

# Clear Light of Bliss

TANTRIC MEDITATION MANUAL

*Also by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso*

Meaningful to Behold  
Buddhism in the Tibetan Tradition  
Heart of Wisdom  
Universal Compassion  
The Meditation Handbook  
Joyful Path of Good Fortune  
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The Bodhisattva Vow  
Heart Jewel  
Great Treasury of Merit  
Introduction to Buddhism  
Understanding the Mind  
Tantric Grounds and Paths  
Ocean of Nectar

# CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

THE PRACTICE OF MAHAMUDRA  
IN VAJRAYANA BUDDHISM

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso



Tharpa Publications  
London

First published in 1982 by Wisdom Publications  
Second edition totally reset and revised 1992  
Second impression 1995

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Tharpa Publications  
15 Bendemeer Road  
London SW15 1JX

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Cover painting of Conqueror Vajradhara  
by the Tibetan artist Chating Jamyang Lama  
Cover design by Stefan Killen  
Cover photo of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso by Eric Martin  
Line illustrations by Ani Kelsang Wangchen

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is  
available from the British Library

ISBN 0 948006 13 7 - papercase  
ISBN 0 948006 21 8 - paperback

Set in Palatino by Tharpa Publications  
Printed on acid-free 250-year longlife paper and bound  
by Redwood Books, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, England

## Contents

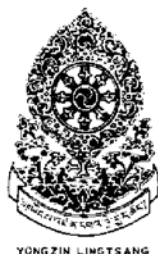
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|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Illustrations  | vi  |
| Foreword   | vii |
| Acknowledgements   | ix  |
| Preface  | x   |
| Introduction and Preliminaries   | 1   |
| Channels, Winds, and Drops   | 17  |
| Inner Fire   | 35  |
| Clear Light and the Four Joys  | 73  |
| The Nine Mixings and the Two Mudras                                      | 109 |
| Introduction to the Nature of the Mind                                   | 141 |
| Tranquil Abiding   | 157 |
| Meditation on Emptiness  | 177 |
| Illusory Body  | 195 |
| Clear Light and Union  | 217 |
| Resultant Mahamudra  | 229 |
| Dedication   | 242 |
| Appendix I – The Condensed Meaning of the Text                           | 243 |
| Appendix II – The Tibetan Script of the<br>Condensed Meaning of the Text | 253 |
| Appendix III – Sadhanas  | 259 |
| <i>Prayers of Request to the Mahamudra Lineage Gurus</i>                 | 261 |
| <i>The Quick Path</i>  | 271 |
| Appendix IV – The Visualized Letters                                     | 279 |
| Glossary   | 281 |
| Bibliography   | 293 |
| Study Programmes   | 296 |
| Index  | 297 |

## *Illustrations*

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|                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Vajradhara                           | xii |
| Manjushri                            | 10  |
| Je Tsongkhapa                        | 16  |
| Togdän Jampäl Gyatso                 | 24  |
| Baso Chökyi Gyaltsän                 | 34  |
| Drubchen Dharmavajra                 | 52  |
| Gyalwa Ensäpa                        | 56  |
| Khädrub Sangye Yeshe                 | 66  |
| Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltsän       | 72  |
| Drubchen Gendun Gyaltsän             | 82  |
| Drungpa Tsöndru Gyaltsän             | 96  |
| Könchog Gyaltsän                     | 108 |
| Panchen Losang Yeshe                 | 120 |
| Losang Trinlay                       | 130 |
| Drubwang Losang Namgyal              | 140 |
| Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsän                | 156 |
| Phurchog Ngawang Jampa               | 168 |
| Panchen Palden Yeshe                 | 176 |
| Khädrub Ngawang Dorje                | 186 |
| Ngulchu Dharmabhadra                 | 194 |
| Yangchän Drubpay Dorje               | 200 |
| Khädrub Tendzin Tsöndru              | 208 |
| Dorjechang Phabongkha Trinlay Gyatso | 216 |
| Yongdzin Dorjechang Losang Yeshe     | 222 |
| Dorjechang Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche   | 228 |



## *Foreword*

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OM Bliss and Excellence

With great respect and devotion I rely upon Losang  
Dragpa,  
Who alone is the precious eyes for countless migrators,  
A manifestation of the wisdom of countless omniscient  
Buddhas,  
And holder of three immaculate sets of vows.

This excellent commentary on the joyous Mahamudra  
Derived from churning the essence of the ocean of  
Tantric scriptures  
That arose from the heart of this most precious Spiritual  
Guide  
Is published with a pure wish to benefit migrators.

Through its publication may all three worlds be beautified  
By the infinite benefits of happiness that arise  
From the excellent, impeccable teachings and practices  
of Losang Dragpa  
Whose treasure-like tradition of the Conqueror  
resembles a wish-granting jewel.

May all the beings and communities following  
Buddhadharma remain for a long time, and increase in  
their activities;  
May all Sangha members maintain pure discipline and  
increase their beneficial actions,  
May all sickness, war, famine, and afflictions be pacified;  
And may everyone in this world enjoy happiness, joy,  
and good fortune.

Throughout all their lives may all beings throughout  
space  
Never be separated from precious Spiritual Guides.  
Like a waxing moon, may everything excellent increase  
in accordance with Dharma,  
And may everyone swiftly attain the ultimate  
enlightenment of Vajradhara.

I am very happy to learn that Venerable Geshe Kelsang  
Gyatso has given extensive teachings on Secret Mantra  
based on Protector Manjushri Je Tsongkhapa's great  
treatises and on other authentic commentaries on Maha-  
mudra, including the first Panchen Lama's root text.

May these teachings, originally given at Manjushri  
Institute in England and now made available in this book,  
*Clear Light of Bliss*, be a source of great happiness and  
immeasurable benefit to all human beings of this world.

May virtue and excellence increase.

Yongdzin Ling Rinpoche



## Acknowledgements


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In 1980, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche gave an extensive commentary to Vajrayana Mahamudra to the fortunate students of Manjushri Centre in Ulverston, England. We pray that through studying these nectar-like instructions and attempting to put them into practice sincerely we can in some small way begin to repay the immeasurable kindness of our most precious Spiritual Guide and Vajra Master.

Not satisfied merely with giving the teaching, out of his immeasurable kindness Geshe Kelsang then worked closely with his translator and a team of editors to prepare the transcript for publication under the title, *Clear Light of Bliss*. For this incomparable book, the like of which has never before been seen in this world, we offer heartfelt thanks to the author.

Our thanks also go to Tenzin Norbu, the translator, and to Chris Kolb, Jonathan Landaw, and all the other students of Manjushri Centre who helped with the original editing. Now, with the publication of the second edition, we also extend our thanks to Gen Thubten Gyatso who has worked closely with Geshe Kelsang in bringing the terminology up to date and into line with more recent publications, and in preparing new endmatter including a translation of the root text composed by the author. Finally, our thanks also go to Lucy James, Tsultrim Kelsang, Ingrid Barton, Kelsang Chökyi, Kelsang Wangmo, and all the other members of Tharpa Publications Editorial Office who helped to prepare the final draft for publication.

*Roy Tyson, Director,  
Manjushri Centre,  
May 1992*



## *Preface*

---

I have written this book primarily for the benefit of western Dharma practitioners with the hope that indirectly it will prove beneficial for all living beings.

As for how it was composed, I have based it on the slight experience I have gained through the kindness of my holy Spiritual Guide from whom I received instructions on the generation stage and completion stage of Secret Mantra. In addition, I have drawn material from Je Tsongkhapa's *Lamp Thoroughly Illuminating the Five Stages*, which contains the quintessence of Je Tsongkhapa's Tantric teachings, and also from Je Tsongkhapa's commentary to the Six Yogas of Naropa. I have also consulted the first Panchen Lama's root text on the Mahamudra, *The Main Path of the Conquerors*, and his autocommentary, *Lamp of Re-illumination*, as well as the Mahamudra texts of Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsän and Keutsang, and many other authentic works on Secret Mantra. Because I have incorporated the teachings of such great Masters there is some reason to hope that this present book will be of considerable benefit.

To attain pure realizations of Mahamudra it is not sufficient merely to read these instructions. First we must train in the stages of the path common to both Sutra and Tantra by relying upon texts such as *Joyful Path of Good Fortune*, and practise the various preliminaries so as to remove obstacles and accumulate merit. When we have some experience of renunciation, bodhichitta, and wisdom realizing emptiness we should receive a Highest Yoga Tantra empowerment from a qualified Vajra Master and then strive to keep our vows and commitments purely. We should then train in generation stage practices and, once

we have some experience of these, we should request a qualified Vajra Master to give us instructions on Vajrayana Mahamudra. If we then put these instructions into practice with faith and wisdom we will definitely attain the realization of the Union of Mahamudra.

The importance of engaging in these preparatory practices and of cultivating an impeccable motivation before attempting to practise Vajrayana Mahamudra has been stressed by the great Masters of all traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. It is most important that we do not engage in these practices with an impure motivation, wishing for personal gain, a good reputation, or the like, because, as Conqueror Vajradhara warned in the Tantras, the consequences of such actions will only be suffering, such as illness, a short life, mental obscurations, and rebirth in the lower realms. Therefore, from the outset we should cultivate a pure motivation of bodhichitta and engage in the practices of Vajrayana Mahamudra with the intention to become a Buddha for the benefit of all living beings.

*Geshe Kelsang Gyatso,  
Manjushri Centre,  
1982*



*Vajradhara*

## *Introduction and Preliminaries*

---

It is very pleasing to have this opportunity to explain the method for practising Vajrayana Mahamudra according to the Mahayana tradition. This explanation will be given under three main headings:

- 1 An introduction to the general paths
- 2 The source of the lineage from which these instructions are derived
- 3 The actual explanation of the instructions possessing this lineage

### AN INTRODUCTION TO THE GENERAL PATHS

In *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, Shantideva says:

By depending upon this boat-like human form  
We can cross the great ocean of suffering.  
Since such a vessel will be hard to find again,  
This is no time to sleep, you fool!

Samsara is like a vast ocean, for just as an ocean gives rise to waves, so rebirth in samsara gives rise to suffering. At the moment we have a precious human body, which is the best vessel for crossing this perilous ocean of samsara. If we were to waste this precious life without taking full advantage of it we would be extremely foolish. We would be like the adventurer who had to wait a long time to find a boat that would take him to a treasure island but who, having finally found one, fell asleep instead of taking immediate advantage of it. How foolish he felt when he awoke to discover that the long-awaited vessel had been washed

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

away and that he was still without a means of travelling to the island! Similarly, at this time we have found a boat-like human body that can transport us to the island of full enlightenment, or Buddhahood. If instead of taking advantage of this body we were to waste it on the meaningless activities of this life, that would be most tragic. It will not be easy to find another opportunity like this in the future.

The highest of all possible human goals is the attainment of complete enlightenment, an ultimate state of peace in which all obstacles obscuring the mind have been removed and all good qualities such as wisdom, compassion, and skilful means have been fully developed. However, we cannot reach this ultimate goal merely by waiting for it; we need to use the appropriate methods to take us there.

What are the methods for attaining the peace of full enlightenment? They are the paths of Sutra and Secret Mantra; there is no third method. Of these two, the techniques revealed in Secret Mantra are superior to those revealed in the Sutras. Not only is Secret Mantra the supreme path to full enlightenment, it is also extremely rare. As Je Tsongkhapa said, the teachings of Secret Mantra are even rarer than the Buddhas because, although a thousand founding Buddhas will appear during this Fortunate Aeon, only the fourth (Buddha Shakyamuni), the eleventh, and the last will teach the paths of Secret Mantra.

At the moment we have a great opportunity to practise these rare and beneficial teachings, so it is important that we develop a strong intention to practise them purely. If the Mahayana teachings were to vanish from this world we would have no opportunity to become a Buddha. Therefore, while we still have access to these precious teachings we should apply ourselves to them assiduously and try to gain some experience of them.

The etymology of Secret Mantra is as follows. 'Secret' indicates that these methods should be practised discreetly. If we make a display of our practices we will attract many hindrances and negative forces. This would be like someone talking openly and carelessly about a precious jewel

## INTRODUCTION AND PRELIMINARIES

they possessed and, as a result, attracting the attention of thieves. 'Mantra' means 'protection for the mind'. The function of Secret Mantra is to enable us to progress swiftly through the stages of the spiritual path by protecting our mind against ordinary appearances and ordinary conceptions.

The Secret Mantra practices and scriptures are also called the 'Vajrayana', in which 'vajra' means 'indestructible' and 'yana' means 'vehicle'. In this context, 'vajra' refers to the indivisibility of method and wisdom, where method is spontaneous great bliss and wisdom is the unmistakable understanding of emptiness. Method is the cause of the Form Body of a Buddha and wisdom is the cause of the Truth Body. The union of method and wisdom that is the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness is unique to Secret Mantra, and is the quickest way to attain the two bodies of a Buddha.

Je Tsongkhapa explained that an authentic Secret Mantra practice must possess four attributes, known as the 'four complete purities'. These are: complete purity of place, complete purity of body, complete purity of enjoyments, and complete purity of deeds. The practice of these four complete purities was not revealed in the Sutra teachings, but is to be found only in Secret Mantra. Secret Mantra is distinguished from Sutra by the practice of bringing the future result into the present path. For example, even though we have not yet attained enlightenment, when we practise Secret Mantra we try to prevent ordinary appearances and ordinary conceptions of our environment and instead visualize our surroundings as the mandala of a Deity. In the same way we prevent ordinary appearance of our body, our enjoyments, and our deeds and, in their place, generate ourself as a Deity, visualize our enjoyments as those of a Buddha, and practise performing enlightened deeds. By doing such practices we can attain the resultant state of Buddhahood very rapidly. These four practices are essential for both the generation stage and completion stage of Secret Mantra and thus they form the foundation

for the teachings presented in this book, such as the instructions on inner fire (Tib. tummo).

Secret Mantra has four levels: Action Tantra, Performance Tantra, Yoga Tantra, and Highest Yoga Tantra. Action Tantra principally emphasizes external actions, Performance Tantra places equal emphasis on both external and internal actions, Yoga Tantra principally emphasizes internal actions, and Highest Yoga Tantra is the supreme class of Tantra.

All four levels of Secret Mantra transform great bliss into the spiritual path, but the methods of transformation differ according to the level being practised. In Action Tantra the meditator generates bliss by looking at a visualized goddess, and then transforms that bliss into the path. In Performance Tantra the meditator generates bliss by exchanging smiles with the goddess, and in Yoga Tantra by holding hands with her and so forth. In Highest Yoga Tantra the meditator generates bliss by imagining sexual embrace with a consort and, at advanced stages, by engaging in actual embrace; and then transforms that bliss into the spiritual path. It should be noted, however, that it is very difficult to use great bliss as a method for attaining enlightenment, and if we are able to do so we have indeed attained a formidable accomplishment. As the great Mahasiddha Saraha said, 'Everyone is excited by copulation but very few can transform that bliss into the spiritual path.'

Generally, Buddhism teaches that attachment is a delusion that is to be avoided, and eventually abandoned, but in Secret Mantra there is a method for transforming attachment into the path. However, to practise this method we must be very skilful. In this practice we use attachment to generate great bliss and then use that mind of great bliss to meditate on emptiness. Only if we can do this is it a transformation of attachment. Attachment itself cannot be used directly as a path because it is a delusion, and even in Secret Mantra it is finally to be abandoned. In authentic Secret Mantra practice, the bliss generated from attachment meditates on emptiness and thereby overcomes all the delusions, including attachment itself. This is similar to the



## INTRODUCTION AND PRELIMINARIES

way in which the fire produced from rubbing two pieces of wood together eventually consumes the wood from which it arose.

For those who are unskilful, or whose minds are untrained, such practices of transformation are impossible. For this reason, the Yogis and great meditators of the past have said that to attain the realizations of Secret Mantra one's mind should first be controlled by training in the Sutra stages of the path. Without building this firm foundation there is absolutely no way to attain a pure experience of Secret Mantra.

Revealing these instructions of Secret Mantra can be dangerous for both the Spiritual Guide and the disciple, if either is not properly qualified. At the very least, they should both have an appropriate motivation. A Teacher should reveal these methods only out of the great compassionate intention to spread the holy Dharma for the benefit of others. To reveal these methods out of attachment to the happiness of this life – wishing to achieve fame, gifts, and so forth – would be a cause for taking rebirth in the deepest hell.

It would also be dangerous for the disciple to receive the empowerments and instructions of Secret Mantra if he or she did not strive to keep the vows and commitments; wished only an increase in reputation, possessions, and so forth; or merely desired to collect information for academic purposes. Any of these, or similar worldly motivations, would result in nothing but future suffering.

It is very important, therefore, that both the Spiritual Guide and the disciple have controlled minds and an impeccable motivation. Even though we may call ourself a Buddhist and take refuge in the Three Jewels every day, these alone are insufficient qualifications for the practice of Secret Mantra. We also need to generate the highest of all motivations – the precious mind of bodhichitta – and dedicate ourself solely to benefiting others. Therefore, whenever we meditate on Secret Mantra we should begin by generating bodhichitta while reciting the following prayer:

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

*For the sake of all sentient beings  
I shall drink the nectar of this instruction  
So that I may attain Buddhahood within this life  
Through the profound path of Secret Mantra.*

There now follows an introduction to Mahamudra in general and to this text in particular. Mahamudra is a Sanskrit term composed of two parts: 'maha' meaning 'great' and 'mudra' meaning 'seal'. In the Sutra Mahamudra system, great seal refers to emptiness. In *King of Concentration Sutra* Buddha says:

The nature of all phenomena is the great seal.

Here, 'nature' refers to the ultimate nature of all phenomena, which is their emptiness, or lack of inherent existence. This emptiness is called the 'great seal' because phenomena never move from the state of lacking inherent existence. In general, all Buddhists assert four views:

- 1 All products are impermanent
- 2 All contaminated things are the nature of suffering
- 3 All phenomena are selfless
- 4 Only nirvana is peace

Because these views are irrefutable, they are called the 'four seals'. Of these, the third is known as the 'great seal'. Since emptiness is the nature of all phenomena it is called a 'seal', and since a direct realization of emptiness enables us to accomplish the great purpose – complete liberation from the sufferings of samsara – it is also called 'great'.

In the present text, Mahamudra meditation is explained not according to the Sutra system but according to the completion stage of Highest Yoga Tantra. In this system 'great' refers to spontaneous great bliss and 'seal' refers to emptiness. Therefore, in Secret Mantra, Mahamudra is the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness.

According to Secret Mantra, Mahamudra is divided into two stages: causal-time Mahamudra and resultant-time Mahamudra. Causal-time is the time spent on the path

## INTRODUCTION AND PRELIMINARIES

leading to full enlightenment, and so causal-time Mahamudra is the Mahamudra practised prior to the attainment of Buddhahood. Resultant-time Mahamudra is the Union of No More Learning, which is the actual state of Buddhahood.

Causal-time Mahamudra is divided into two successive stages: the Mahamudra that is the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness, and the Mahamudra that is the union of the two truths. The first union occurs when the subjective mind of spontaneous great bliss realizes emptiness as its object. The object, emptiness, is the same in both Sutra and Secret Mantra; what differs is the mind realizing this emptiness. It is the subjective mind of spontaneous great bliss that makes Secret Mantra meditation superior to Sutra meditation. Realizing emptiness with the mind of spontaneous great bliss is the quickest method for attaining full enlightenment.

It should be noted that the spontaneous great bliss of the completion stage of Secret Mantra is not the same as ordinary pleasure experienced at the height of sexual embrace. Spontaneous great bliss is experienced only when, through the force of meditation, we cause the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel and, as a result, the white drop melts and flows through the central channel. Using spontaneous great bliss to realize emptiness was the essential heart practice of the great Secret Mantra Masters of ancient India such as Saraha, Nagarjuna, Tilopa, Naropa, and Maitripa; and of the great Tibetan Masters such as Marpa, Milarepa, Gampopa, and Je Tsongkhapa. As in the past, so today – the Secret Mantra meditator's supreme path to perfect enlightenment is the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness.

The second stage of causal-time Mahamudra is the Mahamudra that is the union of the two truths: the conventional and the ultimate. In this context, the pure illusory body is known as conventional truth and meaning clear light as ultimate truth. Assembling these two truths simultaneously within one person's continuum is known

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

as the Mahamudra that is the union of the two truths. This Mahamudra is the ripened fruit of the Mahamudra that is the union of bliss and emptiness. Causal-time Mahamudra therefore contains both a cause and a result. Through the force of accomplishing this two-stage causal-time Mahamudra we will attain the resultant-time Mahamudra, or actual Buddhahood possessing the seven pre-eminent qualities of embrace. This concludes the explanation of the general paths of Secret Mantra.

THE SOURCE OF THE LINEAGE FROM WHICH THESE  
INSTRUCTIONS ARE DERIVED

All the meditations included within this present text come from Conqueror Vajradhara and the great Secret Mantra Masters of ancient India. These techniques were passed from the Indian Masters to the Tibetan Masters, and have been handed down to the present day Teachers in an unbroken lineage from spiritual Father to spiritual Son.

Although Mahamudra meditations were practised by the ancient Indian Masters, the particular system of Mahamudra presented here is a 'close' lineage transmitted by Conqueror Vajradhara to the Wisdom Buddha Manjushri, who in turn transmitted it directly to Je Tsongkhapa. Thus Je Tsongkhapa was the first human Master in this particular lineage.

The Gurus of the close lineage of Vajrayana Mahamudra are as follows:

Vajradhara  
Manjushri  
Je Tsongkhapa  
Togdän Jampäl Gyatso  
Baso Chökyi Gyaltsän  
Drubchen Dharmavajra  
Gyalwa Ensäpa  
Khädrub Sangye Yeshe  
Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltsän

INTRODUCTION AND PRELIMINARIES

Drubchen Gendun Gyaltsän  
Drungpa Tsöndru Gyaltsän  
Könchog Gyaltsän  
Panchen Losang Yeshe  
Losang Trinlay  
Drubwang Losang Namgyal  
Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsän  
Phurchog Ngawang Jampa  
Panchen Palden Yeshe  
Khädrub Ngawang Dorje  
Ngulchu Dharmabhadra  
Yangchän Drubpay Dorje  
Khädrub Tendzin Tsöndru  
Dorjechang Phabongkha Trinlay Gyatso  
Yongdzin Dorjechang Losang Yeshe  
Dorjechang Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche

In recent times this lineage was held by Trinlay Gyatso, more widely known as Phabongkha Rinpoche, who was an emanation of the Tantric Deity Heruka. This great Lama was like the sun of Dharma, illuminating the hidden meaning of both Sutra and Secret Mantra. He passed the Mahamudra lineage to his heart Son, Yongdzin Trijang Dorjechang, and it is through the kindness and authority of this holy Spiritual Guide that this present text appears.

*Prayers of Request to the Mahamudra Lineage Gurus* can be found in Appendix III. If we are sincerely interested in studying and practising the meditations explained in this book, we should receive the blessings of the Mahamudra lineage Gurus by offering a mandala and reciting this prayer. Because successful practice depends to a large extent upon the blessings and inspiration of the Spiritual Guides, the wise student will not neglect this advice.



*Manjushri*

## INTRODUCTION AND PRELIMINARIES

### THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION OF THE INSTRUCTIONS POSSESSING THIS LINEAGE

These instructions are given under three headings:

- 1 The preliminary practices
- 2 The actual practice
- 3 The concluding stages

#### THE PRELIMINARY PRACTICES

To perform the practices of Mahamudra successfully we must accomplish two sets of preliminaries:

- 1 The common preliminary practices
- 2 The uncommon preliminary practices

#### THE COMMON PRELIMINARY PRACTICES

These practices prepare us for the more advanced techniques of Secret Mantra. They purify the various obstacles and defilements of body, speech, and mind and thereby eliminate hindrances that would interfere with successful practice. They also serve to generate a store of positive energy, or merit, that will enable realizations of the more advanced practices to ripen in our mind.

This process of purifying and accumulating merit can be compared to the way in which a farmer prepares a field for cultivation, first removing the rocks and weeds that would obstruct growth and then nurturing the soil with water, fertilizer, and the like. Just as such preparations ensure a successful crop, so the proper practice of the preliminaries ensures successful Secret Mantra meditation.

There are four common preliminaries:

- 1 The guide of going for refuge and generating bodhichitta, the gateway to the Buddhadharma and the Mahayana

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

- 2 The guide of mandala offerings, the gateway to accumulating a collection of merit
- 3 The guide of meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva, the gateway to purifying negativities and downfalls
- 4 The guide of Guru yoga, the gateway to receiving blessings

If an explanation of these four were given here this text would become too long. Those who are seriously interested in practising Mahamudra should consult authentic explanations of these practices, such as the one given in *Guide to Dakini Land*, and apply these instructions conscientiously.

#### THE UNCOMMON PRELIMINARY PRACTICES

As was mentioned earlier, there are two parts to Highest Yoga Tantra meditation: generation stage and completion stage. The techniques of Secret Mantra Mahamudra belong to the completion stage. This is preceded by the various yogas of the generation stage, which are the uncommon preliminaries. There is a generation stage practice associated with each Highest Yoga Tantra Deity. These are explained in detail in Je Tsongkhapa's *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path of Secret Mantra* and in Khädrubje's *Ocean of Attainments*.

There is more to the generation stage of Secret Mantra than merely generating oneself as a particular Deity. For a practice to be an actual generation stage practice we must generate oneself as a Deity in conjunction with the yoga of bringing the three bodies into the path. If we wish to practise Secret Mantra Mahamudra but cannot study the above-mentioned texts in which these yogas are extensively explained, we should at least receive brief instructions on generation stage from a qualified Tantric Master. To receive such instructions and put them into practice, we must first receive an appropriate Highest Yoga Tantra empowerment.

If, for example, we have received the empowerment of Heruka, we should practise the generation stage of the



## INTRODUCTION AND PRELIMINARIES

*Heruka Tantra* before engaging in Mahamudra. If possible, we should try to practise the generation stage of Heruka according to the commentary, following a sadhana such as *The Quick Path*, which can be found in Appendix III. If this is not possible, we should at least try to practise according to the following extremely condensed method.

We begin by sitting on our meditation cushion and reciting three times:

*Eternally I shall go for refuge  
To Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.  
For the sake of all living beings  
I shall become Heruka.*

Then we visualize:

*All worlds and their inhabitants melt into blue light, which then dissolves into me. My body gradually melts into light simultaneously from below and above, gradually becoming smaller and smaller until it dissolves into the blue letter HUM at my heart. The letter HUM then gradually dissolves from the bottom up into the nada. Finally, even the nada disappears, dissolving into clear light emptiness.*

At this point we think strongly that our mind and Heruka's mind are indistinguishably mixed, like water mixed with water. We focus on this clear light Truth Body and generate divine pride by thinking:

*This is me; I am the Truth Body.*

This is the brief meditation on bringing death into the path of the Truth Body. It functions principally to prevent ordinary appearances, to purify ordinary death, to cause the ripening of the clear light of completion stage, and to sow the seed to accomplish the actual Truth Body of a Buddha.

Now we visualize:

*From the state of emptiness of the Truth Body, my mind instantly transforms into a small beam of blue light, the*

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

*height of a forearm, standing on a sun cushion in the centre of an eight-petalled lotus of various colours.*

We think:

*Now I have become the Enjoyment Body*

and we develop the divine pride of being the Enjoyment Body. This is the brief meditation on bringing the intermediate state into the path of the Enjoyment Body. It functions principally to purify ordinary intermediate state, to cause the ripening of the illusory body of the completion stage, and to sow the seed to accomplish the actual Enjoyment Body of a Buddha.

We continue:

*Instantly my mind, in the form of a beam of blue light, transforms into Heruka, blue in colour with one face and two arms, holding a vajra and bell, and embracing Vajravaraḥi.*

We think:

*Now I have become the Emanation Body*

and we develop the divine pride of being the Emanation Body. This is the brief meditation on bringing rebirth into the path of the Emanation Body. It functions principally to purify ordinary rebirth, to cause the ripening of the completion stage practices of the mixings of the Emanation Body, and to sow the seed to accomplish a Buddha's actual Emanation Body. At this point we can meditate on Heruka's body or we can recite his mantra. If we choose the latter, we focus on the letter HUM at our heart and visualize the mantra around it as we recite.

There is no shorter generation stage practice than this. We should attempt the following Mahamudra meditations only if we have, at the very least, previously performed this practice. If we have a different personal Deity, such as Vajrayogini or Yamantaka, we can still

INTRODUCTION AND PRELIMINARIES

practise this condensed generation stage practice by making the appropriate changes with respect to the Deity, colours, implements, and so forth.



*Je Tsongkhapa*



## *Channels, Winds, and Drops*

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### THE ACTUAL PRACTICE

As explained in the introduction to the general paths of Secret Mantra, there are three parts to the practice of Mahamudra:

- 1 How to practise the Mahamudra that is the union of bliss and emptiness
- 2 How to practise the Mahamudra that is the union of the two truths
- 3 How to accomplish the Mahamudra that is the resultant Union of No More Learning, the state possessing the seven pre-eminent qualities of embrace

### HOW TO PRACTISE THE MAHAMUDRA THAT IS THE UNION OF BLISS AND EMPTINESS

This, the first of the causal-time Mahamudra practices, is presented in two parts:

- 1 An explanation of the method for generating the object-possessor, spontaneous great bliss
- 2 An explanation of the method for correctly realizing the object, emptiness

### AN EXPLANATION OF THE METHOD FOR GENERATING THE OBJECT-POSSESSOR, SPONTANEOUS GREAT BLISS

There are two methods involved in generating spontaneous great bliss:

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

- 1 Penetrating the precise points of one's own body
- 2 Penetrating the precise points of another's body

**PENETRATING THE PRECISE POINTS OF ONE'S  
OWN BODY**

This has four parts:

- 1 Identifying the ten doors through which the winds can enter the central channel
- 2 The reason why the winds can enter the central channel by penetrating the precise points through these doors
- 3 An explanation of their different functions
- 4 An explanation of the stages of meditation on inner fire (tummo) in particular

**IDENTIFYING THE TEN DOORS THROUGH WHICH THE WINDS  
CAN ENTER THE CENTRAL CHANNEL**

We must know the ten doors through which the winds can enter the central channel because it is impossible to generate spontaneous great bliss without bringing the winds into the central channel, and these ten doors are the only doors through which the winds can enter the central channel.

Except at the time of death and during sleep, the winds will not normally enter the central channel unless we engage in appropriate meditative practices. Therefore, to be able to meditate on emptiness with a mind of great bliss, the Secret Mantra practitioner must generate spontaneous great bliss by intentionally bringing the winds into the central channel through any of the ten doors through the force of single-pointed concentration.

The central channel begins at the point between the eyebrows and ascends in an arch to the crown of the head. From there it descends in a straight line to the tip of the sex organ. The ten doors are located along the central channel as follows:

#### CHANNELS, WINDS, AND DROPS

- 1 The upper tip of the central channel: the point between the eyebrows
- 2 The lower tip: the tip of the sex organ
- 3 The centre of the crown channel wheel: located in the apex of the cranium
- 4 The centre of the throat channel wheel: located near the back of the throat
- 5 The centre of the heart channel wheel: located between the two breasts
- 6 The centre of the navel channel wheel
- 7 The centre of the secret place channel wheel, four finger-widths below the navel
- 8 The centre of the jewel channel wheel, located in the centre of the sex organ, near its tip
- 9 The wheel of wind: the centre of the forehead channel wheel, having six spokes
- 10 The wheel of fire: the centre of the channel wheel located midway between the throat and the heart channel wheels, having three spokes

Just as we can enter a house through any of the doors leading in from the outside, so the winds can enter the central channel through any of these ten doors.

To penetrate the precise points of our own body we must concentrate on the channels, the winds, and the white and red drops. In the Tantric scriptures these three are often referred to as the 'vajra body'. The actual vajra is spontaneous great bliss, which arises in dependence upon the channels, winds, and drops. Here, the future result is brought into the present by imputing the name of the result upon its cause; hence the name 'vajra body'. If we wish to meditate on the vajra body, we need a clear understanding of the stationary channels, the moving winds, and the contained drops. These will now be explained in detail.

THE STATIONARY CHANNELS

There are three main channels: the central channel, the right channel, and the left channel. The central channel is like the pole of an umbrella, running through the centre of each of the channel wheels, and the other two run either side of it. The central channel is pale blue on the outside and has four attributes: (1) it is very straight, like the trunk of a plantain tree, (2) inside it is an oily red colour, like pure blood, (3) it is very clear and transparent, like a candle flame, and (4) it is very soft and flexible, like a lotus petal.

The central channel is located exactly midway between the left and right halves of the body, but is closer to the back than the front. Immediately in front of the spine there is the life channel, which is quite thick; and in front of this is the central channel. As mentioned before, it begins at the point between the eyebrows, from where it ascends in an arch to the crown of the head, and then descends in a straight line to the tip of the sex organ. Although its most common name is the central channel, it is also known as the 'two abandonments' because gathering the winds into this channel causes the negative activity associated with the winds of the right and left channels to be abandoned. It is also known as the 'mind channel' and as 'Rahu'.

Either side of the central channel, with no intervening space, are the right and left channels. The right channel is red in colour and the left is white. The right channel begins at the tip of the right nostril and the left channel at the tip of the left nostril. From there they both ascend in an arch to the crown of the head, either side of the central channel. From the crown of the head down to the navel these three major channels are straight and adjacent to one another. As the left channel continues down below the level of the navel it curves a little to the right, separating slightly from the central channel and rejoining it at the tip of the sex organ. There it functions to hold and release sperm, blood, and urine. As the right channel continues down below the level of the navel it curves a little to the left and terminates



#### CHANNELS, WINDS, AND DROPS

at the tip of the anus, where it functions to hold and release faeces and so forth.

Other names for the right channel are the 'sun channel', the 'speech channel', and the 'channel of the subjective holder'. This last title indicates that the winds flowing through this channel cause the generation of conceptions developed in terms of the subjective mind. Other names for the left channel are the 'moon channel', the 'body channel', and the 'channel of the held object', with the last title indicating that the winds flowing through this channel cause the generation of conceptions developed in terms of the object.

The right and left channels coil around the central channel at various places, thereby forming the so-called channel knots. The four places at which these knots occur are, in ascending order, the navel channel wheel, the heart channel wheel, the throat channel wheel, and the crown channel wheel. At each of these places, except at the heart level, there is one twofold knot formed by a single coil of the right channel and a single coil of the left. As the right and left channels ascend to these places they coil around the central channel by crossing in front and then looping around it. They then continue upward to the level of the next knot. At the heart level the same thing happens, except that here there is a sixfold knot formed by three overlapping loops of each of the flanking channels.

The four places where these knots occur are four of the six major channel wheels. As it will be important later on to visualize these channel wheels clearly, they will be explained briefly here. At each of the six major channel wheels a different number of spokes, or petals, branch off from the central channel in the same way that the ribs of an umbrella appear to branch off from the central pole. Thus, at the crown channel wheel – known as the 'great bliss wheel' – there are thirty-two such petals or channel spokes, all of them white in colour. The centre is triangular with the apex facing forwards. (This refers to the shape of the coiled knot through which the spokes emanate as seen

from the top.) These thirty-two spokes arch downwards, like the ribs of an upright umbrella. A description of this and the three other major channel wheels where knots occur is given in Chart 1.

**Chart 1 The Four Major Channel Wheels**

| <i>location</i> | <i>name</i>       | <i>shape of centre</i> | <i>number of spokes</i> | <i>colour</i> | <i>direction of arching</i> |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| crown           | great bliss wheel | triangular             | thirty-two              | white         | downwards                   |
| throat          | enjoyment wheel   | circular               | sixteen                 | red           | upwards                     |
| heart           | Dharma wheel      | circular               | eight                   | white         | downwards                   |
| navel           | emanation wheel   | triangular             | sixty-four              | red           | upwards                     |

These four channel wheels contain a total of 120 spokes. As for the remaining two major channel wheels, the channel wheel at the secret place has thirty-two red-coloured spokes arching downwards and the jewel channel wheel has eight white spokes arching upwards. It should also be noted that according to some texts the spokes at the crown, navel, and secret place can be visualized as having various colours.

Since the heart channel wheel is of particular importance, it will now be described in more detail. Its eight spokes, or petals, are arranged in the cardinal and intermediate directions with the front being the east. In each spoke there flows mainly the supporting wind of a particular element as indicated in Chart 2 (see page 25).

From each of these eight petals or channel spokes of the heart, three channels split off, making twenty-four channels in all. These are the channels of the Twenty-four Places. They are all included in three groups of eight: the channels of the mind wheel, which are blue and contain mainly winds; the channels of the speech wheel, which are

#### CHANNELS, WINDS, AND DROPS

red and contain mostly red drops; and the channels of the body wheel, which are white and contain mostly white drops. Each channel goes to a different place in the body. These places are the Twenty-four Inner Places. When we practise the extensive Heruka sadhana we visualize the Deities of the body mandala at these places.

The outer tips of the eight channels of the mind wheel terminate at: (1) the hairline, (2) the crown, (3) the right ear, (4) the back of the neck, (5) the left ear, (6) the brow (the place between the eyebrows), (7) the two eyes, and (8) the two shoulders. Those of the speech wheel terminate at: (9) the two armpits, (10) the two breasts, (11) the navel, (12) the tip of the nose, (13) the mouth, (14) the throat, (15) the heart (the area midway between the two breasts), and (16) the two testicles or the two sides of the vagina. Finally, those of the body wheel terminate at: (17) the tip of the sex organ, (18) the anus, (19) the two thighs, (20) the two calves, (21) the eight fingers and eight lesser toes, (22) the tops of the feet, (23) the two thumbs and the two big toes, and (24) the two knees.

Each of these twenty-four channels splits into three branches, which are distinguished by the principal elements – winds, red drops, and white drops – that flow through them. Each of these seventy-two channels then splits into a thousand, making seventy-two thousand channels in all. It is important for a Secret Mantra practitioner to be familiar with the arrangement of the channels since, as will be explained later, it is through gaining control over the winds and drops flowing through these channels that the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness is accomplished.

The winds in the body of an ordinary person flow through most of these channels except the central channel. Because these winds are impure, the various minds that they support are also impure, and so for as long as these winds continue to flow through the peripheral channels they will continue to support the various negative conceptions that keep us trapped in samsara. Through the force



*Togdän Jampäl Gyatso*

## CHANNELS, WINDS, AND DROPS

of meditation, however, these winds can be brought into the central channel where they are no longer able to support the development of gross conceptions of dualistic appearance. With a mind free from dualistic appearances we will be able to gain a direct realization of ultimate truth, emptiness. A more detailed explanation of this visualization and the means for controlling the channels, winds, and drops will be given later.

Corresponding to the Twenty-four Inner Places of the Heruka body mandala are the 'Twenty-four Outer Places', which are located at various points throughout this world. Practitioners with pure karma can see these outer places of Heruka as Pure Lands, but people with impure karma see them only as ordinary places.

### Chart 2 The Spokes of the Heart Channel Wheel

| <i>direction</i> | <i>supporting wind</i>  |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| east             | of the earth element    |
| north            | of the wind element     |
| west             | of the fire element     |
| south            | of the water element    |
| south-east       | of the element of form  |
| south-west       | of the element of smell |
| north-west       | of the element of taste |
| north-east       | of the element of touch |

### THE MOVING WINDS

In contrast to the stationary channels, the inner winds are known as the 'moving winds' because they flow through

### Chart 3 The Root Winds

|                      | <i>life-supporting</i>               | <i>downward-voiding</i>                                 | <i>upward-moving</i>                      | <i>equally-abiding</i>  | <i>permeating</i>  |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| <i>colour</i>        | white                                | yellow  | red                                       | green/yellow  | pale blue  |
| <i>Buddha Family</i> | Akshobya                             | Ratnasambhava   | Amitabha                                  | Amoghasiddhi  | Vairochana   |
| <i>element</i>       | water                                | earth   | fire                                      | wind  | space  |
| <i>seat</i>          | heart                                | the two lower doors: the anus and the sex organ         | throat                                    | navel   | both the upper and lower parts of the body, mainly the 360 joints          |
| <i>function</i>      | to support and maintain life         | to retain and release urine, faeces, semen, blood, etc. | to speak, swallow, etc.                   | to cause the inner fire to blaze, to digest food and drink, etc.                      | to enable the body to come and go; to allow movement, lifting, and placing |
| <i>direction</i>     | from both nostrils, gently downwards | from both nostrils, horizontally, heavily forwards      | from the right nostril, violently upwards | from the left nostril, moving to the left and the right from the edge of this nostril | this wind does not flow through the nostrils except at the moment of death |

#### CHANNELS, WINDS, AND DROPS

the channels. Some people believe that it is only fluids such as blood that flow through the channels of the body, but this is not so. In fact, these fluids are able to circulate within the body only because of the movement of the winds. If there were no movement of these winds the other systems of circulation could not function. However, it should be remembered that these inner winds are much subtler than external air.

There are five root and five branch winds. The root winds are:

- 1 The life-supporting wind
- 2 The downward-voiding wind
- 3 The upward-moving wind
- 4 The equally-abiding wind
- 5 The pervading wind

The five branch winds are:

- 6 The moving wind
- 7 The intensely-moving wind
- 8 The perfectly-moving wind
- 9 The strongly-moving wind
- 10 The definitely-moving wind

Each of the five root winds has six characteristics by which it can be recognized: (1) its colour, (2) its associated Buddha Family, (3) an element for which it serves as the support, (4) its principal seat or fundamental location, (5) its function, and (6) its direction (how it leaves the nostrils upon exhalation). These are summarized in Chart 3 (opposite).

If we become familiar with these characteristics we will be able to recognize which winds are flowing. This ability becomes important at a later stage of meditation. As mentioned above, each root wind serves as the support for a particular element. The first wind, which is also known as the 'wind of the water element', is responsible for the increase of blood, sperm, and other liquids in the body. In a similar fashion the second wind, the 'wind of the earth element', is responsible for the growth of the bones, teeth,

and nails; the third wind, the 'wind of the fire element', increases the bodily heat; the fourth wind, the 'wind of the wind element', increases the flow of the wind element through the channels; and the fifth wind, the 'wind of the space element', causes an increase in the size of the internal spaces and cavities of the body and so is related to growth.

As for the five branch winds, these are so called because they all branch off from the life-supporting wind, which resides in the heart centre. They each flow to the door of a particular sense power, thereby enabling the awareness related to that power to move to its appropriate object. The colour and function of each branch wind are summarized in Chart 4.

**Chart 4 The Branch Winds**

| <i>name</i>                | <i>colour</i> | <i>function</i>   |
|----------------------------|---------------|---|
| the moving wind            | red           | to enable the eye awareness to move to visual forms     |
| the intensely-moving wind  | blue          | to enable the ear awareness to move to sounds           |
| the perfectly-moving wind  | yellow        | to enable the nose awareness to move to smells          |
| the strongly-moving wind   | white         | to enable the tongue awareness to move to tastes        |
| the definitely-moving wind | green         | to enable the body awareness to move to tactile objects |

Of the ten root and branch winds, the most important for Secret Mantra meditation is the life-supporting wind. This wind has three levels: gross, subtle, and very subtle. It is the very subtle wind that travels from life to life, supporting the very subtle mind. This very subtle wind and



#### CHANNELS, WINDS, AND DROPS

the very subtle mind never separate, which is why the very subtle wind is called 'indestructible'. The indestructible wind is located in a tiny vacuole inside the central channel at the centre of the heart channel wheel. It is enclosed in the very centre of a small sphere, the indestructible drop, which is formed by the very subtle white and red drops.

We need an intimate knowledge of the life-supporting wind because it is the object of meditation of completion stage practices such as vajra recitation. This practice, which is done inside the heart channel wheel, is a method for loosening the knots at the heart. It is essential to loosen these knots if our Mahamudra practice is to be successful.

#### THE CONTAINED DROPS

There are two types of drop in the body: white drops and red drops. The former are the pure essence of the white seminal fluid and the latter are the pure essence of the blood. Both have gross and subtle forms. The white and red drops that flow outside the central channel are gross drops. The central channel contains both gross and subtle drops.

The principal seat of the white drop (also known as white bodhichitta) is the crown channel wheel, and it is from here that the white seminal fluid originates. The principal seat of the red drop is the navel channel wheel, and it is from here that the blood originates. The red drop at the navel is also the foundation of the warmth of the body and the basis for attaining inner fire, or tummo, realizations. When the drops melt and flow through the channels they give rise to an experience of bliss.

For practitioners of Secret Mantra, the channels, winds, and drops are the bases for attaining spontaneous great bliss. Beings whose bodies are not endowed with these three have no opportunity to practise Highest Yoga Tantra. Thus the human body is the perfect vehicle for Secret Mantra meditations, which is why it is regarded as so precious. In general, to practise Highest Yoga Tantra one must be a

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

womb-born human being possessing six elements: earth, water, fire, wind, channels, and drops; or, according to another way of listing them, bone, marrow, and white drops obtained from the father; and flesh, skin, and blood obtained from the mother.

THE REASON WHY THE WINDS CAN ENTER THE CENTRAL  
CHANNEL BY PENETRATING THE PRECISE POINTS  
THROUGH THESE DOORS

To bring the winds into the central channel we must practise meditations that focus our concentration at any of the ten doors mentioned above. The practices of Heruka, Guhyasamaja, Vajrayogini, and so forth contain different technical methods for penetrating these points. In some, concentration is focused at the centre of the heart channel wheel, in others at the centre of the navel channel wheel, and in others at the upper and lower ends of the central channel. According to the system set forth in the Six Yogas of Naropa, the winds enter the central channel through the door of the navel channel wheel. This is also the door used by the present system of Mahamudra meditation. When we gain confidence that the winds can enter the central channel through the navel channel wheel, we will also know how they can enter through the other nine doors.

As mentioned before, there are sixty-four spokes of the navel channel wheel, or emanation wheel. The central, right, and left channels ascend through the hub of this channel wheel, the right and left each coiling around once to form the twofold knot there. In the centre of this knot, inside the central channel, there is a small vacuole similar to a small air bubble. This vacuole is the point to penetrate when meditating on inner fire, or tummo. When performing inner fire meditation we focus our concentration on this vacuole and clearly visualize a letter short-AH inside it. Concentrating single-pointedly on this short-AH is known as 'penetrating the precise point of the navel channel wheel of the vajra body'. If we meditate on our mind

as indistinguishably mixed with the short-AH and practise this meditation again and again with strong and steady concentration we will be successful in bringing the winds into the central channel at this point.

Why will this meditation cause the winds to enter the central channel? The reason is that mounted winds and the minds that mount them are inseparable, just like a body and its shadow, and so if the mind gathers within a vacuole inside the central channel the winds must also gather there. Strong and consistent practice of this meditation will cause the central channel gradually to open. This explains how the winds may be brought into the central channel through the navel channel wheel, and in the same way we can understand how the winds may enter the central channel through any of the other nine doors.

It is most important to be very accurate when penetrating these points, identifying their exact locations in the very centre of the hub of the channel wheels inside the central channel. Sometimes, instead of the short-AH, other letters can be visualized within the vacuoles. For example, in some meditations a RAM is visualized at the navel and in others a HUM or a tiny drop is visualized at the heart.

A quick method for gathering the winds within the central channel is to practise penetrating the precise points while holding the vase breath, which will be explained below. Once the winds have entered the central channel, spontaneous great bliss can be generated without difficulty. The winds that flow inside the central channel are extremely beneficial and conducive to realizations. Normally, because our winds are moving in the right and left channels, they give rise to gross conceptual thoughts which interfere with single-pointed concentration and cause our concentration to become scattered, but when the winds are in the central channel they do not support such conceptual thoughts. All gross conceptual distractions are pacified and our meditative concentration is powerful and penetrating. Thus we are able to hold any object we choose with unmoving concentration.

## CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

### AN EXPLANATION OF THEIR DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS

In general, any wind may be brought into the central channel through penetrating any of the ten doors. However, during completion stage penetrating each channel wheel performs a different function. Penetrating the crown channel wheel increases the white drops, penetrating the throat channel wheel makes dream practices very powerful, penetrating the heart channel wheel enables us to maintain the appearance of clear light, penetrating the navel channel wheel increases inner fire, penetrating the channel wheel of the secret place induces an experience of strong bliss, and penetrating the channel wheel at the tip of the sex organ enhances the experience of strong bliss and induces a quick, deep, and long sleep.

Why is the last ability important? Secret Mantra meditators wishing to use sleep as a spiritual path need to fall asleep quickly and sleep for an extended period of time. To achieve this they penetrate the precise point of the sex organ channel wheel just before falling asleep, and then train in completion stage practices during their protracted sleep. However, if we cannot practise completion stage while awake we will not be able to practise it during sleep. Practising completion stage during sleep prepares us to be able to practise it during the death process, which is the most important time to practise.

