight
7. The special feature of hitting the critical point of experience

Thus there are seven special features.²⁶²

Now, there are three systems for giving the intimate instructions for this uncommon instruction of naturally perfect thögal, the practice of the direct perception of pristine consciousness. [78a] The intimate instruction is given in the system of an instruction, given in the system of an introduction, and given in the system of a traveling guest and a merchant caravan.²⁶³

The System of Instruction

As for the first of those three, giving it in the system of an instruction, there are two in practice: the preliminaries and the main subject. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: For the preliminaries, the stages of purification;

for the main subject, based on one's own continuum.

The Preliminaries

There are three trainings in the preliminaries: (1) training in the four elements, the guidance of the three kayas, (2) training in the preliminaries of body, speech, and mind, the guidance of the mind, and (3) training in the practice of the separation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, the guidance of vidyā.

The Guidance of the Three Kāyas

First, the guidance of the three kāyas is explained in the *Realms and*

Transformations of Sound Tantra: The stages of training in the three kāyas are mainly the desire objects of the elements. There is siddhi for the best because one trains on the sounds of earth, water, fire, and air.

The Guidance of the Mind

The two subjects in the guidance of the mind are [78b] the conduct of body, voice, and mind, and the procedure of resting naturally. These preliminaries are taught in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*: The preliminary of the body

is to block the cause of doing individual actions.

Doing vajra posture
purifies the body and benefits the mind.
[The preliminary of] the voice is sealing
one's places and karma with *hūṃ*,
attaining proficiency,
gaining flexibility, and entering the road.
Those purify the voice and benefit the mind.
[The preliminary of] the mind is [investigating] the initial production of
the mind;
in the middle, its location; in the end, where it goes.
When those three are investigated,
the mind is purified and the reality of the mind is recognized.

Second, the procedure for naturally resting is also explained in [the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*]: The yogin should naturally rest these critical points of the body, voice, and mind.

The Guidance of Vidyā

For the practice of the separation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, the guidance of vidyā, one should engage in the conduct of the separation of the body. Having reached the full measure of signs of the separation of the body, one should then do the separation of the voice. Having reached the full measure of signs of the separation of the voice, [79a] one should practice the separation of mind. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: If the separation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is not performed,

the connections of body, voice, and mind
to the three realms will not be cut.

It is explained that one must separate saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.

The *Blazing Lamp Tantra* states:

Having separated saṃsāra and nirvāṇa,
naturally drop the body, voice, and mind.

With regard to the purpose of those preliminaries, the ordinary purpose is pacifying the obstacles of body, voice, and mind, purifying misdeeds, and reversing clinging. The supreme purpose is liberation into the three kāyas. [The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:]

There are two purposes here,
analyzed through the divisions of common and supreme.

As for the purpose of resting naturally, the purpose of resting the body naturally is replenishing the aggregates, sense gates, sense elements, and bodhicitta. The purpose of resting the voice is transforming expressions into the meaning of nonfabrication and the exhaustion of analytical words. [79b] The purpose of resting the mind naturally is liberation from mental objects of clinging.

The Main Subject

Now, the main subject, the four aspects of the immaculate great pristine consciousness that depend on the continuum of the yogin are: (1) the preliminary, emphasizing the critical point of the trio of body, voice, and mind; (2) resting in the intrinsic state of the direct perception of dharmatā based upon the three critical points; (3) how the four visions arise due to practicing in that way; and (4) the supporting intimate instructions.

The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:

The critical points of direct perception are definitively explained
in the individual critical points of body, speech, and mind.

Further, the body should never
leave the three kāyas.

The voice is based on training,
abiding, and transcendence.

The mind is accomplished by focusing on the dhātu.

Never be separate from these three critical points.

Further, for the explanation of the critical points
of the doorway, field, breath, and vidyā:

the doorway is seeing the three kāyas with the eyes:

the field is free from obstructions;
since the breath and vidyā are relaxed, pristine consciousness is
accomplished.
That gives rise to the four visions. [80a]

One transcends intellectual grasping
through the vision of the direct perception of dharmatā.

Deluded appearances subside
through the vision of the increase of experience.
One transcends the visions of the path realizing the three kāyas
through the vision of the full measure of vidyā.
The stream of saṃsāra's three realms is interrupted
through the vision of the exhaustion of dharmatā.
The supporting instructions exist for trusting that.

Since the three immobilities lay the foundation,
the critical point of vāyu and mind is hit.
Since the gauge is taken with the three stillnesses,

dreams stop and one recognizes
the signs and gauges of the body, voice, and mind.
Since one strikes a nail with the three attainments,
the defiled body disappears.

The Critical Points of Body, Voice, and Mind

First, to emphasize the critical point of the body, never leave the critical point of the body, the three postures. Further, since pristine consciousness and vidyā exist in the body, if one does not emphasize the critical point of the body, it is not possible for the visions to manifest. For example, a snake has a full complement of limbs, but if it is not squeezed, [80b] they will not appear. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Having become free from all fear of delusion,

through the lion posture of dharmakāya,
one will see with vajra eyes.

Based on the sambhogakāya posture,
the prone elephant,
dharmatā is enjoyed
and one sees with lotus eyes.

Based on the nirmāṇakāya posture,
the rishi posture,
one sees with water bubble eyes.

The *String of Pearls Tantra* states:

There are three activities of the body:
the style of a lion, the style of an elephant,
and sitting like a rishi.

Next, the critical point of speech is to stop talking. The stages of the correct way of training are to first train in short sessions and then to train in long sessions. Occasionally, one should talk even though one has nothing to say. After that, abiding means not stopping the speech of one's mantras, offerings, praises, sūtra recitations, and so on, yet not speaking even two words to others.

[81a] That time is the time of making signs with the body.

Then, stabilizing and transcending the voice is stopping one's mantra recitations and remaining like a mute. At that time, do not even use physical gestures. This time is the time of using symbols of the mind. By acting in that way, the meaning of inexpressibility arises in the continuum of the yogin. Paṇḍita Vimalamitra said: If the yogin can stop speaking, he is able to practice Dharma.²⁶⁴

The meaning of this is that since one practices diligently²⁶⁵ on the basis of not accumulating positive or negative actions of the voice, [the voice] is rapidly purified — this is very important. At the time of the critical point of the mind, it is important never to be separate from these three points.

The Three Critical Points of the Direct Perception of Dharmatā

One should never be separate from the three postures with regard to the critical point of the doorway. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The critical point of the immobility of the far-reaching [lamp]

should be applied to the three postures at this time.

Chapter 3 of the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:

Through understanding the three gazes of the eyes,
simultaneously the dharmadhātu is experienced. [81b]

Chapter 4 of the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:

Furthermore, the naturally appearing five pristine consciousnesses
are seen with the water bubble eyes
through the nāḍīs and postures.²⁶⁶

The *Unwritten Tantra* states:

Press the eyes firmly.
The dhātu arises in the two corners of the eyes [. . .]
the eyes look into the element of space.²⁶⁷

This explains the system of seeing pristine consciousness with the water

bubble eyes.

The critical point of the field is directing one's awareness to the lamp of the pure external dimension. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The dhātu is external and internal.

The external is apprehended as the sky free of clouds;
the internal [is apprehended] as the path of the lamps.

Pristine consciousness is seen by the unwavering eyes looking at the sky free from clouds. At that time, the critical point of the breath is long, relaxed exhalations. [The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:]

The breath must be relaxed.

[Pristine consciousness] arises from full exhalation.

The connection between body and mind is severed.

Also, there is no return to the three realms.

And:

Pristine consciousness is accomplished because the breath and vidyā are relaxed. [82a]

The critical point of vidyā is to imprison the chains. [The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:]

Vidyā's own state is the chains
manifesting in space free from coming and going.

And:

The nature of the chains
is free of all concepts,
undeluded buddhahood.

The *Unwritten Tantra* states:

Seeming like chains, the essence arises from that.

The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states:

The kāya of mind²⁶⁸ that possesses the five pristine consciousnesses arises
in the manner of chains
that come and go,
shake and flutter.

The *Powerful Lion Tantra* states:

The substance²⁶⁹ of self-appearing vidyā
is present as chains of pristine consciousness.

The *Inlaid Jewels Tantra* states:

The kāyas of the chains of vidyā, perfect buddhahood, fully manifest
to the lamp of the far-reaching water.

The *Blazing Lamp Tantra* states:

The dhātu is made into vidyā's own field.
The vajra is the chains.
This should be entered into,
as its essence is nonconceptual.

These and more are taught in other tantras. [82b] The one instructed in these should train for up to six weeks. Thereafter there will be no doubt. Further, at first the sessions should be short and frequent. Second, the sessions should be prolonged. Third, one practices without regard to day or night.

The Way the Four Visions Arise

The gradual way the four visions arise from practicing like that: first, the vision of the direct perception of dharmatā arises gradually. The guru states, “The critical point of the body, the critical point of the voice, and the critical point of the mind must be done like this!” The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The vision of the direct perception of dharmatā

definitely comes out of the gate of the sense organ
and manifests in a cloudless sky.

Since one practices in this way, one sees bindus, small bindus, and chains. After a short period of time, the lamp of the empty bindu arises without effort. After that, the colors, shapes, and bindus of the five pristine consciousnesses arise clearly.

Following that, the vision of the further increase of experience is the arising of lights of five colors that stand straight up, [83a] arising as spokes, bucklers,²⁷⁰ squares, and as large as the countryside. The appearance of the dhātu arises as a storied stupa, a thousand-petalled lotus, a pavilion, a checkered pattern, a net, half net, and so on. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: After emerging out of the colors of the five pristine consciousnesses,

the further increasing vision of experience
stands up straight, arises as spokes,
and the kāya of the multicolored bindus
manifests as the field of coarse appearances.

After that, when the kāyas appear five at a time, it is the time of the full measure of vidyā. [The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:]

The vision of the full measure of vidyā
is the manifestation of the major and minor marks of the sambhogakāya.
The fathers and mothers of the five families
appear from the undefined rainbow colors.

[And:]

After that, they are paired five by five,

connected by very clear bindus
in which appear the forms of the fathers and mothers.
Having exhausted deluded vision, it is a buddhafield.

This is very extensively explained. For example, like filling a quart or a gallon, [83b] at this time, since the measure has been filled one has practiced enough. Nevertheless, in order to liberate matter into the kāya of pristine consciousness, one must practice diligently. Since those kāyas of pristine consciousness increase gradually, the signs of increase are exhausted at that time and all appearances manifest as a naturally perfect maṇḍala that does not move or shift. Since that is the exhaustion of dharmatā, it is called “the vision of the exhaustion of dharmatā.” Since the signs of pristine consciousness are complete, it is called “dwelling in the state of Great Perfection.” The body is exhausted; the objects of the sense organs are also exhausted. Having been liberated from the delusions of the mass of concepts, one is free from words that form the basis of expression.