At death we need to be able to practise three special methods: bringing the clear light of death into the path of the Truth Body, bringing the intermediate state into the path of the Enjoyment Body, and bringing rebirth into the path of the Emanation Body. To be successful in these, we need to prepare beforehand by training in the completion stage practices that bring the clear light of sleep into the path of the Truth Body, dreaming into the path of the Enjoyment Body, and waking into the path of the Emanation Body. Therefore, the Secret Mantra meditator strives to remain for a long time with the experience of the clear light of sleep so as to practise these methods.

CHANNELS, WINDS, AND DROPS

Ordinary people have a very brief experience of the clear light of sleep, but they are unable to recognize this experience or to maintain it for long periods. Nevertheless, everyone has the potential to develop the experience of the clear light and to use this experience as the spiritual path.

Finally, it should be noted that it is not only when falling asleep that we should penetrate the precise point of the sex organ channel wheel. We may penetrate it at any time to bring the winds into the central channel.



*Baso Chökyi Gyaltsän*

## *Inner Fire*

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### AN EXPLANATION OF THE STAGES OF MEDITATION ON INNER FIRE (TUMMO) IN PARTICULAR

According to the present system of Mahamudra meditation, the winds are brought into the central channel at the precise point of the navel channel wheel by means of the yoga of inner fire, or tummo. The yoga of inner fire pervades all completion stage practices. It is the trunk from which all such practices branch. If something is a completion stage practice it is either a direct or an indirect practice of inner fire. Without igniting the inner fire and causing it to blaze, and melt the two types of drop, it is impossible to generate spontaneous great bliss.

In general, completion stage has various objects of meditation, such as the channels, the winds, the drops, inner fire, or the letters located within the precise points of the various channel wheels; and whether a particular practice is a direct or an indirect inner fire meditation depends upon the actual object of meditation. As explained above, inner fire is the clear, red drop inside the navel channel wheel. It is called 'inner fire' because it is the nature of heat. If a practitioner visualizes this red drop as a flame and meditates on that, he or she is practising a direct meditation on tummo.

The Tibetan term 'tummo' means 'Fierce One' and is generally used to refer to Heroines, who are slightly wrathful in appearance and who bestow spontaneous great bliss on their consorts, the Heroes. The red drop at the navel in the nature of fire is also called tummo because its function is similar to that of the fierce Heroines. In this text, however, it will be referred to simply as 'inner fire'.

## CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

When practising the yoga of inner fire we visualize the red drop in the form of the letter short-AH (see Appendix IV). This letter is called the 'short-AH of inner fire' and, in the practice of Mahamudra, meditation on this letter is recognized as a supreme method for initially bringing the winds into the central channel. In his teachings Milarepa frequently referred to this letter as 'my short-AH'. One day his disciple Gampopa told him that when he practised single-pointed concentration he could remain for seven days in one uninterrupted session. 'So what?', replied Milarepa, 'You sit for seven days but do not experience the clear light. If you meditated on my short-AH of inner fire you would experience the clear light very quickly.'

By meditating on inner fire we will quickly be able to attain the realizations of tranquil abiding and superior seeing and, on the basis of these, we will be able to attain both example clear light and meaning clear light. Thus the fruits of inner fire meditation are manifold. To compare other methods to inner fire is like comparing a donkey to a fine horse.

The practice of inner fire was first taught by Conqueror Vajradhara in the *Hevajra Root Tantra*. From there it was incorporated into other practices such as those of Yamantaka, Guhyasamaja, Heruka, and Vajrayogini. Thus all Tantric meditators look upon the *Hevajra Tantra* as an especially blessed scripture. Because the inner fire practices come directly from Vajradhara they are practised within all Tibetan Buddhist traditions. As the first Panchen Lama stated in his auto-commentary to the root text of the Mahamudra:

If we can bring the winds into the central channel through the force of habits formed in previous lives, this is very good; otherwise we should perform the yoga of inner fire as explained in the Six Yogas of Naropa.

This has been a general introduction to the practice of inner fire. What follows is a detailed explanation of the methods used to ignite the inner fire and cause it to blaze.



## INNER FIRE

If we have a strong wish to follow the path of inner fire we should practise every day the methods explained below, beginning each session with the following brief preliminaries. We visualize our root Guru in the form of Vajradhara surrounded by the Mahamudra lineage Gurus, who in turn are surrounded by the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Heroes, Dakinis, and Dharma Protectors. This visualization is similar to that of the Field for Accumulating Merit in *Offering to the Spiritual Guide*, which is described in detail in *Great Treasury of Merit*. After visualizing this Field for Accumulating Merit, we make a long or short mandala offering and then recite the following prayer three times while concentrating strongly on its meaning:

*I prostrate and go for refuge to my Spiritual Guide  
And the sublimely precious Three Jewels.  
Through the force of your blessings may I meet with  
success  
In my practice of inner fire;  
And through the force of completing the practice of inner  
fire  
May I quickly attain the Union of the Mahamudra.  
Please make my channels both pliant and smooth,  
And make my winds and drops supple.  
Through your blessings may I swiftly accomplish the  
attainments  
Without the slightest difficulty or discomfort.*

The last four lines are recited to eliminate the causes of physical hindrances which can impede our progress and prevent success in our practice. To perform completion stage meditations we must be healthy, with pliant and smooth channels, supple winds, and flexible white and red drops. Otherwise we may develop wind diseases (Tib. lung) or other physical illnesses.

After reciting this prayer three times we should generate a special motivation of bodhichitta, a mind that wishes to attain perfect Buddhahood for the sake of all beings. We do this while reciting the following prayer three times:

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

*For the sake of all living beings I must become  
A perfect Buddha in this life.  
Therefore I shall now practise the yoga of inner fire  
To attain my goal as swiftly as possible.*

Both aspiring bodhichitta and engaging bodhichitta are included in this prayer, the first two lines referring to the former and the last two to the latter. The precious mind of bodhichitta is absolutely essential if our practice of inner fire is to be a Mahayana practice, not to mention a Vajrayana one. If our meditation on inner fire is not conjoined with the minds of refuge and bodhichitta it will become a non-Buddhist path, and a yoga of inner fire performed for worldly purposes is not a path to full enlightenment. Because there is a great difference in motivation between worldly practices and Dharma practices, their paths and fruits are also very different.

After reciting and meditating on the meaning of these prayers, we imagine that the Field for Accumulating Merit and the lineage Gurus all dissolve into our root Guru, Vajradhara. Then, with our palms pressed together at our heart in a gesture of supplication, we request our root Guru to come to the crown of our head. When he arrives there we feel that our crown channel wheel opens. Our Guru then gradually diminishes to the size of a thumb, enters through our crown, and descends through our central channel. Finally he dissolves into the indestructible wind and indestructible mind inside the indestructible drop in the centre of our heart channel wheel. We contemplate very strongly that our subtle body, speech, and mind have been blessed. Our subtle body is the very subtle wind upon which our very subtle mind is mounted. The combination of these two possesses the potential to communicate, and this is our subtle speech.

In addition to these meditations on refuge, bodhichitta, and receiving the blessings of our Spiritual Guide, it is important at the beginning of our practice of inner fire to generate clear appearance and divine pride of oneself as

## INNER FIRE

the Deity. During generation stage the Deity may be visualized as having many arms, legs, and faces, but during completion stage meditations the Deity is always visualized as having only one face and two arms. For example, if our personal Deity is Heruka, during completion stage practices we visualize ourself as Heruka with one face and two arms and embracing Vajravarahi.

During completion stage meditation our posture should be impeccable. If possible, we should sit in the sevenfold posture of Buddha Vairochana, realizing that each of the seven features has a specific purpose. For some people, however, the vajra posture, in which the feet are placed upon the opposite thighs, is difficult to hold comfortably. If this is the case, we should at least try to maintain this position for a few moments at the beginning of each session and then switch to a position that is more comfortable. This will allow us gradually to grow accustomed to the posture, and will also serve as an auspicious sign for our practice. Although the vajra posture is superior to other postures, we may sit in any cross-legged position, or even in the posture of Tara with one leg extended, provided that we sit with a perfectly straight back.

The explanation of the stages of meditation on inner fire has two main divisions:

- 1 How to meditate on inner fire (tummo) in eight stages
- 2 Based on these, an explanation of the practice of the four joys and the nine mixings

### HOW TO MEDITATE ON INNER FIRE (TUMMO) IN EIGHT STAGES

The eight stages are as follows:

- 1 An explanation of dispelling impure winds and meditating on a hollow body
- 2 Visualizing and meditating on the channels
- 3 Training in the paths of the channels

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

- 4 Visualizing and meditating on the letters
- 5 Igniting the inner fire (tummo)
- 6 Causing the fire to blaze
- 7 Mere blazing and dripping
- 8 An explanation of extraordinary blazing and dripping

If we wish to attain the realization of inner fire we need to practise these eight stages of meditation. Then, through the attainment of inner fire we will be able to experience the four joys and practise the nine mixings. By training in inner fire, the four joys, and the nine mixings, we can complete the entire path of Mahamudra meditation and fully accomplish all completion stage practices. We should not be satisfied with accomplishing only the direct methods of inner fire meditation but, on this basis, we should go on to complete the practices of the four joys and the nine mixings. Je Tsongkhapa was very clear on this point.

#### AN EXPLANATION OF DISPELLING IMPURE WINDS AND MEDITATING ON A HOLLOW BODY

As indicated by its title, the first stage of meditation has two parts:

- 1 Dispelling impure winds
- 2 Meditating on a hollow body

The purpose of these two practices is to free us from mental and physical hindrances and to make our mind and body clear and lucid.

#### DISPELLING IMPURE WINDS

This is accomplished by the purification practice of nine exhalations. We begin this practice by pressing the tip of our left thumb against the inside of the root of our left ring finger and then making a fist by closing the four fingers over the thumb. The fist is then placed on the right side of

## INNER FIRE

the rib cage so that the arm is draped comfortably across the stomach. The arm is rotated upwards slightly, enabling the back of the fist to rest on the right side of the body at the level of the right elbow.

Then, with the right hand, we make a similar fist but extend the index finger. With the back of the extended index finger, we press the left nostril to block it and then gently inhale a full deep breath through the right nostril. While inhaling smoothly, we visualize the inspiring strength of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas entering through our right nostril in the form of radiant white light, which dissolves into the indestructible wind and mind at the centre of our heart channel wheel. We remain at the height of inhalation for as long as possible.

To exhale, we move our extended right index finger to the right nostril and close this nostril by pressing it with the front of the finger. Then we exhale all impure winds through the left nostril in three equal, successive breaths. While exhaling we visualize that all our impure winds, especially those of the left side of the body, are expelled in the form of inky black smoke. We have now completed three of the nine exhalations.

With our finger still pressing on the right nostril, we once again inhale slowly, smoothly, and deeply. We visualize radiant white light streaming in through our left nostril, bringing the inspiring strength of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and absorbing into the indestructible wind and mind at the heart. We hold this breath until just before it becomes uncomfortable. Then we move the extended index finger back to the left nostril as before and fully exhale all impure winds through the right nostril in three equal breaths. We visualize that all our impure winds, especially those of the right side of the body, are thereby expelled.

Now that six of the nine exhalations have been completed, we place our hands in our lap in the gesture of meditative equipoise, with the palms facing upwards, the right hand resting on the left, and the tips of the thumbs almost touching. We breathe in smoothly and deeply

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

through both nostrils while visualizing as before. Then we exhale through both nostrils three times. When these three exhalations have been completed we strongly imagine that all our channels, winds, and drops are very supple and comfortable.

This whole cycle can be repeated as many times as we wish, if necessary even for an entire session. It is very important to try to do this meditation with single-pointed concentration if it is to be beneficial.

#### MEDITATING ON A HOLLOW BODY

The purpose of this stage of meditation is to eliminate obstacles and problems arising in relation to our channels, winds, and drops. If these three are not functioning properly there is a danger of developing various diseases. Furthermore, those who are new to completion stage meditation can cause their bodily elements to become unbalanced by pushing too hard and over-exerting themselves. However, none of these interferences will occur if we make our channels, winds, and drops supple by means of this meditation.

As will be explained below, there are two methods for bringing the winds into the central channel through inner fire meditation: the peaceful method and the forceful method. The latter uses physical force to bring the winds quickly and strongly into the central channel. Although this method can be very effective, it can also be dangerous, causing an imbalance in our winds and inducing mental and physical discomfort. Meditating on our body as being hollow will safeguard against this. It is important to prevent completion stage practices from causing an imbalance in our winds because if this happens neither doctors nor medicine will be able to help us.

The peaceful method for bringing the winds into the central channel may take slightly longer but it is a much smoother process. When the winds are brought into the central channel in this way they enter very gently and

## INNER FIRE

smoothly, and without the mental and physical side effects that could result from disturbing the channels, winds, and drops. Those who can practise this peaceful method successfully do not need to meditate on the body as being hollow, because for them there is no danger of wind or channel diseases.

Je Tsongkhapa explained that the peaceful method is superior to the forceful one. He pointed out that not only does it prevent the hindrances mentioned above but it is also a more powerful way of experiencing clear light. The peaceful method enhances single-pointed concentration and so, when we practise the four joys explained below, we move naturally and smoothly from one joy to the next. Furthermore, in the root text of the *Hevajra Tantra* and its commentaries, it is stated that if we meditate on inner fire by holding the vase breath we should do so in a peaceful manner.

Finally, there is one more disadvantage of the forceful method that should be mentioned here. If we perform these meditations forcefully with much expectation, we may indeed be able to bring the winds into the central channel relatively quickly, but the amount of physical movement involved in this technique can prevent us from clearly recognizing even the first signs that occur as the winds dissolve into the central channel, and if we do not recognize the first signs we will not be able to recognize clearly the last sign, the clear light. Therefore, for all these reasons the peaceful method is the preferred practice.

As for meditating on our body being hollow, this is done as follows. First we regard our body as being in its normal form – made of skin, flesh, bone, blood, and so forth – and then we strongly imagine that all the contents of our body melt into light and gradually disappear into emptiness, leaving only our skin like an empty shell. Once this meditation is stable we imagine that our skin becomes clear and transparent, without any physical resistance, like a rainbow. If during any stage of our practice we experience trouble from wind disease, we should do this meditation

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

until the difficulty subsides, even if it takes several days or weeks. At the end of each meditation session we should resume the visualization of our body as that of the Deity.

This has been a short explanation of the first stage of inner fire meditation. A more detailed explanation would contain bodily exercises known as 'the six magical wheels', a full explanation of which can be found in Je Tsongkhapa's commentary to the Six Yogas of Naropa. When we are following the peaceful method it is not necessary to do these exercises, although we may if we wish.

#### VISUALIZING AND MEDITATING ON THE CHANNELS

The system of channels has already been described. When we practise the meditations of completion stage, however, the visualization of these channels differs slightly from the description given above. One difference is that we visualize the central channel ending at the secret place instead of at the tip of the sex organ. Another difference is that for the purposes of this meditation we imagine that the knots at the various channel wheels are loosened so that the central channel is not constricted at any of those points. In reality the central channel is like a shaft of bamboo that has membranes dividing one section from the next, with the knots constricting the central channel resembling such membranes, but when we are meditating on completion stage we imagine that all these dividing membranes have been removed, so that if we were at the bottom of the central channel we would be able to look up its full length just as if we were looking up an empty lift shaft.

The thinner we visualize the central channel the better. We can start by visualizing it as having the diameter of a drinking straw. A helpful technique is to begin the session by visualizing it as very thick, for example the width of an arm, and then to imagine that it gradually becomes thinner and thinner. Finally, when it reaches the width of a drinking straw, we let it remain like this and place our concentration on it firmly. As our concentration improves and becomes



## INNER FIRE

more subtle we can make it even narrower. We can train in gradually reducing the width of the central channel over a period of several days. If we are serious about meditating on inner fire we should be prepared to concentrate just on the central channel for many sessions over many days, weeks, or even months.

After visualizing the central channel we turn our attention to the right and left channels and visualize them clearly. Although the inside of all three channels is red they each have different colours on the outside. The right channel is red on the outside, the left channel white, and the central channel slightly blue. For the purposes of this meditation we imagine that the right and left channels join, or plug into, the central channel at the level of the navel, forming a trijunction at that point. From the level of the navel up to the crown of the head and then arching down to the point between the eyebrows all three channels run parallel to one another. The central channel terminates at the point between the eyebrows, but the right and left channels continue downwards from the brow to the nostrils.

Inside the central channel at the very centre of the navel channel wheel, at the point enclosed by the twofold knot, there is a small vacuole as was described earlier. It is very important to know where this vacuole is located because this is where the actual inner fire meditation takes place, and if we do not find the right point our entire meditation on inner fire will be mistaken.

Once our visualization of the three channels is stable we concentrate on the spokes, or petals, of the various channel wheels. We begin by imagining that we are inside the indestructible drop at the heart channel wheel. As mentioned before, the centre of the heart channel wheel is constricted by a sixfold knot (three coilings of each flanking channel), and the indestructible drop is inside the central channel in the very centre of this knot.

We imagine that if we were to turn on a light it would shine down the corridors of the eight spokes of the heart channel wheel. We look down these spokes carefully,



CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

inspecting each one closely, and then conclude 'Now I have seen the eight petals of the heart channel wheel clearly.'

Still remaining within the indestructible drop, we now travel up to the throat channel wheel. Thinking that we are within the vacuole of the central channel enclosed by the twofold knot, we inspect the corridors of each of the sixteen spokes of this channel wheel. After we have looked along each one carefully we think as before 'Now I have seen the sixteen petals of the throat channel wheel clearly.'

Then we travel up to the crown channel wheel and do the same as before. From within the vacuole there, at the centre of the twofold knot, we inspect the corridors of each of the thirty-two spokes until we can think 'Now I have seen the thirty-two petals of the crown channel wheel clearly.'

Finally we travel down to the navel channel wheel. From within the vacuole of the twofold knot there we look along each of the sixty-four spokes until we are satisfied and think 'Now I have seen the sixty-four petals of the navel channel wheel clearly.'

In all these visualizations we should see the channel wheels as they were described earlier, except that to begin with it is probably best to leave out the knots. Later, when we have more skill and familiarity, we can add the twofold knot at the navel and then, when our skill in meditation has improved sufficiently, we can include the knots at the other three channel wheels as well.

To summarize, when visualizing the channels we first concentrate on seeing the central channel clearly and then we stabilize our visualization of the right and left channels, seeing how they join the central channel at the navel. When we are familiar with the three channels we meditate on the spokes of the various channel wheels by placing our mind successively in each small vacuole of the central channel at each of the four levels. As mentioned before, if we are to bring the winds into the central channel through the method of inner fire meditation, we must use our mind to penetrate the precise point at the centre of the vacuole of the navel channel wheel. The importance of absolute

## INNER FIRE

accuracy in penetrating the precise points cannot be over-emphasized. This meditation on inspecting each channel wheel thoroughly and then finally penetrating the vacuole at the navel should be done for at least several days.

Longdöl Lama said that there is no more powerful meditation than penetrating the central channel with bodhichitta motivation. This is because by meditating on the central channel we can gain control over the winds and cause them to enter, abide, and dissolve within that channel. On the basis of this we can then attain the great bliss of the clear light and, through meditation on clear light, complete the two collections of merit and wisdom. Advanced meditators who have accomplished the union of spontaneous great bliss and clear light emptiness do not need to put effort into performing physical prostrations or other external practices because, as explained in the Tantric scriptures, merely by meditating on the union of bliss and emptiness they can complete the necessary collections for the attainment of full enlightenment. Such great meditators, therefore, simply request the blessings of their root and lineage Gurus and then proceed with their completion stage practices.

### TRAINING IN THE PATHS OF THE CHANNELS

There are two principal reasons for doing this third stage of meditation. First, it helps to eliminate defects from the channels, winds, and drops, making them very clear and flexible and preventing us from contracting diseases associated with them. If these three elements are supple the body as a whole will also be supple. This is because the channels, winds, and drops pervade the entire body. It is very important for a meditator's body to be comfortable and flexible because this helps the mind to become clear and lucid; and a clear mind makes meditation powerful and very beneficial. The second reason for doing this meditation is that it greatly enhances the clarity of our visualization of the channel wheels.

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

To train in this stage we imagine that our mind is in the form of the indestructible drop located in the centre of the heart channel wheel. This drop is the size of a pea, white with a slightly reddish tint, and shines brilliantly with five-coloured light: white, red, blue, green, and yellow. This light however does not extend a great distance from the drop. With our mind concentrated single-pointedly on this drop, we contemplate strongly that it is the essence of the inseparability of our own mind and the mind of our Spiritual Guide, and we identify it as being ourself. Then we decide that, as the sparkling drop, we would like to make a tour of the various channel wheels.

We slowly ascend through the central channel to the level of the throat and come to rest exactly in the centre of the vacuole in the centre of the throat channel wheel. We look along the corridors of each of the sixteen spokes and then, as if we were turning on a very powerful light, radiate the five-coloured light so that it completely illuminates all the spokes of this channel wheel. We feel that this brilliant light corrects all the possible defects of the spokes, such as their being shrivelled, stuck together, or blocked, and that all the spokes that have become stiff, hard, and brittle are made smooth, soft, and supple. We think that the elements flowing within the spokes – the winds, the white drops, and the red drops – become very clear, powerful, and beneficial. We continue with this visualization until the feeling arises that all the defects in the spokes have been removed and then we reabsorb the light into the sparkling drop. We think that we have completed our purpose in visiting the throat channel wheel and then decide to visit the crown channel wheel.

We travel slowly up the central channel and come to rest in the exact centre of the vacuole of the crown channel wheel. Then we proceed as before. We look down the corridors of each of the thirty-two spokes of this channel wheel, radiate the powerful five-coloured light down them, correct all the defects as before and, when we feel that all the defects have been removed, reabsorb the light and

think that we have accomplished our purpose in visiting this channel wheel.

Now we think that we would like to tour the channel wheel at the point between the eyebrows and, from our place in the crown, look down the central channel towards it. At the entrance to the central channel, which is exactly midway between the eyebrows, we visualize an opening like the third eye of many Vajrayana Deities. We slowly descend to this entrance, coming to rest with half of the sparkling drop inside and half outside the opening. From this position we closely examine inside and outside our body, looking in every direction. Then we radiate the five-coloured light and, as it shines inside, see that it removes all the defects of the channels at the brow. As the light radiates outside it purifies all impure environments and pacifies the suffering and the gross and subtle causes of suffering of all sentient beings. When we feel that these purposes have been accomplished we move completely inside, so that we no longer protrude outside the opening, and remain there for a while.

We then make a decision to return to where we started in the heart channel wheel. We slowly ascend to the crown, pass through the vacuole there, and slowly descend through the central channel, passing through the vacuole at the throat and finally coming to rest in the centre of the vacuole in the heart channel wheel. We think that we have returned to our main abode. Now we inspect the eight spokes of the heart channel wheel, radiate the five-coloured light throughout their corridors, and purify their defects in exactly the same manner as before. When we have done this we reabsorb the light and think that now we would like to go to the navel channel wheel.

We slowly descend through the central channel and come to rest in the vacuole there. We examine each of the sixty-four spokes of the navel channel wheel and again radiate the light, correct all the defects of the channels, winds, and drops, and think that they have all become very supple, pliant, soft, and comfortable. After reabsorbing the



## CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

five-coloured light, we remain in the vacuole for some time, remembering that this is the principal place for our meditation on inner fire.

After remaining in the vacuole of the navel for as long as possible, the indestructible drop returns to its place at the heart. Again we think that we have returned to our main abode and then we determine to purify all the defilements and correct all the defects of the seventy-two thousand channels pervading our entire body. We radiate the five-coloured light down the eight spokes of the heart channel wheel and visualize this light spreading throughout the eight spokes, the twenty-four channels of the twenty-four places, the seventy-two channels branching off from these, and finally throughout all the seventy-two thousand channels. This five-coloured radiant light restores all the channels that are broken, blocked, shrivelled, tangled, or stuck together; and all those that had become stiff, hard, and brittle now become smooth, soft, and supple. In this way all the winds and drops are made perfectly clear and pliant. Finally, we reabsorb the light into ourself, the indestructible drop.

There are several ways to do this third stage of meditation, depending upon how much time we wish to spend on each of the various steps. For example, it is possible to spend an entire meditation session exploring just one of the channel wheels. If we do this, we can begin the next session where the previous one left off, and when we eventually feel that we have completed this part of the meditation we return to the heart channel wheel. Of the various channel wheels to be explored, the navel channel wheel is the most important. We should spend as much time as possible in this channel wheel, but we must ensure that we acquire a thorough knowledge and experience of the other channel wheels as well.

In summary, training in the paths of the channels is rather like visiting a museum. Having decided to pay a visit, we enter the ground floor, which in this case corresponds to the heart channel wheel, and from there we go directly to the first floor. After we have thoroughly

## INNER FIRE

inspected the exhibits on this floor, we go up to the second floor. Then, after taking a long look at the objects on exhibition there, we return to the ground floor. After examining the exhibits on the ground floor we descend to the basement and, when we have finished there, we return once again to the ground floor and leave. Having made such an extensive tour of the museum we should be able to remember clearly all the exhibits on each floor.

It is very important that the channel wheels appear clearly in our visualization. As mentioned before, to practise the yoga of inner fire of completion stage we must be able to penetrate the precise point of the navel channel wheel accurately and skilfully. This is like someone who is chopping wood with an axe. If he is skilful and hits the right place he will split the wood without much difficulty or effort, but if he misses the proper place he will not meet with much success, even if he expends much energy. Another analogy is afforded by a slaughterer of animals. If such a person is very skilful and knows how to sever the right artery he will be able to kill the animal quickly and painlessly, even if his only instrument is a tiny needle; but if he lacks skill, the slaughter may turn out to be a long and bloody affair. In a similar fashion, the completion stage meditator who wishes to bring the winds into the central channel will be successful if he or she can penetrate the precise points skilfully. As a result of such skilful practice the meditator will acquire supreme attainments without difficulty.

To become familiar with the channels and with the method for penetrating the precise points, and also to correct all the defects of the elements of the vajra body, we should place strong emphasis on training in the paths of the channels. We need to do this for several days, or until we experience a clear visualization.



*Drubchen Dharmavajra*



## INNER FIRE

### VISUALIZING AND MEDITATING ON THE LETTERS

There are extensive and concise explanations of the visualization of these letters. The extensive explanation includes a detailed visualization not only of the letters located in the four principal vacuoles – those of the navel, heart, throat, and crown channel wheels – but also of those located at the inner entrances of each of the one hundred and twenty spokes of these four channel wheels. This extensive explanation will not be given here because it is quite complex and not absolutely necessary. A concise explanation of the letters of the four principal vacuoles is sufficient to enable us to meet with complete success in our practice of inner fire.

First we visualize within the vacuole of the crown channel wheel a round, flat moon cushion made of white light. This cushion is the size of the circular surface formed when a pea is cut in half. Upon this moon cushion is a letter HAM which is the nature of the white drop residing at the crown. It is the size of a mustard seed, white in colour. The moon cushion and HAM are suspended upside down.

Inside the vacuole at the throat we visualize another moon cushion upon which is a letter OM which is the nature of the red drop residing at the throat. This letter, which has the nature of fire, is also the size of a mustard seed, but is red in colour and stands upright.

Inside the vacuole at the heart there is another moon cushion upon which is a letter HUM which is the nature of the indestructible drop. It is the size of a mustard seed and blue in colour. Both the letter and the moon cushion are suspended upside down. The indestructible drop is the most subtle drop and is so called because it does not melt before the time of death.

Finally, in the vacuole of the navel we clearly visualize another moon cushion. Upon this, again the size of a mustard seed, is a red letter short-AH standing upright, which is the nature of the red drop residing in the navel. As this is the principal object of concentration when meditating on the yoga of inner fire, and as all the body's warmth is

generated from this drop, the short-AH should be visualized in the nature of fiery heat. A diagram depicting how these four letters should be visualized is given in Appendix IV.

There are two specific purposes of visualizing these letters in the vacuoles of the central channel at the centre of each channel wheel. The first purpose concerns the four joys. We can experience these four joys only when the winds enter, abide, and dissolve within our central channel. The longer and more intensely we can hold the experience of the four joys, the better our experience will be; and our ability to do this is greatly enhanced by visualizing the four letters. As a result of the meditation described below, the white drop in the crown is made to melt. When it does so it begins to flow down the central channel, eventually passing through the throat, heart, and navel channel wheels, and finally reaching the tip of the sex organ. Once the white drop melts, it descends without interruption. If it flows through a particular channel wheel without being checked or held there, the experience of joy associated with that channel wheel will be fleeting and unstable. However, by focusing our concentration on the various letters we can arrest the downward flow of the white drop and thereby gain a longer and more intense experience of each of the four joys.

The four joys are explained fully in the next chapter, but a brief description will be useful at this point. The first joy is called simply 'joy' and the experience of it originates in the crown channel wheel when the white drop residing there melts. Therefore, initially we must meditate for a long time on the letter HAM in the crown. The experience of this joy is complete when the white drop flowing down the central channel reaches the throat channel wheel.

The second joy, called 'supreme joy', originates in the throat channel wheel and is experienced in full when the white drop flowing down the central channel reaches the heart channel wheel. The third joy, called 'extraordinary joy', originates in the heart channel wheel and is experienced in full when the white drop flowing down the central

## INNER FIRE

channel reaches the navel channel wheel. Finally, the fourth joy, called 'spontaneous great joy', originates in the navel channel wheel and is experienced in full when the white drop flowing down the central channel reaches the tip of the sex organ. Thus to have a sustained and stable experience of each of these joys we must have gained strong control over the downward-flowing white drop and be able to arrest it at each level of its descent, and this is accomplished by gaining familiarity with the four letters in meditation.

The second purpose for visualizing the letters in the channel wheels is to help us to find the actual object of meditation in the yoga of inner fire. The letter HAM is visualized within the vacuole of the crown channel wheel. Although its outer appearance is that of a letter, we should recognize it as actually being the white drop in the crown. When we practise the fourth stage of inner fire we should begin by visualizing this white HAM in the crown. We visualize it clearly for a short time and then we move our attention to the red OM in the throat. After a while we move to the HUM in the heart, and finally we settle the mind on the short-AH in the navel channel wheel. We visualize the short-AH very clearly and feel that it is the nature of powerful, fiery heat. Our concentration should be focused on this letter for a longer time than on the others.

After concentrating on the short-AH, we move our mind back to the HUM at the heart, then on to the red OM in the throat, and finally to the white HAM in the crown. Then we move down again, back to the throat, the heart, and finally stop at the navel. In this way we move our mind from the crown downwards, from the navel upwards, and finally from the crown downwards once again.

At this point our concentration is focused on the short-AH of inner fire in the centre of the navel channel wheel. If it is not perceived clearly our meditation will not be successful. Therefore, this is the time to recall as vividly as possible the pointing-out instructions that we have received from our Spiritual Guide concerning the specific



Gyatwa Ensäpa

## INNER FIRE

characteristics of the short-AH, such as its location, size, shape, and nature. We visualize the sixty-four spokes of this wheel and the coiling right and left channels that form a twofold knot at the hub of these spokes. Inside the central channel at the centre of this knot is the vacuole of the navel. It is within this vacuole that the letter short-AH resides, standing on a tiny moon cushion. The letter is red in colour, completely pure, infinitely radiant, and has the nature of intense fiery heat. This is the object of inner fire meditation.

Finding the object of meditation depends upon mindfulness and alertness. After finding the object in the manner described above we should completely dissolve our mind into it and concentrate on it single-pointedly without forgetting it. If this proves difficult we can think that the letter is our body and that our mind is dwelling within it; or we can think that it is like clothes that we, the mind, are wearing. These techniques will help to close the gap between the subjective mind and the object of meditation. Once we have found the object of meditation we have reached the first stage of tranquil abiding meditation, if we have not already reached this stage through previous practice. If we meditate continuously we can gradually accomplish all nine mental abidings. Thus the short-AH is a unique object of meditation because a single meditation on it yields four important fruits: attaining tranquil abiding; causing the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel; igniting the inner fire and causing it to blaze; and accomplishing the realization of Mahamudra.

The present meditation is done primarily to bring the winds into the central channel, and success in this depends upon perfect concentration. Therefore, whenever we do this meditation it is important that we do not see our mind and the object of meditation as being different. As mentioned before, we should completely dissolve our mind into the short-AH so as to eliminate the gap between subject and object. When we are able to do this we will be able to gain control over the winds so that they enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel. This is the basis for all the

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

subsequent stages of meditation that culminate in the realization of the Mahamudra.

#### IGNITING THE INNER FIRE (TUMMO)

The concentration that was generated in the fourth stage of meditation is focused on the letter short-AH within the vacuole of the navel channel wheel. We now combine this concentration on the short-AH with holding the vase breath.

We begin the vase breathing by drawing a portion of the winds of the lower body upwards and gathering them just below the short-AH at the navel channel wheel. This is accomplished by relying mainly upon the power of imagination; we merely feel that we are constricting the muscles of the lower part of our body and thereby drawing the winds gently upwards. As a result, the muscles controlling the retention of urine, excrement, and so forth will constrict slightly, but not to the extent that the two lower doors actually close. We then inhale through both nostrils gently, slowly, and deeply, and visualize that all the winds of the upper body flow down through the right and left channels. When they reach the navel they enter the central channel and gather just above the short-AH. The third stage of the vase breathing is actually to constrict the muscles of the pelvic floor so that the two lower doors close, and then to draw up completely all the winds of the lower part of the body. These winds then unite with the winds already gathered just below the short-AH. Then we gently swallow some saliva without making any noise. This presses the upper and lower winds together slightly.

We now think that the letter short-AH is completely enclosed by the upper and lower winds, like a jewel in an amulet box. The size of this visualization should be that of a small pea that has been cut in half, hollowed out, and rejoined around an even smaller mustard seed.

We fix our attention single-pointedly on the letter short-AH enclosed within the small sphere and stop all inhalation and exhalation. Once we are concentrated in this

way it is no longer necessary to keep the lower doors closed. We remain concentrated like this without breathing until we are about to feel discomfort. Then, just before exhaling, we visualize the upper and lower hemispheres of wind dissolving into the short-AH which, as a result, grows even hotter than before.

We exhale slowly and gently through the nostrils (not through the mouth), all the while remaining concentrated on the short-AH in the centre of the navel channel wheel. We relax for a while and then continue the vase breathing as before. We can take seven, twenty-one, or more consecutive vase breaths in one meditation session, depending upon the time we have available. If possible, we should not take any additional breaths between the exhalation marking the end of one vase breath and the inhalation marking the beginning of the next. However, if this proves too difficult we may take a few intermediate breaths.

There are other ways of doing vase breathing, but they are in essence the same as the method explained here. This particular method is most suitable for the present practice. While doing this meditation we do not let our concentration stray from its object, even momentarily, and we always keep in mind that the short-AH is the nature of fiery heat. We need to repeat this practice of holding the vase breath as many times as we can so as to become completely familiar with it.

Once again it is important to stress the need for our concentration to be accurately focused on the proper place within the central channel. The vacuole within the central channel is in the centre of the navel channel wheel and it is here that the short-AH is visualized and the winds gather. We need to perform four important tasks during this stage of the meditation: (1) constantly to check to see if the place of meditation is accurate, (2) to find the object of meditation without difficulty, (3) to hold the object of meditation continuously through the force of mindfulness, and (4) to have our mind mix completely with the object of meditation. If we practise these four well, we will definitely

## CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

succeed in our meditation on inner fire and as a result we will be able to cause the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within our central channel.

There are two purposes served by holding the vase breath. The first is that we arrest the flow of wind within the right and left channels and thereby pacify the gross conceptual minds. As mentioned before, if the winds stop flowing within the right and left channels they must then flow within the central channel.

Concerning this first purpose it should be noted that it is possible to bring the winds into the central channel merely by concentrating on the short-AH, without doing vase breathing at all. This is the most peaceful of all techniques for bringing the winds into the central channel and it is excellent if we are able to do it. With this method there is no danger of disturbing the winds. Moreover, this method is more powerful than others for gaining a realization of clear light. On the other hand by using the vase breathing method we are able to bring the winds into the central channel much more quickly.

As indicated before, the vase breathing technique itself can be performed either peacefully or forcefully. The technique described here, wherein the muscles of the lower body doors are constricted gently, is the recommended peaceful method. The more forceful method involves clenching the muscles of the arms and legs thereby forcing the lower winds to gather more rapidly. It is said that if a meditator does not experience success with the peaceful method, he or she should practise a more forceful method for a while and then return to the gentler technique.

There is a similarity between the different methods for causing the winds to enter the central channel and the different ways of dying. The peaceful method whereby we merely concentrate on the short-AH is similar to the process that occurs during a natural death, when the winds dissolve into the central channel slowly and progressively and therefore allow a greater opportunity for discerning and meditating on clear light. The most forceful method is similar



## INNER FIRE

to what happens during a sudden, violent death. The winds dissolve very quickly and as a result of this hurried movement it is more difficult to be aware of the appearance of clear light. Therefore, the best way to meditate would be to use the vase breathing technique at first to gain experience in concentrating the mind on the short-AH in the navel channel wheel and then, once familiarity has been established, to proceed with the more peaceful method of using concentration alone.

The second purpose served by holding the vase breath has to do with the downward-voiding wind residing in the central channel just below the navel channel wheel. By dissolving the upper and lower winds of the body into the short-AH as described above, we are able to cause the downward-voiding wind to move upwards. When this happens the inner fire will ignite and blaze.

When people engage in sexual intercourse the downward-voiding wind is also caused to move upwards by the union of the male and female sex organs, but this movement does not take place within the central channel and so the result is only a momentary igniting and blazing of the ordinary inner fire. Because of this ignition and blazing, the drops in the lower part of the body melt and flow downwards, resulting in a brief experience of bliss, but this lasts only until the drops leave through the sex organ or, in the case of the woman, collect in the uterus. By holding the vase breath and concentrating on the inner fire, however, the downward-voiding wind can be caused to move upwards inside the central channel. This will cause the inner fire to ignite and blaze and the drops to melt - all within the central channel. Those who do not practise Secret Mantra cannot accomplish this result. Although they may be able to ignite the ordinary inner fire and cause it to blaze through sexual intercourse, they are unable to cause the drops to melt within the central channel or to cause them to descend from the crown channel wheel. Since ordinary sexual intercourse cannot cause the winds to enter the central channel or cause the inner fire

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

to ignite and blaze therein, it can never benefit the practice of completion stage.

Just as ordinary sexual intercourse can cause the inner fire to ignite and blaze in the fashion described, so too can certain ordinary meditations generate the heat of inner fire within the body. However, generating such heat serves no purpose other than to keep the body warm; it lacks the power to bring realizations. If our only aim is to warm the body we do not need to do meditation; it would be easier simply to wrap oneself in a blanket or to put a heater on!

To practise inner fire purely we should strive to ignite the inner fire within the central channel, for to ignite it outside the central channel will only detract from the heat that could be generated within. As a result the drops will not melt and flow within the central channel and the meditation will not bring any completion stage realizations. If Mahamudra meditation is not successful it will not be possible to perceive the clear light. On the other hand, when the inner fire ignites and blazes within the central channel the winds enter, abide, and dissolve therein. Then there is nothing to prevent us from generating spontaneous great bliss, the main purpose of inner fire meditation.

To ignite the inner fire by means of the vase breath we visualize that as a result of dissolving the upper and lower winds, the downward-voiding wind flows upwards and blows against the short-AH. It should be noted that whereas before the lower winds of the body were merely visualized as ascending through the central channel to form the lower half of the sphere surrounding the short-AH, now the downward-voiding wind below the navel channel wheel actually does flow upwards to blow against the letter. Just as red coals grow hotter when blown upon by bellows, so the short-AH now burns more intensely as it is fanned by the downward-voiding wind. We imagine that the letter becomes so hot that it could consume anything. We visualize that it becomes hotter and hotter, all the time glowing more brightly, until the fine upper tip of the nada of the short-AH finally bursts into flame for a moment and then

#### INNER FIRE

dies down again. The nada continues to flare up and subside in this way as it is fanned by the upward movement of the downward-voiding wind, just as hot coals flare up and subside as they are blown on by bellows. This is the fifth stage of the meditation, which is called 'igniting the inner fire'. We should continue training in this practice until we have actual experience of this ignition.

According to Je Tsongkhapa's tradition, each stage of meditation on inner fire should be practised methodically and thoroughly until successful results arise. If we practise inner fire meditation too quickly we may be able to generate bodily heat but this will actually prove a hindrance to receiving the true fruits of inner fire. Therefore we should abandon all expectations and practise slowly and thoroughly; then we will meet with success. Many great meditators of the past took four, five, or six years to perfect the meditation on inner fire. We can even spend an entire lifetime practising this yoga. As Longdöl Lama said:

Inner fire meditation is like a wishfulfilling cow from which we can receive an inexhaustible supply of nourishment.

#### CAUSING THE FIRE TO BLAZE

The sixth stage of the meditation concerns the blazing of the inner fire. This is very similar to the fifth stage and is also done in conjunction with vase breathing. As always, the first step is to find the object of meditation – the short-AH on the moon cushion within the vacuole in the centre of the navel channel wheel inside the central channel. We remember that the short-AH is the size of a mustard seed, has the nature of fire, is very red, and sparkles with radiant light. We find this object and dissolve our mind into it.

Now we practise vase breathing, keeping our concentration firmly focused on the object of meditation. As before, the winds dissolving into the short-AH while we are holding the vase breath causes the downward-voiding

## CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

wind just below the navel channel wheel to move upwards, and this in turn causes the heat of the short-AH to increase powerfully. In the fifth stage we visualized that the fine upper tip of the nada repeatedly burst into flame and then died down again, but at this stage we visualize that it blazes constantly without subsiding, just as coals in a fire, having been brought to life, blaze of their own accord.

The flame at the tip of the nada gradually increases in length until it is the size of a sewing needle, having the same diameter and being extremely sharp at its upper end. Though the flame is very small it is extremely powerful. We visualize this needle of flame in the exact centre of the central channel, standing very straight. We now visualize that the powerful heat generated by this needle of fire ascends through the central channel in the same way that heat rises from the tip of a candle flame. Warmed by this ascending heat, the HUM at the heart channel wheel, the OM at the throat channel wheel, and the HAM at the crown channel wheel heat up until they are on the verge of melting.

At this point our concentration should be focused primarily on the short-AH in the navel channel wheel, but one part of our mind should visualize the other letters within the upper channel wheels and feel that they are reaching melting point. This entire visualization is done while holding the vase breath. Just before it becomes uncomfortable to hold it any longer, we release the breath slowly and evenly through both nostrils. We should practise this meditation until we gain proficiency in it. As mentioned earlier, we can begin with vase breathing and then, when our concentration is well developed, continue the meditation with concentration alone.

When the fire blazes within the central channel as described, we will be able to generate spontaneous great bliss as the white and red drops melt, but because these melted drops will be flowing within the central channel there will be no danger of our losing them through the sex organ.

## INNER FIRE

When we first start to practise inner fire meditation we should emphasize the first stage and remain with it until we gain some experience. Then we should move to the second stage, train in that until we gain some experience, and then progress to the third stage, and so on until we are proficient in all eight stages. When we are skilled in these we can practise them all successively in one meditation session. Since the time normally available for meditation is limited it may be difficult to devote enough time to each stage to gain the desired proficiency. In this case, for the sake of gaining familiarity with inner fire meditation, we may practise all eight stages in one sitting. This will not bring deep experience but it will allow us to become familiar with all the technical methods of the eight stages so that when we do have the time to practise thoroughly in retreat we will be able to proceed with confidence.

### MERE BLAZING AND DRIPPING

The seventh stage evolves from the previous stage and is also done in conjunction with vase breathing. Once again we find the object of meditation – the short-AH and its needle of flame – and let the flame gradually grow longer. It has the nature of very powerful fire, which ascends through the exact centre of the central channel. When it reaches the centre of the heart channel wheel it coils clockwise once round the upside-down letter HUM, thereby bringing it closer to melting. The flame then gradually continues up the central channel until it reaches the centre of the throat channel wheel where it coils clockwise once round the upright letter OM, bringing it closer to melting as well. The thread of flame then continues upwards until it reaches the centre of the crown channel wheel and touches the bottom of the upside-down letter HAM. As a result, a white drop drips from the letter just as butter melts and drips when it is held above the tongue of an open fire. At this point we visualize that the fire subsides, reducing



*Khadrub Sangye Yeshe*

## INNER FIRE

back down to a needle of flame issuing from the short-AH. During this meditation there is no need to visualize the moon cushions.

The melted white drop drips from the HAM in a long, fine thread, as thin as the thread of a spider's web. This is similar to the way in which honey drips in a long thread from a small hole punctured in a tin of honey. As it drips down, the drop dissolves into the OM at the throat, causing us to feel extremely blissful. Then it drips out of the OM and continues to descend until it reaches the heart channel wheel, where it dissolves into the HUM causing us to experience even greater bliss than before. Finally the drop reaches the navel channel wheel and dissolves into the flame of the short-AH, causing it to become even hotter, just as butter dripping onto an open fire will cause the fire to burn more intensely. As the heat of the letter increases, so does our experience of bliss. If possible, this entire visualization should be done while holding a vase breath. If this is too difficult we may do the vase breathing beforehand and then, while breathing normally, increase the length of the needle of flame and continue with the rest of this stage of the meditation.

### AN EXPLANATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BLAZING AND DRIPPING

This eighth stage is similar to the preceding one and is also done in conjunction with vase breathing. The needle of flame ascends through the central channel like a red-hot electric wire. It coils around the HUM and OM as before and ascends to the centre of the crown channel wheel. Once the flame reaches the HAM the practice begins to differ from the preceding stage. Instead of melting the white drop, the thread of fire coils clockwise once round the letter, bringing it almost to the point of melting, and then continues through the central channel, arching downwards until it reaches the point where the central channel terminates between the eyebrows.



CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

When the fire reaches the point between the eyebrows its light shines forth from the opening there, reaching instantly to the ends of space, pervading all the environments and inhabitants of the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm. The light purifies the faults and defilements of all these worlds and their inhabitants and causes them to melt into light, mix together completely, and become undifferentiated within a single small sphere of blue light. We visualize this sphere in front of us, the size of a light bulb.

At this point we visualize that all the Buddhas of the three times and the ten directions appear in the form of Heroes and Heroines in single-pointed embrace, filling the whole of space beyond the sphere of light. We visualize that rays of brilliant blue light emanate from the sphere and enter through the left nostril of each Father. This light dissolves into the indestructible drop in the heart channel wheels of the holy beings, causing them to experience uncontaminated spontaneous great bliss.

As each couple experiences this great bliss they melt into light. The Father aspects melt into white drops, and the Mother aspects into red drops. The drops deriving from each couple completely intermingle so that all that remains of each is a single drop in the nature of great bliss, which is white with a reddish tint. All these separate drops of light melt into one, which enters us through the point between our eyebrows. From here this powerful drop ascends through our central channel until it reaches the letter HAM in the centre of our crown channel wheel. It then dissolves into the letter HAM which becomes completely unified with the essence of all the Heroes and Heroines. We feel that the HAM has now become greatly blessed by the power and wisdom of the Buddhas of the three times and the ten directions. It is very important that our concentration on this is as single-pointed as possible.

We then return our attention to the navel channel wheel. As before, we see the extremely hot fire generated by the short-AH as a needle of flame. Once again this powerful



## INNER FIRE

fire ascends through the central channel until it reaches the HAM in the crown. Since at this point to visualize the HUM and the OM would be a distraction we visualize the flame going straight up the central channel to the HAM, causing this letter to melt. As it melts, the white drop drips from the letter and begins to flow down the central channel until it reaches the OM in the throat channel wheel, which we now bring back to mind. When it touches the OM this letter is transformed so that its nature becomes the synthesis of all the Heroes and Heroines. The white drop then flows down to the heart channel wheel and touches the HUM, causing it to transform in the same way, and then flows down to the navel channel wheel where it also transforms the short-AH. Now with strong concentration we feel that the short-AH, which is the nature of great bliss, is the synthesis of all the enlightened beings of the three times and the ten directions. This powerful blessing causes the heat generated by the short-AH to increase greatly.

We remain in this concentration for a while and then visualize that the blazing light of inner fire spreads throughout the sixty-four spokes of the navel channel wheel and then throughout the seventy-two thousand channels of the body, correcting all their defects, clarifying all the winds and drops, and consuming all our negativities of body, speech, and mind. In this way, our channels, winds, and drops become blessed by the power and wisdom of all the fully enlightened beings.

If we need to make our body warm through this meditation we should visualize that the light flowing within the seventy-two thousand channels is very hot. However, if we lack skill this visualization can detract from the heat in the central channel and thus prevent the proper fruits of inner fire meditation from ripening. There is even a danger that our meditation on inner fire will degenerate into an impure Dharma practice and thereby yield inferior results. As stated before, the main object of meditation on inner fire is to bless all our channels, winds, and drops; to purify all impure winds; and to eradicate every single gross and

subtle negative thought including even the most subtle dualistic conceptions that obstruct the attainment of perfect enlightenment. All these superior aims are accomplished through the experience of the light of inner fire.

Meditation on inner fire is a gradual process. If we experience much heat at the very beginning of our practice, this is probably an indication that our mind is not focused on the proper place of meditation. At the beginning, heat should be generated only within the vacuole inside the central channel at the navel channel wheel, not in the gross physical body.

There was one great Yogi called Sangye Gyatso whose monastery was in the Se region of Tibet. When he died it was winter and there was much snow on the ground. While he was passing away he remained in single-pointed meditation on clear light for one month, and because his concentration on the practice of inner fire was so powerful all the snow around the monastery melted.

If we successfully bless and purify all our channels, winds, and drops, our mind will naturally become extremely clear and lucid, and as a result we will acquire a degree of clairvoyance and miracle powers. Predictions made by a meditator who reaches this level will be very accurate. Such powers are natural by-products of meditating on inner fire, but they are not qualified miracle powers. As stated by Atisha in *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, pure, qualified miracle powers are attained only after we accomplish actual tranquil abiding.

When the channels, winds, and drops have been purified and the winds have been brought into the central channel, dualistic conceptions – the source of samsara – no longer have any foundation and so they disappear. The myriad of negative thoughts powered by the dualistic mind automatically vanishes without effort, and as a result the mind naturally develops positive qualities.

The eighth stage of meditation is called 'extraordinary' because it invokes the power and blessings of the Heroes and Heroines. It has three principal benefits: (1) it bestows

#### INNER FIRE

the blessings of the Heroes and Heroines; (2) it blesses and clarifies the channels, winds, and drops and thereby destroys negative thoughts; and (3) it causes the inner fire to ignite and blaze so that the drops will melt and flow within the central channel, thereby giving rise to spontaneous great bliss.

This concludes the first section of the meditation on inner fire. This particular practice of inner fire is known as 'the fierce one having four wheels' and is principally explained in the *Hevajra Tantra* and also in the *Samputa Tantra* and *Little Samvara Tantra*. Most of the early Yogis practised this system and accomplished perfect realizations through it, and so it is a most precious and valuable treasure.



*Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltsän*

## *Clear Light and the Four Joys*

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### BASED ON THESE, AN EXPLANATION OF THE PRACTICE OF THE FOUR JOYS AND THE NINE MIXINGS

This section is explained in two parts:

- 1 An explanation of the four joys
- 2 An explanation of the nine mixings

#### AN EXPLANATION OF THE FOUR JOYS

There are two sets of four joys, those of generation stage and those of completion stage, and it is the latter that will be described here. Experiencing the four joys of completion stage depends upon the winds entering, abiding, and dissolving within the central channel. The method by which this is accomplished is the eight stages of meditation on inner fire. If we practise these eight stages successfully it is certain that we will be able to gain the desired control over our inner winds. Because it is very important to recognize when the winds enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel we need to become familiar with the signs associated with each of these stages. Therefore, before discussing the four joys it will be helpful to present an extensive description of these signs.

We can tell whether or not the winds have entered the central channel by checking our breathing. Normally there are imbalances in our breath – more air is exhaled through one nostril than through the other, and the air begins to leave one nostril before the other. However, when the winds have entered the central channel as a result of the eight stages of meditation, the pressure and the timing of

the breath will be the same for both nostrils during inhalation and exhalation. Therefore, the first sign to be noticed is that we will be breathing evenly through both nostrils. Another noticeable imbalance in the normal breath is that the inhalation is stronger than the exhalation, or vice-versa. The second sign that the winds have entered the central channel is that the pressure of the inhalation will be exactly equal to that of the exhalation.

There are also two signs indicating that the winds are abiding in the central channel: (1) our breathing becomes weaker and weaker, eventually ceasing completely, and (2) all abdominal movement normally associated with the breath stops. In the normal course of events if our breathing were to stop we would be filled with panic and think that we were close to death, but if we are able to stop breathing through the force of meditation, far from panicking, our mind will become even more confident, comfortable, and flexible.

When the winds are abiding within the central channel we no longer have to rely upon gross air to survive. Normally our breathing stops only at the time of death. During sleep our breathing becomes much more subtle, but it never stops completely. During completion stage meditation, however, our breath can come to a complete halt without our becoming unconscious. After the winds have been abiding in the central channel for five or ten minutes it is possible that they will escape again into the right and left channels. If this happens we will resume breathing. Air flowing through the nostrils is an indication that the winds are not abiding within the central channel.

As mentioned before, meditation on inner fire causes the winds not only to enter and abide within the central channel, but also to dissolve there. What are the signs that the winds have dissolved within the central channel? There are seven winds that must dissolve, and each has a specific sign indicating that its dissolution has been completed. The seven winds are:

CLEAR LIGHT AND THE FOUR JOYS

- 1 The earth element wind
- 2 The water element wind
- 3 The fire element wind
- 4 The wind element wind
- 5 The wind mounted by the mind of white appearance
- 6 The wind mounted by the mind of red increase
- 7 The wind mounted by the mind of black near-attainment

The first four of these winds are gross and the last three are subtle. These seven winds dissolve gradually in sequence, and with each dissolution there is a particular appearance.

The earth element wind supports and increases everything that is associated with the earth element in our body, such as our bones, cartilage, and fingernails. When this wind dissolves within the central channel we perceive an appearance known as the 'mirage-like appearance'. This is like the appearance of shimmering water that is sometimes seen on the floor of a desert. There are three levels on which this mirage-like appearance is perceived, depending upon the degree to which the earth element wind has dissolved into the central channel. If the dissolution is only slight the appearance will be vague, the least clear, and very difficult to recognize; if the dissolution is almost complete the appearance will be clearer and more vivid; and if the wind dissolves completely the appearance will be unmistakably clear and vivid, and impossible not to perceive. When the earth element wind has dissolved and the mirage-like appearance has been perceived, the next wind will dissolve and a different appearance will manifest. The more completely the first wind dissolves, the more vivid will be our perception of this next appearance.

The second wind to dissolve is the water element wind, which supports and increases the liquid elements of the body such as the blood. The appearance associated with this dissolution is called the 'smoke-like appearance'. Some

texts say that this appearance is like smoke billowing from a chimney, but this is not the actual appearance. There is an appearance like billowing smoke, but this occurs just prior to the actual dissolution of the water element wind. It is not until this initial appearance has subsided that the actual smoke-like appearance is perceived. This is like thin wisps of wafting blue smoke drifting in the air in a slowly swirling haze. As before, there are three levels on which this appearance is perceived depending upon the degree to which the water element has dissolved.

Next comes the dissolution of the fire element wind. This wind supports and increases the fire element in the body and is responsible for bodily heat and so forth. The sign that this wind has dissolved is the 'sparkling-fireflies-like appearance'. This appearance is sometimes described in terms of an open crackling fire seen at night, with the mass of ascending sparks swirling above the fire resembling the sparkling-fireflies-like appearance. Once again, there are three levels on which this appearance is perceived depending upon the degree of dissolution.

Following this, the wind element wind dissolves. This is the wind mounted by gross conceptual thought. It powers gross dualistic appearances and the gross conceptual thoughts that result from holding these appearances to be true. The sign that the fourth of the gross winds has started to dissolve is the 'candle-flame-like appearance'. This is like the steady, erect flame of a dying butter lamp or candle in a draughtless room. Once again there are three levels on which this appearance is perceived.

When the earth element wind has dissolved within the central channel and the power of the earth element is thereby diminished, it may seem as though the water element has increased because as the power of the former element diminishes, the latter is perceived more clearly. For this reason the dissolution of the earth element wind into the central channel is often described as 'the earth element dissolving into the water element'. For similar reasons the subsequent dissolutions are referred to as 'the water



element dissolving into the fire element', 'the fire element dissolving into the wind element', and 'the wind element dissolving into consciousness'.

After the candle-flame-like appearance, all gross conceptual minds have ceased functioning because the winds upon which they are mounted have dissolved and disappeared. When the meditator has completed the dissolution of the fourth wind, the first subtle mind – the mind of white appearance – arises. With this mind the meditator perceives an appearance of whiteness like an empty sky on a clear autumn night pervaded by the bright light of the moon. As before there are three levels of clarity to this appearance depending upon the ability of the meditator.

At this point the mind is completely free from gross conceptions such as the eighty indicative conceptions listed below, and the only perception is that of white empty space. Ordinary beings also perceive this appearance, for example at the time of death, but they are unable to recognize it or to prolong it because at this stage the ordinary gross level of mindfulness has ceased to function. However, even though there is no gross mindfulness at this stage, those who have trained properly according to the practices of Secret Mantra are able to use the subtle mindfulness they have developed during meditation to recognize and prolong the white appearance, something that ordinary beings are unable to do.

When the subtle wind mounted by the mind of white appearance dissolves, the mind of red increase arises. This mind and its wind are more subtle than the mind and wind of white appearance. The sign that occurs when this mind arises is an appearance like an empty sky pervaded by red sunlight. Once again, there are three levels of clarity to this appearance.

When the subtle wind mounted by the mind of red increase dissolves, the mind of black near-attainment arises. This mind and its mounted wind are even more subtle than the mind and wind of red increase. The mind of black near-attainment has two levels: the upper part and the lower

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

part. The upper part of the mind of black near-attainment still possesses subtle mindfulness but the lower part has no mindfulness at all. It is experienced as an overwhelming unconsciousness, like that of a very deep faint. At this point we would appear to others to be dead.

The sign that occurs when the mind of black near-attainment arises is an appearance like a very black, empty sky. This appearance comes with the upper part of the mind of black near-attainment, immediately after the cessation of the mind of red increase. As the experience of black near-attainment progresses and we approach complete unconsciousness our subtle mindfulness ceases. The more strongly the wind dissolves into the central channel, the more deeply unconscious we become during the mind of black near-attainment; and the more deeply unconscious we become at this time, the more vividly we will perceive the subsequent appearance of clear light. This is similar to the experience of someone who stays in a dark room for a long time; the longer he stays there, the brighter the outside world will appear when he eventually emerges. Thus the degree of brightness experienced depends upon the depth and duration of the previous darkness.

When the subtle wind mounted by the mind of black near-attainment dissolves, the mind of clear light arises. This mind and its mounted wind are the most subtle of all. The sign that occurs when this mind arises is an appearance like an autumn sky at dawn – perfectly clear and empty.

When the mind of clear light arises a very subtle mindfulness is restored, according to the meditator's level of development. The very subtle wind and the very subtle mind that is mounted upon it reside in the indestructible drop in the centre of the heart channel wheel. Normally the very subtle mind does not function, but at the time of the clear light it manifests and becomes active. If we have trained in the techniques of Secret Mantra and have become proficient in them we will be able to perceive and maintain the appearance of clear light. Eventually, by learning to use the very subtle mindfulness developed at this stage, we

#### CLEAR LIGHT AND THE FOUR JOYS

will be able to focus our very subtle mind on emptiness, and in this way use the mind of clear light as the means for attaining a Buddha's Truth Body.

Our mind cannot become more subtle than the mind of clear light. During the first four appearances (mirage-like, smoke-like, sparkling-fireflies-like, and candle-flame-like) the gross winds dissolve; and during the next three (white appearance, red increase, and black near-attainment) the subtle winds dissolve. Then, with the appearance of the clear light, the very subtle mind and its mounted wind manifest and become active. These cannot dissolve because they are indestructible. After death they simply pass to the next life.

Of the three subtle winds mounted by the three subtle minds, the least subtle is that mounted by the mind of white appearance. This mind is called 'white appearance' because all that is perceived is an appearance of white, empty space. It is also called 'empty' because the mind of white appearance perceives this white space as empty. At this stage the appearance of white and the appearance of empty are of equal strength.

When the wind mounted by the mind of white appearance dissolves, the second of the three subtle minds – the mind of red increase – arises. The mounted wind of this mind is more subtle than that mounted by the mind of white appearance. This mind is called 'red increase' because the appearance of red space is increasing. It is also called 'very empty' because the appearance of empty is stronger than that of the previous mind. At this stage the appearance of empty is stronger than the appearance of red.

When the wind of the mind of red increase dissolves, the third subtle mind, the mind of black near-attainment, arises. This mind is called 'near-attainment' because the experience of clear light is now close at hand. It is also called 'great empty' because the appearance of empty is even greater than that of the previous mind.

When the third subtle wind, that mounted by the mind of black near-attainment, dissolves, the mind of clear light arises. This mind is called 'clear light' because its nature

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

is very lucid and clear, and because it perceives an appearance like the light of an autumn dawn. It is also called 'all-empty' because it is empty of all gross and subtle winds and perceives only an empty appearance. The object of the mind of clear light is very similar in appearance to the object perceived by a Superior being in meditative equipoise on emptiness. Collectively, the four minds – the mind of white appearance, the mind of red increase, the mind of black near-attainment, and the mind of clear light – are referred to as the 'four empties'.

If a Secret Mantra meditator is highly accomplished, he or she will have a very vivid experience of clear light and will be able to maintain that experience for a long time. Just how vivid our experience of clear light is depends upon how vivid the previous seven appearances were, and this in turn depends upon how strongly the winds dissolve into the central channel. If the winds dissolve very strongly the meditator will have a vivid experience of all the appearances and will be able to prolong the experience of each one. The longer we are able to remain with the experience of each appearance, the longer we will be able to remain with the clear light itself.

If a person dies a violent death, he or she progresses through these appearances very rapidly, but if the death is slow or natural the appearances will be experienced more gradually and for longer. If we have developed the realization of isolated mind of completion stage – as will be explained in more detail later – we will be able to have exactly the same experience of these appearances while in deep concentration that we would have if we were actually dying. Moreover, if we have trained well in this meditation we will be able to meditate on emptiness throughout all four empties, except during the time spent in the swoon, or faint, of the mind of black near-attainment.

To be able to perceive the four empties clearly, exactly as in the death process, we must be able to dissolve all the winds into the indestructible drop in the centre of the heart channel wheel. If they dissolve into another channel wheel

## CLEAR LIGHT AND THE FOUR JOYS

we will experience similar appearances but they will be artificial, not the true appearances that occur when the winds dissolve into the indestructible drop, as they do at the time of death.

Although an accomplished meditator can abide within the clear light for a long time, he or she must eventually move on. When we arise from the clear light, the first thing we experience is the mind of black near-attainment of reverse order. Then we experience in sequence the mind of red increase, the mind of white appearance, the eighty gross conceptual minds, the minds of the candle-flame-like appearance and so forth, as the minds evolve in an order that is the reverse of that in which they previously dissolved.

Thus the mind of clear light is the foundation of all other minds. When the gross and subtle minds and their mounted winds dissolve into the indestructible drop at the heart we remain with only the clear light, and then it is from this clear light that all the other minds evolve, each one grosser than the previous one.

Generally, it is said that there are twenty-five gross phenomena that dissolve when a sentient being passes through the process of death. They are:

### **The five aggregates:**

- 1 The aggregate of form
- 2 The aggregate of feeling
- 3 The aggregate of discrimination
- 4 The aggregate of compositional factors
- 5 The aggregate of consciousness

### **The four elements:**

- 6 The earth element
- 7 The water element
- 8 The fire element
- 9 The wind element



*Drubchen Gendun Gyaltän*

**The six powers:**

- 10 The eye sense power
- 11 The ear sense power
- 12 The nose sense power
- 13 The tongue sense power
- 14 The body sense power
- 15 The mental power

**The five objects:**

- 16 The visual forms included within our own continuum
- 17 The sounds included within our own continuum
- 18 The smells included within our own continuum
- 19 The tastes included within our own continuum
- 20 The tactile objects included within our own continuum

**The five basic wisdoms:**

- 21 The basic mirror-like wisdom
- 22 The basic wisdom of equality
- 23 The basic wisdom of individual analysis
- 24 The basic wisdom of accomplishing activities
- 25 The basic wisdom of the Dharmadhatu

The first four of these groups are easily understood. As for the five basic wisdoms, a brief explanation of them follows. The basic mirror-like wisdom is so called because it is an ordinary mind that can perceive many objects simultaneously, just as a mirror can simultaneously reflect many different forms. The basic wisdom of equality is the mind that remembers experiences as having been pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral; the basic wisdom of individual analysis is the mind that remembers the individual names of our friends, relatives, and so forth; the basic wisdom of accomplishing activities is the mind that remembers normal external activities, purposes, and so forth; and the basic wisdom of the Dharmadhatu is the mind that is the seed of the Wisdom Truth Body of a Buddha.

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

At the time of death most people experience the dissolution of these twenty-five objects in the order indicated below, with certain phenomena dissolving in relation to each of the five aggregates:

**The five phenomena on the level of the aggregate of form:**

- 1 The aggregate of form
- 2 The basic mirror-like wisdom
- 3 The earth element
- 4 The eye sense power
- 5 The visual forms included within our own continuum

**The five phenomena on the level of the aggregate of feeling:**

- 6 The aggregate of feeling
- 7 The basic wisdom of equality
- 8 The water element
- 9 The ear sense power
- 10 The sounds included within our own continuum

**The five phenomena on the level of the aggregate of discrimination:**

- 11 The aggregate of discrimination
- 12 The basic wisdom of individual analysis
- 13 The fire element
- 14 The nose sense power
- 15 The smells included within our own continuum

**The five phenomena on the level of the aggregate of compositional factors:**

- 16 The aggregate of compositional factors
- 17 The basic wisdom of accomplishing activities
- 18 The wind element
- 19 The tongue sense power
- 20 The tastes included within our own continuum



**The five phenomena on the level of the aggregate of consciousness:**

- 21 The eighty indicative conceptions
- 22 The mind of white appearance
- 23 The mind of red increase
- 24 The mind of black near-attainment
- 25 The mind of the clear light of death

The external signs associated with the dissolution of each of the five phenomena on the level of the aggregate of form are:

- 1 The limbs of the body become thinner and the body weakens and loses its power
- 2 Our vision becomes unclear and blurred
- 3 The body becomes thin, the limbs loose, and we have a feeling of sinking into the ground
- 4 We can no longer open or close our eyes
- 5 The lustrous complexion of the body is lost and our beauty diminishes

The internal sign associated with these five dissolutions is the mirage-like appearance. This appearance arises because when the wind of the earth element dissolves within the central channel the power of the earth element decreases and so it appears as if the power of the water element becomes stronger.

The external signs associated with the dissolution of each of the five phenomena on the level of the aggregate of feeling are:

- 6 The body awareness no longer experiences pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feelings
- 7 We no longer experience individual feelings of mental happiness, mental suffering, or mental indifference
- 8 The liquids of the body begin to dry up
- 9 We no longer hear external sounds

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

- 10 The inner sound of the whirring in the ears is no longer perceived

The internal sign associated with these five dissolutions is the smoke-like appearance. This appearance arises because the power of the water element is decreasing and so it appears as if the power of the fire element is becoming stronger.

The external signs associated with the dissolution of each of the five phenomena on the level of the aggregate of discrimination are:

- 11 We can no longer recognize close relatives and friends  
12 We can no longer remember the names of close relatives and friends  
13 The heat leaves the body and the digestion stops  
14 Our inhalation becomes weak and shallow while our exhalation becomes long and strong; we begin to wheeze and make the sound of the death rattle  
15 We can no longer detect smells, including our own odour

The internal sign associated with these five dissolutions is the sparkling-fireflies-like appearance. This appearance arises because the power of the fire element is decreasing and so it appears as if the power of the wind element is becoming stronger.

The external signs associated with the dissolution of each of the five phenomena on the level of the aggregate of compositional factors are:

- 16 We can no longer move  
17 We can no longer remember the purpose of work and activities or even what they were during the life now ending  
18 There is no longer any inhalation or exhalation

CLEAR LIGHT AND THE FOUR JOYS

through the nostrils; all the breathing stops now  
that the ten winds have gathered at the heart  
19 The tongue becomes short, thick, and blue at  
its root, and we can no longer speak clearly  
20 We can no longer experience tastes

Also at this time the body awareness can no longer experience any tactile objects such as roughness and smoothness, hardness and softness, heat and cold. This is due to the dissolution of the body sense power and the tactile objects included within our own continuum. The internal sign associated with all of these dissolutions is the candle-flame-like appearance.

At this point most of the gross minds and their winds have dissolved; what remains is the experience of the dissolutions of the aggregate of consciousness. This aggregate has gross and subtle levels. The last gross mind to dissolve is necessarily one of the eighty indicative conceptions. Which one of these it is depends upon the dying person's activities and habits of the life now ending. For example, if he or she had trained extensively in bodhichitta, the last gross mind to arise could well be that of compassion. On the other hand, the last gross conception in the continuum of someone with an unruly mind might well be anger or attachment. Now that the candle-flame-like appearance has arisen, the last of these eighty minds finally absorbs along with the gross mental power and the basic wisdom of the Dharmadhatu.

Although we have countless gross conceptual minds, they are all included within the eighty gross conceptions. These, in turn, are divided into three groups: thirty-three gross conceptions indicative of the mind of white appearance, forty indicative of the mind of red increase, and seven indicative of the mind of black near-attainment. They are called 'indicative' because these conceptions are conclusive reasons indicating the existence of the subtle minds from which they arise. The continuum of the first thirty-three conceptions originally arises from the mind of white

appearance and dissolves back into that mind at death. Likewise the continuum of the next forty conceptions originally arises from the mind of red increase and dissolves back into that mind at death, and the continuum of the last seven conceptions originally arises from the mind of black near-attainment and dissolves back into that mind at death. Thus, although all eighty gross conceptions dissolve before the mind of white appearance arises, their continuums do not fully dissolve at this time. The continuum of the first thirty-three conceptions finally dissolves at the time of the mind of white appearance, the continuum of the next forty conceptions at the time of the mind of red increase, and the continuum of the last seven conceptions at the time of the mind of black near-attainment.

Normally, we have no awareness of the minds of white appearance, red increase, and black near-attainment because for ordinary beings these minds occur only weakly when falling asleep and slightly more strongly during the death process; but at these times we have no gross mindfulness. However, we can know of the existence of these three subtle minds through our experience of the eighty gross conceptions, which arise from them and are their effects. By observing the first thirty-three conceptions, for example, we can see that the minds themselves and their mounted winds arise quite strongly, or grossly. Similarly we can observe that the minds and winds of the next forty conceptions arise less strongly, and those of the last seven conceptions less strongly still. From this we can infer the existence of three types of subtle mind and wind that give rise to these gross conceptions, each one being progressively more subtle than the previous one, and in this way we can know of the existence of the minds of white appearance, red increase, and black near-attainment. Thus, because these eighty gross conceptions are conclusive reasons that are effects indicating the existence of their causes, they are said to be 'indicative' of the three subtle minds.

These three groups of gross conceptions are listed as follows:

**The thirty-three conceptions indicative of the mind of white appearance:**

- 1 Great separation from attachment: a mind not desiring an object
- 2 Middling separation from attachment
- 3 Small separation from attachment
- 4 Mental going and coming: a mind going to external objects and coming to internal ones
- 5 Great sorrow: the mental anxiety experienced upon separation from an attractive object
- 6 Middling sorrow
- 7 Small sorrow
- 8 Peace: a mind remaining peacefully
- 9 Conceptuality: a mind distracted towards an external object
- 10 Great fear: the mind of fright generated upon meeting an unpleasant object
- 11 Middling fear
- 12 Small fear
- 13 Great craving: a mind attracted to a pleasant object
- 14 Middling craving
- 15 Small craving
- 16 Grasping: a mind thoroughly holding to objects of desire
- 17 Non-virtue: doubt with respect to virtuous actions
- 18 Hunger: a mind desiring food
- 19 Thirst: a mind desiring drink
- 20 Great feeling: feelings of pleasure, pain, or indifference
- 21 Middling feeling
- 22 Small feeling
- 23 Conception of a cognizer
- 24 Conception of cognizing
- 25 Conception of a cognized object
- 26 Investigation: a mind investigating what is suitable and unsuitable

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

- 27 Shame: a mind that abandons misconduct for reasons that concern oneself
- 28 Compassion: a mind wishing for others to be separated from suffering
- 29 Mercy: a mind thoroughly protecting an observed object
- 30 Desire to meet the attractive
- 31 Qualm: a mind not abiding in certainty
- 32 Collection: a mind of gathering possessions
- 33 Jealousy: a mind disturbed by others' good fortune or good qualities

**The forty conceptions indicative of the mind of red increase:**

- 1 Attachment: a mind attached to an object not yet attained
- 2 Adherence: a mind attached to an object already attained
- 3 Great joy: a joyous mind upon seeing what is attractive
- 4 Middling joy
- 5 Small joy
- 6 Rejoicing: a happy mind from having achieved a desired object
- 7 Rapture: a mind repeatedly experiencing a desired object
- 8 Amazement: contemplating an object that did not arise before
- 9 Excitement: a mind distracted through perceiving an attractive object
- 10 Contentment: a mind satisfied with a pleasant object
- 11 Embracing: a mind wishing to embrace
- 12 Kissing: a mind wishing to kiss
- 13 Sucking: a mind wishing to suck
- 14 Stability: a mind of unchanging continuum
- 15 Effort: a mind tending towards virtue

CLEAR LIGHT AND THE FOUR JOYS

- 16 Pride: a mind considering oneself to be high
- 17 Activity: a mind of completing an activity
- 18 Robbery: a mind wishing to steal wealth
- 19 Force: a mind wishing to conquer others
- 20 Delight: a mind becoming accustomed to the path of virtue
- 21 The great innate-born: a mind engaging in non-virtue because of arrogance
- 22 The middling innate-born
- 23 The small innate-born
- 24 Vehemence: wishing to debate with the excellent for no reason
- 25 Flirtation: desiring to play upon seeing the attractive
- 26 Angry disposition: a mind of resentment
- 27 Virtue: a mind desiring to put effort into virtuous actions
- 28 Clear word and truth: a mind wishing to speak so that others can understand; a mind that does not change its discrimination of the facts
- 29 Untruth: a mind wishing to speak having changed its discrimination of the facts
- 30 Definiteness: a mind of very steady intent
- 31 Non-grasping: a mind not desiring to hold an object
- 32 Donor: a mind wishing to give away possessions
- 33 Exhortation: a mind wishing to exhort the lazy to practise Dharma
- 34 Heroism: a mind wishing to overcome enemies such as the delusions
- 35 Non-shame: a mind engaging in non-virtue, not abandoning misconduct despite our own disapproval or religious prohibitions
- 36 Pretension: a mind deceiving others through hypocrisy
- 37 Tightness: a mind of sharp conscientiousness
- 38 Badness: a mind used to a bad view
- 39 Non-gentleness: a mind desiring to injure others
- 40 Dishonesty: a mind of crookedness

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

red drops received from our parents at conception and present throughout life – has not yet opened. Actual death occurs when the drop opens and the very subtle mind and its mounted wind depart to the next life.

During the experience of the clear light of death all the winds dissolve into the indestructible drop at the heart. After this process is completed, the very subtle white and red drops constituting the indestructible drop finally separate and the very subtle mind and its mounted wind depart to the next life. The general external signs that we have actually died and that the very subtle mind and wind have departed is that the white drop leaves through the sex organ and the red drop through the nostrils. However, these signs do not occur for those who die a sudden or violent death.

Immediately the experience of clear light ceases, the profound swoon of the mind of black near-attainment of reverse order arises. This is the first mind of the intermediate state. Then, as mentioned above, we experience in sequence the mind of red increase, the mind of white appearance, the re-emergence of the eighty indicative conceptions and the candle-flame-like appearance, followed by the sparkling-fireflies-like appearance, the smoke-like appearance, and finally the mirage-like appearance, along with their associated consciousnesses. In short, after the clear light of death the intermediate state being experiences the remaining seven signs in reverse order.

If within seven days an intermediate state being has not found karmically appropriate conditions in which to take rebirth it will experience a small death, and then take another intermediate state body. When one intermediate state life comes to an end we experience the eight signs from the mirage-like appearance to the clear light; and when the next intermediate state life begins we experience the seven signs of reverse order, from black near-attainment to the mirage-like appearance.

An intermediate state being will definitely find a place of rebirth within forty-nine days. When this place becomes



#### CLEAR LIGHT AND THE FOUR JOYS

available he or she will die and perceive the eight signs from the mirage-like appearance to the clear light. If, for example, that being has the karma to be reborn as a human, then when the clear light experience comes to an end the very subtle mind and its mounted wind will enter into the mother's womb. The first mind at conception in the womb is that of black near-attainment, after which the remaining signs of the reverse order are gradually experienced. Then, as the foetus develops, the mind of the newly conceived being gradually becomes more and more gross.

From this brief explanation of death, intermediate state, and rebirth, we can gain a rough understanding of the process that must be controlled and transformed by the practitioner of Vajrayana Mahamudra.

Thus far in this text the term 'clear light' has been used to refer to several different types of experience. Because the experience of clear light is of central importance in Mahamudra meditation it will be helpful at this stage to explain briefly the different types of clear light mind.

Clear light is defined as the very subtle mind that arises through the force of the mind of black near-attainment and that is experienced directly after the mind of black near-attainment has ceased. The clear light of death, for example, can be experienced only after the cessation of the seventh sign of dying. There are two types of clear light: mother clear light and son clear light. The former is the clear light that arises naturally during sleep and death, and the latter is the clear light that arises only when the winds have dissolved within the central channel through the force of meditation.

There are two types of son clear light: the isolated mind of clear light and the non-isolated mind of clear light. The term 'isolated mind' in general refers to a mind that is isolated from the winds upon which gross minds are mounted. More specifically, it is applied to any of the four empties that arise when, through the force of meditation, the winds dissolve into the indestructible drop at the heart



*Drungpa Tsöndru Gyaltsän*

#### CLEAR LIGHT AND THE FOUR JOYS

channel wheel. Hence, the mind of white appearance that arises through the force of the winds dissolving into the indestructible drop at the heart by means of meditation is an isolated mind, as are the minds of red increase and black near-attainment that arise when the winds dissolve into the indestructible drop at the heart by means of meditation. However, none of these is an isolated mind of *clear light*. This mind develops only after the third empty, the isolated mind of black near-attainment, has ceased.

As for the non-isolated mind of clear light, this is the mind of clear light that arises when, through meditation, the winds dissolve into the central channel through any of the nine doors other than the heart channel wheel. As before, such a mind can be experienced only after the cessation of the mind of black near-attainment, but not the mind of black near-attainment that arises when the winds dissolve within the central channel via the heart. It should be noted however that the non-isolated mind of clear light is isolated in the sense that it is removed from the gross winds.

Son clear light can also be divided into example clear light and meaning clear light. The former is a son clear light that realizes emptiness conceptually, by means of a generic image, and the latter is a son clear light that realizes emptiness directly, without a generic image.

Example clear light also has two divisions: the non-isolated mind of example clear light and the isolated mind of example clear light. The former is a son clear light that realizes emptiness by means of a generic image when the winds have dissolved into the central channel at any point other than the indestructible drop at the heart, and the latter is a son clear light that realizes emptiness by means of a generic image when the winds have dissolved into the indestructible drop at the heart.

The isolated mind of example clear light has two divisions: the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light and the isolated mind of non-ultimate example clear light. The former is the clear light that arises through the force of all the winds, including the entire pervading wind,

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

dissolving into the indestructible drop at the heart, and the latter is the clear light that arises through the force of any of the winds, other than the entire pervading wind, dissolving, even partially, into the indestructible drop. The experiences of both ultimate example clear light and non-ultimate example clear light depend upon the knots of the heart channel wheel being loosened. This is because both ultimate example clear light and non-ultimate example clear light are isolated minds. The methods for attaining these isolated minds are explained in the five stages of completion stage.

It is possible to loosen the knots of the heart channel wheel partially through such meditations as inner fire and the vajra recitation of the *Guhyasamaja Tantra*. Although the eight stages of the inner fire meditation described earlier focus primarily on the navel channel wheel, once the central channel has been penetrated through any door it is relatively easy to proceed with loosening the knots at the heart. However, by relying upon these meditations alone, we cannot loosen the knots at the heart channel wheel completely and thereby cause the entire pervading wind throughout the body to dissolve into the indestructible drop before death. Therefore, when the power of such techniques as inner fire and vajra recitation has been completed, the Secret Mantra practitioner must either accept an action mudra or wait until the clear light of death as explained below. Without accepting an action mudra it is not possible before death for meditation alone to cause the entire pervading wind to dissolve into the indestructible drop at the heart and thereby facilitate the attainment of the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light. However, a fully qualified Secret Mantra practitioner who does not accept an action mudra can experience the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light during the experience of the clear light of death.

Once the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light has been attained before death, it is definite that the meditator will attain enlightenment in that life. When such

#### CLEAR LIGHT AND THE FOUR JOYS

a meditator emerges from the session in which the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light is attained, he or she will automatically attain the impure illusory body. This is called 'impure' because the practitioner has not yet abandoned the obstructions to liberation. This is because he or she has not yet attained the superior paths of Secret Mantra, which realize emptiness directly with the mind of spontaneous great bliss. If a practitioner who has attained the impure illusory body meditates on emptiness continuously, he or she will eventually attain meaning clear light, and at the same time attain the superior paths of Secret Mantra. When this meditator emerges from the meditative equipoise of meaning clear light he or she will automatically attain the pure illusory body, which later will transform into the Form Body of a fully enlightened Buddha. In this way, a meditator who has attained the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light before death is assured of attaining enlightenment in that life.

If the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light is attained at death, then the clear light of death itself will transform into the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light and, instead of passing into the intermediate state, the meditator will attain the illusory body. It is with this illusory body that enlightenment is attained. Sometimes it is said that in this case the meditator becomes a Buddha in the intermediate state, or with an intermediate state body, but in fact such a meditator's body is not an actual intermediate state body because he or she has attained the illusory body, which is a Deity's body.

According to Secret Mantra, the eighth sign at death, the clear light of death, is the basic truth body; the intermediate state body that follows is the basic enjoyment body; and the body in which rebirth is taken is the basic emanation body. These three are not the actual Truth Body, Enjoyment Body, and Emanation Body of a Buddha, but are merely the bases that are purified during the generation and completion stages of Secret Mantra practice and thereby transformed into the three resultant bodies of a Buddha.

## CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

The three basic bodies are purified directly by completion stage meditation. The ordinary clear light of death is purified by the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light. When this isolated mind meditates on emptiness it becomes the Mahamudra that is the union of bliss and emptiness. By experiencing the great bliss nature of clear light and meditating on emptiness with this isolated mind, the meditator will avoid experiencing ordinary death. Because the meditator has purified the clear light of death in this way, he or she will also avoid experiencing the ordinary intermediate state – the mind and body of which have as their substantial cause the ordinary clear light of death and its mounted wind – and will attain instead the illusory body. The isolated mind of ultimate example clear light becomes the mind of the illusory body and the wind upon which it is mounted becomes the illusory body itself.

A meditator who can purify the ordinary clear light of death and the ordinary intermediate state in this way will naturally be able to purify ordinary rebirth as well, and transform it into the spiritual path. The key to purifying these three bases is the attainment of the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light. This isolated mind is like the alchemical elixir that can change base metals into gold, in that it transforms ordinary death, intermediate state, and rebirth into the three holy bodies of a fully enlightened Buddha.

In both generation stage and completion stage of Secret Mantra it is important to have a clear understanding of three things: the bases that are purified, what purifies these bases, and the results of this purification. The bases that are purified are the same in both stages: the basic truth body (ordinary death), the basic enjoyment body (ordinary intermediate state), and the basic emanation body (ordinary rebirth). However, the means by which they are purified are different in each stage. In completion stage the ordinary clear light of death is purified directly by the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light, ordinary intermediate state by the illusory body, and ordinary

rebirth by the yoga of emanations of the illusory body. In generation stage practices these three ordinary bases are purified by the three yogas known as 'bringing the three bodies into the path'. These three yogas purify their bases indirectly, and so the generation stage practices are like a rehearsal for the actual purifications that take place in completion stage. If our generation stage meditations are successful our completion stage meditations will also be very powerful, and when these are successful the three bases can be purified without much difficulty. The results of this purification are the three bodies of a Buddha: the resultant Truth Body, the resultant Enjoyment Body, and the resultant Emanation Body.

Now that the discussion of the ways in which the winds enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel has been completed, it is possible to proceed with an explanation of the method by which the four joys are produced through the practice of inner fire.

By meditating for a sustained period of time on the short-AH within the centre of the navel channel wheel, and by mixing our mind thoroughly with this object of meditation, we will be able to cause the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel as previously described. As a result of these winds entering the door of the navel channel wheel, the downward-voiding wind, which is located just below this channel wheel, will move upwards. This in turn will ignite the inner fire, visualized as the letter short-AH, and cause it to blaze. The heat generated by the blazing of the inner fire will melt the white drop in the crown channel wheel, which is visualized as an upside-down letter HAM, and it will begin to flow downwards through the central channel. It is this movement of the white drop flowing gently down the central channel that gives rise to the experience of joy, or bliss.

As the drop flows down to the centre of the throat channel wheel we experience the first joy, called simply 'joy'.

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

By stabilizing our meditative concentration on the OM visualized in the throat centre we will be able to experience this first joy for a prolonged period of time. The first stage of joy will be experienced for as long as the white drop does not flow past the throat channel wheel.

After remaining for a time in this channel wheel the white drop should be allowed to continue down the central channel. As it flows down to the centre of the heart channel wheel we will experience the second of the four joys. This is known as 'supreme joy' because the bliss experienced at this time is greater than that of the first joy. Again, we will be able to maintain this blissful experience by concentrating on the letter HUM in the heart centre.

After remaining in supreme joy for a while we should allow the white drop to flow down to the centre of the navel channel wheel. When this happens we will experience the third and even greater joy, known as 'extraordinary joy'. If our meditation on inner fire has been successful we will be able to maintain this experience of extraordinary joy for as long as we wish.

When the white drop leaves the navel channel wheel it flows down the central channel until it reaches the tip of the sex organ. This gives rise to the fourth of the four joys, known as 'spontaneous great joy', which is a stage of spontaneous great bliss. This blissful experience is superior to the three preceding joys and can be maintained for a long time. In ordinary beings, when the white drop reaches the tip of the sex organ it is soon released and the strength of the blissful experience quickly diminishes. For an accomplished Secret Mantra meditator, however, this does not happen. Because the Yogi has caused the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel and has gained control over the downward-voiding wind, the white drop will flow only within the central channel and thus can be held at the tip of the sex organ without being released.

When we have attained this blissful experience we should use the mind of spontaneous great joy to meditate



on emptiness, the lack of inherent existence. After remaining with this experience for a time we should reverse the flow of the white drop and cause it to move upwards through the central channel. Until we become accustomed to this meditation, we will need a great deal of concentration to accomplish this reversal. With practice, however, we will be able to reverse the flow of the white drop quite naturally and with little effort.

As the white drop flows upwards we will experience four increasingly powerful states of joy. Because the white drop is now flowing upwards, these are called the 'four joys of reverse order'. Each of these is a stage of spontaneous great bliss and should be conjoined with meditation on emptiness.

The first joy of reverse order arises as the white drop flows up to the navel channel wheel. As it flows up to the heart we experience the supreme joy of reverse order, and as it flows up to the throat we experience the extraordinary joy of reverse order. Finally, as the white drop flows up to the centre of the crown channel wheel we experience the spontaneous great joy of reverse order. This is the highest of all the experiences of joy. When it occurs we are pervaded by tremendous bliss and we are able to remain within this experience for a very long time. In fact, we will continue to experience this bliss unceasingly, even when we are no longer engaged in meditation. The practice of experiencing these stages of spontaneous great bliss and using these minds to meditate on emptiness is the very essence of completion stage, and we can beneficially spend our entire life engaged in it.

It was mentioned earlier that Sutra and Secret Mantra use different levels of mind to meditate on the object emptiness. The most powerful of all such minds is that of spontaneous great bliss. It has far greater power to destroy the obstructions to liberation and omniscience than any other mind because it is completely free from gross conceptual thoughts and dualistic appearances. Gross conceptions cannot disturb the mind of spontaneous great bliss

because the winds supporting such conceptions have already been dissolved within the central channel and thus have ceased to function. Because there is no longer any danger of interference from these gross conceptions we are able to meditate on emptiness with great power and clarity. The subjective mind and the object emptiness mix indistinguishably like water mixing with water.

In addition to being the supreme method for eliminating the obstructions to liberation and omniscience, this meditation is also the supreme method for accomplishing the holy bodies of a Buddha. The mind of spontaneous great bliss is the substantial cause of a Buddha's Truth Body and the wind upon which it is mounted is the substantial cause of a Buddha's Form Body. From this we can understand that meditation on spontaneous great bliss is also the best method for completing the two collections of wisdom and merit, which are the causes of the Truth Body and Form Body respectively.

A meditator who is successful in these practices need not engage in any other spiritual activity. For those who are fortunate enough to be proficient in such methods, all their daily actions – whether walking, eating, or whatever – help to complete the collections of wisdom and merit. Secret Mantra is called the 'quick path' because one single practice, meditation on spontaneous great bliss and emptiness, cuts the two obstructions and completes the two collections.

Some people have a completely mistaken view of Secret Mantra. Without having any experience of great bliss and emptiness they nevertheless claim 'I am a Secret Mantra Yogi', and then drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, take drugs, dispute, engage in sexual misconduct, and so forth. Engaging in such conduct should not be considered the same as following the path of Secret Mantra. After all, such actions can be performed by anyone. Those who have a pure wish to become true Yogis of Secret Mantra should instead put a great deal of effort into mastering the meditation just described, and should do so with an impeccable bodhichitta motivation.

#### CLEAR LIGHT AND THE FOUR JOYS

If the experience of the four joys is analyzed in more detail it is possible to distinguish sixteen joys of serial order and sixteen joys of reverse order. For example, when the white drop descends one quarter of the way between the crown and the throat channel wheels the first division of the first joy is experienced. Each of the four joys is similarly divided into four divisions of increasing intensity, thereby making a total of thirty-two stages of blissful experience.

While abiding in the spontaneous great joy of reverse order, our primary mind will become completely transformed into the nature of spontaneous great bliss. Such a consciousness is both a subtle mind and a primary mind. According to Sutra, bliss can only be a mental factor and not a primary mind, but this is not the case in Secret Mantra. Here there is a mind of spontaneous great bliss that is also a primary mind.

The substantial cause of the illusory body is the very subtle wind mounted by the very subtle mind of clear light meditating on emptiness. When the meditator rises from the session in which the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light is attained, he or she will attain a body that is not the same as his or her previous physical body. It will be the same in appearance as the body of the personal Deity of generation stage, except that it will be white in colour. Such a form can be perceived only by someone who has already attained the illusory body. In this respect, then, the illusory body is similar to a dream body in that both the dream body and the illusory body arise from the very subtle wind. The *Guhyasamaja Tantra* says that the dream body is the best analogy for the illusory body and proves that it is possible to attain it.

To attain the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light we must have completed the power of our meditation on the channels, winds, and drops. Furthermore, to attain the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light before the clear light of death it is necessary to accept a qualified action mudra. The highly realized Lama Je Tsongkhapa did not accept an action mudra because he was concerned for

the welfare of his ordained followers. Although he was at the stage where he could have meditated with an action mudra without accumulating the slightest negativity, even though he was a monk, he did not do so. Why not? He wished to protect those impatient disciples of the future who, thinking they could follow his example without being fully qualified, would have been tempted to take a consort prematurely and thus would have created the cause for lower rebirth rather than for enlightenment.

Je Tsongkhapa was widely praised during his life and afterwards by many great Yogis for his lucid and unique exposition of Secret Mantra practices. He was especially famous for his explanations of the means for attaining the illusory body. During his life he demonstrated the way to attain the four empties of the isolated mind through the force of the vajra recitation of the *Guhyasamaja Tantra*. Then, on the twenty-fifth day of the tenth Tibetan month, when he was about to leave his gross physical body, he attained the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light by mixing the son and mother clear lights. When he rose from that meditation, he attained the illusory body with which he attained enlightenment.

In reality Je Tsongkhapa was already the fully enlightened Buddha Manjushri. To benefit others, Manjushri appears in many forms – enlightened and ordinary, ordained and lay. In this case he appeared as a revered Teacher who, in his life and works, demonstrated the pure Sutra and Secret Mantra paths to full enlightenment and gave his fortunate disciples an excellent example to emulate. The actions of enlightened beings such as Manjushri are beyond the scope of the minds of ordinary beings.

In general, there are four joys of generation stage and four of completion stage. To attain the former it is not necessary to bring the winds into the central channel because these four joys are attained mainly through the force of meditative concentration. As for the latter, these result from the melting and flowing of the white drop within the central channel.

#### CLEAR LIGHT AND THE FOUR JOYS

We should rehearse for this experience by practising the four joys of generation stage as described in the Tantras of Guhyasamaja, Heruka, Vajrayogini, and so forth, and by following the instructions of a fully-qualified Tantric Master.

The four joys of completion stage are practised in conjunction with inner fire meditation and other methods such as vajra recitation. First we should perform the eight stages of inner fire meditation as described earlier. The heat generated from this will melt the white drop at the crown which will flow down the central channel from the crown to the throat, from the throat to the heart, from the heart to the navel, and from the navel to the tip of the sex organ. This will bring with it the experience of spontaneous great joy, and we should maintain this experience while meditating on emptiness. Then we should generate the four joys of reverse order – all of which are stages of spontaneous great bliss – and thereby continue meditating on emptiness with a supremely blissful mind. This concludes the explanation of the four joys.



*Könchog Gyaltsän*

## *The Nine Mixings and the Two Mudras*

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### AN EXPLANATION OF THE NINE MIXINGS

The nine mixings are the main methods for bringing ordinary death, intermediate state, and rebirth into the paths of the three bodies of a Buddha. They are explained extensively in the texts on *Guhyasamaja Tantra*, and both Nagarjuna and his disciple Aryadeva wrote clear commentaries on them. These instructions were later brought from India to Tibet and have been practised without interruption by Tibetan Masters up to the present day.

The nine mixings are an essential practice of completion stage meditation and it is not possible to attain Buddhahood within one life without them. Both Marpa and Milarepa had special praise for this practice, and the great meditator Khädrub Rinpoche said that even if one does not attain the complete experience of these nine mixings a great stock of merit can be accumulated merely through acquiring an intellectual understanding of them. In short, all qualified meditators of the completion stage of Secret Mantra rely upon the practice of the nine mixings. The instructions that follow have been extracted from Vajradhara's teachings contained in *Guhyasamaja Tantra*, from where they were incorporated into other Highest Yoga Tantra practices.

The nine mixings are explained in three divisions:

- 1 An explanation of the mixings during waking
- 2 An explanation of the mixings during sleep
- 3 An explanation of the mixings during death

## CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

### AN EXPLANATION OF THE MIXINGS DURING WAKING

This has three parts:

- 1 Mixing with the Truth Body during waking
- 2 Mixing with the Enjoyment Body during waking
- 3 Mixing with the Emanation Body during waking

#### MIXING WITH THE TRUTH BODY DURING WAKING

The first of the nine mixings is mixing with the Truth Body during waking. As has already been explained, through the force of inner fire meditation the winds are made to enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel and, as a result, we experience the eight signs from the mirage-like appearance to the clear light. We then transform the mind of clear light into the path by meditating on emptiness. This is how the clear light is mixed with the Truth Body. Although this meditation is called 'mixing with the Truth Body during waking', the meditator merely imagines that his mind of clear light is the actual Truth Body; there is no actual Truth Body at this time. According to Secret Mantra there are three types of truth body: the basic truth body, the path truth body, and the resultant Truth Body. The first two are not the actual Truth Body but are called truth bodies because practising the path truth body on the basis of the basic truth body leads to the attainment of the actual, resultant Truth Body.

The practice of mixing with the Truth Body during waking is explained as follows. As before, the initial object of meditation is the short-AH in the centre of the navel channel wheel. We concentrate on this object until we experience the eight signs. Throughout the entire progression of the eight signs it is very important not to forget emptiness, for if we do not remember emptiness with our gross mind it will be impossible to realize it with our subtle mind. Therefore, when we experience the mirage-like appearance, we remember that this appearance does not exist from its own side but is merely an appearance to our



perceiving consciousness. We employ the same type of mindfulness throughout the next three signs: smoke-like appearance, sparkling-fireflies-like appearance, and candle-flame-like appearance. After all these have been experienced, our gross mindfulness will disappear. During the next appearance, the mind of white appearance, which is the first of the four empties, only subtle mindfulness will function.