As such, when one comes to the end of the four visions, since that fortunate one’s defiled body disappears, he definitely attains buddhahood. [The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states:]

Having cut off the stream of the body’s elements,
the defiled body disappears.
One attains buddhahood in this life.

The *Blazing Physical Relics Tantra* states:

Due to this, in this life’s appearances,
having purified the elements in their own state, [84a]
the defiled body disappears.
There is no doubt that the result is obtained.

The Supporting Intimate Instructions

Fourth, the supporting intimate instructions are for those who have not reached the final stage. This set of nine Dharmas — the three immobilities that lay the foundation, the three stillnesses that measure progress, and the three obtainments

that plant the nail — arise to support the practice of the fourth vision.²⁷¹

That completes the explanation of the eighth topic, how to practice.

Samaya. Sealed, sealed, sealed.

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161. *Rang gis rang bstod pa dang. Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra: rang gi rigs rgyud brjod pa dang// lus la rgyan bzang 'dogs pa dang/*. The second line is missing in the DD and NB follows the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra*.
 162. Marginalia: “Unable to discern the qualities of the guru, with many faults and concepts.”
 163. This paragraph is missing in NB.
 164. This section of the citation is from chapter 5, reply 1.
 165. *Bags*, following NB, *babs*.
 166. *Gyi 'dar lhod yod*, NB gives *gyid dha 'i lhod yod*; reading this as *gyi nar lhod yod*.
 167. The *Illuminating Lamp*, vol. 2, p. 336, clarifies *phyi glen pa 'i rnam pa dang 'dra ba la*.
 168. *Bsnyen dang nyer bsnyen sgrub pa gnyis*; here, I am following ADZ and NB.
 169. *'Bog pa*, NB gives *'bebs*.
 170. Unidentified at present.
 171. *Siddhi* here refers to both spiritual and mundane accomplishments that are brought about by making offerings at the time of receiving empowerment.
 172. The DD edition, NB, and ADZ give *'og*, meaning section 58/60 of chapter 1.
 173. *Lag skya*.
 174. While the cited tantra only gives three members of this list, NB adds another member, making five in the following order: nonexistent, single, ubiquitous, whole (*rgya ma chad*), and naturally perfect.
 175. *Ci byed gzhan la cha med par bsgrub*. Both TDD and NB give *ci shes cha med par bsgrub*. I am following the latter two texts in this instance.
 176. Reading *brtan* as *brten*.
 177. Unidentified.
 178. NB identifies this as *gdams ngag*.
 179. In the *Illuminating Lamp*, the details of several devatā practices are mentioned; chief among them are Vajravārāhī and Yamāntaka. TDD excludes all mention of this section.
 180. This line is missing in NB. It seems this passage is in fact a paraphrase. See TDD, p. 1099.
 181. These four lords are described in the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra*. They are the lord of conduct, the lord of secret mantra, the lord of strength, and the lord of samaya, who are respectively conduct, view, meditation, and empowerment.
 182. *Gdar sha*, literally the latissimus dorsi muscle.
 183. *Snang srid* as defined by Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok in his commentary on *Sangs rgyas lag chang*.
 184. *Rang byan tshud*. TDD gives *rang byen la*; NB gives *rang byan bya*; ADZ gives *rang phyā na byas*; Tsham edition gives *rang byan bya*.
 185. People are divided according to the four elements. The first chapter of the *Realms and*

Transformations of Sound Tantra describes specific practices for balancing these four constitutions based on the cycle of the four seasons of the year.

186. The term “unfettered equipoise” (*cog bzhag*) is glossed in the *Illuminating Lamp* (p. 388) as *steng du bzhag*. Here, the commentary also mentions the *khregs chod* text, *Khyung chen lding ba*, attributed to Śrī Siṃha.
187. NB: *gang du spangs*.
188. This tantra is not found in any modern edition of the *Bka' 'gyur*. However, there is a text in the *Snar thang bstan 'gyur* [“*chos spyod kyi man ngag mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyud kyi rnam par bshad pa gzi brjid snang ba*” in *Bstan 'gyur (snar thang)* TBRC W22704.70: 146–216 (Narhang), 1800?] which is also listed in the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje’s *Thugs dam bstan 'gyur gyi dkar chags* [*Rang byung rdo rje*, “*Thugs dam bstan 'gyur gyi dkar chag*” in *The Collected Works of Rangjung Dorje* TBRC W30541.4: 427–606 (*zi ling*): (*mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis*), (2006)].
189. 'U bya.
190. *Cog bzhag*.
191. *Chos can dum bu*.
192. TDD and NB both give *gzugs brnyan*.
193. TDD reads *phungs*; NB gives *phung nge ba*.
194. The DD edition reads *spyod pa'i rim*; NB gives *skyed pa'i rim*.
195. Rong zom chos kyi bzung po (1042–1136) identifies the five characteristics of concentration (*dhyāna*) as initial and sustained attention, physical ease, mental joy, and mental one-pointedness in chapter 6 of his *Theg pa chen po'i tshul la 'jug*.
196. *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* marginalia: “Demonstrating meditation from a state of doubt because pristine consciousness has not been seen.”
197. *Rang bzhin*.
198. *Mda' srong*, lit., “straight arrow.”
199. *Bcyud len. Rasāyana* is composed of two words: *rasa*, or *bcud* in Tibetan, refers to the nutrients derived from the five elements; *āyana* literally means “going.” Here, it has the connotation of “using” or “taking” (cf. *len pa*). This practice is commonly referred to by its Tibetan name, which is pronounced “chulen.”
200. Reading *babs kyis* for *babs kyis*, following NB.
201. Reading 'phen for 'phangs following ADZ.
202. Reading *gnyis* for *gcig*.
203. *Sgom*.
204. *Sgom*.
205. *Rgyud*.
206. The Latin name for this raptor is *circus cyaneus cyaneus*.
207. See the *gcer grol* section of *Illuminating Lamp*, vol.1, p. 503.
208. The two purposes are generating the samsaric body and meditating the path.
209. ADZ: *yang zhing stod dang gsal bar khyab*.
210. NB has a folio side out of place starting at line 6, p. 75, continuing to line 6, p. 76.
211. ADZ: *re zhig*.
212. A female partner for completion stage practices.

213. Here, it is *slar rjes bcad*; NB and ADZ give *blos rjes bcad*.
214. Reading *sbyangs* for *sbyar* following ADZ.
215. Reading *har* for *dung ting* following ADZ.
216. Jaggery is a kind of raw sugar that has not been refined.
217. *Drug ldan*; this is a guess, based on the fact that the victorious arura's (*rnam rgyal a ru ra*, a legendary strain of *Terminalia chebula* now considered extinct) famed healing qualities are based on its possessing all six tastes: sweet, sour, salty, hot, bitter, and astringent.
218. Reading *'byung ba'i sbyor* for *sbyor ba'i 'byung* following ADZ.
219. The manuscript and NB give *gdam pa*; ADZ gives *gnas pa*.
220. The commentary on this passage glosses a *sems 'dzin* as "fastening one's unfastened mind . . ." (*rang gi sems ma zin pa zin par bya ba*), ADZ, vol. 1, p. 490.
221. This text, part of the *Vi ma snying thig* corpus, remains unfound.
222. Textual lacunae, inserted from NB, p. 73.
223. *Rlung*, one of the three *dośas* (*nyes pa*) in Ayurveda and Tibetan medicine.
224. Reading *bsil* for *gsil* following TDD.
225. Following TDD and NB, *ma zhig*.
226. The tantra itself gives *bder gshegs*.
227. Reading *bkra sa le* instead of *bkral ma me* or *bkra bal le* (NB) following TDD.
228. This passage draws an interesting distinction between apparent (*snang yul*) and apprehensible objects (*gzung yul*); the former are mere images, whereas the latter are in some sense more than mere reflections on a conventional level.
229. Not present here or in NB.
230. *Kronggs gyis*: Here, the sense of this term is unrelated to the usual sense of *krongs* as a verbal tense of *'grongs*, which means "to die," etc. According to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (email message to author, October 16, 2012), the meaning of *krongs gyis* in this case is "precise."
231. NB gives *thag gcod*, i.e., decisively.
232. *Semecarpus anacardium*; its nut creates an indelible mark.
233. *Vajrasattvamāyājālaguhyasarvādarśanāmatantra*: *rtsa ba med pa'i sems nyid ni/chos rnams kun gyi rtsa ba ste/*.
234. *Āryaprajñāpāramitāsamcayagāthā*: */gzod nas dag pas sems can skye bar ga la 'gyur/*. Manuscript gives: *gdod nas dag pa'i sems nyid skye bar ga la 'gyur*.
235. This line, *gzhi rtsa med pas stong gsal gda'*, is a slight gloss of two lines */gzhi rtsa med pas stong pa gnas/rang gsal la gnas pa'i sems de ni/*. See ADZ, p. 124.
236. The ADZ edition gives */de phyir rang byung ye shes zhes bya bal/rang gi rang byung rang shar ba/*. In this place in the text I think that *ye shes* is a scribal interpolation caused by moving a margin note into the line. This is borne out by examining Tsham, p. 764, which has *de phyir rang byung zhes bya ba*.
237. Reading *rang 'byung* for *rang bzhin* following ADZ and Tsham.
238. Reading *gis* for *gi* following Tsham.
239. Second line is not present in ADZ.
240. This line is not found in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*.

241. Following ADZ: *sangs rgyas ma yin sems can min*.
242. *Nor bu phra bkod rang gi don thams cad gsal bar byed pa'i rgyud*.
243. 'Da' ka ye shes kyi mdo [in *Bka' 'gyur (sde dge par phud)*, TBRC W22084.54: 307–8] gives *ye shes*.
244. This line is missing in ADZ.
245. *Khyung chen mkha' lding*.
246. *Sems kyi dmigs drug gi rnam par bshad pa* in *Snying thig ya bzhi 5*: 71–254 (Delhi: Sherab Gyaltzen Lama, 1975).
247. *Sems dmigs drug*.
248. *Khyung chen mkha' lding*, p. 62: *de phyir ma bcos 'khor 'das bya byed nam bral na//rdzogs chen nyid dang bzhan pa ci zhib yod*. I suspect *ma bcos* is a marginalia that has migrated into the body of the passage.
249. This line is elided in the text.
250. TDD and NB give *lngo shes pa la rang ngo shes*. ADZ, and others, give *lngo shes pa las rang ngo stel*.
251. TDD and NB give *lyid ches pa yi mthar thug gnas/*; ADZ gives *yid ches pa yis thug pa'o*.
252. Following ADZ, *gyi nar*.
253. Following ADZ for this line.
254. Reading *shes rab* for *shes pa* following ADZ.
255. Reading *zhen pa* for *shes pa* following N, NB, and Tsham.
256. Reading *bral* for *grol* following ADZ.
257. Citation absent in NB.
258. ADZ reads: *bskyar mi dgos*, i.e., “no need for repetition”; but the commentary here states *bskyar gzhi med*, so it is clear the commentarial reading is being glossed.
259. Reading *ming* for *sel* following N.
260. This clause is missing from NB and N.
261. Following NB; missing here and in N.
262. This enumeration is lacking in NB.
263. Following the explanation given in TDD, p. 1218.
264. Reading *phyed zin* as *byed nus* following NB.
265. Reading *'grus pa* for *'grub pa* following NB.
266. *'Khrul 'khor*.
267. Following ADZ and NB.
268. Reading *'od* as *thugs* following ADZ.
269. Reading *ngo bo* as *dngos po* following NB and ADZ.
270. A small shield.
271. NB adds “The citations of these have already been explained above.”

TOPIC 9: *The Authoritative Signs*

2.1.1.9 The ninth topic is the explanation of the authoritative signs of practice. The way the authoritative signs of the general path arise is extensively explained in the *Blazing Physical Relics Tantra*, and is summarized and explained in the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* and the *Mind Mirror of Vajrasattva Tantra*. It can be understood from the textual extracts by Vimalamitra.

The explanation of the authoritative signs of the practice of those inclined toward objects is that there is no fear or anxiety about the suffering of hot and cold; [84b] there is no suffering due to the fear of falling into the lower realms of saṃsāra; there is no hope for nirvāṇa; and there is no interest in buddhahood. It is recognized that suffering is impossible in this vidyā that has never experienced delusion. There is no searching for bliss elsewhere because it is integrated with vidyā itself. It is impossible for saṃsāra to come from vidyā. Since vidyā has always been buddhahood, in the present there is no reason for liberation to repeat. Since it is recognized that one is a buddha, and since one is already a buddha, in the present there is no reason for it to be introduced. Since that meaning is understood, one is free from such hope and fear without seeking nirvāṇa somewhere else. The *Heap of Jewels Tantra* states:

With the four great confidences of the unchanging view,
one takes the measure of irreversible pristine consciousness.

The *String of Pearls Tantra* states:

The measure of the yoga of four confidences . . .

Those are the measures of recognition.

The measure of body and voice is that the body becomes insouciant and relaxed, and remains in an insouciant state; [85a] for the voice, one has various conversations without a partner, the traces of delusion are reduced, vidyā

remains wherever it is placed, and so on.

At the time of the self-appearance of vidyā, externally, pure appearances arise after delusion is stopped. Internally, twelve signs arise when the four visions arise, which are the measure of body, speech, and mind. Secretly, the measure of vidyā is to be recognized as the self-liberation of its own appearance.

Since one practices in that way, after perfecting the authoritative signs, there is buddhahood without residual aggregates. Up to this point, the Dharma without the bardo has been examined.

Kāyavākcitta²⁷² samaya. Sealed, sealed, sealed.

²⁷². Body, speech, and mind.

TOPIC 10: *The Bardo*

2.1.1.10 Now, the explanation of the Dharma of the bardo is for a person who has met this profound Dharma and has the intimate instructions of the guru. He does not practice because he does whatever he wants, is lazy, or has no time to practice because of being fatigued.

The tenth topic that demonstrates how one is liberated in the bardo of dharmatā [85b] includes an explanation of the general presentation of the bardo, divisions, dharmatā, dividing line, and mode of appearance.

The General Presentation of the Bardo

First, the general presentation of the bardo is calculated as the interval of casting off the body while the next life's body has not yet been acquired.

The divisions are (1) the bardo of the natural location, (2) the bardo of the time of death, (3) the bardo of dharmatā, and (4) the bardo of rebirth.

The bardo of the natural location: to begin with, there is the delusion after saṃsāra and nirvāṇa divide. Since one is bound by the five aggregates for as long as saṃsāra is not emptied, the appearances of the five kāyas cease. Since one is bound by the sense elements and sense gates, the appearance of lights and colors cease. Since one is bound by action and affliction, the appearances of pristine consciousness and dharmatā cease. This is the time of constantly experiencing suffering.

The bardo of the time of death: externally, there is an experience of the suffering of the body because there is a disturbance in the elements of the body. Internally, there is an experience of the suffering of the mind because the path of the mental factor of sensation is scattered. [86a] Based on the connection of body and mind from the upwelling of the lake of grasping, attachment, and clinging, there is an experience of fear because of abandoning the body, meaning one lives in fear of death.

The bardo of dharmatā: Since one has given up the support of grasping the aggregates as a self, the appearances of kāyas and pristine consciousnesses directly arise. Since the connection of karma and traces is cut, one abides in the mother dharmatā luminosity, the bardo of natural concentration. The sense organ is empty of an object to grasp and one experiences the self-appearing pure dharmatā.

Now, the bardo of rebirth: externally, the existence of the body is the possession of a mental form with all sense organs complete and unimpeded. Internally, the existence of the mind enters into and conceives many fantasies. The existence that combines body and mind travels without impediment, and can know and examine everything. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The characteristics of the bardo: [86b]

the natural location is present
as the field of aggregates, elements, and afflictions.
The time of death is ephemeral and uncertain.
Awareness cannot remain in one place.
The bardo of dharmatā is the appearances
of kāyas, pristine consciousnesses, lights, colors,
and the spreading and arising of the bindu²⁷³ — whatever appears is the
palace of dharmatā.

The appearances of existence fluctuate
and are momentary, like the appearances of a dream;
although false, they appear as true actions of the mind.
The six realms, such as white and so on,
appear to the eyes of each individual.

The *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra* extensively demonstrates the meaning of that.

The mode of their appearance: the mode of appearance of the bardo of the natural location is the individual modes of appearance such as the specific individual, the general three realms, and so on. From the perspective of an individual person, if they are afflicted by a *pitta* illness,²⁷⁴ when they look at a white conch, it appears yellow. When afflicted by a combination disease, all mountains and houses appear to be moving. [87a] Also, in terms of the six realms collectively, the devas see the same water as nectar; and therefore in that way, six or seven modes of appearance are observed.

The mode of appearance of the bardo of the time of death: there is mental suffering and thoughts withdraw inside. There are fearful appearances and appearances that are confusing, momentary, and so on.

The mode of appearances in the bardo of dharmatā is luminosity appearing as colors, kāyas, and pristine consciousnesses.

The mode of appearance of the bardo of rebirth is appearing as momentary and ephemeral.

The dividing line is called “the bardo of the natural location.” Its duration lasts from the initial delusion until final awakening. If illustrated in detail, it is the period between being born from the mother and being afflicted by the condition of death. After the signs of death arise and before the breath stops is the bardo of the time of death. After the breath has stopped until one arrives at the appearance of natural perfection is the bardo of dharmatā. After that, the period where one is placed in the city of the womb is the dividing line of the bardo of rebirth.

The four subjects in the intimate instructions of the critical points of the bardo are: [87b] (1) the intimate instruction for determining the classification of objects of knowledge in the bardo of natural location, like a swallow entering its nest; (2) the intimate instruction for clarifying the unclear in the bardo of the

time of death, like a pretty girl looking in a mirror; (3) the intimate instruction for generating confidence in the self-appearances of the bardo of dharmatā, like meeting with a prior acquaintance; and (4) the intimate instruction for the continuation of karma in the bardo of rebirth, like a fox entering a broken water pipe.

The Bardo of Natural Location 2.1.1.10.1 The first of these, determining the classification of objects of knowledge in the bardo of natural location, is investigating the object of doubt again and again. Since death comes to all, one must train the mind through hearing, come to a decisive conclusion, and go beyond with meditation on Dharmas beneficial to that investigation as has been elaborated above.

Here, if the purpose is discussed briefly, externally, “determining the classification of objects of knowledge” means that the purpose of recognizing that appearances are mere dreams or illusions is to turn the mind away from saṃsāra. Internally, one’s mind is understood to be free from an identity through determining the classification for the mind that gathers [appearances]. [88a] Also, the result is buddhahood.

Having attained buddhahood as the three kāyas (which are inseparably one) by determining the classification of the nonduality of appearances and mind, deeds are performed with unbiased compassion. Further, it is very important to meet a qualified guru, which also happens due to the strength of past positive karma.

The Bardo of the Time of Death

2.1.1.10.2 The instruction for clarifying the unclear in the bardo of the time of death, like a pretty girl looking in a mirror: at this time give up whatever remaining practice one does and apply the transference. Examine the outer signs of death and cheat death by gathering accumulations. Further, the signs of being affected by the illness of the condition of death is taught in the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra*: There are twenty-one signs of death.

The extensive subjects are explained in the *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra*: When the brightness of the nails and limbs is no more, there is no doubt that [death will come] in nine months.

One can understand the signs of death elsewhere.

After that, the cheating of death is [88b] explained in the rite of cheating death by engaging in the preliminary accumulations. The same tantra states: As such, if the signs of death²⁷⁵ occur, one should do the rite of cheating death.

The person undertaking the activity of repelling
should please one's guru, the sangha,
and the field for gathering accumulations
with offerings and celebrations.

One should undertake these rites.

And cheating through dependent origination:

Draw a wheel of the five elements
on a palm leaf . . .

The method for cheating death can be understood from the *Small Maroon Volume*.²⁷⁶ Through such examination, repeat the rite again and again until one has authoritative signs of reversal.

Supposing the time of death has come, four inner signs of death occur. [The *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra*] states: After illness afflicts a person's body, in whomever these signs arise, that one is being afflicted by the time of death. Earth dissolves into earth, likewise, water, fire, and air each dissolve into themselves . . .

Further, this body was formed out of the four elements in the beginning and its time has come to an end through the dispersal and dissolution of the four elements. [89a] At that time, the sign of the earth dissolving into earth is that the body is heavy and it cannot rise. The sign of water dissolving into water is that fluid flows out of the mouth and nostrils. After that, the mouth and nose become dry. The sign of fire dissolving into fire is that the warmth in the four extremities of the body is lost, and the palms and soles lose heat. At this time, the body loses its luster. After that, the sign of air dissolving into air is that panting starts and the body loses strength.

At that time, the reminder through the intimate instruction is, “Since the bardo of dharmatā appears like this to me, at this time I must recognize it to be my own vision.” If this thought is vividly clear, it is sufficient. If this is not clear, then invite one’s guru and gather as much accumulation [of merit] as possible.