During the mind of white appearance we will perceive only an appearance similar to an empty sky pervaded by the bright white light of an autumn full moon, and we meditate that the emptiness of this appearance is lack of inherent existence. Because the mind at this point is a subtle mind, it will be difficult initially to establish lack of inherent existence through the force of logical reasoning. However, as we become more familiar with the experience of subtle minds we will be able to use logical reasoning to establish emptiness, even during the mind of white appearance.

From the mind of white appearance we then move to the mind of red increase, which perceives an appearance like an empty sky pervaded by the red light of the sun. As before, we maintain our mindfulness of emptiness and meditate that the emptiness of this second empty is lack of inherent existence. Then, when the mind of the black near-attainment arises, which perceives an appearance like an empty sky pervaded by blackness, we should maintain our mindfulness of emptiness until we experience the profound swoon of this subtle mind. During this swoon we will temporarily lose our mindfulness of emptiness because at this time there is no conscious activity whatsoever.

After the cessation of the mind of black near-attainment, the very subtle mind of clear light, the subtlest of all minds, will arise. This very subtle mind will perceive an appearance like that of an empty autumn sky at dawn pervaded by a clear and radiant light. With this very subtle mind of clear light we should meditate that the emptiness of the clear light is lack of inherent existence. The ability to

## CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

remember emptiness at this time depends upon having been able to remember emptiness during the preceding empties, with the momentary exception of the profound swoon of the mind of black near-attainment; and remembering emptiness during the appearance of the subtle minds depends upon having remembered emptiness with the gross mind prior to its dissolution. Thus from the very beginning of the mirage-like appearance it is important not to forget emptiness.

When our very subtle mind of clear light meditates on emptiness and holds this union of clear light and emptiness to be similar in aspect to the Truth Body, we are practising the first of the three mixings, mixing with the Truth Body during waking. On this basis we should develop the divine pride of being the actual Truth Body of a Buddha, and in this way make our realization of the Truth Body absolutely indestructible. It is not sufficient to do this just once or twice; it is necessary to practise in this way continuously until we accomplish a stable realization.

As indicated earlier, during the generation stage of Secret Mantra meditation we bring death into the path of the Truth Body. The purpose of this is to prepare for and facilitate the mixing with the Truth Body that we practise during completion stage. Mixing with the Truth Body during waking facilitates the mixing with the Truth Body during sleep, which in turn facilitates the mixing with the Truth Body during death. When our very subtle mind of clear light meditates on emptiness, we have attained the first realization of Vajrayana Mahamudra.

### MIXING WITH THE ENJOYMENT BODY DURING WAKING

Through generating the divine pride of being the Truth Body, with a mind free from all gross dualistic appearances, we make our realization of the Truth Body indestructible. This clear light mind has a similar aspect to the clear light mind of death. As explained above, after the experience of the clear light of death, ordinary beings take an intermediate

state body, but an accomplished meditator takes the body of his or her personal Deity instead. Therefore, when we are practising the second of the nine mixings we should meditate that we arise from the clear light state of emptiness, or the Truth Body, in the form of our personal Deity. If, for example, our personal Deity is Heruka, then with divine pride we think that we have arisen in his form. However, instead of being blue in colour, our body is white and we embrace a white Vajravarahi. We meditate that the very subtle wind mounted by the mind of clear light arises in the form of Heruka's body and that the very subtle mind of clear light itself is Heruka's mind. Then with divine pride we meditate that we are the actual Enjoyment Body of Buddha Heruka.

Practising in this way creates the cause for us to attain an actual illusory body in the form of our personal Deity in the future. Such an illusory body is not something that everyone can see. Although it is an actual body, it can be seen only by others who have attained an illusory body. In general, this illusory body is called 'the path enjoyment body'. As was the case with the Truth Body, according to Secret Mantra there are three types of enjoyment body: the basic enjoyment body, the path enjoyment body, and the resultant Enjoyment Body, and once again, the first two are enjoyment bodies in name only. After the attainment of the illusory body, or the path enjoyment body, the meditator practises continuously and eventually becomes a Buddha, thereby attaining the resultant Enjoyment Body which is an actual body of a Buddha.

In summary, when we rise from the clear light in the white form of our personal Deity we should focus on this body and develop the divine pride that thinks 'Now I am the actual Enjoyment Body.' This is the practice of mixing with the Enjoyment Body during waking. Such a practice facilitates mixing with the Enjoyment Body during sleep, which in turn facilitates mixing with the Enjoyment Body during death. All of these are preceded by the generation stage practice in which we bring the intermediate state into

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

the path of the Enjoyment Body and thereby rehearse for and facilitate the mixings with the Enjoyment Body performed during completion stage meditation.

#### MIXING WITH THE EMANATION BODY DURING WAKING

At this point we are still in the form of the white Enjoyment Body of our personal Deity. We understand that this body and our normal physical body are totally different and then think:

*If I remain in this state, ordinary beings will not be able to see me and so I shall be unable to help them pass beyond suffering and attain Buddhahood.*

With this thought, and motivated by bodhichitta, we then make a strong determination to take an Emanation Body that can be perceived by ordinary beings so that we can be of maximum benefit to others.

Prior to practising the mixings during waking we had generated ourself in the aspect of our personal Deity. This is called 'the commitment being'. For example, if our personal Deity is Heruka, the commitment being is ourself in the form of Heruka, blue in colour with one face and two hands. Such a commitment being body is present throughout completion stage meditation, but it ceases to be an object of meditation while we are practising the mixings with the Truth Body and Enjoyment Body. This is similar to the way in which the appearance of our ordinary body ceases when we fall asleep and dream, for although our physical body does remain we are no longer aware of it.

Now, after mixing with the Truth Body, we have arisen as the illusory body in the form of white Heruka. This white Heruka differs from the blue commitment being body in much the same way that a dream body differs from a gross physical body. While we practise the mixing with the Enjoyment Body, we develop the strong divine pride of being the actual Enjoyment Body of Heruka. This white

#### THE NINE MIXINGS AND THE TWO MUDRAS

Heruka is the wisdom being. When as a result of our strong bodhichitta motivation we determine to arise in the form of an Emanation Body for the benefit of others, we meditate that this white Heruka enters the commitment being's body through the crown of his head. This is similar to the way in which, upon waking from a dream, our dream body re-enters our gross physical body. At this point in our meditation the white Heruka remains in the heart of the Emanation Body – the blue Heruka – as a wisdom being. Focusing on the body of blue Heruka, we then develop the divine pride of being the actual Emanation Body. This is the practice of mixing with the Emanation Body during waking.

#### AN EXPLANATION OF THE MIXINGS DURING SLEEP

This has three parts:

- 1 Mixing with the Truth Body during sleep
- 2 Mixing with the Enjoyment Body during sleep
- 3 Mixing with the Emanation Body during sleep

#### MIXING WITH THE TRUTH BODY DURING SLEEP

When ordinary beings fall asleep they experience the clear light of sleep. The Secret Mantra meditator endeavours to mix this clear light of sleep with the Truth Body. However, this can be accomplished only by those who have previously gained experience in the four empties by practising the mixings during waking as described above. Therefore, such meditation will be successful only if we are able deliberately to cause our winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel.

When we are going to practise the mixings during sleep, we should meditate on inner fire immediately before falling asleep. At this time we need not be sitting in the meditation posture; we can practise inner fire while lying in our normal sleeping position. If possible, however, it is good to sleep in the lion posture, lying on our right side with our

right cheek resting on the palm of our right hand, our legs straight with the left resting upon the right, and our left arm lying along our left thigh. This is the posture in which Buddha Shakyamuni passed away, and it is the best posture to assume whenever we go to sleep.

As in the normal inner fire practice, the object of meditation is the short-AH in the vacuole within the centre of the navel channel wheel. If we are familiar with causing the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel during waking, we should be able to do the same during sleep without much difficulty. We practise the inner fire meditation until we perceive the mirage-like appearance of sleep. While falling asleep we must be able, through the force of mindfulness, to identify each appearance as it arises. We must also remember lack of inherent existence from the very beginning of the mirage-like appearance up to and including the fourth empty, which is clear light itself. We think that these eight signs are mere appearances perceived by our primary mind and that they are empty, lacking true existence. When, during the eighth sign, our very subtle mind of clear light meditates on emptiness, our experience of emptiness will become extremely powerful. This is because this very subtle mind can mix with its object like water mixing with water. When we reach this point in our practice we should meditate that the non-duality of our mind and emptiness has become absolutely indestructible, and upon this basis generate the divine pride of being the Truth Body of a Buddha. This is the practice of mixing with the Truth Body during sleep.

To be successful in this meditation we need to be able to practise two profound methods: (1) to cause the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel during waking and thus be able to do the same during sleep, and (2) to prevent the power of mindfulness from declining during sleep. The first method has already been discussed; what follows is an explanation of the second.

Normally when we fall asleep we completely lose the power of mindfulness and so we do not recognize the eight

signs of sleep as they occur. On the other hand, if the power of our mindfulness does not decline, we find it impossible to fall asleep at all. Therefore, we must be very skilful in practising mixing with the Truth Body during sleep; we must be able to fall asleep yet still maintain the power of mindfulness. The way to do this is to allow our mindfulness to decline very slightly, just enough to make sleep possible, but not to the extent that we are unable to recognize even the first of the eight signs of sleep. In general, ordinary beings do not know that they are asleep or that they are dreaming because at these times their mindfulness completely declines, but accomplished meditators are able to identify the eight signs as being the eight signs of sleep and they are also able to recognize when they have entered the dream state.

When we lie down to sleep, therefore, we should practise meditation on inner fire with the principal object being the short-AH at the centre of the navel channel wheel. At the same time, with one part of our mind we should strongly determine to maintain our mindfulness so as to identify the eight signs when they appear and recognize them as being empty of inherent existence. If we practise continuously in this way, eventually through the force of our concentration and determination we will meet with success; but each time we practise it is essential at the very beginning to make sure that we generate a strong determination to identify the eight signs. Success in this practice will be even easier if while practising the mixings during waking we remember that the same eight signs will occur when we fall asleep. For example, when the mirage-like appearance arises during our waking practice we should remind ourselves that this sign will also arise when we are asleep.

Although ordinary beings perceive the clear light while dying and while falling asleep, they are unable to recognize it as the clear light. An accomplished meditator however does have such a recognition and uses it as a means for attaining enlightenment. He or she is able to perceive the clear light during the time of sleep even more vividly

than when mixing with the Truth Body during waking. Therefore, the mixing with the Truth Body during sleep is an even more powerful meditation than that done during waking.

When the great Bodhisattva Shantideva was staying at the monastic university of Nalanda, the other monks thought that he was extremely lazy because he seemed to do only three things: eat, defecate, and sleep – and of these mostly the last! In reality however he was engaged in the very advanced Secret Mantra practices of the three mixings during sleep. This shows that if one is truly a skilled meditator, sleep itself can become a powerful spiritual practice.

When mixing with the Truth Body during sleep we should try to integrate the experience of the four empties gained during waking meditation with the experience of the four empties gained while falling asleep. In this way our meditation will become very powerful. However, to practise the mixings during sleep well, our sleep should be long, deep, and undisturbed. If we are interrupted during our sleeping meditation this will interfere with our ability to meditate on the clear light. For example, if after experiencing the first two signs of sleep we are awakened or disturbed by something, this will interfere with our perception of the remaining signs and thus our practice of mixing with the Truth Body during sleep will be interrupted. In *Lamp of Condensed Deeds* Aryadeva asks 'What is the cause of a long deep sleep?' and replies that it is causing the winds to gather strongly at the heart. The more strongly these winds gather at the heart, the longer and deeper our sleep will be.

Because a long deep sleep is the best type for the practice of the mixings during sleep, we should try to gather the winds at our heart by means of the following visualization. While falling asleep we focus our mind on the indestructible drop in the centre of our heart channel wheel. We concentrate our mind on this drop and allow ourselves to fall asleep. If we prefer, we can visualize a letter at our heart. For instance, a practitioner of inner fire



meditation can use the short-AH. In the beginning we concentrate on this short-AH of inner fire as it resides within the navel channel wheel. Then, immediately before falling asleep, we move the letter up through the central channel until it reaches the vacuole of the heart channel wheel where the indestructible drop resides. Then, as we fall asleep, we visualize this short-AH at our heart.

There is another method that is effective in producing a long and deep sleep, and it is especially helpful if we want to fall asleep quickly. First we visualize that the indestructible drop in the centre of our heart is in the form of a radiant white drop. This drop then descends through the central channel and finally comes to rest at the tip of the sex organ, where it transforms into a black drop. Then we fall asleep while concentrating on this black drop.

As it is much easier to perceive the eight signs during a long and deep sleep, we should use whichever method we find most useful for attaining this goal. Even if we are not ready to begin the actual practice of the mixings during sleep, it is important to start our training now so that the seeds of this practice are sown and cultivated within our mind. This is true for all of the nine mixings.

We need not be practising the methods of Secret Mantra to gain the conscious recognition of our sleep as being sleep or of our dreams as being dreams. Such a recognition can be achieved merely through the force of determination and concentration. While we are in the waking state we should make a strong and constant determination to recognize our sleep as sleep and our dreams as dreams. Then we will be able to attain these two recognitions by virtue of firm concentration. When we are actually practising Secret Mantra these two recognitions are gained by causing the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel combined with the force of concentration. If we have previously become accustomed to the experience of the four empties by having practised the mixings during waking, it will not be difficult to recognize them when we are asleep.



*Panchen Losang Yeshe*

In conclusion, when we perceive the clear light of sleep we should use that mind to meditate on emptiness. If we are able to do this practice we will be mixing the son and mother clear lights of sleep and, as a result, we will also be able to mix the son and mother clear lights of death. While we are awake, the only clear light that we can experience is the son clear light; therefore, the only time we can mix the son and mother clear lights prior to our actual death is while we are asleep. This enables us to transform the clear light of sleep into the actual truth body of the path (example clear light or meaning clear light), or into a truth body of the path that is similar to it. If we are successful in this even our sleep will become a powerful and beneficial meditation.

#### MIXING WITH THE ENJOYMENT BODY DURING SLEEP

The *fifth of the nine mixings* can be practised only while we are dreaming. In general, there are two types of sleep: sleep without dreams and sleep with dreams. The sleep experienced during the evolution of the eight signs is sleep without dreams. Dreams arise once the clear light of sleep ceases. This is very similar to the manner in which the intermediate state arises immediately the clear light of death ceases.

Sleep without dreams is also of two types: light sleep and deep sleep. Light sleep is experienced from the mirage-like appearance through to the appearance of red increase, although our sleep gets progressively deeper with the appearance of each successive sign. The deepest sleep of all is that experienced during the swoon of the mind of black near-attainment, when our mindfulness is temporarily lost.

From the beginning of the mirage-like appearance the Secret Mantra practitioner holds emptiness as the object of meditation, but the ability to hold this object ceases for a while during the swoon of the mind of black near-attainment. When the fourth empty, which is the clear light itself, gradually dawns, we regain a very subtle mindfulness.

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

It is through the force of this very subtle mindfulness that we are able to mix the son and mother clear lights of sleep.

We will not experience any dreams until the clear light of sleep ceases. After mixing with the Truth Body during sleep, during which we practise transforming the clear light of sleep into the path truth body, the Secret Mantra meditator practises mixing with the Enjoyment Body during sleep. This entails training in transforming the ordinary dream state into the enjoyment body of the path. While still in the form of the Truth Body, we determine to attain the Enjoyment Body so as to possess a form body that is visible to others. Then, when the dream state begins, we recognize it for what it is and practise transforming the dream body into the enjoyment body of the path by arising in the form of our personal Deity, white in colour with one face and two hands and embracing a white wisdom consort. On this basis we then develop the divine pride of being the Enjoyment Body. In this way we are able to transform the ordinary dream state into the actual enjoyment body of the path (the illusory body), or into an enjoyment body of the path that is similar to it.

The actual enjoyment body of the path arises from the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light and its mounted wind. As indicated earlier, the illusory body is altogether different from the gross physical body. Although it is an actual body it is perceived only by those who have already attained an illusory body, just as a dream body is perceived only by dreamers. When we attain the illusory body, our subtle form actually transforms into the aspect of our personal Deity. This is the actual enjoyment body of the path. When mixing with the Enjoyment Body during sleep, we transform the dream body either into the actual enjoyment body of the path or into an enjoyment body of the path that is similar to it.

Dream sleep is also a form of light sleep. To be able to use such sleep in our practice, our dreams should be very long and clear and we should have a strongly developed power of mindfulness so that we can recognize our dreams

#### THE NINE MIXINGS AND THE TWO MUDRAS

for what they are and thereby be able to transform the dream body into the enjoyment body of the path. As long as our dream body remains we should try to maintain this transformation together with the divine pride of being the resultant Enjoyment Body of a Buddha. Then, when we realize that the dream will soon end, we prepare to practise the sixth of the nine mixings: mixing with the Emanation Body during sleep.

#### MIXING WITH THE EMANATION BODY DURING SLEEP

The sixth mixing can be explained by using the practice of Heruka as an example. During the dream state we meditate that we are in the form of the white Enjoyment Body of Heruka. Then we think that if we were to remain in that form ordinary beings would not be able to see us, because only Superior Bodhisattvas and Buddhas are able to perceive the Enjoyment Body of a Buddha. Accordingly, we make a strong determination to arise in the form of an Emanation Body that even ordinary beings can see and benefit from.

Then, with strong bodhichitta motivation, we wake from the sleep of the dream state. It is important that we practise waking in a particular way. Practising the mixings during sleep is very similar to practising the mixings during waking. Before we went to sleep we visualized ourself as the commitment being Heruka, blue in colour, with one face and two hands and embracing his consort; but while practising the mixings with the Truth Body and Enjoyment Body during sleep we lost this appearance of the commitment being. When we entered the dream state, we arose from the clear light of sleep in the form of white Heruka, thereby transforming the dream body into the Enjoyment Body. This white Heruka is the wisdom being. The body of this wisdom being is a different entity from the body of the commitment being, the blue Heruka, just as our dream body is a different entity from our gross physical body.

To practise mixing with the Emanation Body during sleep we cause the wisdom being to enter the commitment being's body in the same way that the dream body enters the gross physical body when we wake from the dream state. Thus, the white Heruka enters the blue Heruka and remains in the heart of the blue Heruka. Then we arise from the dream state in the form of blue Heruka and generate the strong divine pride of being the Emanation Body of a Buddha. We think 'I am the resultant Emanation Body; I am Heruka.' Even though this divine pride is generated while awake, this practice is called 'mixing with the Emanation Body during sleep'. The reason is that this process of mixing begins with a strong determination generated while still in the sleep of the dream state.

While we are practising the three mixings of sleep, the sleep and dream times are said to belong to the meditation session and the waking in the form of the Emanation Body to subsequent attainment. During subsequent attainment we should continuously contemplate all appearances as being empty of inherent existence, regard all these emptinesses as being the nature of bliss, and perceive this bliss as being in the form of the Deity's body.

This section concerning the mixings during sleep is concluded with five questions and answers taken from Aryadeva's *Lamp of Condensed Deeds*.

(1) *What is the cause of sleep in general, and of a long and deep sleep in particular?* Sleep occurs when the five gross winds – the mounts of the five sense awarenesses – gather naturally at the heart. Until these winds gather there, it is impossible to fall asleep. In fact, if we are having trouble falling asleep it is because these winds are not gathering at the heart for one reason or another. Sometimes they gather naturally even when we do not wish them to; for example, during teachings or in the middle of a meditation session! This involuntary gathering of the winds at the heart may be caused by mental sinking, dullness, physical tiredness, over-eating, lack of sleep the previous night, and so forth.

It should be noted that in addition to the natural process of gathering, the winds of the five sense awarenesses can also collect at the heart through the force of meditation and at the time of death, but in these cases sleep does not occur because the gathering of the winds does not happen naturally. As for the cause of a long and deep sleep, this occurs when the winds not only gather naturally at the heart, but do so strongly.

(2) *What is the cause of dreams in general, and of long and clear dreams in particular?* As stated above, as long as the winds remain at the heart we generally experience a state of deep sleep. When these winds leave the heart and gather at the throat, we move from the state of deep sleep to the lighter state of dream sleep. In other words, the dream state occurs when the drop at the throat channel wheel and the winds meet. The cause of long and clear dreams is the winds gathering at the throat strongly. As long as the winds are collected at the throat we will be in the dream state and the longer and more strongly they gather there the longer and clearer our dreams will be.

(3) *What causes the dream body to enter the gross body when we wake from the dream state?* Even if our dream body travels to a distant place, when we wake up it immediately re-enters our gross body. This happens because the dream body has left the gross body only temporarily, and the relationship that exists between the two has not yet come to an end. As long as their karmic link is not severed, the dream body will always return to the gross body. For example, if a father of a family goes away to work, he leaves his family only temporarily, and when he has completed his work he returns to them. He does so because of the relationship he has with his family. However, if for some reason that relationship or connection were to come to an end the father would be unable to return as he had originally planned. In the dream situation, however, the place the dream body travels to is not an actual place but a dream place.

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

(4) *If the dream body and the gross body are different, why do the experiences of the dream body ripen upon the gross body?* A person might wake up from a terrifying nightmare to discover that his or her heart is pounding and palms are perspiring, or a man may merely dream of having sexual intercourse yet actually lose semen. The reason that these things can happen is that the mind of the dreaming person and the mind of the waking person are the same continuum. Only one person exists in relation to this continuum and therefore the experiences of his or her dreaming mind can ripen upon the waking mind. The reverse can also happen. For example someone might experience being rained upon while sleeping with the result that they dream that they are swimming, or drowning.

(5) *What is the cause of waking from sleep?* We wake from the dream state when the winds leave the throat and gather at the brow. If we wish to rise quickly from sleep with an alert and clear mind we should visualize a white drop at the brow channel wheel and concentrate on it before falling asleep. As mentioned before, the mounted winds will gather wherever the mind focuses, and it is the gathering of the winds at the brow that causes the awakening from sleep.

#### AN EXPLANATION OF THE MIXINGS DURING DEATH

Since there is only one opportunity in each life to practise the mixings during death it is very important that we train for this while we are alive. Successful practice of the mixings during death depends upon gaining proficiency in the three mixings during sleep. If we cannot mix with the Truth Body, Enjoyment Body, and Emanation Body during sleep we will certainly not be able to mix with them during death. Moreover, success in practising the three mixings during sleep depends upon being proficient in practising the three mixings during waking. The easiest of these practices are the mixings



during waking because they afford more opportunity to make use of our gross mindfulness.

Generally speaking, falling asleep and dying are very similar in that in both cases the winds gather at the heart. At the time of death, we experience the eight signs from the mirage-like appearance to the clear light. An accomplished meditator combines these eight signs of dying with the eight signs that occur when the winds dissolve into the central channel through the force of completion stage meditation. In this way he or she transforms the eight signs of dying into the spiritual path. Here we are talking about a meditator who has practised Secret Mantra meditation but has not yet attained enlightenment. As was stated earlier, if someone has already attained enlightenment during their life they will not need to practise the three mixings during death because they already will have overcome ordinary death. However, life is very short and death may come even to a great meditator before final enlightenment is attained. If this happens it is necessary to practise the mixings during death.

If we are unable to practise these mixings during death we will have to take an ordinary samsaric rebirth without any choice, and there will be great danger of forgetting all the spiritual knowledge we have gained in this life. If we die without conscious control we lose everything we have tried so hard to learn in this life; only the imprints of this knowledge remain. Even if we have the good fortune to be reborn as a human being in our next life, we will have to begin all over again, experiencing the same difficulties in gathering knowledge that we encountered before. On the other hand, if we die with control we will be able to carry our practice from this life into the next life. Only our physical body will have changed; the knowledge we have gathered will remain intact.

It is very important to die with a happy and positive mind. Even though we might practise very hard in this life, if we die with an angry or negative mind we will fall into one of the three lower realms. Therefore, while we are

dying we should be very mindful of our mental activity and check to see whether or not it is virtuous. The true test of an accomplished meditator is whether he or she can maintain the practice of Dharma during the death process.

When we practise the mixings during waking we should remember that the purpose is to be able to practise them during sleep, and when we practise them during sleep we should remember that the purpose is to be able to practise them during death. As for the practices during death itself, these have three main purposes: (1) to protect us from fear throughout the death process, (2) to give us the power to choose the circumstances of our next rebirth, and (3) to enable us to carry this life's practice into our next life. These three reasons alone are sufficient to demonstrate how precious the Vajrayana practices are. Furthermore, by practising Vajrayana in a perfect and pure manner we will certainly be able to reach enlightenment in our next life if we are unable to do so during this one.

As with the mixings practised during waking and sleep, the mixings during death have three parts:

- 1 Mixing with the Truth Body during death
- 2 Mixing with the Enjoyment Body during death
- 3 Mixing with the Emanation Body during death

#### MIXING WITH THE TRUTH BODY DURING DEATH

We begin this practice as soon as we are certain that we are dying, by selecting an object of meditation that will cause our winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel. If during our life our main practice has been inner fire we should now use that as our object of meditation and continue practising it until we die. If we practise inner fire during the death process the eight signs will appear very clearly.

When these signs appear we should meditate on their lack of inherent existence. This meditation should commence at the very beginning of the mirage-like appearance

#### THE NINE MIXINGS AND THE TWO MUDRAS

and continue throughout the eight signs. When we reach the clear light of death we should not lose the power of our mindfulness but rather use our subtle mindfulness to enable us to meditate on emptiness with our very subtle mind of clear light. As mentioned before, ordinary beings lose the power of their mindfulness during the process of dying and therefore are unable to recognize the clear light even when it arises. An accomplished meditator, however, is able to retain his or her mindfulness because of previous intensive training in the mixings of waking and sleep. Therefore such a meditator is able not only to recognize the clear light of death, but also to meditate on emptiness with that very subtle mind. It is in this way that we practise transforming the ordinary clear light of death into the truth body of the path.

During this mind of clear light we should generate the divine pride of being the resultant Truth Body. This will make the seventh mixing indestructible.

#### MIXING WITH THE ENJOYMENT BODY DURING DEATH

When training in the truth body of the path we concentrate on emptiness with the mind of clear light. This is our main practice, but one small part of our mind should determine that when the time of the intermediate state arrives we will arise in the form of the Enjoyment Body. If we have gained proficiency in recognizing sleep as sleep and dreams as dreams, we will also be able to recognize the intermediate state for what it is.

Through the force of the previous determination an accomplished meditator is able to prevent the appearance of the ordinary intermediate state and in its place generate the form of the Deity. Thus, if Heruka is our personal Deity, we should transform the intermediate state body into Heruka's body, white in colour with one face and two hands and embracing a wisdom consort. We should then meditate on the divine pride of being the resultant Enjoyment Body of a Buddha.



Losang Trinlay

#### THE NINE MIXINGS AND THE TWO MUDRAS

A person who can meditate in this way has carried the practice of the previous life into the intermediate state. This intermediate state being has control in choosing the circumstances of the next rebirth and can appear wherever he or she wishes, for example in Vajrayogini's Pure Land or in another Buddha Land. Such a practitioner has succeeded in mixing with the Enjoyment Body during death.

It is important to remember the specific meanings of the terms employed here. The enjoyment body that we train in at this stage is the path enjoyment body, not the actual resultant Enjoyment Body of a Buddha. As stated before, the ordinary intermediate state is called the basic enjoyment body according to Secret Mantra. Through the force of the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light, the accomplished meditator will attain the illusory body, the path enjoyment body, in place of the ordinary intermediate state body. The intermediate state body and the illusory body both arise from the same substance: the very subtle wind. When the resultant Enjoyment Body of a Buddha is eventually attained, this will also arise from the very subtle wind. However, it should be remembered that although the basic enjoyment body and the path enjoyment body are called 'enjoyment bodies', they are not the actual Enjoyment Body of a Buddha.

To summarize, when we mix with the Enjoyment Body during death we rise from the clear light in the white form of our personal Deity. Thus, depending upon our previous practices, we arise as white Heruka, white Vajrayogini, and so forth. The white colour indicates the illusory body because the substance of this illusory body – the very subtle wind – is white. Then with divine pride we meditate that we have attained the resultant Enjoyment Body of a Buddha. This is the practice of mixing with the Enjoyment Body during death.

MIXING WITH THE EMANATION BODY DURING DEATH

At this point we are ready to practise the ninth and last of the nine mixings: mixing with the Emanation Body during death. This practice begins while we are still mixing with the Enjoyment Body. While holding the divine pride of being the resultant Enjoyment Body, we determine to arise in the aspect of the Emanation Body for the sake of all living beings. We think:

*If I remain in the form of the Enjoyment Body forever, ordinary beings will not be able to see me, and so I will be unable to help them. Furthermore, if I am to fulfil my wish of completing the practice of Secret Mantra, I must take an Emanation Body.*

It is at this point that we choose our next rebirth, which can be in a human realm or in one of the Pure Lands. For example, if we wished to be born as a human in conditions conducive to continuing our practice of Secret Mantra, we would think:

*As I still have not completed my practice of Secret Mantra, I must take rebirth in the human realm. Which country, therefore, would be most conducive to my practice?*

Then, if we are an accomplished meditator, we will take rebirth in a country where Secret Mantra is taught by fully-qualified Spiritual Guides. Unlike ordinary beings, who from the intermediate state take rebirth in their mother's womb without conscious control or choice, fully accomplished meditators can determine where and when they will be reborn.

A brief explanation of the process of controlled rebirth now follows. If our personal Deity is Heruka, we should regard our future mother as Vajravarahi and our future father as Heruka. Through the force of this visualization we prevent ordinary appearances of our mother and father and carry our previous life's practice into the next life. From the

intermediate state we regard our mother as the commitment being and ourself as the wisdom being. Then, when the red and white drops of our future mother and father mix, we enter that union of germ cells and develop the divine pride of being the resultant Emanation Body of a Buddha. This Emanation Body is visualized as being blue in colour with one face and two hands, and embracing the consort. Alternatively, if our personal Deity is Vajrayogini, this Emanation Body is seen as red in colour with one face and two hands.

When someone conceived in this way emerges from the womb of the mother, ordinary beings will perceive him or her as an ordinary baby. This, however, is merely the external appearance; internally they will have the unceasing divine pride of being the Emanation Body of a particular Deity, although this will not be evident to others. One who has reached this level of practice is entitled to be called an Emanation Body, or Tulku. Thus, a Tulku is not just someone who can remember his or her previous life, but rather a meditator who has consciously chosen the conditions for his or her present rebirth and taken a controlled rebirth in the manner described.

In summary, an Emanation Body, or Tulku, is someone who has died, passed through the intermediate state, and taken rebirth, all with conscious control and without interrupting the continuity of his or her practice from one life to the next. Such is the practice of mixing with the Emanation Body during death. Again it should be noted that in this case the meditator has the divine pride of being the Emanation Body but does not in fact have the actual resultant Emanation Body of a Buddha; this is attained only through the force of the resultant Enjoyment Body.

The entire explanation of controlled rebirth given above pertains only to a meditator who has not attained the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light during death. If he or she had attained this mind then, instead of entering the intermediate state, he or she would have attained the illusory body and, in dependence upon this, full enlightenment.

Of the two methods for developing the object-possessor, spontaneous great bliss, the first – penetrating the precise points of one's own body – has now been explained. In conclusion, by meditating on our channels, winds, and drops we cause our winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within our central channel, and as a result generate the experience of spontaneous great bliss.

It is important to note that these meditations may be successfully performed by members of either sex. The only prerequisite is that we should have received an appropriate empowerment from a qualified Vajra Master. Depending upon the empowerment and instructions we have received, during generation stage we might visualize ourself in the form of a male or female Deity, regardless of our sex. For example, men may visualize themselves as Heruka and women may visualize themselves as Vajrayogini or, if they prefer, men may visualize themselves as Vajrayogini and women may visualize themselves as Heruka; it makes no difference. If a monk's personal Deity is Vajrayogini he must generate himself in this female aspect, just as all other males with the same personal Deity must do. The essential point of all these practices is to prevent ordinary appearances from arising. If a man finds it uncomfortable to see himself as Vajrayogini and if a woman experiences the same difficulty in seeing herself as Heruka, this indicates that they have failed to overcome their ordinary appearances. Once this fault has been eliminated, it makes no difference whether we choose to see ourself as a male Deity or as a female Deity.

When considering the Father-Mother aspect of a Highest Yoga Tantra Deity – for example, when Heruka is depicted embracing Vajravahni – it may appear that the two figures are two different entities in the same way that an ordinary husband and wife are two different people, but in reality their divine embrace symbolizes the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness. This bliss and emptiness are, respectively, the method and wisdom of Vajradhara – the Secret Mantra manifestation of Buddha – and are one and



#### THE NINE MIXINGS AND THE TWO MUDRAS

the same essence. Unlike the minds of ordinary beings, the omniscient mind of a Buddha can assume form. Thus Vajradhara's mind, which is the mind of the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness, can arise in the apparently dual form of the Father and Mother aspect of Heruka. In this case Vajradhara's method of great bliss appears in the aspect of Heruka and his wisdom of emptiness appears in the aspect of his consort, Vajravarahi, but they remain essentially identical.

There are many effective methods for generating spontaneous great bliss, including the vajra recitation explained in *Guhyasamaja Tantra* and others that can be found in the Tantras of Vajrabhairava and so forth. According to the system of Mahamudra explained here, spontaneous great bliss is developed mainly by relying upon inner fire meditation through which we cause the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve into the central channel. As each method explained in the Highest Yoga Tantras is adequate in and of itself, there is no need to practise all of them to experience spontaneous great bliss. Once this mind has been generated through any one of the methods, we can practise the nine mixings mentioned earlier to overcome the obstructions to both liberation and omniscience and thereby attain full enlightenment. The attainment of this exalted state is the purpose of generating spontaneous great bliss.

This concludes the explanation of generating spontaneous great bliss by penetrating the precise points of our own body.

#### PENETRATING THE PRECISE POINTS OF ANOTHER'S BODY

This, the second method for developing spontaneous great bliss, is explained under two headings:

- 1 Relying upon an action mudra
- 2 Relying upon a wisdom mudra

## CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

### RELYING UPON AN ACTION MUDRA

Relying upon an action mudra is meditation with an actual consort. To practise with an action mudra at completion stage we must already be able to cause our winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel through the force of meditation. A person who cannot control his or her winds in this way through meditation cannot possibly do so through copulation. If someone wishes to practise by means of engaging in sexual activity with an action mudra he or she must generate spontaneous great bliss through control of the winds and then meditate on emptiness with that blissful mind. A lay practitioner who is currently unable to transform sexual activity into the path in this way should generate the strong aspiration and motivation to be able to do so in the future.

If our central channel has not already been opened through penetrating the precise points of our own body, we will be unable to bring the winds into it while embracing a consort. The indication that we have successfully penetrated the precise points of our own body and have caused the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel is, at the very least, a rough experience of the eight signs from the mirage-like appearance to the clear light. If we have gained such an experience through penetrating the precise points of our own body we will have no difficulty in controlling the winds while meditating with a consort. Therefore, if we are already proficient in controlling our winds through the force of concentration, meditating with a consort can be very beneficial to our practice.

An action mudra must have received Secret Mantra empowerments, must know the meaning of Secret Mantra, must be able to keep all the vows and commitments of Secret Mantra and, if possible, must have experience of completion stage – or at the very least some experience of generation stage. If both the male and female meditators have experience of the completion stage practices and are

able to bring the winds into the central channel, meditation with a consort can be extremely beneficial. The winds enter the central channel more strongly through meditation with a consort than they do through meditation alone, which is why the embrace of a consort enables us to loosen completely the knots at the heart channel wheel. In fact, a person who has attained the isolated mind of the four empties by depending upon meditation alone must accept an action mudra if he or she wishes to attain the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light before death.

In the *Heruka Root Tantra* there is a detailed explanation of the definition and the different classes of action mudra, as well as complete instructions on where, when, and how we should enter into that practice so that our winds may be brought into the central channel. According to this text, each part of the consort's body should have a specific shape, including even the eyes, the voice should have a certain intonation, and so forth. In addition to having attained a certain level of inner realization, the consort should be skilled in the sixty-four arts of love. Since, these days, it is very difficult to find a consort who fulfils all these requirements, if we ourself have the qualifications mentioned previously, we may rely upon a consort who fulfils at least the following minimum requirements. He or she must: (1) have some experience of the three principal aspects of the path (renunciation, bodhichitta, and the correct view of emptiness), (2) have received an appropriate Highest Yoga Tantra empowerment from a Master of Secret Mantra, (3) delight in keeping the vows and commitments of Secret Mantra, and (4) have profound faith in our own Spiritual Guide and personal Deity. Finally, if neither we nor our partner have even these minimum qualifications but still wish to practise Secret Mantra, then during sexual activity we should both try to prevent ordinary appearances from arising, develop the thought of being Deities, and generate the strong motivation that our intercourse will become the cause of our winds entering,

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

abiding, and dissolving within the central channel and thereby lead to the experience of spontaneous great bliss.

For all stages of the paths of Sutra and Secret Mantra it is very important to make constant prayers that we will soon be able to engage in those practices for which we are currently unqualified. If we make such heartfelt prayers we will definitely experience the desired results. Therefore, even before we become proficient in a particular practice we should try to become familiar with it to the best of our ability. For example, even though at present we might not be able to generate spontaneous great bliss through practising the eight stages of inner fire meditation, nevertheless, if we keep practising these eight stages we will eventually gain the actual experience of this meditation. This is because the imprints we place on our mind by attempting the practice will eventually ripen in the form of the desired experience. However, if we are lazy and do not practise at all, and if we do not generate the heartfelt aspiration to be able to practise in the future, we will not attain any realizations or experiences whatsoever.

#### RELYING UPON A WISDOM MUDRA

If we are not yet qualified to embrace an action mudra and have not yet met the necessary conditions, we can still practise by visualizing a wisdom mudra, or visualized consort. Through practising with a wisdom mudra we can generate spontaneous great bliss by means of visualization and concentration. In this case the wisdom mudra takes the place of the action mudra. In fact, one of the commitments of having received an empowerment of Mother Tantra – for example, the empowerments of Heruka or Vajrayogini – is to visualize embrace with a wisdom mudra three times during each day and three times during each night. Furthermore, if we have sufficient time, when we embrace the wisdom mudra we should practise melting the white drop at our crown and experiencing the four

THE NINE MIXINGS AND THE TWO MUDRAS

joys on the basis of the eight stages of inner fire meditation described above.

Of the two main divisions of the Mahamudra that is the union of bliss and emptiness, the first division – generating the object-possessor, spontaneous great bliss – has now been completed.



*Drubwang Losang Namgyal*

# *Introduction to the Nature of the Mind*

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## AN EXPLANATION OF THE METHOD FOR CORRECTLY REALIZING THE OBJECT, EMPTINESS

This has three parts:

- 1 How a direct realization of emptiness depends upon tranquil abiding
- 2 The uncommon explanation of how to meditate on tranquil abiding
- 3 How to seek the view of emptiness with meditation

## HOW A DIRECT REALIZATION OF EMPTINESS DEPENDS UPON TRANQUIL ABIDING

For the mind to gain a direct realization of emptiness it must be able to hold its object of meditation without wavering, but this is difficult for ordinary minds which, because they have not been subdued by tranquil abiding, are in constant motion. Conceptual thoughts continuously scatter the mind so that it cannot focus single-pointedly long enough to gain a direct realization of anything. It is impossible for such a scattered mind to develop a clear perception of a subtle object such as emptiness.

We can perceive objects such as visual forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile objects directly with our sense awarenesses, but unless we are an enlightened being we cannot perceive subtle objects such as emptiness with these awarenesses. Such subtle objects are called 'hidden objects' because initially they can be known only conceptually by the mental awareness. However, because at present our

conceptual mind is unsubdued and in constant motion, it is impossible for our mental awareness to perceive these subtle hidden objects clearly. As a result our mind does not have the opportunity to mix with these objects and gain a direct realization of them.

Tranquil abiding is a state of unwavering concentration in which conceptual thoughts are no longer able to move or disturb the mind. When we attain tranquil abiding our mind will be able to focus single-pointedly and remain undistracted for an extended period of time on any object we choose – even on a subtle hidden object such as emptiness. The longer the mind remains focused on its object the more clearly that object will be perceived. Eventually we will gain a direct realization of that object. Thus we can see that the attainment of tranquil abiding, which is in the nature of perfect stillness, is an indispensable prerequisite for directly realizing the subtle hidden object emptiness.

Je Tsongkhapa gave the following analogy to demonstrate the necessity of attaining tranquil abiding. Imagine that we are trying to read a text at night by the light of a candle flame. If a draught is causing the flame to flicker we will not be able to see the words on the page clearly and so we will not be able to absorb their meaning, but if the flame is steady we will not have this problem. In the same way, if our mind is blown about by the winds of conceptual thought it cannot see or understand subtle hidden objects clearly, but this problem is overcome once the winds of conceptual distraction have been pacified by the attainment of tranquil abiding.

Without the attainment of tranquil abiding our mind will not be supple and pliant, but will be stubborn and difficult to control. We will find it difficult to focus on virtuous objects of meditation and, even if we are able to focus on such objects momentarily, we will be unable to remain concentrated on them for a long time. Such a mind is like an unsubdued horse over which the rider has no control. It is as if our mind is our master and we are obliged to do as it bids. Such an unruly mind refuses to engage in



## INTRODUCTION TO THE NATURE OF THE MIND

virtuous activities that we may wish to perform. If we want to develop concentration, for example, it provides only obstacles, not help.

Once we have attained tranquil abiding this situation is reversed. Like a well-trained horse, our mind becomes responsive and obedient. Controlled by the reins of mindfulness and alertness, this obedient mind will do whatever we wish. Instead of being an interference, it will become our greatest helper. With it we will be able to penetrate deeply into whatever object of meditation we choose. Eventually we will be able to gain a direct realization of emptiness.

Since it is impossible to realize emptiness directly at the beginning, we must first attain a generic image of emptiness and use that as our object of meditation. Then, as our meditation progresses, our realization of emptiness will become more and more vivid. Eventually we will reach the point where the generic image disappears and there is no gap between the subject (our mind) and the object (emptiness itself). When this happens we will have attained a direct realization of emptiness and thereby become a Superior being.

We may wonder why it is necessary to realize emptiness directly. The reason is that without a direct realization of emptiness we will not be able to abandon self-grasping, and so we will not be able to attain even the liberation of a Foe Destroyer, let alone the full enlightenment of a Buddha. Therefore it is not enough simply to realize emptiness; we must realize it directly.

Although tranquil abiding can be attained by using any object of meditation, we should be careful not to regard this attainment as an end in itself. If we are to complete our spiritual training and attain the exalted state of Buddhahood for the sake of all living beings we must generate bodhichitta and use our concentration of tranquil abiding to meditate on emptiness. In this way, eventually we will abandon both the obstructions to liberation and the

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

obstructions to omniscience, and attain the exalted state of Buddhahood.

THE UNCOMMON EXPLANATION OF HOW TO MEDITATE ON  
TRANQUIL ABIDING

This is given under two headings:

- 1 An introduction to the object of meditation, the mind itself
- 2 The actual explanation of how to train

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION,  
THE MIND ITSELF

According to the system set forth by the Masters of the Mahamudra lineage we should take the mind itself as our object of tranquil abiding meditation. This is not the only object we can use. We can, for example, train in tranquil abiding by meditating on the short-AH instead. However, whereas the use of the short-AH is unique to the practice of Secret Mantra, the mind itself can be used as an object of meditation in both Sutra and Secret Mantra practices.

Taking the mind as the object of meditation has a number of advantages. It makes it easier to attain tranquil abiding, to overcome external distractions, and to realize emptiness. Furthermore, it makes it much easier to recognize the nature of the very subtle mind that goes from life to life. For these reasons, the Spiritual Masters of the Mahamudra lineage have given clear and detailed introductions to the nature of the mind.

Traditionally the Spiritual Guide first explains the attributes of the mind to the disciple and teaches him or her how to search for the mind in meditation. Then the disciple retires to a place of solitude and meditates according to the instructions received. After some time the disciple returns to the Spiritual Guide and discusses

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE NATURE OF THE MIND

whatever experiences he or she may have had. By means of this dialogue, all misconceptions and misunderstandings are removed and the disciple eventually arrives at a correct understanding and experience of the gross and subtle minds.

Besides giving clear descriptions of the differences between the conventional nature of the mind and the ultimate nature of the mind, the Mahamudra teachings also provide detailed explanations of various gross and subtle levels of mind. These instructions are very important because if we are unable to experience the gross mind correctly we shall be unable to experience the subtle minds, and if we are unable to experience the subtle minds we shall be unable to experience the very subtle mind and benefit from the clear light experience.

The introduction to the object of meditation, the mind itself, has three parts:

- 1 An introduction to the general mind
- 2 An introduction to the individual minds
- 3 Avoiding mistaking the introduction to the conventional nature of the mind for an introduction to the ultimate nature of the mind

#### AN INTRODUCTION TO THE GENERAL MIND

We may feel that an introduction to the mind in general should be relatively straightforward because everyone has a mind, but in fact we need some pointing-out instructions to be able to recognize the mind precisely. As there are many disputes among philosophers as to what the mind actually is, we must make a thorough investigation ourselves to ascertain the truth of the matter.

First we should ask 'Where is my mind located?' In general there are three possible answers to this question. Some people believe the mind is located throughout the body, others that it exists mainly in the brain, while still others believe that it is located mainly at the heart. As for

the first assertion, there are good reasons for saying that the mind is located throughout the body. As Aryadeva states in his Four Hundred, all the parts of the body are pervaded by the body sense power and hence by tactile awareness. When we touch our body we experience a feeling at the point of contact, and that feeling is mind. Therefore, in this sense, it is correct to say that the mind pervades the entire body. We can check for ourself to see whether this is true or not.

The brain, too, is the site of various sense faculties. Thus, if someone were to touch or stimulate a part of the brain, certain feelings would arise and, as stated before, feelings are mind. It is perhaps for this reason that some people claim that the brain is the main location of the mind. If however there were no feelings experienced in response to stimulating the brain we would have to conclude that there is no mind in the brain.

There are good reasons for asserting that the mind is mainly located within the heart channel wheel. This is because the root mind – the very subtle mind – and its mounted wind reside here. As all gross and subtle minds develop from this mind it is reasonable to assert that the mind is located mainly at the heart centre.

The scriptures define the mind variously. In some texts the definition of mind is simply that which is clarity and cognizes. In others, such as the writings of the first Panchen Lama, the definition of mind is that which is clarity, is empty of form, and cognizes. Thus in addition to stating that the mind is clarity and cognizing, the Panchen Lama also states that it is empty of form. To say that the mind is empty of form is to say simply that it lacks any physical properties. This point is included within the definition to refute the assertions of some scholars that the mind is physical form.

There are many ways in which things can be empty. For example, the sky is said to be empty because it lacks obstructive contact, that is, it is intangible and does not prevent movement; but the sky does not lack physical form

because when we look at it we see the colour blue. In this case, obstructive contact is negated but form is not. In the case of mind, however, it is form that is negated. Thus, although both the mind and the sky are said to be empty, their objects of negation are different. The sky is said to be empty because it lacks obstructive contact, while the mind is said to be empty because it lacks form. Therefore, even though the same term is being used in both cases, its denotation is different in each case because the object that is negated is different. It will be important to keep this distinction in mind later when the much more subtle emptiness, lack of inherent existence, is discussed.

When it is said that the mind is empty of physical form, this emptiness is not the ultimate nature of the mind but its conventional nature. Only the mind is empty of form and yet cognizes objects. The mind apprehends and perceives objects as well as performing many other functions, such as discriminating and experiencing its objects. In summary, the function of the mind is to cognize objects.

By contemplating the definitions and functions described above we should arrive at a generic image of the mind. Since at present our mind is obscured by conceptual thought it is difficult to perceive the mind clearly at the beginning; therefore at this stage we should strive to attain an accurate generic image of the mind and meditate on that. For example, although we may not have been to Lhasa we can still gain a generic image of what Lhasa is like by listening to the tales of an experienced traveller who has been there. Similarly, even though we cannot presently focus on our mind directly, we can gain an accurate generic image of what it is like and then meditate on that generic image. Then, through tranquil abiding meditation, our gross dualistic conceptual thoughts will gradually fade and we will be able to perceive the mind itself, clearly and directly.

Although it was stated previously that the body is pervaded by tactile awareness, we should understand that this awareness manifests only when the body sense power meets a tactile object. Similarly, an eye awareness will arise

only when the eye sense power meets a visual form. If there is a visual form present but no eye sense power, or if there is a functioning eye sense power but no visual form, no eye awareness will arise. In short, if an object and a power do not meet, no mind or awareness can develop, just as if two hands do not meet, there can be no sound of two hands clapping.