After that, when the outer breath stops, the guru should repeat the intimate instruction of luminosity through a bamboo tube or a roll of paper into [the dying person’s] left ear. [89b] If so, it is impossible that the bardo of dharmatā will not be recalled. For example, since one sends an important message to a man about a specific place, even if he immediately forgets the message due to the strength of the place being far away, as soon as he encounters the name of that place on the road, he will clearly remember it. Similarly, when a dying person is given a reminder by the guru at the time of death, although he or she forgets it at that moment because of the condition of the body being separated from its life force, he or she will recognize himself in the bardo of dharmatā. Now, if the guru is not present, then the reminder should be given by one’s male or female siblings with whom there is no breakage of samaya and with whom one is in accord in terms of view and conduct. Further, [the *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra*] states: At that time, one should familiarize oneself

with the intimate instructions of the guru
and be reminded of the topics.

If those are not clearly remembered,
then if the guru is present,
he should remind one of the foregoing intimate instructions.

If the guru is not present, one can also be reminded
by a knowledgeable vajra sibling.

If the patient has an impaired memory or if the breath has stopped, the critical point of purifying the breath and restoring body, voice, and mind is [90a] the reminder with the intimate instructions of the guru. The trio of the mouth and the two nostrils of the dying person’s body meets [the guru’s] own three doors. The guru should exhale into [the patient] three times. Since the guru does that, the patient’s body becomes warm. [The breath] is guided into the center of [the patient’s] heart from the guru’s mouth by saying *hūṃ*. [The breath] is guided through the right nostril by saying *oṃ* and [the breath] is guided into the left nostril by saying *āḥ*.²⁷⁷ By doing that, the nāḍīs of the eyes open wide. At that moment, since one plants the reminder with the intimate instruction, it is

definitely planted.²⁷⁸ [The *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra*] states: If one wishes to benefit others,

in order to support them with compassion . . .

The Bardo of Dharmatā

2.1.1.10.3 Now, in order to trust that the bardo of dharmatā is one's appearances, since air dissolves into consciousness, one's consciousness becomes unclear and the inner breath stops. Since consciousness dissolves into space, the connection between the body and mind is severed, the breath vanishes into the sky, [90b] the body becomes completely inanimate, and vidyā vanishes like a spark. At the time of going to the bardo of dharmatā it is said "space dissolves into luminosity," during which the external appearances of soil, stone, mountains, and cliffs cease.

After the inner luminosity arises as the appearance of dharmatā, all appearances are appearances of five-colored light. If the [light] body is pressed down, one thinks [that the appearance of dharmatā] is sinking. If the body is lifted, one thinks [that the appearance of dharmatā] is floating. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: This is the explanation of the bardo of dharmatā:

when one has passed beyond death,

consciousness dissolves into space.

Since space dissolves into luminosity,

all subtle and coarse appearances cease.

There is a body of light²⁷⁹ with full sense organs, which becomes like a body and its shadow.

At that time, when there are clusters of light,

the expert is said to spread²⁸⁰ appearances.

Due to the spreading²⁸¹ of motile vāyus, lights and rays of five colors arise as undefined rainbow patterns.

The meaning of this citation is clarified in the *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra*: The consciousness of people dissolves into luminosity, [91a] i.e., as soon as the movements of the outer and inner breath stop, other than their sense organs, there are no substantial appearances, but a thought that they exist does

arise. This physical body does not appear, but a body of light does appear.²⁸² At that time, the experiential field of the sense organs appears as a maṇḍala of five-colored lights and rays.

Thus, this is explained in sequence.

The chains, said to manifest in the bardo of dharmatā, are to be understood as the appearance of the luminosity of the bardo.

At that time, there is an enumeration of the critical point of the three times: (1) entry, the critical point of consciousness; (2) liberation, the critical point of the body; and (3) culmination, the critical point of recognition.

There are two subjects at the time of entry: light entering vidyā and vidyā entering light. Light entering vidyā means that those appearances of light arise in the form of the five kāyas. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: The vāyu of entering and ripening

spreads in the four directions, the zenith, and the nadir. [91b]

Since the light of the main and intermediate directions gathers,

the kāyas of the five families also visibly appear —

blue, white, yellow, red, and green —

appearing in their individual forms.

As it says, from the hearts of those families there is a coiled strand of very subtle light rays that are felt to penetrate one's own heart. Having recognized these, if one focuses one's mind on them, one will dwell in natural concentration.

Vidyā entering light means that from one's heart there arises a rope of light rays that connects externally [to the kāyas of the five families]. [The *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra*] states: Now then, vidyā entering light means those appearances are very vibrant and visible. Then, from one's heart a coiled strand of light rays arises that wraps around the hearts of the devatās that are external. Also, this strand of rays arises as innumerable small bindus.²⁸³ After that, since they are recognized as one's own appearances, one feels that these kāyas dissolve into one's body. This is called “vidyā entering light.”

The time of liberation: at this time, since grasping to the aggregates as a self automatically vanishes, the body is liberated into the body of luminosity.²⁸⁴ After dwelling in the state of dharmatā, one is liberated from coarse and subtle physical elements. [92a] Appearances are liberated into great luminosity. Having

been liberated from coarse and subtle afflictions, vidyā is liberated like a child dissolving into the mother. If that is analyzed extensively, at this time the appearance of the union of the four pristine consciousnesses arises from one's heart. First, there is a layer of white, on top of that is a layer of yellow, on top of that is a layer of red, on top of that is a layer of blue, and within that are bindus equivalent to the individual layers arising like an inverted mirror with nine or five layers. This is called "the hollow path of Vajrasattva."

The time of culmination is when vidyā dissolves into the naturally perfect precious body. The *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra* states that since one's consciousness dissolves into luminosity, "above those [layers] a very clear round light arises like an umbrella."

At that time, there are the eight modes of arising:

1. Since compassion seems to arise, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are seamless.
2. Since light seems to arise, all appearances manifest internally.
3. Since kāyas seem to arise, consciousness is not lost externally.
4. Since pristine consciousness seems to arise, all appearances are pellucid.
5. Since nonduality seems to arise, [92b] one's consciousness is present as one-pointed.
6. Since freedom from extremes seems to arise, there is no dwelling in any extreme.
7. Since the door of impure saṃsāra seems to arise, the source of existence does not cease.
8. Since the door of pure pristine consciousness seems to arise, the mother and child dharmatā mix.

Further, the *Heap of Jewels Tantra* states:

The protector of all sentient beings originates
from the mode of compassion which seems to arise.
The five lights are present as illuminations
because intrinsically clear appearances do not cease.
Unceasing appearances arise as the path
in the doorway of pure pristine consciousness
because the apparent aspects of omniscience do not cease.

All phenomena appear as kāyas

because everything is complete within one's body.
Since consciousness has a single essence,
nonduality also seems to arise.
Since suchness does not exist where it is,
the appearance of great freedom from extremes
appears from the undefined, naturally perfect basis.

The essence is connected to
the doorway of pure pristine consciousness
because pellucid vidyā completes words.
Since the mode of production does not cease,
it is the source of all sentient beings.
Also, the seeming doorway of impure saṃsāra
arises in the doorway of pervasive appearances.
All of these appear as the eight modes of arising. [93a]
Arising as modes of production,
they are called “naturally perfect appearances,”
appearing in a precious form.

[The *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra*] states:

As such, when there is such an arising, son of a good family, the six
higher perceptions arise.

In the first moment there arises the clairvoyance of the sense organs, the
pliable mind, power over wisdom, the pure perception of pristine consciousness,
the unmistakable perception of dharmatā, and perceiving the unmistakable
omniscience of buddhahood.

Second, directly in front, the five families arise in the form of the principal
and retinue. The birthplaces, karma, suffering, lifespans, and so on, of the six
classes of migrating beings manifest below. The actual state of the basis
manifesting above comes from the six recollections. The *Union of the Sun and
Moon Tantra* states:²⁸⁵

Also, the six recollections of those arise.

The six are the recollections of the devatā, the path, the birthplace, the
concentration, the intimate instructions of the guru, and the Dharma. At that
time, these recollections that are not forgotten arise in one’s continuum. [93b]
All Dharma that one has heard and seen instantaneously arises in one’s
continuum. In that same way, since teachings also arise that one has never seen
before, it is called “the bardo of dharmatā.”

Since the state of samādhi continuously arises, negative concepts cannot

arise. At this time, three trustworthy critical points arise: 1. Since the intimate instruction of trust like a child climbing on the lap of its mother is recalled, the recognition of one's appearances severs doubt, like a person of previous acquaintance being seen later on.

2. Since the intimate instruction of changelessness like a golden surgical trocar²⁸⁶ is recalled, just as an expert physician uses a trocar to drain fluid that has attacked the heart, because one trusts the unchanging path of pure dharmatā, continuous samādhi arises.

3. Then, since one recalls the intimate instruction of irreversibility like the arrow shot by a great archer, it is like the arrow of a strong athlete that can penetrate something without impediment.

In the third moment, since one recognizes the appearance of the kāyas and pristine consciousnesses as one's own, the attainment of precious natural perfection simultaneously produces the eight dissolutions. [94a]

Since compassion dissolves into compassion, just like the rays of the setting sun gather, the appearances of the six realms do not appear to oneself, and not even the word "impure delusion" exists.

Since light dissolves into light, like a rainbow vanishing in the sky, the appearance of light has no patterns of distinct color — being one taste in the dhātu of emptiness free from an identity.

Since kāyas dissolve into kāyas, like a figure inside a vase, consciousness is internally illuminated and has no form of individuated faces and hands — the essence of one's appearances is pure.

Since pristine consciousness dissolves into pristine consciousness, it is like a child climbing onto the lap of its mother — dharmatā, the mother, and vidyā, the child, merge into nonduality.

Since nonduality dissolves into nonduality, like water dissolving into water, as the state is the same, there is no partiality.

Since liberation from extremes dissolves into liberation from extremes, like space dissolves into space, there is no focal point in emptiness.

Since the door of impure saṃsāra dissolves into the door of pure pristine consciousness, it gathers into the single unique bindu, like coiling a yak-hair tent rope. [94b]

Since the door of pure pristine consciousness dissolves into the essence, one is free from all anxiety and timidity, like a lion assuming his place on a glacier. The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states: Oh friends! When one has seen the truth

through gaining one's own strength in the naturally perfect appearances, there are eight ways they dissolve. Furthermore, compassion dissolves into compassion, like the rays of the setting sun. Pristine consciousness dissolves into pristine consciousness, like a child climbing on a mother's lap. Light dissolves into light, vanishing like a rainbow in the sky. Kāyas dissolve into kāyas, like a figure in a vase. Nonduality dissolves into nonduality, like water dissolving into water. Liberation from extremes dissolves into liberation from extremes, like space dissolves into space. The door of pure pristine consciousness dissolves into the essence, original purity, like a lion seated on a glacier. The door of impure saṃsāra dissolves into the door of pure pristine consciousness, like coiling a tent rope of yak hair.

The *Heap of Jewels Tantra* states:²⁸⁷ [95a]

Since compassion automatically dissolves
into compassion through its own nature,
the sphere of nonaction is the state of nirvāṇa
through the mode of the uncontrived attainment.

Since nothing is left undone,
all deeds are nirvāṇa.

Since nothing is left undone and nothing appears to be done,
the conditioned is a pure dimension.

Since compassion automatically dissolves into itself,
it goes nowhere else;
for example, the sun's rays
dissolve into its own core.

All visions and appearances are nirvāṇa
due to possessing intrinsic radiance.

All these precious qualities
do not dwell in the faulty.

Light dissolving into itself
is explained to be a great quality.
The object of the clinging that grasps to signs
ceases in the purity of its own essence.
Also, the four coarse elements
do not appear here and so clinging is averted.
Through intrinsically pure great emptiness,
grasping colors as a self is in the state of nirvāṇa.
This also goes nowhere else;
since its nature dissolves into itself,
all appearances are in the state of nirvāṇa.
Since the maṇḍala of light dissolves into itself,
it is like a rainbow in the sky
automatically vanishing into the sky.
In the indivisible vast dimension²⁸⁸
all grasping attachment is in the state of nirvāṇa.
This too is a precious quality.

The manner of the arising of this quality is as follows:

since pristine consciousness automatically dissolves into pristine consciousness through its own nature, the grasping cognitions, concepts, memories, and thoughts are all in the nondual state of nirvāṇa in the dimension of self-existing uniformity.

Even the apparent aspects of the individual pristine consciousnesses are in the state of nirvāṇa in the center of a dimension free of activity without subsiding.

Since those automatically dissolve into themselves, all the various displays of pristine consciousness dissolve into [pristine consciousness's] own state, like a child climbing on its mother's lap.

Trusting one's own pristine consciousness, one's nature is the state of nirvāṇa.

This too is a precious quality.

The way this quality dissolves:
the kāyas automatically dissolve into the kāyas.

Since there are no appearances
in the great nonconceptual rūpakāya, it is the state of nirvāṇa.
The elements gathered by the coarse ignorance
of subtle grasping, and so on,
are the state of nirvāṇa because there is no differentiation.
Since the kāyas dissolve into their own state,
the apprehending aspect of consciousness does not escape outside,
like a figure in a vase.

The external movements of the internally illuminated
are naturally purified because they lack a nature.
This too is a precious quality.

This quality is as follows:
since nonduality dissolves into nonduality,
because the sole unique state is free from proliferation,
the clinging of grasping to enumerations
is also in the state of one without a second.

Since it dissolves into itself, it is the state of nirvāṇa.
Since dualistic appearances dissolve into themselves,
they are inseparable,
like water that dissolves into water.

Since inseparability is total, it is the state of nirvāṇa.
This too is a precious quality.

The unceasing quality is as follows:
since freedom from extremes automatically dissolves [95b]
into freedom from extremes through its own nature,
because the objects of all those whose continuums grasp
the three kāyas are exhausted, it is the state of nirvāṇa.
The two extremes self-purify and dissolve into themselves.
For example, like space dissolving into space,

there is nothing to identify.

After the conceptual clinging to the four extremes automatically ceases, it is the state of nirvāṇa because it is a great nonabiding.

This too is a precious quality.

The quality of the appearance is as follows:
the automatic entryway into impure saṃsāra
dissolves into the pure door through its essence
without ever moving.

For example, it is like coiling a tent rope of yak hair,
coiling into itself in the center.

The experiential range of the sense organs is nirvāṇa.

This too is a precious quality.

Since in this way the qualities are complete,
the doorway of pure pristine consciousness
automatically dissolves into its own essence.

The kāyas and pristine consciousnesses are in the state of nirvāṇa.

For example, it is like a lion assuming his seat on a glacier,
as irreversible, fearless confidence is attained.

This too is a precious quality.

In this way, pristine consciousness dwells as one
through the manner of producing qualities
because these are attained by oneself without seeking;
the nature of these existed already.

The Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra states:

The best are liberated in three moments. Further, medium-level [practitioners] attain stability within five days. They also attain stability in twenty-one moments. [96a] The average, having caught their breath in a natural nirmāṇakāya buddhafield, attain buddhahood without the bardo.

The *Powerful Lion Tantra* states:

In samādhi for five days . . .

The *Blazing Physical Relics Tantra* states:

Like a shooting star
in the sky, in three moments
[that person] along with [his] emanations
automatically dissolve into the essence.²⁸⁹

And:

If the wrathful kāyas arise,
that will be liberation in five aspects
in an instant within the bardo of dharmatā.

And:

If the peaceful kāyas arise,
the truth will be seen in five days
and the buddhas will dissolve.

The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states that according to differences in capacity, the truth is seen in twenty-one moments or twenty-one days. The details of that should be heard from the voice of the guru.

The Bardo of Rebirth

2.1.1.10.4 The continuation of karma in the bardo of rebirth is like a fox entering a broken water pipe: the person of average diligence whose sense organs are undisciplined does not recognize the appearances of the bardo of rebirth through the linkage of traces. [96b] Having caught one's breath in the natural nirmāṇakāya buddhafiels, one is miraculously born without entering the city of the womb, like waking from a dream. Having seen Akṣobhya, the vajra family nirmāṇakāya, one catches one's breath in the Manifest Joy buddhafiels in the east. One is conferred empowerment by Ratnasambhava, the ratna family

nirmāṇakāya, in the Glorious buddhafield in the south. One is given a prediction by Amitābha, the padma family nirmāṇakāya, in the Heaps of Lotus buddhafield in the west. Thereafter Amoghasiddhi, the karma family nirmāṇakāya, exhausts all of one's karma and traces in the Perfected Action buddhafield. Without going through the bardo, one attains perfect buddhahood in five hundred years through the blessing of truth. The *Self-Arisen Vidyā* states: [97a]

Even without realization having arisen in their continuums,
sentient beings who have seen the truth
can finally be liberated from those abodes
in the nirmāṇakāya buddhafields in the ten directions.

These are extensively described in the first chapter of the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra*: In a world system to the east of this world is a buddhafield called Abhirati . . .

The *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra* states:

Having caught one's breath in the natural nirmāṇakāya buddhafields,
one attains buddhahood without the bardo.

And the *Blazing Physical Relics Tantra* also states:

Having caught one's breath in a natural nirmāṇakāya buddhafield,
there is attainment after a single birth.

Up to this point, the chapter demonstrating the extent of liberation of persons of best, medium, and average capacity who have entered into the door of this profound Dharma is complete.

Samaya. Sealed, sealed, sealed.

Those who have not seen the door of this profound intimate instruction, as well as ordinary migrating beings, first cling to and are attached to the bardo of the natural birthplace.²⁹⁰ There, one's continuum gathers karma. In the bardo of the time of death, one experiences the suffering of the separation of the body and mind. In the bardo of dharmatā, due to lack of familiarity, one does not

recognize pristine consciousness. One loses control in the bardo of rebirth. Cycling in the bardo of rebirth means [97b] that since one has a mental body with all sense organs complete, it is a body that is not impeded by anything. Just like a bird feather lifted by the wind with no purpose or direction, one appears and goes everywhere. At that time, one's body is seen like the body in a dream; but the bodies of others are not seen, like dust motes in the sun rays coming through a skylight. The accumulations of positive actions cause birth in higher realms. The accumulations of negative actions cause birth in lower realms, places of suffering.

In the bardo there are twenty differences: a difference in form; a difference in the gateway of arising; a difference in light; a difference in birthplace; a difference in the alignment of the head; a difference in lifespan; a difference in clairvoyance; a difference in appearance; a difference in behavior; a difference in name; a difference in miraculous power; a difference in karma and so on; a difference in color; a difference in the mode of cycling; a difference in definition; a difference in virtue and misdeeds; a difference in which of the three realms one belongs to; [98a] a difference in karmic connection to the body of the next life; a difference in connection to the karma and afflictions of the next life; and a difference in the illustration of the example of the bardo of rebirth.

Now then, regarding the difference of form, there is an ordinary body of flesh and blood that does not exist apart from grasping the appearance of the body of the past life. The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states: Their bardo, for example, is like a dream.

That body which is taken in the next life becomes one from among the excessive variety within the six realms, such as the body of a deva of light and so on.

Regarding the gateway, since the appearance of light was not recognized in the bardo of dharmatā, seeing dharmatā as external, one arrives at the bardo of rebirth. Also, the mental body is completely unimpeded. Furthermore, the body appropriated in dependence upon the seed of the four elements is the fourth bardo.

Regarding the difference of light, for those with good karma, light manifests there [in the bardo] as white and eleven fathoms deep. For those with impure karma, [98b] dim light manifests that is an arm span deep due to the power of the truth of dharmatā mentioned above.

Regarding the difference in birthplace, among the four birthplaces, the bardo

shares miraculous birth with devas and hell beings.

Regarding the alignment of their heads, it is thought that the alignment of the heads of humans and devas are vertical, that of asuras and animals is horizontal, and that of pretas and hell beings is inverted.

Regarding lifespan, on the seventh day, in one moment there is death and in the next moment there is birth. That [cycle] occurs for seven weeks. As such, the twenty modes of arising of appearances are complete in the seven day [period]; and then there is death.

Regarding the difference in clairvoyance, in one moment one can respectively see the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm. That is a contaminated clairvoyance that subsides depending on the greater or lesser traces.

Regarding the difference in the size of the body, apart from being the size of an eight-year-old child or a sixteen-year-old youth, in all, there comes a desire to see and a desire to enter. [99a]

Regarding the difference in behavior, since the prior power of seeing dharmatā is weak, prior traces arise and there is mainly clinging to the past.

Regarding the difference in name, apart from the difference of the seed of the four elements, one takes the form of the flesh of the past existence.

Regarding the difference in miraculous power, the senses are very clear. The limbs are coarse and complete. One's awareness remains where it is placed; it can be placed on the tip of a needle, a single split hair, or anywhere.

Regarding the difference in devas and humans, based on the amount of previous karma, all the karma of the next life is included here [in the bardo].

Regarding color, when born as a deva or a human, [the color is] white; when born as an asura or an animal, [the color is] yellow; when born as a preta or a hell being, [the color is] black.

With regard to the definition, it is called a “bardo” or “interval” because of the cycle between the appearance of the body of the last life and the appearance of the six realms. If one does not recognize the strength of the truth of dharmatā, since birth eventually arises, it is called “the bardo of rebirth.” [99b]

Regarding the difference in virtue and misdeeds, since one engaged in virtue in the past, one's awareness is clear; if not, then one's awareness is cloudy and unclear.

Regarding the difference in which of the three realms [the bardo of rebirth] is

included, since there is no physical body of flesh and blood, it is included in the formless realm. Since there are various experiences of happiness and suffering in the mind, it is included in the desire realm.