Accomplished practitioners of tranquil abiding meditation generally take as their object of meditation the very subtle mind located at the centre of the heart channel wheel. This mind is referred to both as the 'root mind' and the 'resident mind'. The latter name is used to distinguish the very subtle mind from the gross and subtle minds, which are temporary, appearing and disappearing many times during one life. Although the very subtle mind is impermanent in the sense of changing moment by moment, it is constant in the sense that it continues from one life to the next.

Using this very subtle root mind as the object of tranquil abiding meditation is a powerful technique because both the subject and the object are the mind itself. However, even though this meditation is very blissful and powerful, if we are not accustomed to it we may become confused, thinking that there are two different minds: one that is the subject and one that is the object. Such uncertainty is an indication that we are new to this type of meditation. When we become thoroughly familiar with it we will feel that the subject and object are utterly indistinguishable.

Meditating on the root mind located at the heart centre is a very effective method for bringing the winds into the central channel. If we do this meditation within the context of Secret Mantra practice we should meditate on the subtle indestructible mind residing in the vacuole inside the central channel at the centre of the heart channel wheel. As was mentioned earlier, the principal aim of the Secret Mantra meditator is to develop spontaneous great bliss by bringing the winds into the central channel. Therefore, if we choose the mind itself as the object for training in tranquil abiding meditation and visualize it residing

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE NATURE OF THE MIND

within the centre of the heart channel wheel, we are preparing the way for spontaneous great bliss to arise. When this type of meditation is conjoined with Secret Mantra practices it becomes an indirect completion stage meditation. Thus there are many benefits to be gained from choosing the mind itself as our object of tranquil abiding meditation.

#### AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INDIVIDUAL MINDS

According to both Sutra and Secret Mantra there are two types of mind: primary minds and mental factors. In general there are six primary minds and fifty-one mental factors. These are explained fully in *Understanding the Mind*, and so they will not be enumerated here. According to Secret Mantra, mind can also be divided into gross minds, subtle minds, and the very subtle mind. The five sense awarenesses – the eye awareness, the ear awareness, the nose awareness, the tongue awareness, and the body awareness – are all gross minds. The sixth awareness, the mental awareness itself, has all three divisions of gross, subtle, and very subtle. All the eighty indicative conceptions listed earlier are gross minds and mental awarenesses. These are the 'used minds' of ordinary beings and include our different thoughts, memories, delusions, and so forth. They are called 'used minds' because they realize, hold, and cognize their objects and while they think and meditate we, the person, use them.

The minds of mirage-like appearance, smoke-like appearance, sparkling-fireflies-like appearance, and candle-flame-like appearance are also gross minds. Although each mind is more subtle than the mind that preceded it – the mind of smoke-like appearance being subtler than the mind of mirage-like appearance, and so on – they are all gross minds because their mounted winds are gross.

The minds of white appearance, red increase, and black near-attainment are subtle minds. As before, each mind is more subtle than the preceding one. They are subtle minds because they are free from gross dualistic conceptual

thoughts. After the mind of black near-attainment has ceased, the mind of clear light arises. This is called the 'very subtle mind' because there is no subtler mind than this.

An accomplished completion stage meditator will experience each of these minds in turn – from gross minds, through subtle minds, to the very subtle mind – during the waking state just as they occur during sleep and death. The essential point of completion stage meditation is to experience the very subtle mind. Although the clear light mind is a very subtle mind, not all very subtle minds are necessarily the clear light mind. This is because ordinary beings have a very subtle mind all the time, but not a clear light mind all the time. For them the clear light occurs only during sleep and at death. It is only Yogis who can experience clear light during the waking state.

The method for experiencing this very subtle mind is explained fully in the Mahamudra teachings of Secret Mantra. Why is this? It is because we can attain enlightenment in this very life in dependence upon this very subtle mind and its mounted wind. The very subtle mind is the substantial cause of the Truth Body of a Buddha and the very subtle wind upon which it is mounted is the substantial cause of the Form Body of a Buddha. Without using this very subtle mind and wind it is impossible to attain the perfect enlightenment of Buddhahood.

The ability of a mind to function depends upon its mounted wind. If a wind is impure the mind mounted upon it will also be impure. On the other hand, if it is a wisdom wind the mind mounted upon it will be a wisdom mind. The winds that flow within the right and left channels and those that flow throughout all the other seventy-two thousand channels of the body all give rise to dualistic conceptions. The winds that flow within the central channel, however, are wisdom winds, so called because Yogis develop their wisdom minds from them. Because all wisdom minds must be mounted upon wisdom winds, it is essential to bring all the winds into the central channel.



#### INTRODUCTION TO THE NATURE OF THE MIND

According to Sutra, self-grasping is the root of samsara and all its sufferings, and so the methods explained in Sutra for gaining release from suffering deal only with overcoming this self-grasping mind. According to Secret Mantra, however, it is not only self-grasping that is the root of samsara, but also the impure winds. Thus Secret Mantra explains not only how to overcome self-grasping but also how to overcome the impure winds upon which it is mounted and thereby attain release from samsara. Because the methods taught in Secret Mantra overcome both self-grasping and the impure winds, they are superior to those of Sutra.

Although we may not be able to practise the superior methods of Secret Mantra at present, we should make a firm determination to be able to do so in the future. When we consider how rare Secret Mantra teachings are – as Je Tsongkhapa has stated, they are even rarer than the Buddhas – we should feel very joyful that we now have the opportunity to study these precious teachings. The more we understand and appreciate the good fortune of having met these teachings, and the more we pray to be able to put them into practice in the future for the benefit of others, the more quickly we will accomplish results through these methods.

#### AVOIDING MISTAKING THE INTRODUCTION TO THE CONVENTIONAL NATURE OF THE MIND FOR AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ULTIMATE NATURE OF THE MIND

Some Mahamudra Teachers and practitioners assert that when a meditator directly perceives clarity and cognizing without the veil of conceptualizations he or she has realized the emptiness that is the ultimate nature of the mind. This is because they believe that clarity and cognizing is the mind's ultimate nature. Students who listen to these instructions also fall into this mistaken view. This misconception arises from a failure to understand the

correct view as explained by Protector Nagarjuna. They do not fully understand what 'ultimate nature' means and, if asked what the ultimate nature of the mind is, they cannot establish it as a non-affirming negative. They think that the ultimate nature of the mind is clarity and cognizing free of conceptualization; they do not realize that the ultimate nature of the mind is the non-affirming negative that is the mere absence of the inherent existence of the mind. This mere absence of inherent existence is very subtle and therefore quite difficult to comprehend. Clarity and cognizing, however, is not nearly as subtle and so it is relatively easy to understand. This is one reason why meditators can hold onto erroneous beliefs concerning the ultimate nature of the mind.

According to the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* and the view of Nagarjuna, actual emptiness is mere absence of inherent existence, and so it is a non-affirming negative. Those who do not understand the subtlety of this view are unable to see any difference between such a non-affirming negative and utter non-existence. For this reason they make mistakes when trying to understand the ultimate nature of the mind. They assert that non-affirming negatives do not exist at all and therefore reject the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* and the view of Nagarjuna. Instead, when they meditate merely on clarity and cognizing and experience it very vividly, they think they are realizing the emptiness that is the ultimate nature of the mind. The emptiness that they are experiencing, however, is merely the lack of physical form and the freedom from conceptualization; it is not lack of inherent existence.

The first Panchen Lama, Losang Chökyi Gyaltsän, soundly refuted this misconception. In his root text on the Mahamudra he wrote:

The mind that is free from conceptualization  
 Is merely a level of conventional mind;  
 It is not the mind's ultimate nature.  
 Therefore seek instruction from qualified Masters.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE NATURE OF THE MIND

Thus the Panchen Lama clearly stated that what some meditators take to be the ultimate nature of the mind – clarity and cognizing – is merely the mind's conventional nature.

If we mistakenly believe this conventional nature of the mind to be its ultimate nature, we may easily develop deluded pride and many other related faults. For example, when through meditation we gain a vivid perception of clarity and cognizing, we may feel that we have gained a direct realization of emptiness and, as it is possible to develop a slightly blissful feeling from such a meditation, we may conclude 'Now I have developed the spontaneous great bliss of Secret Mantra.' Later we might even come to think 'Now I have developed the Mahamudra that is the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness.' It is possible that through the force of further meditation we might for a short time become free from conceptual thought, in which case we may develop the deluded pride that thinks 'Now I am free from the two obstructions; I have become a Buddha!' In reality we shall not have attained such a sublime state, and sooner or later we will have to confront circumstances such as objects of anger or attachment that give rise to the various deluded states of mind. It will then become evident that the 'enlightenment' we experienced was not even a realization of emptiness, let alone enlightenment. All these mistakes come from misunderstanding the ultimate nature of the mind as a result of not following the instructions of qualified Teachers, or not studying such instructions well.

The first Panchen Lama was a highly realized practitioner who always behaved in a very humble manner, but when writing about the need to refute mistaken and misleading teachings he was quite direct:

As we cannot perceive the mindstream of others  
We should strive to appreciate the teachings of all;  
But I cannot accept those who spread wrong views  
And through these wrong views lead many astray.

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

What the Panchen Lama wrote several hundred years ago is particularly applicable today. If pure Dharma is to flourish in western countries it is essential that we examine our beliefs carefully to ensure that they are fully in accordance with the pure teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni. The ugly, unfortunate result of not understanding pure Dharma and of following misleading teachings that pretend to be pure Dharma is sectarianism. This is one of the greatest hindrances to the flourishing of Dharma, especially in the West. Anything that gives rise to such an evil, destructive mind should be eliminated as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.

Nowadays there is a strong tendency to believe without the slightest hesitation every word spoken by someone of high reputation, whereas a humble practitioner giving perfect and accurate teachings is often neither appreciated nor believed. Buddha Shakyamuni cautioned his disciples against adopting such a mistaken attitude:

Do not accept my teachings simply because I am called Buddha.

Time and time again he reminded his disciples not to accept his teachings out of blind faith, but to test them as thoroughly as they would assay gold. It is only on the basis of valid reasons and personal experience that we should accept the teachings of anyone, including Buddha himself.

In the teachings on the four reliances Buddha gives further guidelines for arriving at an unmistakable understanding of the teachings. He says:

Do not rely upon the person, but upon the Dharma.  
Do not rely upon the words, but upon the  
meaning.  
Do not rely upon the interpretative meaning, but  
upon the definitive meaning.  
Do not rely upon consciousness, but upon wisdom.

The meaning of these lines is as follows:

(1) When deciding which doctrine to rely upon we should not be satisfied with the fame or reputation of a particular Teacher, but instead should examine what he or she teaches. If upon investigation we find the teachings reasonable and faultless, we should accept them, but if they lack these qualities we should reject them, no matter how famous or charismatic their expounder might be.

(2) We should not be influenced merely by the poetic or rhetorical style of a particular teaching but should accept it only if the actual meaning of the words is reasonable.

(3) We should not be satisfied merely with an interpretative meaning of conventional truth but should rely upon and accept the definitive meaning of the ultimate truth of emptiness. In other words, because the method teachings on bodhichitta and the wisdom teachings on emptiness and so forth are companions, we should not be satisfied with only one or the other but should practise both together.

(4) We should not be satisfied with impure, deceptive states of consciousness, but should place our reliance upon the wisdom of meditative equipoise of Superior beings.

If we understand these four reliances and use them to evaluate the truth of the teachings we receive, we will be following an unmistakable path. There will be no danger of our adopting false views or falling under the influence of misleading Teachers. We will be able to discriminate correctly between what is to be accepted and what is to be rejected, and we will thereby be protected against faults such as sectarianism.



*Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsän*

# *Tranquil Abiding*

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## THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION OF HOW TO TRAIN

This has three parts:

- 1 How to train by means of general mindfulness
- 2 How to train by means of specific mindfulnesses
- 3 How to train by means of the six methods for settling the mind

### HOW TO TRAIN BY MEANS OF GENERAL MINDFULNESS

When we train in tranquil abiding we have to overcome various obstacles by applying specific antidotes. The first obstacle to attaining tranquil abiding is the three types of laziness: laziness arising from attachment to worldly pleasures, laziness arising from attachment to distracting activities, and laziness arising from discouragement. The first type of laziness is a complacent attitude in which we remain content with samsara and do not feel inclined to engage in virtuous actions. Under the influence of this laziness we lack the energy to rouse ourselves from lethargy. With the laziness arising from attachment to distracting activities we are happy to indulge in worldly activities but have no inclination to engage in virtuous actions that lead to a cessation of suffering. The third type of laziness arises from believing that we lack the ability to engage in a particular virtuous action. For example, if we think that the attainment of tranquil abiding is totally beyond our capability we will easily become discouraged and not try to accomplish it. All these forms of laziness block the path to tranquil abiding.

There are four antidotes to laziness: faith, aspiration, effort, and mental suppleness. The first two combat laziness indirectly while the last two are direct opponents. Faith in tranquil abiding is gained by contemplating its many benefits. On the basis of this faith, we develop an aspiration to attain tranquil abiding. This aspiration naturally gives rise to effort that enables us to engage enthusiastically in the training. Eventually, through the force of our effort, we attain the mental suppleness that cuts the very root of laziness so that it never arises again.

Thinking about the benefits of tranquil abiding is a very effective method for generating faith and overcoming the laziness that prevents us from engaging in the training. One of the advantages of tranquil abiding is that it induces clairvoyance, which greatly enhances our ability to help others. For example, we may have a compassionate wish to help someone but, because we lack clairvoyance, be unable to see clearly all the factors in their situation and as a result give mistaken advice. It often happens that, despite our compassionate intentions, we inadvertently bring harm to others. With clairvoyance, however, such problems do not arise.

One example of the benefits of developing clairvoyance comes from the biography of the great meditator Asanga. On one occasion he was giving a public discourse and in the audience there was a very powerful king. The king decided to test Asanga and so he formulated in his mind three difficult questions concerning the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. Through the powers he had gained from tranquil abiding meditation, Asanga was able to read the questions in the king's mind and answer them perfectly during his discourse. This display of power and insight so impressed the king that he developed great faith in Asanga and his teachings, and as a result Dharma flourished throughout his realm.

As indicated, laziness is a general obstacle to successful Dharma practice. We also have to overcome three specific obstacles to tranquil abiding – mental wandering, mental



## TRANQUIL ABIDING

excitement, and mental sinking. As these three are the worst obstacles to attaining tranquil abiding, it is essential that we recognize them clearly and learn to apply the appropriate antidotes. Just as it is necessary to know who our enemy is before we can stop him from harming us, so we must be able to recognize all three obstacles before we can keep them from interfering with our meditation. Furthermore, it is not enough merely to have intellectual knowledge of these obstacles; we must recognize them from our own personal experience. Only then is it possible to overcome them completely. As it is difficult to distinguish a state of concentration that is fully qualified from one that is not, we should rely upon accurate and detailed teachings on this point, such as those found in the writings of Je Tsongkhapa and his followers. In particular, we should study the explanations given in *Joyful Path of Good Fortune* and *Meaningful to Behold*.

Mental wandering occurs when our mind is focused on a virtuous object of tranquil abiding meditation and then moves to any object other than an object of attachment. For example, if we are meditating on the form of Buddha Shakyamuni and our mind moves to the form of Avalokiteshvara or Tara then, even though we are still meditating on a virtuous object, we have succumbed to mental wandering. Mental wandering has two types: subtle mental wandering and gross mental wandering. The first occurs when our mind moves to the other object only slightly, without losing the original object of meditation, and the second occurs when the mind moves to such an extent that the original object of meditation is lost completely.

Mental excitement occurs when our mind is focused on a virtuous object of tranquil abiding meditation and then wanders to an object of attachment. For example, if we are trying to develop tranquil abiding by meditating on the form of a Buddha and our mind moves towards an object of attachment such as our boyfriend or girlfriend, we have succumbed to mental excitement. Once again, there are two types of mental excitement: subtle mental excitement and

gross mental excitement. The first occurs when our mind moves only slightly towards an object of attachment without actually losing the original object of meditation. Such subtle mental excitement does not break the thread of our meditation, but is like a small fish that can swim back and forth without disturbing the water. Gross mental excitement occurs when our mind becomes so engrossed in the object of attachment that the original object of meditation is completely lost.

Mental wandering and mental excitement are relatively easy to recognize, but mental sinking, especially in its subtle form, is not so easy to identify. Mental sinking occurs when our mind is focused on a virtuous object of tranquil abiding meditation and then either the clarity of that object or the intensity with which our mind holds onto that object diminishes. For example, if we are meditating on the short-AH of inner fire and either the clarity of this letter or the intensity with which we hold it diminishes, then our concentration has given way to mental sinking. As was the case for mental wandering and mental excitement, mental sinking also has two types: subtle mental sinking and gross mental sinking. The first occurs when the intensity with which we hold our object of meditation diminishes slightly, and the second when both the intensity and the clarity diminish.

These obstacles, mental wandering, mental excitement, and mental sinking, must all be overcome if we are to attain actual tranquil abiding. Tranquil abiding itself is so called because it has overcome all conceptual distraction and remains single-pointedly on its object. Thus 'tranquil' refers to the pacification of distracting minds and 'abiding' refers to the mind's ability to remain single-pointedly on the chosen object of meditation.

The proper way to begin tranquil abiding meditation is to sit in the correct meditation posture, make sure that we do not have a dull or sleepy mind, and then try to overcome the disturbing conceptual minds that are drawn towards external objects. It is very important to be able to

distinguish a defiled mind from a clear mind. For example, if we want to drink from a mountain stream we do not drink from the turbulent part because the water there will be mixed with dirt and silt; rather we drink from a calm part of the stream where the water is clean and clear. Similarly, if we want to attain a clear and calm mind we must pacify the mental turbulence of conceptual distractions.

The recommended method for pacifying this mental turbulence is to begin our meditation session by expelling the impure winds as explained previously in the section on inner fire meditation. Once our mind has reached an acceptable level of calmness we should try to recall the pointing-out instructions concerning the meditation object, in this case the mind itself, that were given to us by our Spiritual Guide. This activity, which is called 'seeking the object of meditation', will eventually lead us to a correct generic image of the object. This is known as 'finding the object of meditation'. Once we have found the correct generic image we should endeavour to hold it without forgetting. This is called 'holding the object of meditation'. Finally we should remain firmly on the generic image with strong single-pointed concentration. This is called 'remaining on the object of meditation'. These four activities – seeking, finding, holding, and remaining – are of supreme importance in the development of true concentration. They will be discussed again below.

It is a great shame if we do not know what concentration actually is. A fully-qualified concentration must have two characteristics: (1) holding the object through the force of strong mindfulness, and (2) remaining single-pointedly on that object. When we are meditating we should examine our mind to see if it is endowed with these two qualities. It is much better to spend a short time in true concentration than to spend a long time in faulty practice.

Concerning the obstacles to proper meditation, it is relatively simple to identify mental wandering and mental excitement and to see how they are obstacles to our attainment of tranquil abiding, but it takes an experienced

meditator to recognize subtle mental sinking and to distinguish it from true single-pointed concentration. If we are unable to distinguish these two there will be a danger of our concentration becoming mixed with subtle mental sinking. If this happens our meditation will yield negative results. To safeguard against this fault we must use the mental factor alertness from time to time. Thus, while the main part of our mind is focused on the object of meditation, a small part of the mind should check to see if mental wandering, mental excitement, mental sinking, or any other fault is arising. This alertness is a form of analytical wisdom.

Of central importance to single-pointed concentration is mindfulness. It is the very life of meditation because it performs three essential functions: (1) not forgetting the meditation object, (2) holding the object, and (3) overcoming distractions. In particular, mindfulness is essential for preventing mental wandering, mental excitement, and mental sinking. To develop and maintain strong mindfulness of the meditation object we need to do two things: (1) at the beginning of the session to make a strong determination to maintain unbroken mindfulness throughout the session, and (2) during the session to take steps to strengthen our mindfulness whenever we recognize that it is about to degenerate.

In summary, we shall be able to attain tranquil abiding if we can overcome mental sinking, mental excitement, and mental wandering through the force of mindfulness and alertness. If we allow these faults to remain in our mind without trying to overcome them, this is known as 'non-application'. This is also an obstacle to developing tranquil abiding, and it should be overcome by a conscientious application of the appropriate antidotes whenever faults arise in the mind during our meditation session. If we maintain at all times a strong intention to accomplish the aims of our practice we will naturally apply antidotes whenever obstacles arise. Therefore we should keep these aims foremost in our mind, remember how tranquil

## TRANQUIL ABIDING

abiding allows us to accomplish these aims, and be determined not to let laziness or any other delusion keep us from our goal.

To attain a perfect state of tranquil abiding we must progress through nine stages of development, known as the nine mental abidings. These nine stages, as well as the eight antidotes to the five obstacles, the four attentions, the six forces, and so forth, have been explained in great detail in other texts such as *Joyful Path of Good Fortune* and *Meaningful to Behold*, and if we are interested in developing deep concentration we should become familiar with these explanations. Here the nine mental abidings are described only briefly to demonstrate how tranquil abiding is attained in dependence upon general and specific mindfulnesses.

The first two mental abidings, 'placing the mind' and 'continual placement', are attained by means of general mindfulness in the following manner. At the beginning of our meditation session, after we have assumed a comfortable posture on our meditation cushion, we go through the four steps of seeking, finding, holding, and remaining on the object – the mind itself. At this stage we need to use general mindfulness to remember the pointing-out instructions that enable us to hold a correct generic image without forgetting it.

At the beginning, we will find it difficult to remain in single-pointed concentration on the object for very long. We must apply great effort merely to search for and find the object, and when we find it we will have difficulty in keeping hold of it. Therefore, it is helpful to divide our meditation session into a number of short sub-sections. We begin by going through the four steps until we lose our hold on the object. This is the first sub-section. Then we start immediately searching again for the object and progress through the other three steps until, once again, we lose the object. This is the second sub-section. We continue in this way until the end of the session, each time we lose the object immediately abandoning that sub-section and moving to the next.

## CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

It is said that at the beginning it is good to have eighteen such sub-sections during each meditation session, but this is just a rough guide; we can do as few or as many as we wish. We do not need to interrupt our attempts at concentration by keeping an exact count of the sub-sections; an approximation is good enough. The point is to be as alert and mindful as possible at all times, checking the quality of our concentration, noting whenever we have lost the object, and then immediately beginning the next sub-section.

At the first stage, placing the mind, we will barely be able to hold the meditation object before losing it. Again and again we will have to seek and find the object and then try to hold it. Eventually we will be able to remain focused on the object for up to five minutes without losing it. When we are able to do this we shall have reached the second stage, continual placement.

When we first start to practise tranquil abiding meditation we may devote only an hour or less to such practices, but eventually we should be doing from four to six sessions a day. Building up our practice in such a gradual manner is the best way to proceed. As stated before, it is better to do a short meditation with qualified concentration than a long session with faulty concentration.

This concludes the discussion of general mindfulness. The remaining seven mental abidings, which are developed by depending upon specific mindfulnesses, are explained in the following section.

### HOW TO TRAIN BY MEANS OF SPECIFIC MINDFULNESSES

This has five parts:

- 1 How to train by means of new mindfulness
- 2 How to train by means of old mindfulness
- 3 How to train by means of appropriate methods
- 4 How to train by means of labels known to others
- 5 How to train by means of the natural cessation of conceptual thoughts

## TRANQUIL ABIDING

### HOW TO TRAIN BY MEANS OF NEW MINDFULNESS

During the first two mental abidings, each time we lose the object of meditation we have to search for it again, find it, hold it, and then remain on it single-pointedly. Even though we are constantly renewing our mindfulness, this renewed mindfulness cannot take hold of its object immediately. At the third stage, however, our familiarity with the object has developed to the point where we can re-establish our hold on the object immediately after losing it; there is no longer any need to seek it. At this stage the mindfulness we employ to bring our mind back to its object is called 'new' mindfulness, and this third stage is appropriately called 'replacement'.

At the third stage we are still bothered by distractions that, like a thief, steal our attention from the object. We repeatedly have to apprehend this thief, remove him, and then return our mind once more to the meditation object. However, compared to the first two stages, our mind can now be returned to its object very quickly by means of new mindfulness.

### HOW TO TRAIN BY MEANS OF OLD MINDFULNESS

At the third stage of mental development, we have to employ new mindfulness again and again because the mind keeps losing its object of meditation. Eventually, however, we reach the point where we are able to hold the object without ever having to employ new mindfulness. In other words, from the beginning of the session right through to the end we are able to hold the meditation object without breaking the continuity of our concentration. When we are able to do this we have attained the fourth mental abiding, 'close placement'. Because at this stage our mindfulness does not degenerate once it has been set, it is said that we are now maintaining our meditation by means of 'old' mindfulness. Through the power of such old mindfulness we are able to cut distracting conceptions without ever forgetting the object of meditation.

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

In the *Vinaya Sutras* Buddha taught an analogy to demonstrate the importance of maintaining unbroken concentration by means of old mindfulness. At one time a duel was being fought between two enemies, one an archer and the other fighting with a spinning wheel of swords. For a long time the archer was unable to harm the swordsman because every time he fired an arrow it was intercepted and destroyed by the whirling blades. It seemed as if the duel would go on for ever when, out of exasperation, the archer's wife formulated a clever plan to distract the swordsman and cause him to lose his concentration. Attiring herself in seductive clothing, she moved into the swordsman's field of vision. As he caught sight of her, the swordsman's attention was momentarily distracted, but that brief moment was all that was required for the archer to deliver the fatal arrow! As he lay dying, the swordsman lamented 'It was not the archer who killed me, but my own lack of mindfulness.'

If we are to prevent the arrows of distraction from destroying our concentration we must maintain old mindfulness constantly without letting it drop for a moment, just like a wheel of swords spinning uninterruptedly. When, at the fourth stage, we are able to do this, we have completed the force of mindfulness. It should be noted however that a skilful practitioner will not have very long meditation sessions at this stage because mental sinking and mental excitement still occur, and it is not wise to encourage these obstacles through prolonged sessions.

#### HOW TO TRAIN BY MEANS OF APPROPRIATE METHODS

At the fourth stage of development the force of mindfulness is completed and we have the ability to remain on the meditation object uninterruptedly throughout the session. However, the excessive effort needed to maintain this unbroken level of concentration causes the mind to become too collected, and as a result subtle mental sinking occurs. Thus on the fifth stage, which is called 'controlled mind',



#### TRANQUIL ABIDING

it is necessary to apply the force of alertness to uplift the mind by gripping the object more firmly. We need to relax slightly the effort of maintaining our concentration yet still be able to remain single-pointedly on it.

The instruction to relax our effort does not mean that after holding and remaining on the meditation object we should loosen our grip on the object itself. This would be a grave error at this stage. It is true that the great Mahasiddha Saraha said that if one completely relaxes, tranquil abiding will certainly be attained, but his remarks were meant for those on the eighth and ninth mental abidings, not for those still on the fifth. At this stage, it is not our concentration that we should relax but rather the effort used to overcome such faults as mental sinking and mental excitement. If this effort is not relaxed slightly, we will develop subtle mental sinking, which will interfere with our concentration.

If we are able to hold the meditation object and yet relax the effort needed to maintain single-pointed concentration on it, we are maintaining tranquil abiding meditation by means of appropriate methods; in other words we are applying effort appropriately and to the degree required. To do this properly, however, requires a great deal of practice. Even the great Indian meditator Chandragomin declared:

When I depend upon effort mental excitement occurs,  
but when I reduce that effort mental sinking sets in.

It is important for a meditator interested in developing tranquil abiding to gain a deep understanding of points such as this. Such an understanding will not grow from mere intellectual familiarity with the teachings; rather we must gain personal experience of each of the nine stages of mental development by actually putting these and other instructions into practice. This is the only way we can make progress.

Once we reach the fifth mental abiding our concentration is strong and stable, and it is definite that we will attain



*Phurchog Ngawang Jampa*

## TRANQUIL ABIDING

tranquil abiding if we continue to apply effort in meditation. On our way to this goal we pass through the remaining four stages of development, which can be briefly explained as follows.

At the sixth stage, known as 'pacifying', we complete the force of alertness. Although at this stage there is no more danger of subtle mental sinking there is still a danger of subtle mental excitement that results from tightening the grip on the object and overly uplifting the mind at the previous stage. This subtle mental excitement is overcome through the force of alertness.

On the seventh stage the balance of our concentration cannot be disturbed by either subtle mental sinking or subtle mental excitement because the forces of mindfulness and alertness are now complete. Although it is still possible for either obstacle to arise, we can immediately overcome them through the force of effort. This stage is known as 'completely pacifying'.

At the eighth stage, known as 'single-pointedness', it is impossible for mental sinking and mental excitement to develop at all. Now it requires only a little effort to remain focused on the meditation object for the entire session without experiencing even the slightest interruption to concentration.

Finally, on the ninth stage, known as 'placement in equipoise', we are able to maintain faultless concentration without any effort. We have become so familiar with the object of meditation that it requires no effort at all to remain focused on it single-pointedly. Our concentration is now sustained by the force of complete familiarity.

### HOW TO TRAIN BY MEANS OF LABELS KNOWN TO OTHERS

In the Mahamudra texts three terms, or labels, are used to describe how tranquil abiding meditation is maintained: 'abiding', 'moving', and 'mixing'. Different meditators have used these terms in slightly different ways. For example, some of the early Mahamudra meditators said

that abiding refers to remaining single-pointedly on the held object of meditation, moving to conceptual thoughts arising while we remain on the object, and mixing to the dissolution of these conceptual thoughts back into the root mind, the object of Mahamudra meditation. According to these meditators, it is very important and yet very difficult to recognize these three states clearly.

Some later Mahamudra meditators mention the same three labels with respect to the same three states of meditation, but assert that it is not very difficult to recognize them. Using the analogy of a pond they say that abiding corresponds to the water being still and clear, moving to the formation of bubbles at the bottom of the pond and their rising to the surface, and mixing to the bursting of these bubbles and their dissolving back into the water.

Both the earlier and later meditators agree that while the mind is abiding on its object we should strive to prevent the movement of conceptual thoughts, and that if conceptual distractions do arise they should be allowed to dissolve back into the root mind through the practice of mixing. As to whether or not these three states of abiding, moving, and mixing are difficult or easy to recognize, there is no contradiction between the views of the earlier and later meditators. The earlier meditators stressed that it is difficult to recognize these three states through experience, which is certainly true for beginners, while the later meditators stressed that it is not difficult to distinguish these three states intellectually.

Other later Mahamudra meditators give another interpretation of these three labels. According to them, abiding refers to immutable tranquil abiding meditation, moving to the wisdom of superior seeing, and mixing to the union of these two. To illustrate their meaning they use the analogy of a small fish swimming in a perfectly still and clear pond without causing any ripples in the water. The still, clear pond is like the mind of tranquil abiding, the small fish like superior seeing, and its swimming without disturbing the water like the wisdom of superior

## TRANQUIL ABIDING

seeing investigating its object without disturbing the concentration. Tranquil abiding, superior seeing, and the union of these two are the main abiding, moving, and mixing of Mahamudra meditation.

### HOW TO TRAIN BY MEANS OF THE NATURAL CESSATION OF CONCEPTUAL THOUGHTS

Mahasiddha Saraha used the following analogy to illustrate how to attain a cessation of conceptual thoughts. In the past, when merchants sailed to a far-away land to conduct their business, they would take a crow to help them judge how far they were from their destination. When they thought they might be near land they would release the bird and wait to see if it returned to the ship or not. If it returned they would know that they were not yet near land, because the bird had not found anywhere to alight. In a similar fashion, if when we are training in tranquil abiding by meditating on the mind, conceptual thoughts arise we should simply remain still and watch them with one corner of the mind, just as the merchants would remain on the ship and observe the movements of the crow. After a while the wandering thought will have to rejoin the meditation object, the mind itself, in the same way that a crow far out at sea must eventually return to the ship. All conceptual thoughts arise from the mind and so they must eventually dissolve back into the mind. Therefore meditating in this way is a very effective means for overcoming conceptual distraction.

### HOW TO TRAIN BY MEANS OF THE SIX METHODS FOR SETTLING THE MIND

The explanation given in the previous sections on the general and specific types of mindfulness contains detailed instructions on the methods for fixing the mind on the object of meditation by avoiding the faults and obstacles that interfere with our concentration. This section now

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

explains six analogies, drawn from instructions by the great Mahasiddha Saraha, that illustrate the best way to settle the mind when training in tranquil abiding. They have been included here because it is felt that they might be especially helpful for contemporary meditators.

#### SETTLING LIKE THE SUN UNOBSCURED BY CLOUDS

Our meditation should be unobscured by and unmixed with obstructions to perfect concentration such as distracting conceptual thoughts and mental sinking; just like the sun free from obstruction by clouds.

#### SETTLING LIKE A GARUDA CIRCLING IN THE SKY

When this most powerful bird, the garuda, circles in the air it maintains a smooth glide simply by occasionally shifting the angle of its wings. It never adjusts its flight in a violent or frantic manner, but applies only as much effort as is required. Similarly, when training in tranquil abiding with our mind fixed single-pointedly on the meditation object, we should employ just the right amount of effort to keep our concentration balanced. If we use too much effort we will experience distraction, but if we use too little we will succumb to mental sinking.

#### SETTLING LIKE A STILL OCEAN

When there are no waves and no wind blowing, an ocean remains perfectly still. In the same way, when our mind has been freed from the waves of distraction we should remain on the meditation object single-pointedly, without any mental movement.

#### SETTLING LIKE A SMALL CHILD STARING AT A TEMPLE

If a child looks at the various works of art decorating the walls of a temple, he or she does not inspect them in detail,

## TRANQUIL ABIDING

but is satisfied with a superficial perusal of them. In the same way, at the beginning of our training in tranquil abiding, we should be satisfied with a rough perception of the object of meditation. Striving to gain too detailed or too clear a perception at first will cause many distractions to arise, and eventually the object will be lost altogether. Later however when we have grown familiar with the object, we can try to gain a more precise image of it, in the same way that an adult looking at temple murals will study their fine detail.

### SETTLING LIKE THE TRAIL OF A BIRD FLYING IN THE SKY

When a bird flies through the sky it leaves no trace of its movements, and so there is no trail to follow. In the same way, if distracting thoughts arise during our meditation we should not follow them but, by keeping our mind single-pointedly on the object of meditation, let them pass without trace.

### SETTLING LIKE FINE COTTON THREAD

Cotton thread of the highest quality has two attributes: it is soft and smooth and it is very strong. Similarly, when training in tranquil abiding our mind should be comfortable and relaxed, and yet it should be strongly tied to the object of meditation by means of mindfulness.

If we train in tranquil abiding by following the instructions given above we will progress naturally through all nine mental abidings. Once we have attained the first three, we will be able to pass through the remainder without difficulty. The attainment of each stage depends upon mastering the preceding stage, and so we should practise steadily and gradually.

After we have attained the ninth mental abiding and we can remain focused effortlessly and unwaveringly on the object of meditation, we then have to pass through various

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

states of mental and physical suppleness before we reach the actual state of tranquil abiding. At the ninth stage we will experience a very special, beneficial wind flowing throughout our crown channel wheel. The movement of this wind will induce a great mental suppleness and our mind will become completely free from discomfort, extremely flexible, and delighted to engage in any virtuous activity. Eventually this wind will flow throughout our body, thereby inducing a great physical suppleness. As a result, our body will be very agile and comfortable and we will find it very easy to engage in virtuous actions. It will seem very light and we will feel as if we are almost able to fly. This experience of lightness and freedom induces an intense feeling of bliss of physical suppleness. As a result of experiencing this, the mind then attains an immutable bliss of mental suppleness. Once we have attained this bliss of mental suppleness we have reached the actual state of tranquil abiding. This state possesses such extraordinary clarity of mind that we feel as though we could count all the atoms of the world!

The mind of tranquil abiding is not a desire realm mind, but a form realm concentration. Our concentration becomes so powerful that while in meditation all appearances other than that of the object of meditation completely vanish. Because in this case the mind itself is the meditation object, when we enter into concentration we perceive nothing but the mind. We feel as if our physical body has vanished and that we abide within the blissful nature of our mind, free from any external appearance or any internal conceptual thought.

Having attained unshakeable control over our mind, we shall also have gained control over our delusions through the force of our concentration. Thus, even when we rise from meditation and we once again perceive the ordinary appearances of the sense world, we will find it very difficult to become drawn to attractive objects or repulsed by unattractive ones. Even if we are attacked we will find it difficult to develop anger. In the same way, the other



#### TRANQUIL ABIDING

delusions such as jealousy and so forth will also lose their power to pollute our mind. However, while it is true that we will have the power to prevent delusions from arising in our mind, we will not yet have fully eradicated them. We can accomplish this only by attaining a direct realization of emptiness, the ultimate nature of reality. With the single-pointed concentration of tranquil abiding we have the ability to gain deep experience of any object because our mind is freed from all distractions of conceptual thought. Thus, if we now place our mind in single-pointed concentration on emptiness, we will be able to perceive emptiness with great clarity and penetration. Through the force of this realization of emptiness, eventually we will be able to sever the root of all delusions and attain complete liberation from suffering.

There are two paths we can take after attaining tranquil abiding: the mundane path and the supramundane path. Through following the former we can attain clairvoyance such as miracle powers, and rebirth in the god realms. Although these attainments are remarkable, they do not have much meaning when compared to the results of following the supramundane path of meditating on emptiness. This path leads to complete personal liberation and the full enlightenment of Buddhahood. If, for example, we have developed renunciation – the thought definitely to escape from samsara – and our mind of tranquil abiding meditates continuously on emptiness, lack of inherent existence, we will eventually attain the state of a Foe Destroyer, or nirvana. If we generate the motivation of bodhichitta and follow the Mahayana trainings we will be able to remove even the subtlest mental obstructions and thereby attain Buddhahood.

Since here we are training in tranquil abiding as part of the practice of Mahamudra, and since Mahamudra is a Mahayana practice, once we have attained tranquil abiding we should use it to develop and complete the realizations of renunciation, bodhichitta, and the correct view of emptiness.



*Panchen Palden Yeshe*

## *Meditation on Emptiness*

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### HOW TO SEEK THE VIEW OF EMPTINESS WITH MEDITATION

This has three parts:

- 1 How to meditate on selflessness of persons
- 2 How to meditate on selflessness of phenomena
- 3 Advising those who desire an unmistakable understanding of the ultimate view of both Sutra and Tantra of the necessity of listening to, contemplating, and meditating on Nagarjuna's root text on the Middle Way and its commentaries

How to meditate on selflessness of persons has three parts:

- 1 Identifying the object of negation
- 2 The way to refute the object of negation
- 3 How to train in emptiness during meditative equipoise and subsequent attainment

### IDENTIFYING THE OBJECT OF NEGATION

As mentioned before, emptiness is a non-affirming negative that is a mere absence of inherent existence. A negative phenomenon is one that can be realized only by the mind negating an object of negation. In the case of emptiness the object of negation is inherent existence. Thus emptiness is simply the absence, or non-existence, of inherent existence. To realize emptiness correctly we must first clearly identify its object of negation, inherent existence, and then negate it with our mind by realizing its non-existence. Most of the misunderstandings about emptiness arise from a failure to identify clearly its object

of negation. Other terms used to denote the object of negation of emptiness include 'true existence', 'natural existence', 'existence from its own side', and 'existence by way of its own characteristics'.

Generally, there are two types of emptiness or selflessness: selflessness of persons and selflessness of phenomena other than persons. When we are meditating on the former, the object of negation is the inherently existent I. Thus to realize selflessness of persons, first we must clearly identify the inherently existent I, and then we must refute it by establishing its non-existence with logical reasoning. It is important to remember that in refuting the inherently existent I we are not driving it out of existence, because it has never existed; rather we are simply gaining conviction that something that appears to exist does not exist at all.

At this point a doubt may arise: 'If the self or the I that is the object of negation does not actually exist, how can it appear to mind?' To resolve this doubt we must realize that just because something appears to our mind it does not mean that it actually exists. For example, some people suffer from impaired vision which causes them to see hairs floating in the space in front of them, but we would not say that such floating hairs actually exist simply because they appear to their minds. By thinking about examples such as this we can understand how an inherently existent I can appear to mind even though it is utterly non-existent.

To refute the object of negation we must first gain a clear and vivid generic image of the inherently existent I that normally appears to our mind. At this stage, in striving to gain this generic image, we should not concern ourselves with whether or not the inherently existent I that is appearing to our mind actually exists; rather we should simply concentrate on gaining as clear an image of it as possible.

It is important to distinguish the actual I that is merely imputed by conception, and which exists, from the inherently existent I conceived by the self-grasping mind, which

does not exist at all. It is the latter that is the object of negation of emptiness of persons. Any I that is not merely imputed by conception is an inherently existent I, and it is a generic image of this I, that appears to exist in its own right, that we are seeking to attain.

We begin our session by generating a strong determination to identify clearly the inherently existent I. We then try to bring an image of the inherently existent I to mind. To do this it is helpful to imagine or recall situations in which we are in great danger, such as when we are near the edge of a steep cliff; or situations in which we are embarrassed, or suffering provocation or insult; and then examine how the I appears to our mind at such times. We will discover that on the one side there is our mind and on the other side, appearing vividly to this mind, there appears an 'I' that seems to exist entirely from its own side, independent of the mind. The I that appears in this way is the inherently existent I, the object of negation. We should try to perceive it as clearly as possible.

Once we have identified the object of negation we should not immediately refute it by establishing its non-existence but should pause to think as follows:

*This is the very I that I have always thought existed, the I that I have cherished and protected since beginningless time. When someone praises me or flatters me it is this I that I cherish, thinking 'Yes, that is true', and when others speak harshly to me or insult me it is this I that I protect, thinking 'How dare they say that to me!'*

Usually, when we are flattered and pride arises, or when we are insulted and anger arises, we perceive not the I that is merely imputed by conception, but this vividly appearing I that appears to exist from its own side. In fact, until we have attained some experience of emptiness, whenever we think about ourself or refer to ourself we grasp at this inherently existent I, the very object of negation.

Having brought the inherently existent I to mind in this way we should think:

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

*Until now I have believed that this I really existed and have cherished and protected it accordingly; but I have never checked precisely to see whether or not it actually exists.*

It is not enough merely to listen to teachings or to read books on emptiness; we need to discover the truth for ourself by conducting a precise investigation to see whether or not the inherently existent I that we have cherished and protected for so long actually exists. To do this we need to rely upon the following method.

#### THE WAY TO REFUTE THE OBJECT OF NEGATION

The method for determining the non-existence of the inherently existent I is a logical analysis that consists of three stages:

- 1 The essential point of ascertaining the pervasion
- 2 The essential point of ascertaining the absence of oneness
- 3 The essential point of ascertaining the absence of difference

By conducting this three-fold investigation we shall be able conclusively to refute the object of negation by realizing that the inherently existent I does not exist at all.

#### THE ESSENTIAL POINT OF ASCERTAINING THE PERVASION

In general, whatever exists is either single, such as a tree, or different, such as a knife and fork. Since nothing can be both and nothing can be neither there is no third possibility. If we apply this to the subject at hand we will see that if the inherently existent I that appears vividly to our mind exists it must be either one with the aggregates or different from the aggregates; there is no third possibility. If we realize this clearly we shall be able to conduct our search for the inherently existent I with confidence and arrive at a very definite decision that it does not exist at all. For

#### MEDITATION ON EMPTINESS

example, if we are looking for a fish in our room we can determine before we begin our search that it is either in the aquarium or out of the aquarium; there is no third possibility. If we then search in both places and fail to find a fish we can be certain that there is no fish in our room.

#### THE ESSENTIAL POINT OF ASCERTAINING THE ABSENCE OF ONENESS

If the I were one with the aggregates then just as there are five aggregates so there would be five I's; or just as the I is one so the aggregates would be one. Since neither of these is the case, we can safely conclude that the I is not one with the aggregates.

#### THE ESSENTIAL POINT OF ASCERTAINING THE ABSENCE OF DIFFERENCE

If the I were different from the aggregates then the I would remain even if all the aggregates disappeared, which is clearly impossible. Furthermore, if the I were different from the aggregates then when we became sick, absurdly it would be inappropriate to think 'I am sick' because it would be only one of the aggregates, our body, that was sick. It would be much more appropriate to say 'My body is sick.' Similarly, if we were dying there would be no reason to think 'I am dying' but rather we should think 'My body is dying.' For example, if a cow were dying we would not think a horse was dying because a cow and a horse are totally different entities. By the same token, if the I and the aggregates were different why should we think 'I am dying' when actually it is only the aggregates that are passing away? To use another example, if someone has a beautiful body it would be quite wrong for them to think 'I am beautiful', because in reality it is only their body that is beautiful. By contemplating these points we will reach a firm conclusion that the I is not different from the aggregates.

Once we have clearly realized that the inherently existent I is neither one with the aggregates nor different from the aggregates, and that there is no third possibility, we shall be able to conclude with certainty that an inherently existent I that does not depend upon the aggregates does not exist at all. In other words, we shall have completely refuted the object of negation, the inherently existent I. Where previously there appeared to our mind a vividly appearing I that seemed to exist from its own side, there now appears an emptiness, which is the non-existence of that I. This emptiness, or lack of inherent existence, is our object of meditation and we focus on it single-pointedly.

To begin with we should meditate on this emptiness only for short periods and, as our familiarity grows, gradually extend the duration of our meditation. Through the force of this practice we will come to feel that the I that appeared so vividly at the beginning of the meditation, the I that we have cherished and protected for so long, has been lost and does not exist at all. When this happens we shall have attained some actual experience of emptiness.

To help us understand this meditation more fully we can consider the following analogy. A man walking through a field at dusk suddenly comes upon a coil of speckled rope in the grass and, mistaking it for a snake, shrinks back with fear. Even though a snake appears vividly to his mind it does not exist from its own side and cannot be found upon investigation, for neither the coil of rope as a whole nor any part of it is a snake. The snake is merely a projection of the mind, imputed by thought in dependence upon the rope. All phenomena are merely imputed by thought in just the same way as the snake in this analogy. For example, the I is merely imputed by thought in dependence upon the aggregates. If we look for the I we will never find it because neither the collection of the aggregates nor any individual aggregate is the I. The I does not exist from its own side in the least. Existing phenomena such as the I differ from the snake in that they are valid imputations, but there is no



difference from the point of view of their being merely imputed by thought.

In the analogy, because a rope is seen in the twilight, a mind apprehending a snake is generated and fear is induced. To remove the fear it is necessary to remove the apprehension of a snake by realizing that there is no snake. Similarly, sentient beings observing their aggregates in the darkness of their ignorance generate a self-grasping mind apprehending an inherently existent I. This self-grasping mind is the root of samsara and the source of all fear. The only way to remove the fears of samsara is to remove this self-grasping mind by realizing that there is no inherently existent I.

There are many other analogies we can use, such as seeing a spider on a wall where there is only a mark, seeing a person in the distance where there is only a pile of stones, or generating fear during a film. By contemplating analogies such as these we can understand how the I and all other phenomena are merely imputed by thought.

In general, whatever appears to the mind of an ordinary being appears to exist from its own side, and not to be merely imputed by thought. It is for this reason that the highest Buddhist school, the Madhyamika-Prasangika school, says that all minds of ordinary beings are mistaken. It is this persistent mistake that is responsible for all samsaric suffering. Only by regular meditation on emptiness can we overcome these mistaken minds and the sufferings to which they give rise.

It sometimes happens in meditation on the emptiness of the I that we feel we are losing our I completely, and as a result we may experience fear. This is not a bad sign, but an indication that our meditation is going well. For example, at one time, when Je Tsongkhapa was giving a discourse on emptiness to a thousand disciples, one of the disciples, a very accomplished meditator called Je Sherab Senge, developed a strong realization that his I did not exist from its own side. Feeling that his I was lost, he became apprehensive and started to cling tightly to his upper garment to reassure himself of the existence of the conventional

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

I, the I that is merely imputed by thought. With his clairvoyance Je Tsongkhapa saw that his disciple had realized emptiness and praised him accordingly. Therefore, it is not necessarily a bad sign if fear arises during emptiness meditation. In general, however, once we realize that there is no inherently existent I, there is no longer any reason for generating fear. As Shantideva says in *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*:

If there were a truly existent I  
It would be right to develop fear towards any object;  
But since there is no truly existent I at all  
Who is there to be afraid?

Some people may find that the explanation given here differs from other explanations of the object of negation, and may even appear to contradict them. If such doubts arise they can be removed only by discussing them with those who are experienced in meditation on emptiness. It is difficult to eradicate such doubts merely through the written word.