Regarding the difference of karmic connection to the body of the next life, when the period of seven weeks is complete, the signs of entry into a womb are as follows: if one feels that one is inside of an apartment on top of a temple, one has entered into a deva womb. If one feels that one is in a spinning wheel of fire, one has entered into an asura womb. If one feels that one is frozen, one has entered into a human womb of low quality. If one feels that one is in the middle of darkness, one has entered a pure womb of a human body. If one feels that one is among many people, one has entered the womb of a precious human birth. If one feels that one is in the middle of a straw hut or fog, [100a] one has entered an animal womb. If one feels that one is inside of a gully, one has entered a preta womb. From the strength of past karma, hell beings go just like an arrow shot from a bow and never remain in the bardo of rebirth.

Regarding the explanation of the karmic connection of karma and affliction to the next life, one is born into the form realm due to the arising of the condition of hatred. One is born into the desire realm from the arising of the condition of desire. One is born into the formless realm from the arising of the condition of confusion.

Regarding the illustration of the example, it is like a fire clinging to grass. Through the force of traces, the mind grasps the womb. As such, through the force of karma, one has been born in the *kṛta yuga*, *tretā yuga*, *dvāpara yuga*, or *kali yuga*,²⁹¹ the age of hunger and the age of great suffering. Here, training in the illusory body and the form of the yidam are very important points. As such, deluded sentient beings experience various different karmas and continuously abide in saṃsāra.

That demonstrates the tenth topic, the general way of being liberated in the bardo.

273. Following ADZ, *thig le mched dang 'byung snang dang*; according to the *Illuminating Lamp*, here *thig le* refers to one's mind.

274. A *pitta* (*mkhris pa*) illness arises from the element of fire in the body.

275. Reading *'chi ba'i* for *lus la* following ADZ.

276. *'Chi ba bslus ba*, pp. 539–49, from *G.yu yig can po ti smug chung gi skor*, in *Snying thig ya bzhi*

(Delhi: Sherab Gyaltzen Lama, 1975).

277. TDD, p. 1390, simply recommends blowing strongly into the mouth and nostrils face-to-face.
278. Marginalia: “Pressing the nāḍīs of the eye with the thumbs is the introduction to the lamp of the empty bindu.”
279. *'Od kyi lus.*
280. Reading *phyed* as *mched* following ADZ.
281. Reading *chod* and *mched* following ADZ.
282. In general, this citation and the following ones from the *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra* have been somewhat garbled. For this passage, NB and ADZ read: */rang gi dbang po rnams kyi cha las dngos por snang ba ni med de yod snyam pa'i shes pa ni 'byung ngo/ rdos bcas kyi lus ni mi snang ste/'od kyi lus su snang ba'o/* rather than what is presented here: */rang gi dbang po rnams kyi cha la gsal bar 'char ro/ dngos por snang ba ni med de/ yod snyam pa'i shes pa ni 'byung ngo/rdos bcas kyi lus 'di mi snang ste yid kyi lus su gsal ba'o/.*
283. This passage is out of place when compared with ADZ.
284. *'Od gsal gyi sku.*
285. The text incorrectly cites the *Heap of Jewels Tantra*. NB correctly cites the *Union of the Sun and Moon Tantra*.
286. *Thur ma*, generally a type of surgical implement used to drain fluid from physical cavities.
287. Due to its length, this citation is abbreviated in the manuscript; however, in the interest of completeness, the full citation is included here.
288. Reading *mi 'byed chen po'i* for *chos nyid yangs pa'i* following ADZ.
289. The last line is provided for context — this is a citation for those who attain liberation in this life.
290. *Rang bzhin gnas pa'i bar do.*
291. These are the four classical eons of Hindu and Buddhist mythology. We are presently in the *kali yuga*.

TOPIC 11: *The Great Stage of Liberation*

2.1.1.11 Now, the explanation of the eleventh topic, the great stage of liberation.

In general, if it is asked, “Are the buddhas of the three times differentiated through past and future? Are persons of best, medium, and average capacity differentiated in terms of the degree of their buddhahood or not?” at the time of buddhahood, there is not even the slightest difference in degree or in terms of past and future. If it is asked why, it is because there is no difference in what is abandoned and what is obtained. As such, the three systems of attaining buddhahood have one stage of liberation in the final vision of the exhaustion of dharmatā. The *String of Pearls Tantra* states: The sole secret of all buddhas . . .

That is the realization of the unmistakable nature of original purity endowed with the three pristine consciousnesses, the reality of the dharmatā of one’s vidyā obtained through direct perception. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Known just as it is,

reality is recognized for one’s benefit.²⁹²

And:

The stream of delusion is severed because one’s own benefit is realized by knowing reality. [101a]

If it is asked what is that, [the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states]: The enumeration of one or many is exhausted in the nature of original purity.

The end of exhausting phenomena
is reached in the nondual kāyas and pristine consciousnesses.
The result is asserted to be dharmatā.

And:

Actualized by recognition,
the meaning that has always been present
is the conclusion of the exhaustion of dharmatā.²⁹³

The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* states:

One will be liberated on the ultimate stage of original purity.

And:

Having recognized the nature that has always been naturally perfect,
realization will be actualized.

The *String of Pearls Tantra* states:

Everything actualizes buddhahood in the state²⁹⁴
of original purity free from taints.

And:

The stage of liberation is first.

Now then, “first” means that the reality of the original basis, the pristine consciousness of original purity, is explained at the beginning of the eleventh stage.²⁹⁵ Actualizing that is said to be the stage of ultimate liberation. [101b] Ācārya Vimalamitra states: The basis, the state of initial original purity, is liberated

because its essence is not established at all.

Its nature appears as everything
and its compassion arises in every way.

As such, since reality is naturally pure and the adventitious are pure, when liberated into both purities, the appearances of impure saṃsāra and the appearances of pure nirvāṇa are all exhausted. Further, the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: With regard to the dharmatā that vanishes where it is,

since the elements vanish, matter is purified.
After all coarse and subtle particles cease,
not even an iota remains.
After the afflictions vanish, delusion is purified.
Since one is free from concepts and no clinging remains,
not even an iota of latent
and active [afflictions] remain.
As such, through the vanishing of the coarse and subtle,
also in the end the five aggregates become subtle.
Having exhausted the body of the four elements,
everything is a body of perfect pristine consciousness.
Nonconceptual pristine consciousness dwells in itself;
since it is beyond fabricated phenomena,
phenomena are not present even in name.²⁹⁶ [102a]

[And:]

For example, all appearances are exhausted by emptying the vāyus.
In that way, the exhaustion of concepts
and the pristine consciousness of nonarising are simultaneous.
At that time, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa merge.

And:

Having completed three²⁹⁷ visions, there will be exhaustion.

And:

The stage of the exhaustion of dharmatā is reached.
One's philosophical conclusion is destroyed.

In order to clarify those citations, the *Six Dimensions Tantra* states: The gauge of the exhaustion of dharmatā is grasping that all appearances are not established.²⁹⁸

And:

As such, having finally exhausted the body,
also nothing arises in experience;
nothing at all exists here.
While there is neither a stage here on which to dwell,
nor are there words for a description,
because the mode of the arising of qualities is unceasing,
it is also not nonexistent.
Since here there is no stage on which to dwell,
phenomena upon which to rely are exhausted.
Since here there is no object of perception,
the apprehensible aspect has always been empty.
Here, there is nothing to designate as empty,²⁹⁹
likewise no appearance of clarity [102b]
can be experienced at all.
Similarly, since nonexistence also cannot be experienced,
the taints of existence and nonexistence do not exist
and the pure immaculate kāya appears.

Since there is no emptiness to identify, it is called “the dharmatā free from extremes.” Since there is no preference for this or that, it is called “the kāya of total inseparability.” Since the appearance of dharmatā is beyond all objects, it is empty of the extremes of apprehended objects and apprehending subjects, and is called “the great total perfection free from extremes.” Since it is free from matter, it is called “the impartial uniform nature.” Ācārya Vimalamitra states: Like a potter, a pot,³⁰⁰

space, and a broken pot,
the intent of the buddhas is impartiality

the nature of the buddhas is impartiality,
absence of objects, inseparability,
and nonduality.

For example, it is like space dissolved into space. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Just as the nature of pure space is objectless after it dissolves into space, there are no divisions and no parts. [103a]

And the *Blazing Physical Relics Tantra* states: Just as water dissolves into water,
likewise, ghee dissolves into ghee,
and similarly, space dissolves into space;
the nondual becomes unidentifiable.

The *Unwritten Tantra* states: Crossing to the place that cannot be reached, since the experiential field of great emptiness is intrinsically clear, the single state of nonconceptual buddhahood is seen.³⁰¹

The dharmakāya actualized in realization is perfect complete buddhahood. Compassion becomes the appearance of the kāyas and pristine consciousnesses for those to be tamed. (1) Since the essence appears as kāyas, the three kāyas are inseparable. (2) Since the nature appears as pristine consciousness, compassion manifests as the pristine consciousness of omniscience. (3) After compassion appears as the activity of deeds, for as long as saṃsāra is not empty, it performs the inconceivable deeds of the buddhas.

First, the essence appears as kāyas because dharmatā is perfectly attained.³⁰² Since compassion is always experienced in that dharmakāya, it is the sambhogakāya. In particular, [103b] since the benefit of migrating beings is performed by the pristine consciousness that is omniscient concerning all aspects,³⁰³ it is the nirmāṇakāya. Also, the citations for that will be extensively presented below.

Second, regarding the nature appearing as pristine consciousness, although the three pristine consciousnesses present in the basis appear in the basis at the time of the dharmakāya, they are not established as patterned signs. Since the five pristine consciousnesses of apprehended signs are naturally apprehended at the time of the sambhogakāya, subject and object are not established. At the time

of the *nirmāṇakāya*, there is no action or agent because the aspect of omniscience is unceasing apart from the two pristine consciousnesses of objects of knowledge.³⁰⁴

The deeds of compassion appearing as activity means that the compassion of innate power appears throughout all of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* like space. The compassion that encounters conditions appears to disciples of pure karma like the sun and the moon. The compassion that is invoked and petitioned appears to those devoted disciples like a precious gem. The *Unwritten Tantra* states: [104a]

Since the doorway of this compassion is unceasing, the great emanation performs deeds in the ten directions.

The way it is explained in the other tantras is similar. If it is asked, “As such, are the teachings and sequences in the other tantras not then contradictory?” it is replied that since the result is the *kāya* of pristine consciousness, there is no contradiction with the *kāya* of compassion coming from pristine consciousness. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: As such, compassion must exist

in that liberated mind.

The pristine consciousness present in the basis
is the basis of the arising of [compassion’s] intrinsic power.

The pristine consciousness that apprehends characteristics
ripens the purity of the conditions.

The pristine consciousness of the knower and objects of knowledge
bestows *siddhi* upon the devoted.

Further, when the mind is ripened,
the basis is present in the *dharmakāya*,
the taints upon original purity are exhausted,
and the essence has never been deluded.

Unceasing arising is perfected naturally;
the nature cannot be specifically defined.

Since it pervades all, compassion
does not divide *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.

The pristine consciousness of the *sambhogakāya* apprehends
characteristics. [104b]

Since the object is pure, this pristine consciousness is a mirror
in which the reflection of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa manifests.
Since it is impartial, it is uniform.
Since it supports the objects of the senses, it is individually discriminating.
Since it is effortless, it is successful in activities.
Since it is undifferentiated, it is the dharmadhātu.
For the nirmāṇakāya, the [pristine consciousness] of objects of knowledge,
the omniscience about how things are,
knows reality is unreal for one's own benefit;
and through [the omniscience] about all that exists
the inclinations of disciples are known.
As such, there are different migrating beings to tame
as well as the taming kāya
coming from compassion's modes of arising.

As such, since pristine consciousness comes from compassion and the kāyas
come from pristine consciousness, the three kāyas of the tathāgata possess the
omniscience that knows all of the pure qualities of buddhahood in its entirety.

The pure mind is the three pristine consciousnesses³⁰⁵ because its pure
actions are the three compassions.³⁰⁶ The *Realms and Transformations of Sound
Tantra*³⁰⁷ states: [105a]

The dharmakāya is body, speech,
mind, qualities, and activities.
Body is the nature of emptiness,
clarity, and absence of signs.
Speech is free from expression and discussion
as it is free from sounds, words, and names.
Mind is beyond proliferation and experience
because it is without thoughts or movement
pervading the dhātu and pristine consciousness.
Qualities do not leave or return.
Their nature is unfabricated.
The activities are nonarisen uncontrived

THE ACTIVITIES ARE REMEMBERED, UNOBTAINED,
natural, and unimpeded,
nothing having been done and nothing to be done.
From the five in the samabhogakāya —
body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities —
the body is the absence of inherent existence in appearances;
it manifests,³⁰⁸ makes clear, and is pervaded with knowing.
Speech is self-originated and self-appearing,
a wheel of light with the aspect of radiation and absorption.
Mind is uninterrupted, it sees;³⁰⁹
and the potentiality of omniscience is the transcendent state.
Qualities are the perfect major and minor marks.
The transcendent state is clarity and complete clairvoyance.
The activities are emanating the outer, inner, and secret aspects
through the wheel of Dharma. [105b]
The buddhas of each family,
as well as the bodhisattvas,
emanate from the self-originated tongue
and teach retinues of their own nature.
There are also five in the nirmāṇakāya —
body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities.
The body has the major and minor marks.
It emanates a physical body to tame disciples.
Speech consists of well-formed sentences
with the sixty-limbed voice of Brahma.
Mind is the two pristine consciousnesses of objects of knowledge
intended for the two benefits — one's own and others'.
Qualities are perfect omniscience.
Activities are outer, inner, and secret.

All deeds are perfected
and the perfections are present as five.

When those are summarized:

The three modes of existence of the kāyas
are not established in partial forms
as they are free from signifying phenomena;

they lack substantiality in appearances
due to the perfected nature of clarity;
and they enter the great unmoving equipoise
in order to purify the continuums of disciples. [106a]

Therefore these three kāyas of the result are neither different nor do they change. For example, it is like the power of the light rays manifesting from the sun; when the dharmakāya is actualized, one obtains the power of the two rūpakāyas. The *Inlaid Jewels Tantra* states: The appearances of the three kāyas are perfected instantaneously with the appearance of the dharmakāya.

The *Mañjusrī Nāmasaṃgīti* states: Countless tens of millions
of nirmāṇakāyas of all the buddhas emanate.³¹⁰

And:

Emanating various emanations in the ten directions,
accordingly benefitting migrating beings.

When the person who is the support of those [kāyas] attains buddhahood, his mind is liberated into the dharmakāya, his speech is liberated into the sambhogakāya, and his body is liberated into the nirmāṇakāya. The *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* states: Further, for the stages of the result, the dharmakāya is attained by the mind,

the sambhogakāya is attained by the voice,
and the nirmāṇakāya is attained by the body. [106b]

Since the svabhāvakāya is their homogeneity,
it is attained by combining the three kāyas into one.

The *Six Dimensions Tantra* states:

Whoever cultivates this result of the buddhas will become Śrī
Vajradhara.

This can also be applied to the final goal of general Secret Mantra. This is the result of the buddhas of the three times. “This is the essence of Samantabhadra” is applied to the ultimate goal of the Great Perfection. [The

Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra states]: Since one reaches the end of the exhaustion of phenomena,

the result is asserted to be dharmatā.

In particular, there is nothing higher than this final result.

As such, though it is given different names, in reality there is a single final goal. If it is asked why, it is because that final end also comes from the realization of reality. Even though it has many names, since in reality there is nothing other than a single reality, one should understand that there is nothing other than a single final end.

Now then, the example for the exhaustion of the phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa through the realization of reality [107a] is the simile of a lamp and darkness. The example for the realization of reality since phenomena are exhausted is the simile of clouds, stars, and planets.

Further, for the first example look into the mouth of a cave³¹¹ in a cliff. The mass of darkness is very thick. Even though it has been dark for many eons, as soon as a lamp is lit, the darkness is removed in an instant. Darkness cannot be removed by any other means than a lamp. In the same way, since all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are exhausted in a single moment of recognizing reality, buddhahood occurs. One cannot attain buddhahood by any other means than realizing reality. The *Unified Intent Sūtra* states: The darkness that persists for eons is dispelled

by the blessings of a lamp;

the traces of clinging from the past are dispelled

by an instant of knowing the essential meaning.

As for the second example, just as the planets and stars naturally manifest, since the sky is free from clouds, the omniscient pristine consciousness of the originally pure essence manifests to oneself because all phenomena are exhausted [107b] and compassion manifests to others.

As such, though the buddhas find it difficult to describe the transcendent state of the exhaustion of phenomena, it is taught in the tantras in order that the realization [of the exhaustion of phenomena] develops in people. The extensive explanation for this is also taught in other profound tantras. This demonstrates the great stage of liberation.

If a person who suffers from misconceptions claims, “Appearances are not

reasonable because phenomena have been exhausted,” then rebut with, “Why then are buddhas, bhagavans, awakening, clarity, emptiness, and so on reasonable?”

If someone claims, “Having exhausted [phenomena] nothing can appear at all,” [in reply,] should the emptiness that emerges from exhausting causes and exhausting conditions become nonexistent, that would be a non-Buddhist tīrthika perspective. Also, it would become inert emptiness.

Again, if someone asks, “Does the statement ‘the stage of liberation is first’ mean that liberation returns again, is reversed, or is in a state of dissolution?” it is none of those. This has been explained above in the realization of reality. [108a]

Furthermore, if someone claims, “Since the final goal is defined as Vajradhara, dharmatā will not be exhausted,” then in that case, it follows that buddhas would not be buddhas and the three kāyas would be positive, negative, or neutral. Furthermore, many faults would occur such as the fault of blank voidness and so on.

Also, if someone asserts four, five, or more kāyas, though the qualities of the dharmakāya are individually divided, there is no difference in the transcendent state of omniscience. As it is said: The nonconceptual essence

is the unchanging vajrakāya.³¹²

Moreover, if someone claims, “The three kāyas and the five pristine consciousnesses are the path but not the result,” the three kāyas and the five pristine consciousnesses as the path is an assertion of Secret Mantra which makes the result into the path.

If it is said, “There is no result,” this is intended to free one from grasping to the extreme of clinging to the resultant three kāyas.

Also, the assertion of the three sheaths³¹³ and the six limits³¹⁴ from the *Three Cycles*³¹⁵ [108b] is rejected.³¹⁶

Further, someone claims that buddhahood is not attained without progressing on the stages and paths. For example, the system of the pāramitās and some secret mantrins make such assertions. Since there is no conflict, this is how it is taught in chapter 77 of the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* in accordance with that assertion:³¹⁷

“Stage” means nonretrogression. The paths and stages are complete in

a person who has seen the truth.

Now then, the joy that arises when a person to whom the introduction was explained first sees the truth is the first stage, Very Joyful.

Next, the recognition of this as their own appearances is attaining the second stage, Stainless.

Next, cultivating that is mounting the third stage, the stage [called] Luminous.

Next, having cultivated that, seeing light is obtaining the fourth stage, the stage of Radiant Light.

Next, after cultivating that, the sight of the appearances of pristine consciousness that are seen after all the afflictions are naturally purified [09a] is mounting the fifth stage, Difficult to Purify.

After seeing a single kāya that arises out of the light, directly perceiving the kāya is mounting the sixth stage, Directly Facing.

Next, moving far away from the afflictions, having reached the conclusion of cultivation, one mounts the seventh stage, Moving Far Away.

Next, remaining without moving away from those qualities is mounting the eighth stage, Immovable.

Next, the perfection of the qualities in that state is mounting the ninth stage, Excellent Wisdom.

Next, having fixed one's awareness on the appearances of pristine consciousness, the natural arising of appearances, which are seen to be like a cloud of Dharma, is mounting the tenth stage, Cloud of Dharma.

Next, after deluded appearances cease, the arising of the vision of maṇḍalas is the eleventh stage, Universal Illumination.³¹⁸

Next, since there is no attachment to such an appearance, being uncovered by all outer and inner phenomena is the twelfth stage, Lotus Free from Attachment. [109b]

Next, after a light ray of pristine consciousness arises from one's heart, the five clusters of light in the vista of the sky present in the form of a wheel is mounting the thirteenth stage, Assembly of the Great Wheel.

Next, dwelling in the appearance of pristine consciousness is

dwelling on the fourteenth stage.³¹⁹

Next, the definitive attainment on the stage of natural perfection is the attainment of the fifteenth stage, Holder of the Vajra.

Next,³²⁰ the absence of anything higher than the pristine consciousness that naturally arises on the stage of original purity is the attainment of the sixteen stage, Highest Wisdom.

The intimate instruction explaining the great stage of liberation by applying those stages in a progressive manner to the ultimate stage is complete.

Spoken of with difficulty by the victors of the three kāyas,
spoiled with hope for expertise in commentary and writing,
this inscription of citations that does not contradict the scriptures
definitely issues from the tantras and the intimate instructions.
Just like a wish-fulfilling gem at the bottom of the ocean
is the source of all qualities nonconceptually bestowed³²¹ upon the three
realms, the object that these intimate instructions clarify is the
meaning of the direct perception of dharmatā.