HOW TO TRAIN IN EMPTINESS DURING MEDITATIVE  
EQUIPOISE AND SUBSEQUENT ATTAINMENT

- 1 The yoga of space-like meditative equipoise
- 2 The yoga of illusion-like subsequent attainment

THE YOGA OF SPACE-LIKE MEDITATIVE EQUIPOISE

Through the force of conducting the analysis of the three essential points we shall be able to refute the object of negation, the inherently existent I; and where previously this I had appeared vividly to our mind, seeming to exist from its own side, there will appear an emptiness, like empty space, that is the non-existence of this inherently existent I. At this point we should think:

#### MEDITATION ON EMPTINESS

*Until now I have believed that this I existed, but now, by relying upon clear logical reasoning, I have discovered that it does not exist at all.*

Then we should focus our attention single-pointedly on this space-like emptiness without forgetting that it is the mere absence of the inherently existent I.

If we are able to meditate on emptiness with tranquil abiding our realization of emptiness will become clearer and clearer, and eventually we will attain a direct, non-conceptual realization of emptiness. At this point we will pass beyond the state of an ordinary being and become a Superior being on the path of seeing.

#### THE YOGA OF ILLUSION-LIKE SUBSEQUENT ATTAINMENT

If, during meditative equipoise, we meditated single-pointedly on the space-like emptiness that is the mere absence of the inherently existent I then, when we rise from meditation and engage in the activities of the meditation break, we will find it easy to engage in the yoga of illusion-like subsequent attainment.

During space-like meditative equipoise we try to prevent all appearance of the inherently existent I, but as soon as we rise from that meditation this appearance will return. This happens because our mind has been strongly conditioned by beginningless grasping at inherent existence. However, through the force of the strong concentration on lack of inherent existence attained during meditative equipoise, we shall be able to realize that this inherently existent I that arises during subsequent attainment does not exist. Though it appears vividly to our mind, we should maintain a strong conviction that it does not exist at all. For example, if a conjurer creates an illusory appearance of a horse, even though a horse appears to him he does not believe that there is a real horse – he simply regards it as an illusion. In the same way, even though the inherently existent I appears to us during subsequent attainment, we should not believe that it actually exists, but regard it



*Khadrub Ngawang Dorje*

simply as an illusion. We should try to maintain this thought at all times.

If during our session of meditative equipoise we have strongly abandoned the inherently existent I, then during subsequent attainment we will have a very special experience. For example, normally if someone insults us the thought arises in our mind 'This person is insulting me!' As explained before, the I that appears to the mind at such times is an inherently existent I that appears to exist from its own side. However, if our space-like meditation has been successful we will not fall into the trap of identifying with this I. Instead we will be able to think 'Why should I be upset? This inherently existent I does not exist.'

Becoming upset when we are insulted and so forth is a sign that we are identifying with the inherently existent I. At such times we perceive an independent I that does not depend upon our body and mind, and we cling to it very strongly. However, if this I has been refuted strongly during space-like meditative equipoise, we will not hold onto it firmly when it reappears during subsequent attainment. By loosening our grip on this I we will automatically be able to dispel fear, anxiety, frustration, and all other unhappy states of mind.

At this point a doubt may arise in our mind and we may think:

*Surely it contradicts common sense to say that we are not being insulted in such situations?*

Even though there is no contradiction, it is a good sign if at first there appears to be one; because this indicates that we are contemplating the subject deeply. The only reason we see a contradiction is that we have failed to understand clearly the nature of the conventional I. We need to understand that the conventional I is not the same as the inherently existent I that is the object of negation. If we follow the instructions of a qualified Spiritual Guide and think deeply and for a long time about the conventionally existent I, eventually we will see that it is merely imputed by the

mind, that it is mere name. If we are satisfied with the mere name 'I', the I exists and functions; but if we look for anything other than the mere name we shall not find an I. With this understanding we will be able to make a firm decision: 'I must engage in all activities simply being satisfied with the mere name "I".' When we gain a deep understanding that the I exists merely by being imputed by the mind we shall have realized the subtle conventional I. We shall see that the thought 'the I lacks inherent existence' does not contradict the thought 'the I merely exists conventionally'; and then such doubts as the one mentioned above will no longer arise. At that time we shall have understood the union of the two truths, conventional truth and ultimate truth.

#### HOW TO MEDITATE ON SELFLESSNESS OF PHENOMENA

As mentioned above, there are two types of selflessness: selflessness of persons and selflessness of phenomena other than persons. Just as the I is empty of inherent existence, so too are all other phenomena; and just as we have an innate self-grasping mind that grasps at an inherently existent I, so we also have an innate self-grasping mind that grasps at phenomena other than the I as being inherently existent. If we take our body as an example: when it is praised or insulted we cling to a vividly appearing body that is independent of its parts, such as the head, the trunk, and the limbs, and feel that it is this body that is being praised or insulted. If our body is weak we think 'My body is weak'; we do not think 'My head is weak', 'My trunk is weak', or 'My limbs are weak'. We perceive a vividly appearing body that is independent of the head, trunk, and limbs. If such a body actually existed in the way it appeared, it would be an inherently existent body. This is the object of negation.

By recalling or imagining situations in which our body is praised or insulted, sick or in danger, we should try to gain as clear an image as possible of this vividly appearing

MEDITATION ON EMPTINESS

body. We will see that this is the very body that we normally cherish and protect. We should then think:

*Until now I have believed this body to exist and have cherished it accordingly, but now I am not satisfied with simply believing it to exist; I must investigate carefully to see whether or not it actually exists.*

Once we have a clear image of the inherently existent body, we ascertain the pervasion by deciding firmly that if this body actually exists it must be either one with the head, trunk, and limbs, or different from them; there is no third possibility.

We then search within the head, trunk, and limbs, examining each in turn to see if it is the body. If we investigate skilfully we will discover not only that none of the individual parts is the body, for example our arm is not our body, but also that the collection of all these parts is not the body. This latter point is not easy to understand at first. In reality the collection of the head, trunk, and limbs is the basis upon which our body is imputed. Our body is an imputed phenomenon and this collection is the basis for imputing it; therefore the collection itself cannot be the body. If it were, then since the body depends upon this collection, the body would be dependent upon the body; and if this were the case one body would be two things, which is clearly absurd. Since we obviously do not have two bodies, the mere collection of head, trunk, and limbs cannot be the body for which we are searching.

Having come to a definite decision that the body is not to be found anywhere within the collection of the head, trunk, and limbs, we should now consider whether it is different from them; and this is clearly not the case because if there were no head, trunk, or limbs there would be no body.

Since there is no other possibility, we can now conclude with certainty that the inherently existent body cannot be found. Where previously such a body appeared vividly to our mind, seeming to exist from its own side independent of its parts, there now appears an emptiness, which is the

mere absence of an inherently existent body. As before, we should focus single-pointedly on this space-like emptiness without forgetting its meaning.

When, during subsequent attainment, the inherently existent body reappears, we should practise the yoga of illusion-like subsequent attainment as before. We should also try to understand the conventionally existent body in the same way that we understood the conventionally existent I above.

When through relying upon correct reasons and analogies we have realized the emptiness of our I and of our body, we can turn our attention to other phenomena such as other persons, our mind, and so forth. In this way we will come to realize that all phenomena without exception are empty of inherent existence and are merely imputed by conception.

This has been only a brief discussion of emptiness. For more detailed explanations we should consult *Ocean of Nectar*, which is a commentary to Chandrakirti's *Guide to the Middle Way*, and *Meaningful to Behold*, which is a commentary to Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. It is not enough merely to study such texts; we must also rely sincerely upon a qualified Spiritual Guide and practise precisely according to his or her instructions. Only in this way will we be able to overcome our doubts and gain a deep insight into emptiness, the ultimate nature of all phenomena.

ADVISING THOSE WHO DESIRE AN UNMISTAKEN  
UNDERSTANDING OF THE ULTIMATE VIEW OF BOTH  
SUTRA AND TANTRA OF THE NECESSITY OF LISTENING  
TO, CONTEMPLATING, AND MEDITATING ON NAGARJUNA'S  
ROOT TEXT ON THE MIDDLE WAY AND ITS COMMENTARIES

The lack of inherent existence of all phenomena without exception explained by the incomparable Madhyamika-Prasangikas is the ultimate intention of Buddha himself, as



#### MEDITATION ON EMPTINESS

he revealed in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. Moreover, according to both Sutra and Secret Mantra the wisdom of emptiness is the ultimate view and thus is essential to all paths leading to liberation and full enlightenment.

Emptiness is a subtle topic and is fully understood only by those with great wisdom. In particular, beings who are weak-minded will find it difficult even to recognize the correct object of negation, inherent existence. It is essential therefore that we rely upon authentic commentaries that reveal the meaning of emptiness as explained by Buddha in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. All the great Buddhist scholars and meditators agree that such authentic commentaries are to be found in the works of Protector Nagarjuna, such as his root text *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* and its autocommentaries such as *Sixty Reasonings*, *Seventy Emptinesses*, *Finely Woven*, and *Refutation of Objections*.

It is essential to rely upon these explanations because the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* themselves are easily misinterpreted. For example, these Sutras say that form is empty of form, sound is empty of sound, and so forth, and these statements are often mistakenly understood to mean that form is not form, that form does not exist, and so on. Nagarjuna, however, clearly explains that the actual intended meaning is that form is empty of inherently existent form. Thus, from Nagarjuna's explanation we can understand that emptiness is not utter non-existence, as some would assert, but rather the absence of inherent existence, the completely false mode of existence grasped at by the self-grasping mind. It is only the wisdom of emptiness that eradicates such ignorance and leads us to complete liberation from the fears and sufferings of samsara.

There are four major traditions of Tibetan Buddhism – the Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, and Gelug – and from the beginning the realized Masters of each of these schools have relied upon the view of Nagarjuna. For example, the great Nyingma Lama, Longchen Rabjampa, says in his

*Commentary to the Treasury of Instruction* that Buddha's ultimate intention was explained by the glorious Nagarjuna. He also says that in the *Great Drum Sutra* Buddha predicted that Nagarjuna would come to this world and expound this ultimate view. Of the many followers of Nagarjuna it was Chandrakirti, the main propagator of the Madhyamika-Prasangika system, who interpreted Nagarjuna faultlessly, and Longchenpa himself followed Chandrakirti's view. Therefore, if someone is a pure Nyingma practitioner, they must rely upon the view of Nagarjuna in the same way that Longchenpa, and indeed the great Padmasambhava, did.

The outstanding Sakya Masters of the past also relied upon the view of Nagarjuna. For example, when the great Ngorchon Kunga Zangpo was asked about the different philosophical views he answered 'I do not know about the different views, I studied only Nagarjuna's view of the middle way. That is my own view because it is the essence of Dharma.' Many other Sakya Masters, such as the venerable Rendapa, also held the same view. Therefore, if someone is a pure Sakya practitioner, they too must rely upon the view of Nagarjuna.

As can be seen from the songs of Milarepa and *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* by Gampopa, the great Kagyu Masters also followed the Madhyamika-Prasangika view. Je Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelug tradition, also expounded this view and wrote many commentaries to the works of Nagarjuna. Therefore, if someone is a pure Kagyu or Gelug practitioner, they too must rely upon the view of Nagarjuna.

The great scholars and meditators of the Kadampa tradition in the lineage of the Indian Master Atisha also relied upon this view. Atisha stated that Nagarjuna's view was flawlessly expounded by Chandrakirti, and that this is the only view that will lead us to Buddhahood. In fact, if someone holds a view that is contrary to Nagarjuna's, there is no chance of their attaining liberation or enlightenment, no matter how much they meditate. When Atisha's Tibetan

MEDITATION ON EMPTINESS

disciple Dromtönpa offered Atisha his experience of emptiness, Atisha replied 'You have made me very happy; you have found the view of Nagarjuna.'

Some people mistakenly think that there is a special view of emptiness presented in Secret Mantra, but this is not the case. As Sakya Pandita said:

There is no difference between the view of emptiness presented in Sutra and that presented in Secret Mantra.

Therefore, if we are sincerely interested in travelling the path to enlightenment, we must make a concerted effort to understand the view of Nagarjuna and train in the wisdom realizing lack of inherent existence.

With this discussion of the object emptiness, the first major division of Mahamudra – the Mahamudra that is the union of bliss and emptiness – is completed.



*Ngulchu Dharmabhadra*

## *Illusory Body*

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### HOW TO PRACTISE THE MAHAMUDRA THAT IS THE UNION OF THE TWO TRUTHS

There are five stages of completion stage, all of which are contained within the practice of Vajrayana Mahamudra. They are: isolated speech, isolated mind, illusory body, clear light, and union. The last stage is also called the 'union that needs learning' and it precedes the Union of No More Learning, which is Buddhahood itself. Because each of these stages depends upon the previous one, we must practise all five if we want to attain full enlightenment.

It should be noted that according to another listing there are six stages of completion stage practice, beginning with isolated body and continuing as above. Just as there is an isolated body practice of generation stage, which is the yoga that overcomes the appearance of the ordinary body, so too is there a similar, but more advanced, isolated body practice of completion stage. Success in the latter depends upon having practised the earlier generation stage yoga.

According to the system of Mahamudra presented here, any meditation on the yoga of inner fire that is performed after we have attained isolated body of completion stage is included within the yoga of isolated speech. The main purpose of the meditation on isolated speech is to loosen the channel knots of the heart. As explained earlier, when these knots are loosened and the winds enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel at the heart, the meditator experiences the four empties. A mind experiencing any of these empties through the force of such meditation is called an 'isolated mind' because it is isolated from

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

ordinary dualistic appearances and from gross conceptual thoughts.

The three remaining stages of completion stage will now be explained under the following three headings:

- 1 An explanation of the stages of attaining the illusory body with respect to conventional truth
- 2 An explanation of the stages of attaining meaning clear light with respect to ultimate truth
- 3 The actual explanation of the Mahamudra that is the union of the two truths

An explanation of the stages of attaining the illusory body with respect to conventional truth has four parts:

- 1 How disciples possessing four attributes request the meaning of the illusory body from a qualified Spiritual Guide
- 2 How a correct understanding of the illusory body depends upon the Spiritual Guide's instructions
- 3 Recognizing the basis for attaining the illusory body
- 4 The actual way of attaining the illusory body on this basis

#### HOW DISCIPLES POSSESSING FOUR ATTRIBUTES REQUEST THE MEANING OF THE ILLUSORY BODY FROM A QUALIFIED SPIRITUAL GUIDE

The illusory body is of utmost importance in the practice of Secret Mantra and should be explained only to qualified disciples. In *Five Stages of Completion Stage* Nagarjuna lists four attributes that a disciple should possess. He or she should (1) have received a Highest Yoga Tantra empowerment and have some experience of generation stage; (2) be training in and practising the true meaning of Secret Mantra and possess a wisdom that clearly discerns and comprehends this meaning; (3) be engaged in the practices of isolated body, isolated speech, and isolated mind of

#### ILLUSORY BODY

completion stage, and have some experience of these practices; and (4) have strong appreciation for and faith in conventional illusory body, ultimate clear light, and the Mahamudra that is the union of these two truths. Once such a qualified disciple has attained the realization of isolated mind and is in a position to attain quickly the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light – immediately after which the impure illusory body will be attained – he or she should request instructions on the illusory body from a qualified Spiritual Guide. This is important because the manner of attaining this body is very subtle and the disciple must therefore depend upon a fully qualified Teacher.

If the illusory body could be explained only to disciples with the above-mentioned attributes there would be very few people qualified to receive these instructions. Therefore it is said that a Spiritual Guide may explain the illusory body also to disciples who have the following four attributes, which are approximations to those listed above. He or she should (1) have received a Highest Yoga Tantra empowerment and be training in and practising generation stage; (2) have the wisdom to understand the true meaning of the Secret Mantra texts; (3) be training in and practising the three isolations of completion stage; and especially (4) have strong appreciation for and faith in illusory body, clear light, and the union of these two truths.

Chandrakirti's *Clear Lamp of the Five Stages* and Nagarjuna's *Five Stages of Completion Stage* explain that a disciple should first make prostrations to the Spiritual Guide, offer a mandala and other offerings, and then make the actual request for the explanation of the illusory body. It is very important, both in this context and in general, to be skilful in the way we ask questions of our Spiritual Guide. If our questions are clear and precise our doubts can be removed instantly. Because the illusory body is such a subtle subject it is often difficult for an ordinary disciple to ask about it clearly. Therefore, in *Lamp of Condensed Deeds* Aryadeva explained how these questions should be put. In the

example that follows we should note how the disciple begins by stating what he or she already knows about the subject and only then poses the actual questions. The disciple approaches the Spiritual Guide and says:

*The practice of Secret Mantra begins with generation stage whereby I prevent ordinary appearance of myself and of all other phenomena. This is done by generating myself in the form of the Deity and visualizing the entire universe as this Deity's mandala. However this practice of Deity yoga is merely visualized or imagined, and I do not actually attain the body of the Deity. Furthermore, I also do not attain the actual body of the Deity when I generate myself as the Deity during isolated body, isolated speech, and isolated mind of completion stage, but attain only an imagined Deity body at those times. The actual body of the Deity is attained only when I attain the illusory body. This is a wisdom body adorned with the thirty-two major signs and eighty minor indications of a fully enlightened being. Therefore, please tell me: When is the actual body of the Deity, the illusory body, attained? What is the nature of this body? What is the basis for attaining it? How is it attained? What are its good qualities?*

**HOW A CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF THE ILLUSORY BODY  
DEPENDS UPON THE SPIRITUAL GUIDE'S INSTRUCTIONS**

In *Clear Lamp of the Five Stages*, which is a commentary to Nagarjuna's *Five Stages of Completion Stage*, Chandrakirti says that the illusory body that is attained through depending upon the instructions of a qualified Master of Secret Mantra has four attributes: (1) it is free from any type of ordinary appearance, (2) it is perceived only by the meditator and by those who have also attained the illusory body, (3) it is not an object realized by logicians who do not practise, and (4) it is the actual body of the Deity adorned with the thirty-two major signs and eighty minor indications. As for the instructions of a qualified Master, these



#### ILLUSORY BODY

refer to the explanations contained in Nagarjuna's *Five Stages*, Aryadeva's *Condensed Deeds*, and Chandrakirti's *Clear Lamp*. Without following the instructions set forth in these three texts there is no way we can know the illusory body through our own experience.

The method for attaining the illusory body was initially explained by Conqueror Vajradhara in the *Guhyasamaja Root Tantra*. Because the words of this Tantra are vajra words they are very difficult to comprehend and require accurate commentary by a qualified Teacher such as Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, or Chandrakirti. Whatever is difficult to understand in Nagarjuna's text is clarified by Aryadeva and Chandrakirti in their commentaries. Furthermore, the explanations of all three are synthesized into a single set of instructions by Je Tsongkhapa in his *Lamp Thoroughly Illuminating the Five Stages*. An additional advantage of Je Tsongkhapa's synthesis is that it dispels the misconceptions about the completion stage practices that arose when various scholars misinterpreted the Indian Pandits.

Nagarjuna said that if we do not realize the illusory body there is no purpose in studying or practising either Sutra or Secret Mantra because Buddhahood – the ultimate goal of all study and practice – cannot possibly be attained unless we attain the illusory body. To become a Buddha we must attain a Buddha's Form Body, and the substantial cause of the Form Body is the illusory body. For example, without a seed, which is the substantial cause of a sprout, no amount of soil, moisture, sunlight, or fertilizer will produce a sprout. In the same way, no matter how much we might study and meditate on the teachings of Sutra and Secret Mantra, if we do not attain the illusory body it will be impossible to attain Buddhahood. On the other hand, once we actually attain the illusory body it is definite that we shall attain perfect Buddhahood within that very life.

Why is it necessary to rely upon the instructions of a qualified Spiritual Guide to attain the illusory body? According to the Perfection Vehicle, or Sutra Mahayana, a Bodhisattva on the tenth and final ground is a highly



*Yangchän Drubpay Dorje*

## ILLUSORY BODY

realized being who is very close to attaining perfect Buddhahood, but according to Secret Mantra, such a Bodhisattva – though highly realized – is far from the attainment of Buddhahood when compared with the Secret Mantra meditator who has attained the illusory body. This is because he or she still lacks the prerequisites for attaining enlightenment, specifically the illusory body, which can be attained only through the practice of Highest Yoga Tantra in reliance upon the instructions of a Vajra Master. If this is true for a Bodhisattva on the tenth ground, then how much more true must it be for the Hearer and Solitary Conqueror Foe Destroyers! Moreover, no matter how advanced a practitioner might be, he or she cannot attain the illusory body by relying upon the three lower classes of Tantra because it is only in the system of Highest Yoga Tantra that the illusory body is explained.

Simply studying the teachings of Highest Yoga Tantra is not sufficient; we also need to rely upon a qualified Tantric Master. There are two divisions of Highest Yoga Tantra, Mother Tantra and Father Tantra, and it is in the latter – particularly in the *Guhyasamaja Root Tantra* – that the illusory body is principally explained. The *Guhyasamaja Tantra* is like a treasury filled with precious jewels such as the explanation of the illusory body and the explanation of vajra recitation; but if we wish to use these jewels we must first obtain the key to this treasury by relying upon the works of Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, and Chandrakirti. However, even this is not sufficient to enable us to gain access to the practice of the illusory body because even if we were able to read these texts we would still have great difficulty in understanding their meaning. Therefore, to be able to understand and practise these texts we also need the guidance and interpretation of a qualified Vajra Master.

Consider the following example. In *Five Stages of Completion Stage* Nagarjuna says:

The illusory body dwells within our body, but because we lack good fortune we do not comprehend this.

If this statement were taken literally, without further explanation, there would be a great danger of misunderstanding its meaning and, as a result, engaging in erroneous practice. If the illusory body actually existed within our body already – as the words of this quotation might be taken to mean – it would not be necessary to follow the path of Dharma at all. Therefore, this cannot be Nagarjuna's intended meaning. As Je Tsongkhapa explained, Nagarjuna meant that the seed of the illusory body exists within all living beings but, because they lack merit, for the time being they are prevented from cultivating this potentiality.

This is only a minor example, but it shows how necessary it is to rely upon a qualified Vajra Master. It is not enough to gain an intellectual understanding of Highest Yoga Tantra; our mind must absorb into and become mixed with its actual intended meaning. Thus the instructions we receive must have been handed down through an unbroken succession of qualified Tantric Masters that can be traced back from our Spiritual Guide to Conqueror Vajradhara himself. It is absolutely essential that we receive the appropriate empowerment as well as the verbal instructions from such a fully qualified Vajra Master.

Just as the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness is one of the quickest and most important paths to Buddhahood, so too is the illusory body. However, it is much more difficult to know why this is true of the illusory body than it is to know why it is true of that union, which is a further reason why it is essential to rely upon the instructions of a Vajra Master.

The function of the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness is to destroy the obstructions to omniscience very quickly. The ability to do this depends upon the illusory body because, if the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness is to destroy these obstructions quickly, a great deal of merit must be accumulated. This collection of merit is accumulated through the force of attaining the illusory body. According to Sutra, merit has

#### ILLUSORY BODY

to be accumulated by following pure Bodhisattva conduct for three countless great aeons before enlightenment can be attained, but in Secret Mantra these aeons of merit can be accumulated in one life by meditating on the illusory body. In *Guide to the Middle Way*, Chandrakirti says that anything that principally assists in the attainment of a Buddha's Form Body is a collection of merit, and anything that principally assists in the attainment of a Buddha's Truth Body is a collection of wisdom. In Secret Mantra, the swiftest method for accumulating the greatest amount of merit is to meditate on the illusory body, and the swiftest method for accumulating wisdom is the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness.

Both Sutra and Secret Mantra agree that the attainment of Buddhahood depends upon the completion of these two collections of merit and wisdom. The difference is that in Sutra it is impossible to accumulate these two collections within one single meditation. Thus, according to Sutra, while we are engaged in the practice of accumulating merit we cannot at the same time be accumulating wisdom with the same mind; and when we are accumulating wisdom by single-pointedly meditating on emptiness we cannot simultaneously be accumulating merit. In Sutra therefore there is no practice of the union of method and wisdom in one meditation. In Secret Mantra, however, when the mind of spontaneous great bliss fixes on emptiness single-pointedly, we are accumulating both merit and wisdom at the same time. This meditation comprises both method and wisdom, and the inseparability of these two in one meditation is what makes Secret Mantra the swift path to enlightenment.

#### RECOGNIZING THE BASIS FOR ATTAINING THE ILLUSORY BODY

The illusory body is defined as the actual body of the Deity, adorned with the thirty-two major signs and eighty minor indications, that develops from the subtle wind upon which

is mounted either the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light or the mind of meaning clear light. The illusory body that develops from the wind mounted by the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light is the impure illusory body, and the illusory body that develops from the wind mounted by meaning clear light is the pure illusory body.

Here, the difference between pure and impure is determined by whether or not the mounting clear light mind has directly realized lack of inherent existence. The illusory body that we attain prior to realizing emptiness directly with the mind of spontaneous great bliss is the impure illusory body, and the one we attain after we have realized emptiness directly with the mind of spontaneous great bliss is the pure illusory body. Thus whereas the practitioner who has attained the impure illusory body is not yet a Superior being of Secret Mantra, the practitioner who has attained the pure illusory body is. Hence the pure illusory body is far superior to the impure illusory body.

The moment a meditator attains the impure illusory body, he or she enters the third of the five stages of completion stage. For this reason the impure illusory body is also known as 'the illusory body of the third stage'. It is attained immediately the meditative equipoise of ultimate example clear light ceases and the first mind of reverse order – that of black near-attainment – arises.

There are many reasons why the meditator attains the impure illusory body at that time. First, while training on generation stage that meditator had gained much experience in bringing the intermediate state into the path of the Enjoyment Body. Furthermore he or she has practised extensively the completion stage meditations of mixing with the Enjoyment Body during waking and sleeping, and has already attained the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light through the force of the yogas of isolated speech, such as inner fire meditation and vajra recitation. It is through the accumulated experience of all these practices that the impure illusory body is attained when the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light ceases.

## ILLUSORY BODY

In general, merely understanding the illusory body intellectually is a source for accumulating much merit. Secret Mantra meditators look upon the illusory body as an ever-flowing fountain of encouragement to practise, and as an object truly worthy of attainment. Through the infinite kindness of Je Tsongkhapa, the perfect methods by which meditators can attain a flawless realization of the illusory body have been preserved. These methods are free from even the slightest corruption and are set forth with crystal clarity. The translator Taktsang and the eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorje both highly praised Je Tsongkhapa's explanation of the illusory body.

The outstanding qualities of the illusory body cannot be stressed enough. Nowadays some people are excited by stories of miracle powers, but in reality powers such as levitation and clairvoyance are relatively easy to attain. In India, for example, there are many magicians with such powers, but they are not greatly respected by society. People come to watch them in the same way as a westerner might watch television – for entertainment. Although the audience may pay some money to see a magician perform his tricks they do not think 'May I become like that magician!' Instead of being objects of respect and admiration, such illusionists are often treated rudely by the police and others. The illusory body, however, is a completely transcendent phenomenon. Once we have attained it, the highest and purest form of miracle powers will come to us naturally and effortlessly. Thus we are extremely fortunate still to have access to uncorrupted teachings on the illusory body during these degenerate times.

In Nagarjuna's *Five Stages of Completion Stage* there are three verses that explain the basis for attaining the illusory body. First, Nagarjuna says that sentient beings are born in samsara not by choice but through causes and conditions, and that of these the main cause is the mind of clear light – that is the fourth empty or the all-empty clear light. Second, although the all-empty clear light is the cause of ordinary beings' bondage in samsara, for accomplished

Yogis it is the cause of the illusory body and, as a result, perfect enlightenment. Third, there is no experiencer of the sufferings of samsara other than the I that is merely imputed by thought in dependence upon the very subtle mind and its associated wind. An examination of these three statements will show how they clearly demonstrate the basis for attaining the illusory body.

The all-empty clear light is said to be the cause of rebirth in samsara, and hence of all suffering, because rebirth depends upon the preceding intermediate state existence, and this in turn depends upon the all-empty clear light of a previous death. This does not contradict in any way the assertion in Sutra that samsara is caused by self-grasping. The distinguishing feature of Secret Mantra is its teaching that the deluded mind of self-grasping depends upon its gross mounted wind. This gross wind develops from a subtle wind, which in turn develops from the very subtle wind mounted by the all-empty mind of clear light. This is the reason behind the first statement that the all-empty clear light is the cause of rebirth for ordinary beings.

Whereas the all-empty clear light causes ordinary beings to be reborn in samsara with a contaminated body, it causes accomplished Yogis to attain the body of a Deity, the illusory body, within that Deity's mandala. Without using this clear light mind and its mounted wind there would be no way for these Yogis to accomplish the illusory body. Therefore, their practice is to perceive the all-empty clear light through the force of the yoga of isolated speech, that is, through inner fire meditation. Eventually this mind of clear light transforms into the mind of the illusory body and its mounted wind transforms into the illusory body itself. Thus Nagarjuna's second statement is a clear indication that the very subtle wind upon which is mounted the all-empty mind of clear light is the basis for attaining the illusory body.

As for the third statement concerning the experiencer of suffering, this indicates that while the gross body and mind are temporary bases upon which the I is imputed,



#### ILLUSORY BODY

the principal continuously residing bases of imputation are the very subtle mind and its mounted wind. This does not deny an imputed self that is imputed upon the gross physical body and mind. In fact, there are two types of body: the gross body and the subtle body. The gross body is a temporary body, and the very subtle wind is the body of the continuously residing continuum.

The gross human body is temporary because it is produced from the uniting of the sperm and egg of our parents and must be left behind at the time of death. The subtle body of the continuously residing continuum, on the other hand, never dies. To use an analogy, the heat of heated water is temporary, but the wetness of water is never separate from the water itself; wherever there is water there is always wetness. In the same way, the continuously residing body – the very subtle wind – is never separate from the continuously residing self. We have never been separated from it in the past nor will we ever be separated from it in the future. Because this body is the very subtle wind, it is the nature of lightness and movement. The temporary gross body is like the house in which this continuously residing body temporarily dwells. At the time of death this subtle body leaves its temporary dwelling and moves on to another life, in the same way that travellers leave one hotel and move on to the next.

#### THE ACTUAL WAY OF ATTAINING THE ILLUSORY BODY ON THIS BASIS

To attain the illusory body, we must be able to separate the subtle and gross bodies through the force of meditation. There are certain times when these two bodies separate naturally – such as at death and temporarily during sleep – but, because this does not happen through the force of meditation, it does not lead to the attainment of the illusory body. Accomplished Yogis, however, can separate them while awake through the force of completion stage meditation. Until we are able to do this we will not be able to



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#### ILLUSORY BODY

transform our subtle body into the illusory body, the actual body of the Deity.

There are two principal ways to separate the gross and subtle bodies through the force of meditation. The first is the transference of consciousness (Tib. *po wa*) as explained in the Six Yogas of Naropa. Here the practitioner isolates the very subtle wind and the mind mounted upon it, and then ejects them through the crown of the head. This method relies upon certain visualization practices and the holding of the vase breath, and it is repeated again and again until signs of accomplishment occur. It is not a very difficult practice, but it will not be explained here because, even though it does lead to the separation of the two bodies, it is not helpful in attaining the illusory body.

To separate the gross and subtle bodies in a manner that will bring about the attainment of the illusory body depends upon using the eight signs of serial order – from the mirage-like appearance to the clear light. These signs should be experienced at their deepest and strongest level so that they appear to us as vividly as they do when we are dying. It sometimes happens that meditators experience these eight signs only superficially and, being unaware of the different levels of this experience, mistakenly think that they have attained the actual isolated mind of ultimate example clear light. When such meditators rise from meditative equipoise they mistakenly believe they have attained the actual body of the Deity, and when they re-enter the meditative equipoise of clear light they feel that they have attained the actual union of the two truths. Afterwards, merely because their mind has become clearer, they believe they have attained Buddhahood. In reality, however, none of this has happened.

Just as different grades of gold have different values because of their varying purity, so do the different levels of clear light experience have varying worth. To be able to attain the actual illusory body we first need to attain the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light, and to do this successfully we must become familiar with the different

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

levels, or grades, of clear light experience by engaging in the appropriate meditation again and again.

Once we have attained the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light through the force of meditation, the yoga of this isolated mind will directly cause the gross and subtle bodies to separate. Since it is the all-empty clear light of death that normally causes these two bodies to separate, if we want this separation to take place before death we must be able to attain the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light through practising completion stage. This depends upon attaining isolated speech through the yoga of inner fire or the yoga of vajra recitation. These two yogas are indirectly responsible for causing the two bodies to separate. However, the yogas of inner fire and vajra recitation by themselves are not able to cause the entire pervading wind to dissolve into the indestructible drop at the heart as it does at death, and so they can lead us only to the attainment of the isolated mind of non-ultimate example clear light. If we want to attain ultimate example clear light before death, we must rely upon an action mudra.

When accomplished practitioners rise from the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light they do so with the same motivation with which they rise from the Truth Body during the practice of the mixings with the complete Enjoyment Body – to attain the illusory body for the sake of all beings.

The nature of the illusory body can be understood by contemplating the following twelve similes given by Aryadeva in *Wisdom Vajra Compendium*. In this text it is said that the illusory body is like: (1) an illusion, (2) a reflection of the moon in water, (3) the body's shadow, (4) a mirage, (5) a dream, (6) an echo, (7) a city of intermediate state beings (literally 'smell-eaters'), (8) a manifestation, (9) a rainbow, (10) a bolt of lightning, (11) a water bubble, and (12) a reflection in a mirror. These are explained as follows:

#### ILLUSORY BODY

(1) An illusory person created by a magician appears to be a real person with limbs and so forth, but is in reality merely an appearance to mind conjured up through the force of spells and the like. Similarly, the illusory body, though endowed with limbs and so forth, is actually merely the nature of subtle wind and the mind mounted upon it. When we attain Buddhahood it is not our gross body that becomes a Buddha's Form Body. When we attain the illusory body we gain a new body that is different from our gross one, and it is this new body that will transform into a Buddha's Form Body. Thus it is said that the illusory body is like an illusion.

(2) There are countless pools, lakes, and so forth on the earth, and on a clear night each one will bear a reflection of the moon; but although there are many reflections there is only one moon that is being reflected. Similarly a Yogi who has attained the illusory body can emanate thousands of different forms according to the needs of sentient beings. Though there is only one Yogi, his or her emanations reach countless beings. Furthermore, just as the reflection of the moon appears in many bodies of water at the same time, so the Yogi can manifest in many forms simultaneously. Thus it is said that the illusory body is like a reflection of the moon.

(3) Just as the body's shadow has a head, arms, legs, and a trunk, so does the illusory body; and just as the shadow is empty of substantiality and contains no inner organs, the same is also true of the illusory body. Inside a shadow there are no hollow spaces, and neither are there any within the illusory body. Finally, a shadow is not produced by the meeting of the sperm and egg of the parents, and neither is the illusory body. Thus it is said that the illusory body is like the body's shadow.

(4) The illusory body is said to be like an indestructible vajra because it is free from death. However, this does not mean that the illusory body is a permanent phenomenon. It is impermanent because it changes from moment to

moment. This quality of impermanence is demonstrated by the example of a shimmering mirage, which also changes from moment to moment. Thus it is said that the illusory body is like a mirage.

(5) The dream body is the best analogy for understanding the illusory body because the nature, substance, and causes of the dream body are very similar to those of the illusory body. Furthermore, the dream body can actually be mixed with the illusory body while practising mixing with the Enjoyment Body during sleep. The dream body is the only body that can be mixed in this way with the illusory body, and so it provides the best illustration of the existence of the illusory body. The main difference between these two bodies is that the illusory body has many excellent qualities that are not possessed by the dream body. Otherwise they are very similar.

If we understand how the dream body is formed, how it differs from the gross physical body, how it dissolves into the physical body when we wake from the dream state, and how it remains with us in a non-manifest state while awake, we can understand how all these things are also true of the illusory body. Both the dream body and the illusory body arise instantaneously from the all-empty clear light with the appearance of the mind of black near-attainment of reverse order. They are also formed from the same substance, namely the very subtle wind. Knowing about the dream body, therefore, gives insight into the nature, substance, and means of attaining the illusory body. Thus it is said that the illusory body is like a dream.

(6) A Yogi who has attained the illusory body may, for example, manifest as a tiger and as a dog at the same time. The forms of these animals appear to the Yogi as different entities from one another and from his own form. In reality, however, they both arise from the Yogi himself. Although they are manifestations, they seem to exist as things external to the Yogi. This is similar to someone's experience of

#### ILLUSORY BODY

an echo of their own voice. It seems as if the sound is coming from the outside, while in truth it originates from the person himself. Thus it is said that the illusory body is like an echo.

(7) To intermediate state beings – called smell-eaters because they are sustained by odours – the cities they inhabit seem to arise instantly and all at once, and when they cease they seem to disappear in an instant. Similarly, a Yogi who has attained the illusory body feels that his or her mandala with its associated Deities arises instantaneously, and when it ceases it seems to disappear in an instant as well. Thus it is said that the illusory body is like a city of intermediate state beings.

(8) A person may have the miracle power to manifest a large number of tigers, for example, but in reality they are all nothing but himself. In a similar fashion, when a Yogi who has attained the illusory body sends out emanations, all these apparently numerous beings are in fact just the Yogi himself. Thus it is said that the illusory body is like a manifestation.

(9) Just as the colours of a rainbow are unmixed and the rainbow possesses no quality of obstructing contact, the same is true of the illusory body. Thus it is said that the illusory body is like a rainbow.

(10) Just as lightning springs from the midst of clouds, the illusory body arises from the old gross body. Thus it is said that the illusory body is like a bolt of lightning.

(11) Just as a water bubble arises instantly from water itself, and is the nature of water, so too the illusory body arises instantly from the state of emptiness and is the nature of emptiness. Thus it is said that the illusory body is like a water bubble.

(12) When a person stands in front of a mirror, all the parts of the reflection – the body, limbs, and so forth – develop instantly and are very clear and lucid. In the same way,

the illusory body and all its parts develop instantly and are of a clear and transparent nature. Thus it is said that the illusory body is like a reflection.

In the Sutra teachings, these twelve similes are used to demonstrate the way in which all phenomena lack inherent existence, but in Secret Mantra they are used to explain the illusory body.

There are many other synonyms for the illusory body given in the *Guhyasamaja Tantra*, and a brief explanation of some of these will help us to understand the excellent qualities of the illusory body.

The illusory body is sometimes referred to as the 'blessing of the self'. Here, the 'self' should be understood as that which is imputed on the very subtle wind and mind, and the 'blessing' as the transformation of these bases of imputation into the illusory body and the mind of the illusory body. As for the term 'illusory body' itself, this indicates that it is a body that is like an illusion, as explained in the list of twelve similes. The illusory body is also known as 'conventional truth' because it is conventional, not ultimate.

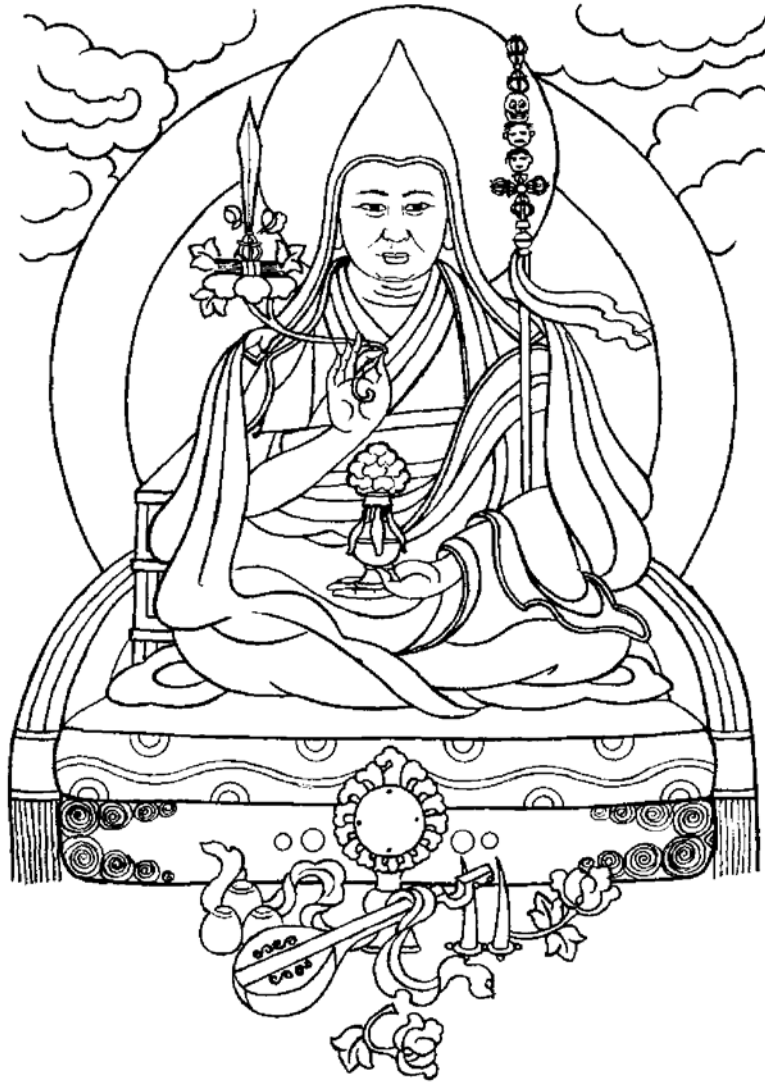
Three other terms for the illusory body are the 'Complete Enjoyment Body', 'Vajrasattva', and 'Vajradhara'. This does not mean that the illusory body itself is the actual resultant Enjoyment Body, actual Vajrasattva, or actual Vajradhara, but simply that it is the path enjoyment body, and so on. Finally, the illusory body is also called the 'vajra body' because the impure illusory body is like the vajra body, while the pure illusory body is the actual vajra body.

As for the benefits of attaining the illusory body, these are also enumerated in the *Guhyasamaja Tantra* as well as in the *Five Stages of Completion Stage and Condensed Deeds*. In these texts it is said that the illusory body is adorned with the thirty-two major signs and the eighty minor indications; is an object of offering for all humans and gods; can obtain wealth and possessions effortlessly; is free from



ILLUSORY BODY

poverty, sickness, old age, death, rebirth, and all the sufferings of samsara; and can manifest various forms to benefit others. The greatest benefit is that a person who has attained the illusory body will definitely attain Buddhahood within that same life.



*Dorjechang Phabongkha Trinlay Gyatso*

## *Clear Light and Union*

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### AN EXPLANATION OF THE STAGES OF ATTAINING MEANING CLEAR LIGHT WITH RESPECT TO ULTIMATE TRUTH

This has three divisions:

- 1 An explanation of the method for cultivating it
- 2 The way of cultivating it by relying upon this method
- 3 The reason why this clear light alone acts as the direct antidote to both the intellectually-formed and the innate delusions

### AN EXPLANATION OF THE METHOD FOR CULTIVATING IT

It is said that the realizations of a Secret Mantra meditator on generation stage are almost equal to those of a Sutra meditator who has attained the eighth ground of a Superior Bodhisattva, while the realizations of one who has attained the impure illusory body are almost equal to those of a Sutra Bodhisattva on the tenth ground. In the Sutra system we become a Superior being when we realize emptiness directly with the gross consciousness, but according to the system of Secret Mantra we do not become a Superior being until we have realized emptiness directly with the mind of spontaneous great bliss. Thus once we have attained the impure illusory body we should strive to attain the realization of meaning clear light whereby emptiness is cognized directly – without reliance upon a generic image – by the subtlest of minds. This is what is meant by manifesting the ultimate clear light.

The practice of penetrating the precise points of one's own body through meditating on the channels, winds, and

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

drops – as in the yogas of inner fire and vajra recitation – is not sufficiently powerful to induce an attainment of meaning clear light. Thus these meditations are said to be completed when we attain the impure illusory body. At this point it is necessary to follow either the internal or external method for attaining meaning clear light. The internal method consists of two practices which are known as ‘subsequent destruction’ and ‘holding the body entirely’. The external method is the yoga of relying upon an action mudra. These three practices will now be explained briefly.

To attain the concentration of subsequent destruction we first visualize the entire universe and all its inhabitants melting into light and then imagine that this light dissolves into us. We, in turn, dissolve from below and above simultaneously, like a candle burning from both ends. Gradually our entire body dissolves into the indestructible drop at our heart. With this dissolution the very subtle mind of clear light will arise, and we then hold this with single-pointed concentration.

We begin this method by visualizing the impure illusory body as a wisdom being (in the aspect of our personal Deity, but white in colour) residing in the heart of our old aggregate of form. If, for example, our personal Deity is Heruka, we visualize the illusory body as a white Heruka in the heart of our old aggregate of form, which itself is visualized as the blue commitment being Heruka.

As the commitment being Heruka we now have the white illusory body Heruka in our heart. From the heart of this illusory body infinite rays of brilliant blue light shine forth and pervade the entire universe and all its inhabitants. This light purifies all negativities, no matter how subtle, and causes all places and beings to melt into light. This light then dissolves back into the heart of the illusory body Heruka. The blue commitment being Heruka then melts from the feet and the crown simultaneously, and then the white wisdom being does the same. Finally, nothing is left but the indestructible drop.

## CLEAR LIGHT AND UNION

Once we have attained the impure illusory body we will find it very easy to dissolve all the winds into the indestructible drop through the force of this meditation because we shall already have completed the yogas of isolated speech and our winds will be very subtle and easily controlled. As a result of this dissolution we will experience all eight signs – from the mirage-like appearance to the clear light – as vividly as we do when we are dying. Moreover we experience each of these eight signs in conjunction with emptiness. Finally, when the all-empty clear light arises, we meditate single-pointedly on emptiness for a long time. By doing this meditation again and again our mind of all-empty clear light will eventually realize emptiness directly and we will thereby attain meaning clear light.

The other internal method is the concentration of holding the body entirely. According to this method, the entire body melts into light, dissolves into emptiness, and that emptiness is held by concentration. In this practice the commitment being simply melts simultaneously from the feet and the crown into the indestructible drop without first sending out light from the illusory body and dissolving the universe and its inhabitants. As the light of the dissolving body melts into the indestructible drop, the all-empty clear light will arise and, as before, we use this very subtle mind to meditate single-pointedly on emptiness. Again, after repeated practice this will lead to the attainment of meaning clear light. These two internal concentrations of subsequent destruction and holding the body entirely are also performed during generation stage, but they are less powerful at that time.

In the external method it is the yoga of the action mudra that causes all the winds to dissolve into the indestructible drop, with the result that the eight signs appear as vividly as in death. As before, these signs should be experienced in conjunction with emptiness meditation so that when the all-empty clear light arises we can concentrate single-pointedly on emptiness for a long time with that very

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

subtle mind. A Yogi who can manifest clear light in dependence upon an action mudra will experience inexhaustible spontaneous great bliss and other inner realizations. It is for this reason that Longdöl Lama said that for an accomplished meditator the action mudra is like a wishfulfilling cow from which we receive an inexhaustible supply of milk.

#### THE WAY OF CULTIVATING IT BY RELYING UPON THIS METHOD

In the Tantric texts it says that the meditator will attain meaning clear light at dawn, which is also the time at which enlightenment is attained. For example, Buddha Shakyamuni, after sitting beneath the Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, demonstrated the manner of overcoming all maras in the evening, entering meditative equipoise at midnight, and attaining full enlightenment at dawn.

When a practitioner who has attained the impure illusory body meditates again and again in accordance with the methods explained above, eventually he or she will receive dreams and visions which indicate that the attainment of meaning clear light is near. When these special signs appear the meditator makes elaborate offerings to his Spiritual Guide and strives to please him. Then at midnight the disciple will receive the third empowerment – the wisdom-mudra empowerment – directly from his Spiritual Guide. The meditator will in fact have received this empowerment before, but because he lacked pure understanding at that time the action mudra given then was only a visualized one. Now that the meditator is about to attain meaning clear light however, he is qualified to receive an actual action mudra and the actual wisdom-mudra empowerment.

When the Yogi embraces the action mudra he will experience the eight signs as vividly as in death. As explained before, these signs are experienced in conjunction with emptiness, and when the all-empty clear light realizes

## CLEAR LIGHT AND UNION

emptiness directly the meditator will simultaneously attain meaning clear light.

Because the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light still has a very subtle dualistic appearance it is not able to realize emptiness directly, but with the attainment of meaning clear light at dawn all subtle conceptions dissolve and the Yogi attains a direct realization of emptiness. The meditator thereby attains the Secret Mantra path of seeing and becomes a Secret Mantra Superior. With the attainment of meaning clear light the impure illusory body disappears like a rainbow in the sky. It is because it ceases in this way that the impure illusory body is said to be like the vajra body, but it is not the actual vajra body. When the meditator arises from the meditative equipoise in which the meaning clear light is first attained, he or she arises in the new form of the pure illusory body.