Having relied upon an unmistaken and undeluded mind,
the speech of the victors, and the instructions of the vidyādhara,
the [shutters of] the lamp that clarifies the essence are opened.
May the fortunate who meet with this swiftly attain buddhahood.

Thus Mahāpaṇḍita Vimalamitra taught the aural lineage to the sovereign
Trisong Detsen at Chimphu Red Rock, the retreat place of Pel Samyé Lhundrup.

The intimate instruction of the pellucid transcendent state of Teacher
Samantabhadra for the direct perception of dharmatā, *The Great Commentary on
Attaining Buddhahood in This Life*, is complete.

Samaya. Sealed, sealed, sealed.

This *Great Aural Lineage of Vimalamitra* is a treasure removed from the central
chamber of a brown rhinoceros hide box on the slopes of Zangzang Lhadrak by
Rigzin Chenpo Gökyi Demtruchen during the fire-horse year (1366).

Sarvamaṅgalaṃ śubhaṃ

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292. Following ADZ.
293. This citation is not found in the extant editions of the *Realms and Transformations of Sound Tantra* and remains unidentified.
294. Reading *gnas lugs* as *gnas su* following ADZ.
295. In addition to the eleven stages described in Mahāyāna, the ten bodhisattva stages and the stage of buddhahood, Vajrayāna tantras divide the stage of buddhahood into three or six further stages. The first two stages of buddhahood, eleven and twelve, are characterized by a subtle dualism. Stages thirteen through sixteen are described as the stages of those buddhas who “dwell within pristine consciousness.” The characteristic of these last four stages is that buddhas recognize that all phenomena are displays of their own pristine consciousness.
296. Following ADZ.
297. Reading *bzhi* as *gsum* following NB and ADZ.
298. Following ADZ.
299. Reading *bdag* as *gdags* following ADZ.
300. Reading *rdza rnams* as *rdza ma* following NB.
301. Following ADZ, a line that was elided has been added.
302. Tib. *yang dag par grub*; Skt. *samudāgama*.
303. Tib. *nam pa thams cad mkhyen pa*; Skt. *sarvākārajñāna*.
304. Omniscience about all that there is and omniscience about reality.
305. These are the pristine consciousnesses of the basis referred to in the first topic.
306. These three compassions, explained in the following passage, are deeds of the three kāyas respectively.
307. This passage is incorrectly identified in the DD edition as being from the *Unwritten Tantra*. It is correctly identified in NB.
308. The commentary states, “The kāya manifests in color and hand implements.”
309. The commentary states, “. . . sees the three visions,” i.e., impure vision, experiential vision, and pure vision.
310. This citation is not found in the “canonical” version but is nonetheless found in numerous commentaries.
311. Reading *brag phug* instead of *zag phug* following N.
312. Source unidentified.
313. The sheaths of the naturally perfect basis, path, and result; see *Tshul khrims bzang po: lhun grub rin po che'i ssub gsum*/. In *Gsung 'bum tshul khrims bzang po* (TBRC W1PD26799.6: 449–63 [n.p.], [n.d.]).
314. The six limits are an interpretive scheme from the father tantra, *Vajrajñānasamuccayanāmatantra*: explanations are interpretive, noninterpretive, provisional, definitive, literal, or figurative.
315. Source unidentified.
316. NB reads *sku gsum las sbubs gsum mthar thug drug 'dod pa de 'gengs*.
317. Here, we are following the way this citation is presented in NB due to scribal errors in the DD edition. See the footnotes below for details.

318. NB and this text slightly paraphrase this line of the citation; the whole may be found in the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra*.
319. This stage is mislabeled *ye shes bla ma* in the text; it has no name in the *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra*. In addition, the DD edition badly garbles the lines of the last three stages. They are presented clearly in NB.
320. The name of the stage is missing in the DD edition. The *Self-Arisen Vidyā Tantra* identifies it correctly as *ye shes bla ma*.
321. Reading *gnad* as *gnang*.

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TABLE OF TIBETAN EQUIVALENTS

TERM OR PHRASE	TIBETAN TRANSLITERATION
accomplishment(s)	sgrub, bsgrubs, grub
activity(-ies)	phrin las
adibuddha	dang po sang rgyas
affliction	nyong mongs
aggregate	phung po
all-pervading	kun khyab
appearance	snang ba
aural lineage	nyan brgyud
authoritative signs	rtags tshad
awakening	byang chub
awareness	shes pa
bardo	bar do
basis	gzhi
behavior	spyod pa
bindu	thig le
body, speech, and mind (honorific)	sku gsum thugs
body, voice, and mind	lus ngag yid
body (physical)	lus

body of light	'od kyi lus
body of luminosity	'od gsal gyi sku
changelessness	gyur med, mi 'gyur
characteristic	mtshan nyid
clarity	gsal ba
clear	gsal, sa le
clinging	zhen pa
clusters	tshom bu
compassion	thugs rjes
completion stage	rdzogs rim
concept	rtog pa, rnam rtog
conceptuality	rnam tog
connate	spyod pa
consciousness	shes pa, rnam par shes pa
continuum	rgyud
creation stage	bskyed rim
cultivate	sgom, goms
defined	nges pa
delusion	khrul pa
deva	lha
devatā	yi dam
Dharma	chos
dharmadhātu	chos kyi dbyings, chos dbyings
dharmatā	chos nyid
dharmatā	chos nyid

unatu	uoy mgs
dimension	klong
direct perception	mngon gsum
display	rol pa
doorway	sgo
equipoise	mnyam bzhag (see also “unfettered equipoise”)
essence	ngo bo, snying po
field	yul, zhing
five afflictions	nyong mongs lnga
five aggregates	phung po lnga
five elements	khams lnga
five perfections	phun sum tshogs lnga
five pristine consciousnesses	ye shes lnga
five wisdoms	shes rab lnga
foundation	rtsa ba
gauge	tshad
great nature	bdag nyid chen po
insubstantiality	rang bzhin med
intellect, intelligence	blo
intimate instructions	man ngag
intrinsic clarity	rang gsal
intrinsic nature	bdag nyid
karmavāyu	las rlung
kāya	sku

knowing consciousness	shes rig
liberation	grol, thar pa
luminescence	gdangs
luminosity	'od gsal
māra	bdud
measure	tshad
meditation	sgom pa
mental focus	sems zin
mental formations	'du shes
mind	sems, blo, yid
nāḍī	rtsa
natural	rang bzhin
natural concentration	rang bzhin bsam gtan
natural location	rang gnas
naturally drop	rnal bab
naturally perfected	lhun grub
nature	rang bzhin
natureless	rang bzhin med
nidāna	gleng gzhi
nonconceptual (wisdom)	rtog med
nondual	gnyis med
nonreferential	dmigs med
omniscience	thams cad mkhyen pa
originally pure, original purity	ka dag, ka nas dag
pellucid	zang thal

penaḥci	zang uai
polychromatic	kha dog rna mtshogs
post-equipoise	rjes thob
postures	khrul 'khor
potentiality	rtsal
prana	srog 'dzin
preta	yi dwags
pristine consciousness	ye shes
pristine consciousness of vidyā	rig pa'i ye shes
proliferation	spros pa
quintessence	bcud bsdus
radiance	mdangs
radiant clarity	gsal mdangs
rasāyana	bcud len
reality	gnas lugs
realization	rtogs
recognition	ngo shes
recognize	shes
reification	sgro 'dogs
rest	bzhag
result	'bras bu
rishi	drang srong
samādhi	ting nge 'dzin, ting 'dzin
self	bdag, rang
self-appearance	rang snang

self-arisen	rang shar
self-liberated	rang grol
self-originated	rang byung
self-originated pristine consciousness	rang byung ye shes
self-purify	rang dag
separation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa	khor 'das ru shan
six higher perceptions	mngon shes
sky	nam mkha', bar snang
space	nam mkha'
stability	brtan
suchness	de bzhin nyid, de nyid
taint	dri ma
thögal	thod rgal
total perfection	yongs rdzogs
transcendent state	dgongs pa
trekchö	khregs chod
unceasing	gags med
unchanging	gyur med
undefined	ma nges pa
undeluded	ma 'khrul
undivided	mi 'byed
unfabricated	ma bcos pa
unfettered equipoise	cog bzhag
uniformity	mnyam nyid

unimpeded	thogs med, 'gag med
unobstructed	thogs med, 'gag med
vajra chain	rdo rje lu gu rgyud
Vajrāsana	rdo rje gdan
vāyu	rlung
vidyā	rig pa
vidyādhara	rig 'dzin
view	lta ba
vision of the direct perception of dharmatā	chos nyid mngon sum snang ba
vision of the exhaustion of dharmatā	chos nyid zad pa snang ba
vision of the full measure of vidyā	rig pa tshad phebs snang
vision of the increase of experience	gong phel ba'i nyams snang
wisdom	shes rab

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ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR



Born in 1962, Malcolm Smith was raised in Western Massachusetts. Captivated by the sound of Tibetan ritual music in 1984, he began his study of the Dharma. He met his first formal teacher, H. H. Sakya Trizin, in 1989. He studied Buddhist philosophy and Tibetan language under the guidance of Khenpo Migmar Tseten for the next five years at Sakya Institute for Buddhist Studies in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1990 Malcolm travelled to Nepal to receive lamdré from the late H. H. Sakya Dagchen.

He received his first Dzokchen teachings from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 1992, with whom he continues to study. In 1993 he met his second Dzokchen teacher, Khenpo Jigme Phunstok, receiving important transmissions. During this year he entered a three-year solitary retreat. In 1998 he met H. H. Penor Rinpoche and received the complete empowerments of the Mahāyoga section of the Nyingma Kama as well as teachings on the Namchö preliminary practices. In 2001, he met his third Dzokchen teacher, the late Kunzang Dechen Lingpa, from whom he received the Nyinthig Yazhi in its entirety, as well as the formal Ngakpa ordination in 2004. He met his fourth Dzokchen teacher, H. H. Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche, in 2001, from whom he received the entire transmission of the Gongpa Zangthal in 2010, as well other transmissions. He received the transmission of the Seventeen Tantras from Khenpo Tenzin Thinley in 2012. In addition, Malcolm has received Sakya, Kagyü, and Nyingma teaching cycles from many other lamas.

Malcolm Smith was awarded the title of ācārya by Khenpo Migmar Tseten

of Sakya Institute in 2004. In 2008 Malcolm was granted the title of lama by Lama Ngawang Tsultrim, abbot of Dhongag Tharling. In 2009 Malcolm graduated from Shang Shung Institute of America as a doctor of Tibetan medicine, completing an internship in Xining, in the Amdo province of Northeast Tibet.

Since 1992 Malcolm Smith as worked on a wide variety of texts for Sakya, Drikung Kagyü, and Nyingma groups, as well as medical and astrological texts.

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