### THE REASON WHY THIS CLEAR LIGHT ALONE ACTS AS THE DIRECT ANTIDOTE TO BOTH THE INTELLECTUALLY-FORMED AND THE INNATE DELUSIONS

According to the Perfection Vehicle, when we have attained the path of seeing by gaining a direct realization of emptiness we become a Superior Bodhisattva on the first ground. Also according to Sutra, while we remain on the path of seeing we abandon only the intellectually-formed delusions. We do not begin to abandon the innate delusions until the path of meditation, and we do not fully abandon them until we attain the eighth ground. According to Secret Mantra, however, a Yogi who has attained meaning clear light is able to abandon both types of delusion at the same time by means of one path. How is this possible?

Anyone who has attained meaning clear light has previously meditated extensively on the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light and the impure illusory body, and thus has accumulated vast collections of wisdom and merit. As mentioned before, wisdom is accumulated through the force of the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light



*Yongdzin Dorjechang Losang Yeshe*



and merit through the force of the illusory body. Being empowered by these two collections, meaning clear light has tremendous strength. It is this superior strength that enables the mind of meaning clear light to destroy both kinds of delusion simultaneously within a single meditation. This ability is unique to the practices of Highest Yoga Tantra.

When the Yogi emerges from the state of meaning clear light, the mind of black near-attainment of reverse order arises. At that moment he or she attains the pure illusory body and the path of meditation of Secret Mantra. Moreover, this Yogi has now abandoned intellectually-formed and innate obstructions to liberation and so has become a Secret Mantra Foe Destroyer.

Meaning clear light is known by many names. Both it and example clear light are known as the 'definitive Heruka', the interpretative Heruka being the Deity who appears with a blue-coloured body. Meaning clear light is also known as 'inner Dakini Land'. Of the two types of Dakini Land, outer and inner, the former, which is the Pure Land of Vajrayogini, is attained in dependence upon generation stage practices and the latter in dependence upon completion stage practices. The terms 'meaning clear light' and 'inner Dakini Land' are synonymous.

A Yogi who has attained inner Dakini Land has also attained outer Dakini Land, because through the force of purifying his or her mind inwardly, the external environment is also purified. Once the mind is free from all impurities there are no further impure external appearances left. This is true according to both Sutra and Secret Mantra. Thus the Yogi who has attained meaning clear light has gone to the Pure Land of Vajrayogini. This Pure Land is not a geographical location that is a long distance away – it can be reached simply by following the generation stage and completion stage practices – but as long as our mind is tainted by impurities we are not able to perceive it at all. Therefore to reach this Pure Land it is very important to practise isolated body and thereby prevent ordinary appearances from arising.

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

**THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION OF THE MAHAMUDRA THAT IS  
THE UNION OF THE TWO TRUTHS**

This has two parts:

- 1 An introduction to the union
- 2 Showing the stages by which it is gradually accomplished

**AN INTRODUCTION TO THE UNION**

The Mahamudra that is the union of the two truths is also known as the 'union that needs learning'. The Union of No More Learning is attained at the first moment of the Path of No More Learning, which is the first moment of Buddhahood.

As mentioned before, the union that needs learning is the fifth of the five stages of completion stage. It depends upon the fourth stage, which is attained the moment meaning clear light is attained. This in turn depends upon the third stage, which is attained immediately the impure illusory body is attained. This depends upon the second stage – the yoga of isolated mind, and this depends upon the first stage – the yoga of isolated speech, which in turn depends upon having practised the yoga of isolated body. Thus all five stages are related to one another in a chain of cause and effect. It is important to understand the precise meaning of each of these five stages and not to be misled by their titles.

The term 'union' can refer to many different things: the union of the two truths, the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness, the union of body and mind, and so forth. Here it refers to the union of the two truths. Although they have the same names as the two truths of Sutra, these two truths should not be understood in the same way. According to Vajrayana Mahamudra the pure illusory body is conventional truth and meaning clear light is ultimate truth. In general, according to Sutra, any phenomenon other than emptiness itself is a conventional truth. In Tantra,

#### CLEAR LIGHT AND UNION

because meditation on the illusory body emphasizes conventional truths, the illusory body itself is known by this name. Similarly, because meditation on meaning clear light emphasizes emptiness, it is called 'ultimate truth', but it is not actually an ultimate truth because it is a mind, and all minds are conventional truths. It is the object of this mind that is the ultimate truth.

The Sanskrit word for union is 'yogananda', in which 'yoga' signifies 'two' and 'nanda' signifies 'simultaneously assembled' or 'non-dual'. Here, it refers to the union of pure illusory body and meaning clear light, and the fact that these two are gathered together simultaneously within the continuum of a single person. An ordinary being simultaneously possesses a body and a mind, and together they form the basis upon which the person is imputed. In the case of a Yogi who has attained the fifth stage, his or her body is the pure illusory body and his or her mind is meaning clear light. These two together are the basis upon which the person of that Yogi is imputed.

#### SHOWING THE STAGES BY WHICH IT IS GRADUALLY ACCOMPLISHED

Some texts state that this union is attained when the mind of white appearance of reverse order ceases, but this is incorrect. The pure illusory body develops from the very subtle wind upon which is mounted the mind of meaning clear light, and it is attained automatically and without effort the instant this mind ceases. Thus, the pure illusory body is attained at the first instant of the mind of black near-attainment of reverse order.

The illusory body is a new body, and when the Yogi initially attains it he or she no longer has the mind of meaning clear light. As explained above, that mind ceases the instant the mind of black near-attainment of reverse order arises. Within that same meditation session, the Yogi perceives the remaining reverse order signs, up to and including the mirage-like appearance. Then he or she

engages in the activities of subsequent attainment while still possessing the pure illusory body, which is unceasing.

Afterwards, by depending upon one of the internal or external methods mentioned earlier, the Yogi will experience all the serial order signs from the mirage-like appearance up to and including the all-empty clear light. He or she experiences these signs in conjunction with meditation on emptiness, and when the all-empty sign is perceived, meaning clear light is manifest once again. At this point, the Yogi attains the Mahamudra that is the union of the two truths, because he or she has assembled the pure illusory body and meaning clear light simultaneously. However, even though the Yogi has now attained the union that needs learning he or she will arise from meaning clear light again. Before Buddhahood is attained, there are further practices to be performed.

The illusory body of a meditator who has manifest meaning clear light is known as 'the body of union'. When we have attained the pure illusory body we can manifest in two ways. One way is to emanate various aspects to suit the specific needs of sentient beings, and the other is for our pure illusory body, in the form of a wisdom being, to enter into our old aggregate of form so that we can continue to show this gross body to others and with it engage in beneficial activities such as expounding Dharma. In the latter case, the gross body is like a house and the pure illusory body is like a person living within it. To use another analogy, the pure illusory body is like a precious jewel and the old aggregate of form is like a treasure chest in which it is kept; although anyone can see the container, the gross body, very few know that there is a precious treasure within. When Nagarjuna attained the body of union he would go from place to place teaching Dharma to his many disciples. When ordinary beings saw him they saw only a humble monk; they did not realize that within his heart his pure illusory body resided in the form of a wisdom being. Many other Spiritual Masters such as Gyalwa Ensäpa and the great Yogi Dharmavajra also

attained the body of union. One of the most famous was Milarepa who, although his attainment of the body of union freed him from all poverty, would still go from village to village seeking food. His physical body was so emaciated that people would take pity on him, thinking him to be a poor beggar. When he passed away and his body was cremated, however, many miraculous signs appeared attesting to his great spiritual advancement. Yet even these signs were not seen by everyone in the same way; different people saw different things according to their own level of spiritual development. If Milarepa were to be judged merely from an external point of view it would be very difficult to understand that he was a fully enlightened being.

The old aggregate of form of someone who has attained the illusory body does not appear to others as any different from the way it looked before the illusory body was attained. For example, if someone we had known for many years were to attain the body of union, we would not be able to detect any difference in our friend's appearance, unless we too had attained the illusory body. In truth, however, our friend's actual body is now the pure illusory body and his or her actual mind is meaning clear light. It is only to help others who are unable to perceive his or her actual form that the meditator keeps and displays the old gross form.

In *Offering to the Spiritual Guide*, the Spiritual Guide is visualized in the external form of a monk with Conqueror Vajradhara at his heart, and the letter HUM at his heart. This visualization represents the three Secret Mantra beings: the external form is the commitment being, Vajradhara is the wisdom being, and the HUM is the concentration being. Furthermore, the commitment being is the Spiritual Guide's physical body, the wisdom being is his pure illusory body (his actual body), and the concentration being is his meaning clear light (his actual mind). Once the existence of this body of union is understood it is not difficult to recognize our Spiritual Guide as an actual Buddha.



*Dorjechang Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche*

## *Resultant Mahamudra*

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### HOW TO ACCOMPLISH THE MAHAMUDRA THAT IS THE RESULTANT UNION OF NO MORE LEARNING, THE STATE POSSESSING THE SEVEN PRE-EMINENT QUALITIES OF EMBRACE

The explanation of the causal Mahamudra meditations has now been completed, including the instructions on the union that needs learning. The goal of all Mahayana training is the attainment of full enlightenment: the Union of No More Learning. This resultant Mahamudra is now presented in five parts:

- 1 The place where Buddhahood is attained
- 2 The basis upon which Buddhahood is attained
- 3 The way in which Buddhahood is attained
- 4 The good qualities of a Buddha
- 5 An explanation of the relationships of serial and reverse order

#### THE PLACE WHERE BUDDHAHOOD IS ATTAINED

According to Secret Mantra there are three places in which Buddhahood can be attained: (1) the Pure Land of Akanishta, (2) the desire realm, and (3) a place that is neither Akanishta nor the desire realm. In the Mahayana Sutras, however, it is asserted that we can attain perfect Buddhahood only in Akanishta. Considering that it was Buddha Shakyamuni who made both assertions, which one is to be accepted as correct? Is there a contradiction between Sutra and Secret Mantra? There is no contradiction, because

Buddha's assertion that full enlightenment can be attained only in Akanishta was made with specific disciples in mind – those who have weak minds or who lack the ability to practise the highest form of Secret Mantra. To those who are able to practise Highest Yoga Tantra, however, Buddha taught that enlightenment could be attained while still in the desire realm. Thus there is no discrepancy between these two assertions; it is only because they are meant for beings of different capacities that there appears to be a contradiction.

Buddha's Secret Mantra teachings convey his ultimate intention in the same way that the Madhyamika-Prasangika system conveys his ultimate view. Buddha taught four different philosophical systems according to the different capacities of his disciples, and each system is presented as a method for realizing emptiness. Although these four systems appear to contradict one another, they actually provide a graded sequence of training whereby we can eventually attain the correct view of emptiness. The only way to prove that the Madhyamika-Prasangika system is ultimately correct is through logical reasoning and personal experience. In a similar fashion, Secret Mantra is proved to be the ultimate method by the fact that those who have the ability to practise Highest Yoga Tantra can attain perfect Buddhahood within a single life. Indeed, it is only through the practice of Highest Yoga Tantra that we can attain perfect Buddhahood at all.

According to Secret Mantra, Buddhahood is attained in Akanishta by a Bodhisattva who has reached the tenth ground through the Sutra paths of the Perfection Vehicle. Such a Bodhisattva will not be able to proceed past the tenth ground without engaging in the practices of Highest Yoga Tantra. Because such a Bodhisattva will not be able to attain Buddhahood without receiving the empowerments of Secret Mantra and entering into the actual paths of Highest Yoga Tantra, at this point he or she will receive these empowerments and then go on to attain enlightenment in Akanishta.



## RESULTANT MAHAMUDRA

If the practitioner is someone who has followed the two stages of Secret Mantra from the beginning and is going to attain enlightenment in that life, it is definite that he or she will attain Buddhahood within the desire realm. For example, the three Yogis mentioned earlier – Gyalwa Ensäpa, Dharmavajra, and Milarepa – all attained Buddhahood in Tibet.

Finally, the third place in which Buddhahood can be attained is neither Akanishta nor the desire realm. Buddhahood is attained here by a Secret Mantra practitioner who attains the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light at the time of death. When the clear light of death ceases such a practitioner will attain the illusory body instead of taking an ordinary intermediate state body. It is with this illusory body – in a place that is neither Akanishta nor the desire realm – that such a Bodhisattva attains Buddhahood.

Besides these three types of being, there are no other types of being who can attain Buddhahood and no other places in which enlightenment can be attained.

### THE BASIS UPON WHICH BUDDHAHOOD IS ATTAINED

There are three realms within samsara: the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm. Of all the beings in the desire realm only humans can attain Buddhahood within one life because only they are endowed with the physical prerequisites – the six elements listed earlier. Among the form realm beings, only tenth-ground Bodhisattvas dwelling in Akanishta can attain enlightenment through the path of Secret Mantra. Formless realm beings cannot progress towards enlightenment through the paths of either Sutra or Secret Mantra.

### THE WAY IN WHICH BUDDHAHOOD IS ATTAINED

This explanation is given in three parts, corresponding to the three types of being described above:

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

- 1 How Buddhahood is attained in Akanishta
- 2 How Buddhahood is attained in the desire realm
- 3 How Buddhahood is attained in a place that is  
neither

#### HOW BUDDHAHOOD IS ATTAINED IN AKANISHTA

It was stated earlier that to practise Highest Yoga Tantra, a person must have the six elements found within the human body. The tenth-ground Bodhisattva in Akanishta, however, is an exception to this in that, although his body is that of a form realm god, it nevertheless contains the red and white drops, and so he can experience the spontaneous great bliss that arises in dependence upon these elements. Thus he is not an ordinary god of the form realm.

When such a Bodhisattva is abiding on the tenth ground, the Buddhas of the ten directions gather around him and encourage him to enter the path of Secret Mantra. They point out that his present meditative concentration is not powerful enough to abandon the obstructions to omniscience and bring him to enlightenment; only meaning clear light has this power. They then confer upon him the wisdom-mudra empowerment and present him with an action mudra. The Bodhisattva then enters into meditation with his consort and develops the eight signs, from the mirage-like appearance to the all-empty clear light, in conjunction with emptiness. When his all-empty clear light of spontaneous great bliss realizes emptiness directly the Bodhisattva attains meaning clear light. Thus he is an exception in that he does not need to practise generation stage, or any meditation up to and including the impure illusory body of completion stage, to attain meaning clear light.

With the attainment of meaning clear light the Bodhisattva enters the Secret Mantra path of seeing and becomes a Secret Mantra Superior on the fourth stage of completion stage. Following this, at the first moment of the mind of black near-attainment of reverse order, he

## RESULTANT MAHAMUDRA

attains the pure illusory body and enters the Secret Mantra path of meditation. Then, the next time he enters the meditative equipoise of meaning clear light, he will attain the fifth stage of completion stage – the union that needs learning. Finally, he will enter into the meditative equipoise in which the very last obstructions to omniscience are removed. At that point he attains the Path of No More Learning, or full enlightenment, the resultant Mahamudra union that is the state possessing the seven pre-eminent qualities of embrace.

This way of attaining Buddhahood is peculiar to the tenth-ground Bodhisattva of the Perfection Vehicle. He or she is able to attain enlightenment in this way through the force of the vast collections of merit and wisdom already accumulated during countless aeons on the Sutra path.

### HOW BUDDHAHOOD IS ATTAINED IN THE DESIRE REALM

Most practitioners of the path of Secret Mantra will attain Buddhahood in the body of a desire realm human. As explained before, a Yogi who has reached the fifth stage – the union that needs learning – has nearly completed the entire path. He has no new objects of knowledge to realize; he simply has to improve the quality of his existing realizations. In this way he will remove the remaining obstacles to enlightenment – the obstructions to omniscience – and attain Buddhahood.

The obstructions to omniscience prevent the mind from realizing all objects of knowledge directly and simultaneously. Even though a Yogi of the fifth stage is very advanced, he or she still has not abandoned these obstructions. When this Yogi is in meditative equipoise on emptiness, he or she cannot at the same time perform actions such as giving teachings. In other words, the Yogi cannot be absorbed in meditative equipoise and engage in the activities of subsequent attainment simultaneously. A fully realized Buddha, on the other hand, has the ability to

perform beneficial deeds without ever rising from deep meditation on the ultimate nature of reality; this is one of the excellent qualities of an enlightened being. To attain such an exalted state the Yogi must repeatedly enter the meditative equipoise of meaning clear light so as to remove all the remaining obstructions to omniscience. That is why the union of the fifth stage is known as the 'union that needs learning'.

The principal meditations for such a practitioner are the external method of action mudra yoga and the two internal concentrations previously described. The purpose of these practices is to eradicate all obstructions by means of meaning clear light. The method of embracing the action mudra can be explained by taking the example of a man whose personal Deity is Heruka. He visualizes himself as Heruka embracing his consort Vajravarahi and, through the force of this embrace, all his winds enter, abide, and dissolve within the indestructible drop at his heart. With this dissolution the eight signs appear and are experienced in conjunction with emptiness. When the all-empty clear light arises, his mind mixes indistinguishably with emptiness, like water mixing with water. At this stage the experienced Yogi can remain in the state of all-empty clear light for as long as he wishes. This practice must be performed again and again until perfect Buddhahood is attained.

When the Yogi rises from the meditative equipoise of clear light he will experience the minds of black near-attainment, red increase, white appearance, and so forth. With each successive sign his mind will become more and more gross in nature until, eventually, he once again engages in daily activities such as expounding Dharma. During this period of subsequent attainment he will no longer have the mind of clear light because it will already have ceased when the mind of black near-attainment arose. Whenever he wishes to manifest this very subtle mind of clear light again, he must either enter into meditation with the action mudra or perform the internal concentrations.

The clear light experienced by someone on the level of union is meaning clear light. By using this mind to meditate single-pointedly on emptiness all nine levels of the obstructions to omniscience will gradually be eliminated and eventually the Yogi will attain enlightenment. As with meaning clear light, this enlightenment will be attained at dawn, the symbol of the all-empty clear light.

Let us suppose that our personal Deity is Heruka and that, after accomplishing all the stages so far described, we have today received signs indicating that we are ready to attain Buddhahood. We now go to our Spiritual Guide and make elaborate outer, inner, and secret offerings. At midnight our Spiritual Guide will appear to us in the form of Heruka, as will all the Buddhas of the ten directions. He will then grant us the wisdom-mudra empowerment and present us with an action mudra in the form of Vajravarahi. Through the force of embracing her we will experience the eight signs and, when the all-empty clear light arises, our mind will mix indistinguishably with emptiness. We will then remain in this state of meditative equipoise until dawn.

During this time our mind of meaning clear light will become the direct antidote to the remaining obstructions. This consciousness, which is our last mind as a sentient being, is known as the 'vajra-like concentration of the path of meditation'. When the vajra-like concentration overcomes the very last obstructions to omniscience at dawn, we will become a fully enlightened being. At that time our mind of clear light realizing emptiness will become indestructible and constant; never again will we experience the minds of black near-attainment, red increase, or any of the other grosser states of consciousness. From that time onwards we will experience without break the all-empty clear light realizing emptiness.

With the total abandonment at dawn of the obstructions to omniscience, our mind of meaning clear light will become the resultant Truth Body of a Buddha and our pure illusory body the resultant Form Body. We shall have attained the Union of No More Learning, the state possessing the

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

seven pre-eminent qualities of embrace. For us there will no longer be any difference between meditative equipoise and subsequent attainment; all objects of knowledge will be realized simultaneously within a single mind in a single moment because even the most subtle dualistic appearance will have been eliminated. Our clear light mind will simultaneously perceive all objects of knowledge as clearly as ordinary beings see their reflection in a mirror.

#### HOW BUDDHAHOOD IS ATTAINED IN A PLACE THAT IS NEITHER

In the discussion of the four joys it was stated that there comes a time when the Secret Mantra meditator who is ready to experience the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light must either accept an action mudra and perform those practices that will cause the pervading wind to dissolve into the indestructible drop at the heart, or decide not to accept such a mudra but wait until the clear light of death when all the winds will naturally dissolve there. What happens in the former case has already been described; the latter case can now be explained as follows.

When such a Yogi experiences the clear light of death he or she will attain the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light. Then, instead of entering the intermediate state, when this clear light mind ceases such a Yogi will arise in the form of the illusory body in a place that is neither Akanishta nor the desire realm. If the meditator's personal Deity is Heruka, Buddhahood will be attained in Heruka's Pure Land, if it is Guhyasamaja, then it will be in Guhyasamaja's Pure Land, and so forth.

The illusory body initially attained by this Yogi is the impure illusory body because it arises through the force of the isolated mind of ultimate example clear light. With this impure illusory body the Yogi repeatedly engages in the external method and the two internal concentrations previously described. Through these methods the Yogi eventually attains meaning clear light, at which point he or

#### RESULTANT MAHAMUDRA

she enters the Secret Mantra path of seeing and becomes a Secret Mantra Superior. Arising from this meaning clear light, he or she attains the pure illusory body and, soon afterwards, the union that needs learning. From this point until the attainment of enlightenment the path is the same as that outlined above.

#### THE GOOD QUALITIES OF A BUDDHA

A Yogi who attains enlightenment does so in the form of the Complete Enjoyment Body. This holy body, which is also known as the 'primordial Buddha', possesses the seven pre-eminent qualities of embrace:

(1) The Complete Enjoyment Body is adorned by the thirty-two major signs and the eighty minor indications. These signs and indications are the distinctive characteristics of a Buddha's form, indicating the many ways in which an enlightened being is superior to sentient beings. Such characteristics include the crown protuberance (ushnisha), wisdom hair curl, elongated ears, and other signs that signify the unsurpassable qualities of a fully enlightened Buddha. They indicate not only that a Buddha is free from all the fears and sufferings of samsara and has completely abandoned the obstructions to liberation and omniscience, but also that his or her body is not subject to degeneration, sickness, ageing, or death.

(2) The Complete Enjoyment Body embraces a wisdom mudra. This feature of the Father and Mother facing one another symbolizes that enlightenment is attained through completing the practices of embracing and thereby experiencing spontaneous great bliss that meditates on emptiness.

(3) An enlightened being's mind always remains in a state of spontaneous great bliss. This is a further mark of the superiority of a Buddha's mind over the minds of sentient beings.

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

(4) A Buddha's spontaneous great bliss is always mixed with emptiness. Without moving from this state of total absorption, an enlightened being sees all objects of knowledge as clearly as a glass bead held in the palm of the hand. This demonstrates the exalted quality of a Buddha's wisdom.

(5) A Buddha's mind of great compassion for all sentient beings never wavers. This feature demonstrates that an enlightened being's mind is unstained by even the slightest self-cherishing thought, and that such a being benefits all other beings without exception.

(6) The continuum of an enlightened being's body never ceases. This indicates that the indestructible vajra body has been attained.

(7) A Buddha's emanations pervade the entire universe and his or her activities for the benefit of others never cease.

This has been just a short description of the primordial Buddha: the Enjoyment Body Vajradhara. If all the excellent qualities of such a being were listed in detail the description would run to many pages. Further explanation of the excellent qualities of a Buddha's body, speech, and mind are given in the eighth chapter of Maitreya's *Ornament of Clear Realizations* and its many commentaries, and by Chandrakirti in *Guide to the Middle Way*. A commentary to the latter can be found in *Ocean of Nectar*.

#### AN EXPLANATION OF THE RELATIONSHIPS OF SERIAL AND REVERSE ORDER

By relying upon our Spiritual Guide we have a special opportunity to progress through the stages of Mahayana practice and attain the realizations of renunciation, bodhi-chitta, and the correct view of emptiness. With this firm foundation we are suitably qualified to enter into the practices of generation stage meditation of Secret Mantra. In



#### RESULTANT MAHAMUDRA

dependence upon the experience of generation stage, we have the opportunity to practise isolated body and isolated speech of completion stage. Through the force of accomplishing these two, we can successfully complete the practice of isolated mind, and success in this enables us to attain the illusory body and meaning clear light. Through the force of meaning clear light we can attain the Mahamudra that is the union of the two truths. On the basis of this Mahamudra we eventually attain Buddhahood: the resultant Mahamudra Union possessing the seven pre-eminent qualities of embrace. This step-by-step progression, from our initial reliance upon our Spiritual Guide up to our attainment of full enlightenment, is the serial order relationship of the stages of the path.

As for the reverse order relationship, this is as follows. The attainment of Mahamudra Union possessing seven pre-eminent qualities of embrace depends upon our prior attainment of the Mahamudra that is the union of the two truths. This in turn depends upon our attaining meaning clear light, which depends upon the prior attainment of the illusory body. The illusory body is attained in dependence upon attaining isolated mind, and this in turn depends upon attaining isolated speech and isolated body of completion stage. The attainment of isolated body of completion stage depends upon accomplishing generation stage meditations, and this depends upon our realizations of the three principal paths: renunciation, bodhichitta, and the correct view of emptiness. All these accomplishments from the attainment of Buddhahood down to the development of renunciation depend upon relying sincerely upon our Spiritual Guide.

These two ways of looking at the interdependent relationship between the stages of the path illustrate that if we have a sincere desire to become a Buddha we must follow the entire path of Sutra and Secret Mantra. Spending our life on one or two meditations will not lead us to enlightenment. If we want to enjoy a cup of tea it is not sufficient merely to have just the water, just the tea, just the

#### CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

milk, or just the sugar; we need to have all the ingredients together. If several different things have to be assembled for us merely to enjoy a cup of tea, how much more necessary must this be if our goal is to experience the highest enlightenment? It is unrealistic to think that we can rely upon just one or two isolated practices.

This completes the instructions on the resultant Mahamudra Union in particular and Secret Mantra Mahamudra in general. If these instructions are to be beneficial they should not be an object of mere intellectual interest or curiosity; we must actually put them into practice under the guidance of a fully qualified Spiritual Guide.

#### THE CONCLUDING STAGES

In the Kadampa Tradition's teachings on training the mind, it is stated that there are certain specific activities to be done at the beginning and the end of any Dharma practice. No matter what action we may be engaged in – whether it be study, meditation, the practice of giving, or anything else – it is important at the outset to set a correct motivation and at the conclusion to perform correct dedication. Setting the correct motivation, *bodhichitta*, was explained at the beginning of this book. As for correct dedication, the function of this concluding practice is to ensure that whatever wealth of virtue has been accumulated by our Dharma activities is not wasted or exhausted, but is increased abundantly. Even if our accumulation of virtue is small, its fruit can be plentiful if we perform dedication properly.

The results of meritorious actions largely depend upon our manner of dedicating them. If our previously accumulated virtuous actions are dedicated towards enlightenment they will definitely become the cause of our attaining perfect Buddhahood, if they are dedicated towards personal liberation from suffering they will become the cause of our attaining nirvana, and if they are dedicated

#### RESULTANT MAHAMUDRA

for the sake of this life's enjoyments their results will follow accordingly. However, this last dedication is not a pure dedication, and the one before it is not a sublime dedication. It is the first dedication that is the purest and most sublime of all. Therefore, we should dedicate whatever virtuous actions we have performed, and whatever merit we have accumulated through them, to the attainment of enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings without exception.

Here, then, we should dedicate all the virtue of giving and listening to Mahamudra teachings, of reading Mahamudra texts, of contemplating the meaning of Mahamudra, and of meditating on the stages of Mahamudra practice, to the attainment of the Mahamudra that is the Union of No More Learning – the perfect enlightenment of Buddhahood – for the sake of benefiting all living beings. This dedication is extremely important. If it is done correctly and sincerely from the depths of our heart, the threefold practice of listening to, contemplating, and meditating on these Mahamudra teachings will be very meaningful and the source of great bliss.

## *Dedication*

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We should pray:

To accomplish all the purposes of living beings,  
By this virtue may I quickly attain  
The seven pre-eminent qualities of embrace:  
A Form Body endowed with the major signs and  
    minor indications  
Embracing a wisdom knowledge consort,  
A mind abiding in a state of great bliss,  
This bliss realizing lack of inherent existence,  
A compassion that has abandoned the extreme of  
    peace,  
An uninterrupted continuum of body,  
And unceasing enlightened deeds.

May everything be auspicious.

*Appendix I*  
*The Condensed Meaning of*  
*the Text*

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THE MAHAMUDRA OF THE ORAL LINEAGE OF  
THE UNEQUALLED VIRTUOUS TRADITION

This condensed meaning, or outlines, of *Clear Light of Bliss*,  
a commentary to the practice of Mahamudra in Vajrayana  
Buddhism by the same author, was composed by  
Geshe Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche.

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## *The Condensed Meaning of the Text*

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*The explanation of the stages of how to practise the swift Vajrayana path of the Mahamudra of the oral lineage of the unequalled Virtuous Tradition is in three parts:*

- 1 An introduction to the general paths
- 2 The source of the lineage from which these instructions are derived
- 3 The actual explanation of the instructions possessing this lineage

*The actual explanation of the instructions possessing this lineage has three parts:*

- 1 The preliminary practices
- 2 The actual practice
- 3 The concluding stages

*The preliminary practices has two parts:*

- 1 The common preliminary practices
- 2 The uncommon preliminary practices

*The common preliminary practices has four parts:*

- 1 The guide of going for refuge and generating bodhichitta, the gateway to the Buddhadharma and the Mahayana
- 2 The guide of mandala offerings, the gateway to accumulating a collection of merit
- 3 The guide of meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva, the gateway to purifying negativities and downfalls
- 4 The guide of Guru yoga, the gateway to receiving blessings

*The actual practice has three parts:*

- 1 How to practise the Mahamudra that is the union of bliss and emptiness
- 2 How to practise the Mahamudra that is the union of the two truths
- 3 How to accomplish the Mahamudra that is the resultant Union of No More Learning, the state possessing the seven pre-eminent qualities of embrace

*How to practise the Mahamudra that is the union of bliss and emptiness has two parts:*

- 1 An explanation of the method for generating the object-possessor, spontaneous great bliss
- 2 An explanation of the method for correctly realizing the object, emptiness

*An explanation of the method for generating the object-possessor, spontaneous great bliss, has two parts:*

- 1 Penetrating the precise points of one's own body
- 2 Penetrating the precise points of another's body

*Penetrating the precise points of one's own body has four parts:*

- 1 Identifying the ten doors through which the winds can enter the central channel
- 2 The reason why the winds can enter the central channel by penetrating the precise points through these doors
- 3 An explanation of their different functions
- 4 An explanation of the stages of meditation on inner fire (tummo) in particular

*An explanation of the stages of meditation on inner fire (tummo) in particular has two parts:*

- 1 How to meditate on inner fire (tummo) in eight stages
- 2 Based on these, an explanation of the practice of the four joys and the nine mixings



*How to meditate on inner fire (tummo) in eight stages has eight parts:*

- 1 An explanation of dispelling impure winds and meditating on a hollow body
- 2 Visualizing and meditating on the channels
- 3 Training in the paths of the channels
- 4 Visualizing and meditating on the letters
- 5 Igniting the inner fire (tummo)
- 6 Causing the fire to blaze
- 7 Mere blazing and dripping
- 8 An explanation of extraordinary blazing and dripping

*Based on these, an explanation of the practice of the four joys and the nine mixings has two parts:*

- 1 An explanation of the four joys
- 2 An explanation of the nine mixings

*An explanation of the nine mixings has three parts:*

- 1 An explanation of the mixings during waking
- 2 An explanation of the mixings during sleep
- 3 An explanation of the mixings during death

*An explanation of the mixings during waking has three parts:*

- 1 Mixing with the Truth Body during waking
- 2 Mixing with the Enjoyment Body during waking
- 3 Mixing with the Emanation Body during waking

*An explanation of the mixings during sleep has three parts:*

- 1 Mixing with the Truth Body during sleep
- 2 Mixing with the Enjoyment Body during sleep
- 3 Mixing with the Emanation Body during sleep

*An explanation of the mixings during death has three parts:*

- 1 Mixing with the Truth Body during death
- 2 Mixing with the Enjoyment Body during death
- 3 Mixing with the Emanation Body during death

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

*Penetrating the precise points of another's body has two parts:*

- 1 Relying upon an action mudra
- 2 Relying upon a wisdom mudra

*An explanation of the method for correctly realizing the object, emptiness, has three parts:*

- 1 How a direct realization of emptiness depends upon tranquil abiding
- 2 The uncommon explanation of how to meditate on tranquil abiding
- 3 How to seek the view of emptiness with meditation

*The uncommon explanation of how to meditate on tranquil abiding has two parts:*

- 1 An introduction to the object of meditation, the mind itself
- 2 The actual explanation of how to train

*An introduction to the object of meditation, the mind itself, has three parts:*

- 1 An introduction to the general mind
- 2 An introduction to the individual minds
- 3 Avoiding mistaking the introduction to the conventional nature of the mind for an introduction to the ultimate nature of the mind

*An introduction to the individual minds has three parts:*

- 1 An introduction to gross minds
- 2 An introduction to subtle minds
- 3 An introduction to the very subtle mind

*The actual explanation of how to train has three parts:*

- 1 How to train by means of general mindfulness
- 2 How to train by means of specific mindfulnesses
- 3 How to train by means of the six methods for settling the mind

THE CONDENSED MEANING OF THE TEXT

*How to train by means of specific mindfulnesses has five parts:*

- 1 How to train by means of new mindfulness
- 2 How to train by means of old mindfulness
- 3 How to train by means of appropriate methods
- 4 How to train by means of labels known to others
- 5 How to train by means of the natural cessation of conceptual thoughts

*How to train by means of the six methods for settling the mind has six parts:*

- 1 Settling like the sun unobscured by clouds
- 2 Settling like a garuda circling in the sky
- 3 Settling like a still ocean
- 4 Settling like a small child staring at a temple
- 5 Settling like the trail of a bird flying in the sky
- 6 Settling like fine cotton thread

*How to seek the view of emptiness with meditation has three parts:*

- 1 How to meditate on selflessness of persons
- 2 How to meditate on selflessness of phenomena
- 3 Advising those who desire an unmistakable understanding of the ultimate view of both Sutra and Tantra of the necessity of listening to, contemplating, and meditating on Nagarjuna's root text on the Middle Way and its commentaries

*How to meditate on selflessness of persons has three parts:*

- 1 Identifying the object of negation
- 2 The way to refute the object of negation
- 3 How to train in emptiness during meditative equipoise and subsequent attainment

*The way to refute the object of negation has three parts:*

- 1 The essential point of ascertaining the pervasion
- 2 The essential point of ascertaining the absence of oneness

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

- 3 The essential point of ascertaining the absence of difference

*How to train in emptiness during meditative equipoise and subsequent attainment has two parts:*

- 1 The yoga of space-like meditative equipoise
- 2 The yoga of illusion-like subsequent attainment

*How to meditate on selflessness of phenomena has three parts:*

- 1 Meditation on the lack of inherent existence of the body
- 2 Meditation on the lack of inherent existence of the mind
- 3 Meditation on the lack of inherent existence of other phenomena

Each of these three has the three parts, identifying the object of negation and so forth.

*How to practise the Mahamudra that is the union of the two truths has three parts:*

- 1 An explanation of the stages of attaining the illusory body with respect to conventional truth
- 2 An explanation of the stages of attaining meaning clear light with respect to ultimate truth
- 3 The actual explanation of the Mahamudra that is the union of the two truths

*An explanation of the stages of attaining the illusory body with respect to conventional truth has four parts:*

- 1 How disciples possessing four attributes request the meaning of the illusory body from a qualified Spiritual Guide
- 2 How a correct understanding of the illusory body depends upon the Spiritual Guide's instructions
- 3 Recognizing the basis for attaining the illusory body
- 4 The actual way of attaining the illusory body on this basis

THE CONDENSED MEANING OF THE TEXT

*An explanation of the stages of attaining meaning clear light with respect to ultimate truth has three parts:*

- 1 An explanation of the method for cultivating it
- 2 The way of cultivating it by relying upon this method
- 3 The reason why this clear light alone acts as the direct antidote to both the intellectually-formed and the innate delusions

*The actual explanation of the Mahamudra that is the union of the two truths has two parts:*

- 1 An introduction to the union
- 2 Showing the stages by which it is gradually accomplished

*How to accomplish the Mahamudra that is the resultant Union of No More Learning, the state possessing the seven pre-eminent qualities of embrace, has five parts:*

- 1 The place where Buddhahood is attained
- 2 The basis upon which Buddhahood is attained
- 3 The way in which Buddhahood is attained
- 4 The good qualities of a Buddha
- 5 An explanation of the relationships of serial and reverse order

**Dedication**

To accomplish all the purposes of sentient beings,  
By this virtue may I quickly attain  
The seven pre-eminent qualities of embrace:  
A Form Body endowed with the signs and indications  
Embracing a wisdom knowledge woman,  
A mind abiding in a state of great bliss,  
This bliss realizing lack of inherent existence,  
A compassion that has abandoned the extreme of peace,  
An uninterrupted continuum of body,  
And unceasing enlightened deeds.

May everything be auspicious.

*Appendix II*  
*The Tibetan Script of the*  
*Condensed Meaning of the Text*

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*Appendix III*  
*Sadhanas*

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CONTENTS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>Prayers of Request to the Mahamudra<br/>Lineage Gurus</b>   | 261 |
| <b>The Quick Path</b><br>A Condensed Practice of Heruka Five Deities<br>according to Master Ghantapa's Tradition | 271 |

*Prayers of Request to the  
Mahamudra Lineage Gurus*

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## *Prayers of Request to the Mahamudra Lineage Gurus*

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Homage to the Mahamudra

O Great Vajradhara, pervading all natures,  
Glorious first Buddha, Principal of all Buddha families,  
Within the celestial mansion of the spontaneous three  
bodies,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union.

O Omniscient Superior Manjushri,  
Father of all the Conquerors of the three times  
In the Buddha Lands throughout the worlds of the ten  
directions,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union.

O Venerable Losang Dragpa,  
Second Able One of Buddha's doctrine  
Appearing in the northern Land of the Snows,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union.

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

O Togdän Jampäl Gyatso,  
Principal holder of the doctrine of the lineage of  
accomplishment  
Of Je Tsongkhapa, the Son of Manjushri,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Unio

O Baso Chökyi Gyaltsän,  
Who opened the treasury of instructions of the Whispered  
Lineage  
And ripened fortunate disciples,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Unio

O Supreme Yogi Dharmavajra,  
Who completed the yogas of the two stages  
And attained the deathless body of a Knowledge-holder,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Unio

O Losang Dönyö Drubpa (Gyalwa Ensäpa),  
Who upheld the victory banner of the definitive doctrine,  
Unfettered by the chains of the eight worldly dharmas,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Unio

PRAYERS OF REQUEST TO THE MAHAMUDRA LINEAGE GURUS

O Khährub Sangye Yeshe,  
Who guide all migrators with your ordained aspect  
In the enchanting palace of the three bodies,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union.

O Venerable Losang Chögyän (first Panchen Lama),  
All-knowing one inseparable from the Protector of the  
doctrine  
Of the Conqueror, Venerable Losang Dragpa,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union.

O Great Yogi Gendun Gyaltsän (Nächu Rabjampa),  
Who completed all practices, integrating into one meaning  
The words of the Sutras, Tantras, and commentaries,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union.

O Accomplished One Gyaltsän Dzinpa (Drungpa Tsöndru  
Gyaltsän),  
Who through great effort attained the supreme state  
By experiencing the essence of the doctrine of the  
Conqueror, Venerable Losang,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union.

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

O Holder of the great lineage Könchog Gyaltsän,  
Who are skilled at expounding to fortunate disciples  
The essential nectar of the holy vast and profound Dharma,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union

O Venerable Losang Yeshe (Second Panchen Lama),  
Who are Venerable Losang Chökyi Gyaltsän himself,  
Returning for the glory of migrators and the doctrine,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union

O Venerable Losang Trinlay (Lhapa Tulku),  
Who accomplished the profound path of the Whispered  
Lineage,  
Blessed directly by the venerable Buddhas,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union

O Supremely Accomplished One Drubwang Losang Namgyal,  
Who completed the practice of the essential meaning  
Of the Conqueror, Venerable Losang's Whispered Lineage,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union



PRAYERS OF REQUEST TO THE MAHAMUDRA LINEAGE GURUS

O Kind Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsän,  
Who out of compassion elucidate without error  
The instructions of the Venerable Lama's Whispered Lineage,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union.

O Venerable Phurchog Ngawang Jampa,  
Who spread throughout all the central lands and the  
border regions  
The essence of the unmistakable doctrine of the entire path  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union.

O Panchen Palden Yeshe,  
Who as a glorious first Buddha in an ordained aspect  
Ripened the whole of China and Tibet with the Dharma,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union.

O Khädrub Ngawang Dorje,  
Who single-pointedly accomplished all the attainments,  
The completion of the excellent paths of Sutra and Tantra,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union.

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

O Venerable Ngulchu Dharmabhadra,  
Protector who clarified the Conqueror's doctrine through  
explanation and composition,  
With skill and steadfastness, like a second Buddha,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union

O Yangchän Drubpay Dorje,  
Whose eyes of great, unobservable compassion are never  
closed,  
And whose profound and extensive wisdom is like that of  
Manjushri,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union

O Khädrub Tendzin Tsöndru,  
Who completed the yogas of bliss and emptiness  
And went directly to the capital city of Union,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union

O Venerable Phabongkha Trinlay Gyatso,  
Who through the power of your love for all migrators,  
Upheld the victory banner of the doctrines of Sutra and  
Tantra,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union

PRAYERS OF REQUEST TO THE MAHAMUDRA LINEAGE GURUS

O Kind Losang Yeshe (Trijang Rinpoche),  
Spiritual Guide who, for fortunate disciples,  
Promoted the heart-essence of the Venerable Second  
Conqueror,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union.

O Venerable Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche,  
Who through your compassion and with your great skill  
Explain to fortunate disciples  
The instructions of your Guru and the profound lineage,  
I request you please to grant me your blessings  
So that I may cut the creeping vine of self-grasping within  
my mental continuum,  
Train in love, compassion, and bodhichitta,  
And swiftly accomplish the Mahamudra of the Path of Union.

Please grant me your blessings  
So that I may see the venerable Guru as a Buddha,  
Overcome attachment for the abodes of samsara,  
And having assumed the burden of liberating all migrators,  
Accomplish the common and uncommon paths,  
And swiftly attain the Union of the Mahamudra.

This body of mine and your body, O Father,  
This speech of mine and your speech, O Father,  
This mind of mine and your mind, O Father,  
Through your blessings may they become inseparably one.

**Colophon:** This traditional prayer of requests to the Mahamudra lineage Gurus was translated by disciples of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche under his compassionate guidance. The verse of request to Geshe Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche was composed by the glorious Dharma Protector, Duldzin Dorje Shugdän, at the request of Geshe Kelsang's faithful disciples.

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*The Quick Path*

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A CONDENSED PRACTICE OF  
HERUKA FIVE DEITIES ACCORDING TO  
MASTER GHANTAPA'S TRADITION

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## *The Quick Path*

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### **Requests to the lineage Gurus**

Fortunate beings are led to the state of Union in one life  
Through depending upon great secret Deity yoga;  
O Glorious Guide, Father Mother Heruka,  
I request you, please bestow Union in this life.

O Ghantapa, Rubälshab,  
Dzalandara, Krishnapada,  
And all the other lineage Gurus of this path,  
I request you, please bestow Union in this life.

And especially my kind root Guru, Kelsang Gyatso  
Rinpoche,  
The compassion of all the Conquerors  
Arisen in a perfect form,  
I request you, please bestow Union in this life.

Please grant me your blessings so that I may quickly  
attain  
A stable and spontaneous experience  
Of renunciation, bodhichitta, correct view,  
And all the stages of the twofold path.

In short, venerable Guru Father and Mother,  
May I never be parted from you, but always come under  
your care.

Through the power of your blessings may I swiftly  
complete the grounds and paths  
And quickly attain the state of Heruka.

**Going for refuge and generating bodhichitta**

Eternally I shall go for refuge  
To Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.  
For the sake of all living beings  
I shall become Heruka. (3x)

**Bringing death into the path of the Truth Body**

Light rays from the HUM at my heart melt all worlds and beings into light. This dissolves into me and I, in turn, gradually melt into light from below and above and dissolve into the HUM at my heart. The letter HUM dissolves in stages from the bottom up into the nada. The nada too becomes smaller and smaller and dissolves into clear light emptiness.

**Bringing the intermediate state into the path of the Enjoyment Body**

From the state of emptiness my mind appears in the form of a nada.

**Bringing rebirth into the path of the Emanation Body**

Upon the four elements stands Mount Meru crowned by a lotus. In the centre of this, from vowels and consonants, there arises a moon, which is white with a shade of red. I, the nada, enter the centre of the moon and gradually transform into a HUM.

Five-coloured lights radiate from the HUM and lead all migrators to the state of Chakrasambara. At the same time all the Heroes and Heroines are invited from the Buddha Lands of the ten directions. They all melt into light and dissolve into the HUM; and the letter HUM becomes the nature of spontaneous joy. The moon, vowels, consonants, and HUM completely transform and the supported Deities and supporting mandala arise fully and all at once.



**Checking meditation on the mandala and the beings within it**

Now I am the Blessed One Heruka, with a blue-coloured body, one face and two hands, holding vajra and bell and embracing Vajravarahi. I stand on a lotus and sun and tread on Bhairawa and Kalarati.

On the petals of the four directions, counter-clockwise from the east, stand Dakini, Lama, Khandarohi, and Rupini. Together with the square celestial mansion, protection circle, and charnel grounds, everything is complete.

**Inviting the wisdom beings and empowering Deities**

PHAIM

My three places are marked by the three letters. Light rays radiate from the letter HUM and invite all at once all the Buddhas of the ten directions in the aspect of the visualized mandala, together with the empowering Deities.

DZA HUM BAM HO

The wisdom beings and commitment beings become inseparable.

**Granting empowerment and adorning the crown**

The empowering Deities grant empowerment. The Father's crown is adorned with Vajrasattva and the Mother's with Vairochana.

**Offerings to the self-generation**

Offering and praising goddesses emanate from my heart and perform the offerings and praises.

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

**Outer offerings**

OM CHAKRASAMBARA SAPARIWARA AHRGHAM PARTITZA  
SÖHA  
OM CHAKRASAMBARA SAPARIWARA PADÄM PARTITZA  
SÖHA  
OM CHAKRASAMBARA SAPARIWARA PUPE PARTITZA  
SÖHA  
OM CHAKRASAMBARA SAPARIWARA DHUPE PARTITZA  
SÖHA  
OM CHAKRASAMBARA SAPARIWARA DIWE PARTITZA  
SÖHA  
OM CHAKRASAMBARA SAPARIWARA GÄNDHE PARTITZA  
SÖHA  
OM CHAKRASAMBARA SAPARIWARA NEWIDE PARTITZA  
SÖHA  
OM CHAKRASAMBARA SAPARIWARA SHAPTA PARTITZA  
SÖHA

**Inner offering**

OM CHAKRASAMBARA SAPARIWARA OM AH HUM

**Secret offering**

Father and Mother engage in union and generate  
spontaneous bliss and emptiness.

**Praise**

To Glorious Heruka Father and Mother,  
Synthesis of all objects of knowledge in the supreme  
sphere of spontaneous bliss,  
To the beautiful Goddesses in the four directions,  
And to the entire supported and supporting mandala,  
respectfully I prostrate.

**Blessing the mala**

The mala becomes vajra speech, the nature of  
Pämanarteshvara.

## THE QUICK PATH

### **Mantra recitation**

On a sun seat at the heart of Father and Mother is a letter HUM surrounded by a mantra rosary. These radiate and gather light.

### **The essence mantra of the Father**

OM SHRI VAJRA HE HE RU RU KAM HUM HUM PHAT DAKINI  
DZALA SHAMBARAM SÖHA (21x, 100x, etc.)

### **The essence mantra of the Mother**

OM VAJRA BEROTZANIYE HUM HUM PHAT SÖHA  
(21x, 100x, etc.)

### **Absorption**

The celestial mansion and Mother dissolve into me.

### **Dedication**

For the sake of all living beings,  
May I become Heruka,  
And then lead every living being  
To Heruka's supreme state.

### **Auspicious prayer**

Through the force of the blessings of Guru Heruka,  
The truth of non-deceptive actions and their effects,  
And through the power of my pure, superior intention,  
May everything be auspicious for the spontaneous  
accomplishment of my wishes.

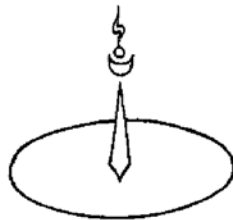
**Colophon:** This sadhana was composed by Venerable Geshe Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche and translated under his compassionate guidance. Geshe Kelsang Gyatso's name was added to the requests to the lineage Gurus by his faithful disciples.

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*Appendix IV*  
*The Visualized Letters*

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HAM, OM, HUM, SHORT-AH

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## Glossary

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**Aggregate** In general, all functioning things are aggregates because they are an aggregation of their parts. In particular, a person of the desire or form realm has five aggregates: the aggregates of form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness. A being of the formless realm lacks the aggregate of form but has the other four. A person's form aggregate is their body. The remaining four aggregates are aspects of their mind. See *Heart of Wisdom*.

**Akanishta** A Pure Land where Bodhisattvas attain enlightenment. See *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Aspiring bodhichitta** A bodhichitta that is a mere wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all living beings. See also *Bodhichitta*.

**Bardo** See *Intermediate state*.

**Blessing** The transformation of our mind from a negative state to a positive state, from an unhappy state to a happy state, or from a state of weakness to a state of strength, through the inspiration of holy beings such as our Spiritual Guide, Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas.

**Bodhichitta** Sanskrit word for 'mind of enlightenment'. 'Bodhi' means enlightenment, and 'chitta' means mind. There are two types of bodhichitta: conventional bodhichitta and ultimate bodhichitta. Generally speaking, the term 'bodhichitta' refers to conventional bodhichitta, which is a primary mind motivated by great compassion that spontaneously seeks enlightenment to benefit all living beings. Conventional bodhichitta is of two types: aspiring bodhichitta and engaging bodhichitta. Ultimate bodhichitta is a wisdom motivated by conventional bodhichitta that directly realizes emptiness, the ultimate nature of phenomena. See also *Aspiring bodhichitta* and *Engaging bodhichitta*. See *Joyful Path, Meaningful to Behold*, and *Universal Compassion*.

**Bodhisattva** A person who has generated spontaneous bodhichitta but who has not yet become a Buddha. From the moment a practitioner generates a non-artificial, or spontaneous, bodhichitta, he or she becomes a Bodhisattva and enters the first Mahayana path, the path of accumulation. An ordinary Bodhisattva is one who has not realized emptiness directly, and a Superior Bodhisattva is one who has attained

a direct realization of emptiness. See *Joyful Path* and *Meaningful to Behold*.

**Body mandala** The transformation into a Deity of any part of the body of oneself generated as a Deity. See *Guide to Dakini Land* and *Great Treasury of Merit*.

**Buddha** A being who has completely abandoned all delusions and their imprints. There are many beings who have become Buddhas in the past, and there are many who will become Buddhas in the future. See *Joyful Path* and *Introduction to Buddhism*.

**Buddha family** There are five main Buddha families: the families of Vairochana, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi, and Akshobya. They are the five purified aggregates – the aggregates of form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness, respectively; and the five exalted wisdoms – the exalted mirror-like wisdom, the exalted wisdom of equality, the exalted wisdom of individual realization, the exalted wisdom of accomplishing activities, and the exalted wisdom of the Dharmadhatu, respectively. See *Great Treasury of Merit*.

**Buddha's bodies** A Buddha has four bodies – the Wisdom Truth Body, the Nature Truth Body, the Enjoyment Body, and the Emanation Body. The first is Buddha's omniscient mind; the second is the emptiness, or ultimate nature, of his mind; the third is his actual Form Body, which is very subtle; and the fourth, of which each Buddha manifests a countless number, are gross Form Bodies that are visible to ordinary beings. The Wisdom Truth Body and the Nature Body are both included within the Truth Body, and the Enjoyment Body and the Emanation Bodies are both included within the Form Body. See *Joyful Path*, *Tantric Grounds and Paths*, and *Ocean of Nectar*.

**Clairvoyance** Abilities that arise from special concentration. There are five principal types of clairvoyance: the clairvoyance of divine eye (the ability to see subtle and distant forms), the clairvoyance of divine ear (the ability to hear subtle and distant sounds), the clairvoyance of miracle powers (the ability to emanate various forms by mind), the clairvoyance of knowing previous lives, and the clairvoyance of knowing others' minds. Some beings such as bardo beings and some humans and ghosts have contaminated clairvoyance that is developed due to karma, but these are not actual clairvoyance.

**Clear appearance** Generally, any clear appearance of an object of meditation to the concentration focused on it. More specifically, a Secret Mantra practice whereby the practitioner, having generated himself or herself as a Deity and the environment as the Deity's mandala, tries to attain clear appearance of the whole object to his or her concentration. It is the antidote to ordinary appearance. See *Guide to Dakini Land*, *Tantric Grounds and Paths*, and *Heart Jewel*.



## GLOSSARY

**Collection of merit** A virtuous action motivated by bodhichitta that is a main cause of attaining the Form Body of a Buddha. Examples are making offerings and prostrations to holy beings with bodhichitta motivation, and the practice of the perfections of giving, moral discipline, and patience. See also *Buddha's bodies*.

**Collection of wisdom** A virtuous mental action motivated by bodhichitta that is a main cause of attaining the Truth Body of a Buddha. Examples are listening to, contemplating, and meditating on emptiness with bodhichitta motivation. See also *Buddha's bodies*.

**Commitment being** A visualized Buddha or oneself visualized as a Buddha. A commitment being is so called because in general it is the commitment of all Buddhists to visualize or remember Buddha, and in particular it is a commitment of those who have received an empowerment into Highest Yoga Tantra to generate themselves as a Deity.

**Commitments** Promises and pledges taken when engaging in certain spiritual practices. See *Guide to Dakini Land* and *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Compassion** A mind that cannot bear the suffering of others and wishes them to be free from it. See *Joyful Path, Meaningful to Behold, Universal Compassion, and Ocean of Nectar*.

**Completion stage** Highest Yoga Tantra realizations that are attained through completing a special method that causes the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel. See *Great Treasury of Merit, Guide to Dakini Land, and Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Concentration being** A symbol of Buddha's Truth Body, usually visualized as a seed-letter at the heart of a commitment being or a wisdom being. It is so called because it is generated through concentration.

**Conceptual mind** A thought that apprehends its object through a generic image. See *Understanding the Mind*.

**Conventional truth** Any phenomenon other than emptiness. Conventional truths are true with respect to the minds of ordinary beings, but in reality they are false. See *Heart of Wisdom, Meaningful to Behold, and Ocean of Nectar*.

**Cyclic existence** See *Samsara*.

**Dakini Land** The Pure Land of Vajrayogini. In Sanskrit it is called 'Keajra' and in Tibetan 'Dagpa Khachö'. See *Guide to Dakini Land*.

**Dakinis** Female Tantric Buddhas and those women who have attained the realization of meaning clear light. Dakas are the male equivalent. See *Guide to Dakini Land*.

**Deity** 'Yidam' in Sanskrit. A Tantric enlightened being.

**Delusion** A mental factor that arises from inappropriate attention and functions to make the mind unpeaceful and uncontrolled. There are three main delusions: ignorance, desirous attachment, and anger. From these, all other delusions such as jealousy, pride, and deluded doubt arise. See *Joyful Path* and *Understanding the Mind*.

**Delusion-obstructions** See *Obstructions to liberation*.

**Desire realm** The environment of humans, animals, hungry ghosts, hell beings, and the gods who enjoy the five objects of desire.

**Dharma** Buddha's teachings and the inner realizations that are attained in dependence upon them. See *Joyful Path*.

**Dharma Protectors** Manifestations of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas whose main function is to eliminate obstacles and gather all necessary conditions for pure Dharma practitioners. Also called 'Dharmapalas'. See *Heart Jewel*.

**Divine pride** A non-deluded pride that regards oneself as a Deity and one's environment and enjoyments as those of the Deity. It is the antidote to ordinary conceptions. See *Guide to Dakini Land, Tantric Grounds and Paths*, and *Heart Jewel*.

**Dualistic appearance** The appearance to mind of an object together with the inherent existence of that object. See *Heart of Wisdom, Ocean of Nectar*, and *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Emanation Body** 'Nirmanakaya' in Sanskrit. A Buddha's Form Body that can be perceived by ordinary beings. See also *Buddha's bodies*.

**Empowerment** A special potential power to attain any of the four Buddha bodies which is received by a Tantric practitioner from his or her Guru, or from other holy beings, by means of Tantric ritual. It is the gateway to the Vajrayana path. See *Great Treasury of Merit, Guide to Dakini Land*, and *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Emptiness** Lack of inherent existence, the ultimate nature of all phenomena. See *Heart of Wisdom* and *Ocean of Nectar*.

**Engaging bodhichitta** A bodhichitta held by the Bodhisattva vows. See also *Bodhichitta*.

**Enjoyment Body** 'Sambhogakaya' in Sanskrit. A Buddha's subtle Form Body that can be perceived only by Mahayana Superiors. See also *Buddha's bodies*. See *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Father Tantra** A Tantra that principally emphasizes the attainment of the illusory body. See *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

## GLOSSARY

**Field for Accumulating Merit** The Three Jewels. Just as external seeds grow in a field of soil, so the virtuous internal seeds produced by virtuous actions grow in dependence upon Buddha Jewel, Dharma Jewel, and Sangha Jewel. Also known as 'Field of Merit'. See *Joyful Path* and *Great Treasury of Merit*.

**Foe Destroyer** 'Arhat' in Sanskrit. A practitioner who has abandoned all delusions and their seeds by training on the spiritual paths, and who will never again be born in samsara. In this context, the term 'foe' refers to the delusions.

**Form Body** See *Buddha's bodies*.

**Form realm** The environment of the gods who possess form.

**Formless realm** The environment of the gods who do not possess form.

**Four complete purities** A Tantric practice is one that possesses the four complete purities: (1) complete purity of place – the environment is seen as the mandala of the Deity; (2) complete purity of body – ordinary appearance of the body is prevented and the practitioner imagines that he or she possesses the body of a Deity; (3) complete purity of enjoyments – sense enjoyments are transformed into offerings to the Deity; and (4) complete purity of deeds – the practitioner regards all his or her actions as the actions of the Deity. See *Great Treasury of Merit*, *Guide to Dakini Land*, and *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Gelugpa** The tradition established by Je Tsongkhapa. Also known as the 'New Kadampa Tradition'. The name 'Gelugpa' means 'Virtuous Tradition'. See *Great Treasury of Merit* and *Heart Jewel*.

**Generation stage** A realization of a creative yoga prior to attaining the actual completion stage, attained as a result of the pure concentration on bringing the three bodies into the path in which one mentally generates oneself as a Tantric Deity and one's surroundings as the Deity's mandala. Meditation on generation stage is called a 'creative yoga' because its object is created by correct imagination. See *Guide to Dakini Land* and *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Generic image** The appearing object of a conceptual mind. See *Heart of Wisdom* and *Understanding the Mind*.

**Ground** A clear realization that acts as the foundation of many good qualities. The ten grounds are the realizations of Superior Bodhisattvas. They are: Very Joyful, Stainless, Luminous, Radiant, Difficult to Overcome, Approaching, Gone Afar, Immovable, Good Intelligence, and Cloud of Dharma. See also *Path*. See *Ocean of Nectar* and *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Guhyasamaja** A Highest Yoga Tantra Deity. See *Great Treasury of Merit*.

**Guru** Sanskrit word for 'Spiritual Guide'. See also *Spiritual Guide*.

**Guru yoga** A special way of relying upon our Spiritual Guide in order to receive his or her blessings. See *Joyful Path*, *Great Treasury of Merit*, and *Heart Jewel*.

**Heroes and Heroines** A Hero is a male Tantric Deity embodying method. A Heroine is a female Tantric Deity embodying wisdom. See *Guide to Dakini Land*.

**Heruka** A principal Deity of Mother Tantra who is the embodiment of indivisible bliss and emptiness. He has a blue-coloured body, four faces and twelve arms, and embraces his consort Vajravarahi. See *Great Treasury of Merit*, *Guide to Dakini Land*, and *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Highest Yoga Tantra** A Tantric instruction that includes the method for transforming sexual experience into the spiritual path. See *Great Treasury of Merit*, *Guide to Dakini Land*, and *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Inherent existence** An imagined mode of existence whereby phenomena are held to exist from their own side, independent of other phenomena. In reality all phenomena are empty of inherent existence because they depend upon their parts. See *Heart of Wisdom*, *Joyful Path*, and *Ocean of Nectar*.

**Innate delusions** Delusions that are not the product of intellectual speculation, but that arise naturally. See *Joyful Path* and *Understanding the Mind*.

**Inner Dakini Land** A mind of clear light that realizes emptiness directly without a generic image. Synonymous with meaning clear light. See *Guide to Dakini Land*.

**Intellectually-formed delusions** Delusions that arise as a result of relying upon incorrect reasoning or mistaken tenets. See *Joyful Path* and *Understanding the Mind*.

**Intermediate state** 'Bardo' in Tibetan. The state between death and rebirth. It begins the moment the consciousness leaves the body, and ceases the moment the consciousness enters the body of the next life. See *Joyful Path*.

**Je Phabongkhapa** (AD 1878-1941) A great Tibetan Lama who was an emanation of Heruka. Phabongkha Rinpoche was the holder of many lineages of Sutra and Secret Mantra.

## GLOSSARY

**Je Tsongkhapa** (AD 1357-1419) An emanation of the Wisdom Buddha Manjushri whose appearance in fourteenth-century Tibet as a monk was predicted by Buddha. He restored the purity of Buddha's doctrine and demonstrated how to practise pure Dharma during degenerate times. His tradition later became known as the 'Ganden Tradition'. See *Heart Jewel* and *Great Treasury of Merit*.

**Kadampa** A follower of the Kadampa Tradition passed down from Atisha and his disciple Dromtönpa. Up to the time of Je Tsongkhapa the tradition is known as the 'Old Kadampa Tradition', and after the time of Je Tsongkhapa it is known as the 'New Kadampa Tradition'.

**Karma** Sanskrit term referring to actions and their effects. Through the force of intention we perform actions with our body, speech, and mind, and all of these actions produce effects. The effect of virtuous actions is happiness and the effect of negative actions is suffering. See *Joyful Path*.

**Liberation** Complete freedom from samsara and its cause, the delusions. See *Joyful Path*.

**Lineage** A line of instruction that has been passed down from Teacher to disciple, with each Guru in the line having gained personal experience of the instruction before passing it on to others.

**Lineage Gurus** The line of Spiritual Guides through whom a particular instruction has been passed down.

**Losang Dragpa** 'Sumati Kirti' in Sanskrit. The ordination name of Je Tsongkhapa. See *Heart Jewel* and *Great Treasury of Merit*.

**Madhyamika** One of the two main schools of Mahayana tenets. The Madhyamika view was taught by Buddha in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* during the second turning of the Wheel of Dharma, and was subsequently elucidated by Nagarjuna and his followers. There are two divisions of this school, Madhyamika-Svatantrika and Madhyamika-Prasangika, of which the latter is Buddha's final view. See *Meaningful to Behold* and *Ocean of Nectar*.

**Mahasiddha** Sanskrit word for 'greatly accomplished one'. Used to refer to Yogis or Yoginis with high attainments.

**Mahayana** Sanskrit word for 'Great Vehicle', the spiritual path to great enlightenment. See *Joyful Path* and *Meaningful to Behold*.

**Mandala** A celestial mansion in which a Tantric Deity abides.

**Mandala offering** An offering of the entire universe visualized as a Pure Land with all the inhabitants as pure beings. See *Great Treasury of Merit*, *Guide to Dakini Land*, and *Joyful Path*.

**Manjushri** The embodiment of the wisdom of all the Buddhas. At the time of Buddha Shakyamuni he manifested as a Bodhisattva disciple. See *Great Treasury of Merit* and *Heart Jewel*.

**Mantra** Literally, 'mind protection'. Mantra protects the mind from ordinary appearances and conceptions. See *Guide to Dakini Land* and *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Meditative equipoise** Single-pointed concentration on a virtuous object such as emptiness.

**Mental factor** A cognizer that principally apprehends a particular attribute of an object. There are fifty-one specific mental factors. See *Understanding the Mind*.

**Merit** The good fortune created by virtuous actions. It is the potential power to increase our good qualities and produce happiness.

**Middle way** See *Madhyamika*.

**Mind of enlightenment** See *Bodhichitta*.

**Miracle powers** See *Clairvoyance*.

**Mother Tantra** A Tantra that principally emphasizes the attainment of clear light. See *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Nagarjuna** A great Indian Buddhist scholar and meditation master who revived the Mahayana in the first century AD by bringing to light the teachings on the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. See *Ocean of Nectar*.

**Naropa** An Indian Buddhist Mahasiddha. See *Guide to Dakini Land*.

**Non-affirming negative** A negative phenomenon that does not imply another affirmative phenomenon.

**Object-possessor** A functioning thing that expresses or cognizes an object. See *Understanding the Mind*.

**Obstructions to liberation** Obstructions that prevent the attainment of liberation. All delusions, such as ignorance, attachment, and anger, together with their seeds, are obstructions to liberation. Also called 'delusion-obstructions'. See *Joyful Path*.

**Obstructions to omniscience** The imprints of delusions that prevent simultaneous and direct realization of all phenomena. Only Buddhas have overcome these obstructions. See *Joyful Path*.

**Ordinary appearance** Any appearance that is due to an impure mind. According to the teachings of Secret Mantra, ordinary appearance is the main cause of samsara. See *Great Treasury of Merit*, *Guide to Dakini Land*, *Tantric Grounds and Paths*, and *Heart Jewel*.

## GLOSSARY

**Ordinary conception** Any mind that conceives things as ordinary. See *Great Treasury of Merit*, *Guide to Dakini Land*, *Tantric Grounds and Paths*, and *Heart Jewel*.

**Ordinary being** A being who has not realized emptiness directly.

**Path** An exalted awareness conjoined with non-fabricated renunciation. Spiritual path, spiritual ground, spiritual vehicle, and exalted awareness are synonyms. See also *Ground*. See *Joyful Path*, *Heart of Wisdom*, *Tantric Grounds and Paths*, and *Ocean of Nectar*.

**Perfection of Wisdom Sutras** Sutras of the second turning of the Wheel of Dharma in which Buddha revealed his final view of the ultimate nature of all phenomena – lack of inherent existence. See *Heart of Wisdom* and *Ocean of Nectar*.

**Perfection Vehicle** The Mahayana Sutra Vehicle.

**Primary mind** A cognizer that principally apprehends the mere entity of an object. There are six primary minds: the eye consciousness, the ear consciousness, the nose consciousness, the tongue consciousness, the body consciousness, and the mental consciousness. See *Understanding the Mind*.

**Pure Land** A pure environment in which there are no true sufferings. There are many Pure Lands. For example, Tushita is the Pure Land of Buddha Maitreya; Sukhavati is the Pure Land of Buddha Amitabha; and Dakini Land, or Keajra, is the Pure Land of Buddha Vajrayogini. See *Guide to Dakini Land* and *Heart Jewel*.

**Refuge** Actual protection. See *Joyful Path* and *Meaningful to Behold*.

**Renunciation** The wish to be released from samsara. See *Joyful Path*.

**Root Guru** The main Spiritual Guide from whom we have received the empowerments, instructions, and oral transmissions of our main practice. See *Great Treasury of Merit*, *Heart of Wisdom*, and *Joyful Path*.

**Sadhana** A method for attainment associated with a Tantric Deity.

**Samsara** This can be understood in two ways: as uninterrupted rebirth without freedom or control, or as the aggregates of a being who has taken such a rebirth. See *Joyful Path*.

**Sangha** According to the Vinaya tradition, any community of four or more fully-ordained monks or nuns. In general, ordained or lay people who take Bodhisattva vows or Tantric vows can also be said to be Sangha.

**Self-cherishing** A mental attitude that considers oneself to be precious or important. It is regarded as a principal object to be abandoned by Bodhisattvas. See *Universal Compassion*, *Joyful Path*, and *Meaningful to Behold*.

**Self-grasping** A conceptual mind that holds any phenomenon to be inherently existent. The mind of self-grasping gives rise to all other delusions such as anger and attachment. It is the root cause of all suffering and dissatisfaction. See *Joyful Path*, *Heart of Wisdom*, and *Ocean of Nectar*.

**Sense power** An inner power located in the very centre of a sense faculty that functions directly to produce a sense awareness. There are five sense powers, one for each type of sense awareness, the eye awareness and so forth. See *Understanding the Mind*.

**Sentient being** Any being who possesses a mind that is contaminated by delusions or their imprints. Both 'sentient being' and 'living being' are terms used to distinguish beings whose minds are contaminated by any of the two obstructions from Buddhas, whose minds are completely free from these obstructions.

**Seven-point posture of Vairochana** A special posture for meditation in which parts of our body adopt a particular position. See *Meaningful to Behold* and *Joyful Path*.

**Shantideva** (AD 687-763) A great Indian Buddhist scholar and meditation master. He composed *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. See *Meaningful to Behold*.

**Spiritual Guide** Any Teacher who guides us along the spiritual path. See *Joyful Path*, *Great Treasury of Merit*, and *Heart Jewel*.

**Subsequent attainment** The period between meditation sessions. See *Joyful Path* and *The Meditation Handbook*.

**Substantial cause** Main cause.

**Superior being** 'Arya' in Sanskrit. A being who has a direct realization of emptiness. There are Hinayana Superiors and Mahayana Superiors.

**Superior seeing** A special wisdom that sees its object clearly, and that is maintained by tranquil abiding and the special suppleness that is induced by investigation. See *Joyful Path*.

**Sutra** The teachings of Buddha that are open to everyone to practise. These include Buddha's teachings of the three turnings of the Wheel of Dharma.

**Three Jewels** The three objects of refuge: Buddha Jewel, Dharma Jewel, and Sangha Jewel. They are called 'Jewels' because they are both rare and precious. See *Joyful Path*.

**Training the mind** 'Lojong' in Tibetan. A special lineage of instructions deriving from Manjushri and passed down through Shantideva, Atisha, and the Kadampa Geshes, that emphasizes the generation of



GLOSSARY

bodhichitta through the practices of equalizing and exchanging self with others combined with taking and giving. See *Universal Compassion*, *Joyful Path*, and *Meaningful to Behold*.

**Transference of consciousness** A practice for transferring the consciousness to a Pure Land at the time of death. See *Great Treasury of Merit*.

**Trijang Rinpoche** A precious Tibetan Lama of the twentieth century who was an emanation of Buddha Shakyamuni, Heruka, Atisha, Amitabha, and Je Tsongkhapa. Also known as 'Trijang Dorjechang' and 'Losang Yeshe'.

**Truth Body** See *Buddha's bodies*.

**Twenty-four Holy Places** Twenty-four special places in this world where the mandalas of Heruka and Vajrayogini still remain. They are: Puliramalaya, Dzalandhara, Odiyana, Arbuta, Godawari, Rameshōri, Dewikoti, Malawa, Kamarupa, Ote, Trishakune, Kosala, Kalinga, Lampaka, Kanchra, Himalaya, Pretapuri, Grihadewata, Shaurashtra, Suwanadvipa, Nagara, Sindhura, Maru, and Kuluta. See *Guide to Dakini Land*.

**Two truths** Conventional truth and ultimate truth. See *Meaningful to Behold* and *Ocean of Nectar*.

**Ultimate truth** Synonymous with emptiness, lack of inherent existence. See *Ocean of Nectar*, *Heart of Wisdom*, and *Joyful Path*.

**Union of No More Learning** A union of the pure illusory body and meaning clear light that has abandoned the obstructions to omniscience. Synonymous with Buddhahood. See *Tantric Grounds and Paths* and *Great Treasury of Merit*.

**Union that needs learning** A union of the pure illusory body and meaning clear light that has not yet abandoned the obstructions to omniscience. See *Tantric Grounds and Paths* and *Great Treasury of Merit*.

**Vajra** Generally the Sanskrit word 'vajra' means indestructible like a diamond and powerful like a thunderbolt. In the context of Secret Mantra it means the indivisibility of method and wisdom. See *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Vajra and bell** A ritual sceptre symbolizing great bliss and a ritual hand-bell symbolizing emptiness. See *Tantric Grounds and Paths* and *Guide to Dakini Land*.

**Vajra body** Generally, the channels, inner winds, and drops. More specifically, the pure illusory body. The body of a Buddha is known as the 'resultant vajra body'. See *Tantric Grounds and Paths* and *Great Treasury of Merit*.

**Vajra Master** A fully-qualified Tantric Spiritual Guide. See *Great Treasury of Merit*.

**Vajra posture** The perfect cross-legged posture. See also *Seven-point posture of Vairochana*.

**Vajra recitation** A mantra recitation produced from inner winds that is practised in conjunction with Vajrayana practices. See *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Vajradhara** The source of all Secret Mantra. He is the same nature as Buddha Shakyamuni, but displays a different aspect. Buddha Shakyamuni appears in the aspect of an Emanation Body, and Conqueror Vajradhara appears in the aspect of an Enjoyment Body. See *Great Treasury of Merit*.

**Vajrayana** The Secret Mantra vehicle

**Vajrayogini** A female Highest Yoga Tantra Deity who is the embodiment of indivisible bliss and emptiness. She is the same nature as Heruka. See *Guide to Dakini Land*.

**Vinaya Sutras** Sutras in which Buddha principally explains the practice of moral discipline, and in particular the Pratimoksha moral discipline.

**Vows** Promises to refrain from certain actions. The three sets of vows are the Pratimoksha vows of individual liberation, the Bodhisattva vows, and the Secret Mantra vows. See *The Bodhisattva Vow*, *Guide to Dakini Land*, and *Tantric Grounds and Paths*.

**Wisdom** A virtuous, intelligent mind that makes its primary mind realize its object thoroughly. A wisdom is a spiritual path that functions to release our mind from delusions or their imprints. An example of wisdom is the correct view of emptiness. See *Heart of Wisdom*, *Understanding the Mind*, *Great Treasury of Merit*, and *Ocean of Nectar*.

**Wisdom being** An actual Buddha, especially one who is invited to unite with a visualized commitment being.

**Yamantaka** A Highest Yoga Tantra Deity who is a wrathful manifestation of Manjushri.

**Yoga** A term used for various spiritual practices that entail maintaining a special view, such as Guru yoga and the yogas of eating, sleeping, dreaming, and waking. 'Yoga' also refers to union, such as the union of tranquil abiding and superior seeing.

**Yogi/Yogini** A highly-realized practitioner.

## Bibliography

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Geshe Kelsang Gyatso is a highly respected meditation master and scholar of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition founded by Je Tsongkhapa. Since arriving in the UK in 1977, Geshe Kelsang has worked tirelessly to establish pure Buddhadharma throughout the world. Over this period he has given extensive teachings on the major scriptures of the Mahayana. These teachings are currently being published and provide a comprehensive presentation of the essential Sutra and Tantra practices of Mahayana Buddhism.

### Books in print

- The Bodhisattva Vow*. The essential practices of Mahayana Buddhism. (2nd. edn. Tharpa, 1995.)
- Buddhism in the Tibetan Tradition*. A guide to Tibetan Buddhism. (2nd. edn. Penguin, 1990.)
- Clear Light of Bliss*. The practice of Mahamudra in Vajrayana Buddhism. (2nd. edn. Tharpa, 1992.)
- Great Treasury of Merit*. A commentary to the practice of *Offering to the Spiritual Guide (Lama Chöpa)*. (Tharpa, 1992.)
- Guide to Dakini Land*. The Highest Yoga Tantra practice of Buddha Vajrayogini. (2nd. edn. Tharpa, 1996.)
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- Introduction to Buddhism*. An explanation of the Buddhist way of life. (Rev. 1st. edn. Tharpa, 1995.)
- Joyful Path of Good Fortune*. The complete guide to the Buddhist path to enlightenment. (2nd. edn. Tharpa, 1996.)
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*Tantric Grounds and Paths.* How to enter, progress on, and complete the Vajrayana path. (Tharpa, 1994.)

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*Universal Compassion.* Practical instructions on increasing love and compassion. (2nd. edn. Tharpa, 1993.)

### Sadhanas

Geshe Kelsang has also supervised the translation of a collection of essential sadhanas, or prayer booklets. Those in print include:

*Assembly of Good Fortune.* The tsog offering for Heruka body mandala.

*The Bodhisattva's Confession of Moral Downfalls.* The purification practice of the *Mahayana Sutra of the Three Superior Heaps*.

*Chenrezig Sadhana.* Prayers and requests to the Buddha of compassion.

*Dakini Yoga: Vajrayogini Six-Session Sadhana.* Six-session Guru yoga combined with self-generation as Vajrayogini.

*Drop of Essential Nectar.* A special fasting and purification practice in conjunction with Eleven-faced Avalokiteshvara.

*Essence of Good Fortune.* Prayers for the six preparatory practices for meditation on the stages of the path to enlightenment.

*Essence of Vajrayana (1).* The condensed meaning of Vajrayana Mahamudra and prayers of request to the lineage Gurus.

*Essence of Vajrayana (2).* The sadhana of Heruka body mandala according to the system of Mahasiddha Ghantapa.

*Feast of Great Bliss.* Vajrayogini self-initiation sadhana.

*Great Compassionate Mother.* The sadhana of Arya Tara.

*Great Liberation of the Mother.* Preliminary prayers for Mahamudra meditation in conjunction with Vajrayogini practice.

*The Great Mother.* A method to overcome hindrances and obstacles by reciting the *Essence of Wisdom Sutra* (the *Heart Sutra*).

*Heart Jewel.* The Guru yoga of Je Tsongkhapa combined with the condensed sadhana of his Dharma Protector.

*The Hundreds of Deities of the Joyful Land.* The Guru yoga of Je Tsongkhapa.

*The Kadampa Way of Life.* Essential practices of the New Kadampa Tradition.

*Liberation from Sorrow.* Praises and requests to the Twenty-one Taras.

*Medicine Guru Sadhana.* The method for making requests to the Assembly of Seven Medicine Buddhas.

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- Prayers for Meditation.* Brief preparatory prayers for meditation.
- A Pure Life.* The practice of taking and keeping the eight Mahayana precepts.
- The Quick Path.* A condensed practice of Heruka Five Deities according to Master Ghantapa's tradition.
- Treasury of Wisdom.* The sadhana of Venerable Manjushri.
- Quick Path to Great Bliss.* Vajrayogini self-generation sadhana.
- Wishfulfilling Jewel.* The Guru yoga of Je Tsongkhapa combined with the sadhana of his Dharma Protector.
- The Yoga of Buddha Amitayus.* A special method for increasing life span, wisdom, and merit.

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## *Study Programmes*

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Geshe Kelsang has prepared three study programmes based on his books: the General Programme, the Foundation Programme, and the Teacher Training Programme. These are designed to fulfil the wishes of those who would like to study Buddhism systematically and thereby deepen their experience of the essential practices.

The **General Programme** provides a basic introduction to Buddhist view, meditation, and action, and various kinds of teaching and practice from both Sutra and Tantra.

The **Foundation Programme** is designed for those who prefer a more structured approach to their spiritual training. Based on five of Geshe Kelsang's books, this programme lasts for approximately four years. The classes consist of readings, teachings, discussion, pujas, and meditations. Each subject concludes with an examination.

The **Teacher Training Programme** is designed for those who wish to train as authentic Dharma Teachers. This programme, which takes approximately seven years to complete, is based on twelve of Geshe Kelsang's books. To qualify as Dharma Teachers, participants must complete the study of all twelve texts, pass an examination in each subject, satisfy certain criteria with regard to behaviour and life style, and complete various meditation retreats.

These three programmes are taught worldwide at Centres of the New Kadampa Tradition. All these Centres are under the spiritual direction of Geshe Kelsang. The two main Centres are:

**Manjushri Centre**  
Conishead Priory  
Ulverston  
Cumbria, LA12 9QQ  
England  
Tel: 01229-584029  
Founded 1975

**Madhyamaka Centre**  
Kilnwick Percy Hall  
Pocklington  
York, YO4 2UF  
England  
Tel: 01759-304832  
Founded 1979

Addresses of all the other Centres are available from: James Belither, Secretary, the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT), Conishead Priory, Ulverston, Cumbria, LA12 9QQ, UK. Tel 01229-584029.

## *Index*

---

- action mudra 98, 105-6, 136-8,  
210, 219-220, 232, 234, 235  
external method 218, 226  
Action Tantra 4  
aggregate(s) 81-7, 180-2, g  
Akanishta 229, 231-3, g  
alertness 162, 167, 169  
anger 174, 179  
appearance (see eight signs, the;  
ordinary appearance(s))  
appropriate methods (see mind-  
fulness, specific)  
Aryadeva 109, 118, 124, 146,  
199, 210  
Asanga 158  
aspiration 158  
Atisha 70, 192-3  
attachment 89, 90, 92  
transforming into the path 4-5  
awareness 28  
mental 141, 149  
sense 124, 141, 149  
eye 147-8  
tactile 146, 147  
  
bardo (see intermediate state)  
basic body(ies) 99-101  
truth 110  
enjoyment 113  
emanation 114-5  
blessing(s) 9, 12, g  
blessing of the self 214  
bliss (see also spontaneous  
great bliss) 3-4, 32, 67, 69,  
101  
of suppleness 174  
thirty-two stages of 105  
bodhichitta 5-6, 11, 31-8, 104,  
114, 143, 175, g  
aspiring 38, g  
engaging 38, g  
red and white bodhichittas  
(see drop(s))  
Bodhisattva(s) 37, g  
Superior 123, 143, 217, 221  
body (see also Buddha's bodies;  
basic body(ies); illusory body;  
path body; vajra body)  
continuously residing 207  
conventional 190  
dream 105, 123-6, 212  
gross 124, 125-6, 207, 209  
hollow body meditation 40-4  
inherently existent 188-90  
of union (see also illusory body)  
226  
subtle 18-30, 38, 207  
body mandala g  
brain 146  
branch winds 26, 28  
breathing (see also vase  
breathing) 73-4  
bringing sleep, dreaming, and  
waking into the path 32  
bringing the result into the path 3  
bringing the winds into the  
central channel (see also enter-  
ing, abiding, and dissolving)  
25, 30-1, 35-6, 42-3, 46-7, 57-8,  
70, 106, 137, 148, 150

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

- bringings, the three 12, 32, 101, 109
  - bringing death into the path of the Truth Body 13, 112
  - bringing the intermediate state into the path of the Enjoyment Body 14, 112-4, 204
  - bringing rebirth into the path of the Emanation Body 14, 114-5
- Buddha Land (see also Akanishta) 131
- Buddha(s) (see also under name of individual Buddha) 2, 37, g
  - family g
  - good qualities 237-8
- Buddhadharma 11
- Buddha's bodies 99, 104, g
  - Truth Body 3, 13, 79, 110-2, 129, 150, 203, 210, 235, g
  - Enjoyment Body 14, 112-4, 122-3, 129-31, 214, 237, g
  - Emanation Body 14, 114-5, 132-3, g
  - Form Body 3, 99, 199, 203, 211, 235, g
    - substantial cause 104, 150
  - resultant 99, 124, 214
- Buddhahood 2, 3, 7, 8, 143, 175, 199, 211, 224
  - attaining in this lifetime 6, 109
  - place attained 229-31
  - basis upon which attained 231
  - how attained 232-7
- central channel (see also bringing the winds into the central channel) 7, 18-21, 31, 44-7, 53-5, 58-62, 92, 98, 101-4, 150
- Chandragomin 167
- Chandrakirti 192, 197, 198, 201, 203
- channel(s) (see also central channel) 20-5, 42, 44-51
  - blessing 69-71
  - defects 48-50, 69
  - left and right 20-1, 31, 45, 150
  - stopping the flow of wind in 60
  - life 20
  - of the Twenty-four Places 22-3
  - of body, speech, and mind 22-3
  - training in the paths 47-51
- channel knots 21-2, 44, 57, 92, 98
  - loosening knots at heart 29, 98, 137, 195
- channel spokes 21-2, 45-6, 49, 57, 69
- channel wheels 18-25, 30-2, 44-51
  - brow 49, 126
  - crown 21-2, 32, 38, 46, 48, 53, 67-8, 92, 101, 103, 174
  - throat 22, 32, 46, 48, 64, 67, 69, 101, 102, 125, 126
  - heart 21-2, 32, 38, 45-6, 49, 50, 65, 67, 69, 78, 92-3, 98, 102, 118-9, 146, 148-9
  - navel 22, 30, 32, 35, 45, 46, 49-50, 58-9, 63, 64, 67-9, 92, 101, 102, 110, 116, 119
  - secret place 22, 32
  - jewel 22
  - tip of the sex organ 32-3, 102, 119
  - their functions 31
- channels, winds, and drops 70, 106
- clairvoyance 70, 158, 175, 205, g
- clear appearance 38-9, g
- Clear Lamp of the Five Stages* 197, 198
- clear light (see also isolated mind; meaning clear light) 47, 78-81, 110-2, 150, 206
- definition and different types 95



INDEX

- different levels 209-10  
 example 36, 97  
 meditation on 43, 47, 60  
 mother and son 95-100, 106, 121  
 non-isolated mind 95  
 of death 93-5, 98-100, 105, 210, 236  
 of sleep 32, 115-21, 212  
 realizing emptiness 110, 116, 129, 219, 220-1, 232, 235  
 collection of merit (see merit, collection of)  
 collection of wisdom (see wisdom, collection of)  
*Commentary to the Treasury of Instruction* 192  
 commitment being 114-5, 123-4, 218, 227, g  
 commitments g  
 compassion 90, g  
     Buddha's great 238  
 completion stage (see also five stages of completion stage) 3, 6, 29, 32, 35, 136, 150, 223, g  
     causes of its ripening 14  
     meditation 37, 44, 109, 114, 149  
 concentration 31, 36, 43, 57, 61, 103, 106, 136, 143, 144, 157-75  
     its two essential characteristics 161  
     vajra-like 235  
 concentration being 227, g  
 conceptions, the eighty indicative 77, 87-92, 94, 149  
 conceptual thoughts 31, 103, 141, 147, 170, 196  
     natural cessation of 171  
 concluding stages 240  
 consort 136-8  
 contentment 90  
 continuum 126  
     continuously residing 207  
 conventional truth 7, 155, 214, 224, g  
 craving 89  
 cyclic existence (see samsara)  
 Dakini Land 223, g  
     inner g  
 Dakini(s) g  
 death (see also clear light, of death; bringings, the three) 32, 77, 79, 80, 94, 126-8, 137, 231, 236  
     dissolutions 80-94  
     external signs of 85-7, 94  
     how to purify 13, 126-31  
     ordinary 127  
     small 94  
 dedication 240-1  
 Deity(ies) 39, 129, g  
     in embrace 134  
     personal 105, 113, 122, 132, 137, 218  
     visualizing oneself as 44  
 delight 91  
 delusions 174, g  
     transforming 4  
     innate and intellectually-formed 221, g  
 desire realm 68, 174, 229, 233, g  
 Dharma g  
     pure 154  
 Dharma Protector(s) g  
 Dharmavajra 226, 231  
 dissolutions 80-94  
 distraction 165, 166  
 divine pride 13, 38, 112, 122, g  
 doors, the ten 18-9, 30  
 doubt 92  
 dream(s) 119, 122-6, 129  
     body 114, 122, 125-6  
     practices 32  
     their cause 125  
 Dromtönpa 193  
 drop(s) (see also indestructible

CLEAR LIGHT OF BLISS

- drop; white drop) 19, 29-30, 32, 35, 42, 61-2, 64-5, 71, 92-4 133, 232
- black 119
- melting 61
- red 29, 35, 53, 93
- reversing the flow 103, 105
- very subtle 29
- dualistic appearance 25, 103, 112, 196, 221, g
- dualistic conceptions 70, 150
- dullness 124
- effort 90, 158, 166-9, 172
- eight signs of serial order 209
- eight signs, the (see also clear light) 43, 73-81, 85-8, 92-5 110-2, 121, 127, 128, 136, 149, 219, 220, 232
- mirage-like 75, 79, 85, 110, 116
- smoke-like 75, 79, 86
- sparkling-fireflies-like 76, 79, 86
- candle-flame-like 76, 79, 86-7
- white appearance 77, 79, 87-9, 92, 97, 111
- red increase 77, 79, 87-8, 90, 92-3, 97, 111
- black near-attainment 77-8, 79, 87-8, 92, 93-7, 111-2, 121, 212, 223, 225
- eight stages of inner fire
  - meditation 39-71, 73, 138
  - dispelling impure winds and meditating on a hollow body 40-4
  - visualizing and meditating on the channels 44-7
  - training in the paths of the channels 47-51
  - visualizing and meditating on the letters 53-8
  - igniting the inner fire 36, 58-63, 101
  - mistake of igniting it outside the central channel 61-2
  - causing the fire to blaze 63-5
  - mere blazing and dripping 65-7
  - extraordinary blazing and dripping 67-71
- element(s) 25-8, 30, 84-6
- Emanation Body (see Buddha's bodies)
- Emanation Wheel (see channel wheel(s), navel)
- empowerment 5, 134, 230, g
  - Highest Yoga Tantra 12, 137, 196
  - of mother Tantra 138
  - wisdom-mudra 220, 232, 235
- empties, the four (see four empties)
- emptiness (see also clear light, realizing emptiness; spontaneous great bliss; ultimate truth) 25, 110-2, 143-4, 151-3, g
  - direct realization 141-4
  - great seal 6
  - supramundane path 175
  - of persons 177-88
  - of phenomena 188-90
  - Nagarjuna's view 190-3
- Enjoyment Body (see Buddha's bodies)
- enlightened deeds 3
- enlightenment (see also Buddhahood) 2, 47, 106, 127-8, 133, 191, 237
  - attaining in one lifetime 98-9, 150
  - false 153
  - quickest method for attaining 7
- entering, abiding, and dissolving 7, 47, 54, 57, 60, 73, 74-81, 115, 119, 128, 135, 136-7
- excitement (see also mental excitement) 90

INDEX

- faith 158  
 Father and Mother facing one another 237  
 Father Tantra 20, g  
 fear 89  
 feeling 89  
 Field for Accumulating Merit 37-8, g  
 fierce one having four wheels, the 71  
*Finely Woven* 191  
 five basic wisdoms 83-4  
 five stages of completion stage 195-6, 204  
*Five Stages of Completion Stage* 196-7, 198, 201, 205-6  
 Foe Destroyer 143, 175, g  
   of Secret Mantra 223  
 forgetfulness 92  
 Form Body (see Buddha's bodies)  
 form realm 68, g  
   beings 231  
 formless realm 68, g  
   beings 231  
 four attributes of a qualified disciple 196-7  
 four complete purities 3, g  
 four empties, the 79-80, 95, 118, 195  
*Four Hundred* 146  
 four joys, the 54-5, 73, 101-7  
   of generation stage 107  
   of completion stage 107  
   of serial order 101-3, 105  
   of reverse order 103, 104, 105  
 four reliances 154-5  
 four seals (see also great seal) 6  
*Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* 191  
 Gampopa 7, 36, 192  
 garuda 172  
 Gelugpa 191, g  
 generating oneself as a Deity 3  
 generation stage 4, 12-5, 39, 100, 113, 136, 195, 196, 204, 217, 223, 232, g  
 generic image 97, 161, 178-9, g  
 god realms 175  
 grasping (see also self-grasping) 89  
*Great Drum Sutra* 192  
*Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path of Secret Mantra* 12  
 great innate-born 91  
 great seal 6  
*Great Treasury of Merit* 37  
 ground g  
*Guhyasamaja Tantra* 98, 105, 106, 107, 109, 135, 199, 201, 214  
   vajra recitation 106  
 Guhyasamaja, Buddha 30, g  
   his Pure Land 236  
*Guide to Dakini Land* 12  
*Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* 1, 184, 190  
*Guide to the Middle Way* 190, 203  
 Guru(s) (see also Mahamudra, lineage Gurus) g  
   Guru yoga 12, g  
   root 37, g  
   lineage 8-9, 37, g  
   their blessings 47, g  
 Gyalwa Ensäpa 226, 231  
 Hearer Foe Destroyers 201  
 Hero(es) and Heroine(s) 35, 68, 69, 71, g  
*Heruka Tantra* 107, 137  
 Heruka, Buddha 9, 12-4, 39, 113-5, 123-4, 129, 234, g  
   definitive and interpretative 223  
   empowerment 12  
   generation stage 12-3  
   body mandala 23  
   Pure Land 236  
*Hevajra Tantra* 36, 43, 71  
 hidden objects 141

- Highest Yoga Tantra (see also Secret Mantra; five stages of completion stage) 4, 12, 29, 201, 202, 223, 230, g  
empowerment 12, 137, 196  
Father and Mother Tantras 201, g  
hollow body 42-4  
HUM, letter 13, 14, 31, 53, 64, 65, 67-9, 102, 227
- 'I' 178-88  
bases on which it is imputed 207  
conventional 183-4, 187-8  
inherently existent 178-80, 182-8  
meditating on its emptiness 183  
that is merely imputed by conception 178, 182, 206  
vividly-appearing 179  
ignorance 183  
illusory body (see also five stages of completion stage; impure illusory body; pure illusory body) 100, 113, 122, 131, 133, 195-215, 221, 231  
basis for attaining 203-7  
conventional 197  
how to ripen 14  
its excellent qualities 214-5  
its four attributes 198  
its nature 210-14  
stages of attaining 196  
substantial cause 105  
yoga of emanations of 101  
impermanence 212  
impure illusory body (see also illusory body) 99, 197, 204-21, 232, 236  
indestructible drop 29, 45, 78, 92, 94, 118, 218  
inherent existence (see also 'I', inherently existent) 177-8, g  
lack of 6, 111, 116, 128-9, 152, 177-8, 191, 214  
inherently existent body 188  
inner fire (see also eight stages of inner fire meditation) 4, 29, 32-71, 98, 107, 115, 210  
and mixing with the Truth Body 115-9  
and the four joys 101-7  
direct and indirect practices 35  
finding the actual object of meditation 55-6  
intermediate state 94-5, 100, 129, 132-3, g  
beings 213  
body 131, 231  
how to purify 14  
internal concentrations 218-9, 226, 234  
investigation 89  
isolated mind 95  
of example clear light 97  
of non-example clear light 210  
of ultimate example clear light 98-9, 100, 105, 131, 133, 137, 197, 204, 210, 221, 231, 236  
isolated speech 195, 206, 210, 219  
isolated body 195
- Je Phabongkhapa 9, g  
Je Tsongkhapa 2, 3, 8, 12, 43, 106, 142, 183-4, 192, 199, 205, g  
Tantric teachings 7  
tradition 63  
jealousy 90  
*Jewel Ornament of Liberation* 192  
joy 90  
*Joyful Path of Good Fortune* 159, 163  
joys, the four 43, 54-5, 73, 101-7
- Kadampa g  
tradition 192, 240

INDEX

- Kagyü tradition 191  
 karma 25, g  
 Khädrubje 12, 109  
*King of Concentration Sutra* 6  
 knots (see channel knots)
- labels known to others (see  
 mindfulness, specific)  
*Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*  
 70  
*Lamp of Condensed Deeds* 118,  
 124, 197, 199, 214  
*Lamp Thoroughly Illuminating the*  
*Five Stages* 199  
 Lamrim (see stages of the path)  
 laziness 92  
   antidotes to 158  
   types of 157  
 letter(s) (see also short-AH,  
 letter; HUM, letter) 53-8  
   HAM 53-5, 64, 67-9, 101  
   OM 53, 55, 64-7, 102  
   RAM 31  
 levitation 205  
 liberation 6, 143, 191, g  
 lineage 8-9, g  
   Guru(s) 37, g  
 lion posture 115  
*Little Samvara Tantra* 71  
 Lojong 240, g  
 logical reasoning 111  
 Longchen Rabjampa 191-2  
 Longdöl Lama 47, 63, 220  
 Losang Chökyi Gyaltsän (see  
 Panchen Lama, first)  
 Losang Dragpa (see also Je  
 Tsongkhapa) g  
 lung (see wind(s), diseases)
- Madhyamika-Prasangika 183,  
 190-3, 230, g  
 Mahamudra, Vajrayana 6-9, 38,  
 57, 112, 128, 150  
   causal-time 6-8, 17  
   resultant-time 6-8, 229-40  
   etymology of Mahamudra 6  
   etymology of Vajrayana 3  
   lineage Gurus 8-9, 37-8, g  
   that is the union of bliss and  
   emptiness 7, 17, 100  
   that is the union of the two  
   truths 7, 195-227  
   that is the resultant Union of  
   No More Learning 229  
 Mahasiddha g  
   Saraha 4, 7, 167, 172  
 Mahayana 1, 2, 11, g  
   practice 38, 175  
 Maitreya, Buddha 238  
 Maitripa 7  
 major signs and minor indications  
 198, 237  
 mandala 3, 198, 206, 213, g  
   offering 9, 12, 37, g  
 Manjushri, Buddha 8, 106, g  
 mantra (see also Secret Mantra) g  
 Marpa 7, 109  
 meaning clear light 36, 97, 99,  
 204, 217-23, 224, 226, 232-5  
*Meaningful to Behold* 159, 163,  
 190  
 meditation 161-2  
 meditative equipoise 99, 184-5,  
 233-4, g  
 mental abidings (see nine mental  
 abidings)  
 mental excitement 159-62, 166-9  
 mental factor(s) 105, 149, g  
 mental sinking 124, 159, 160-2,  
 166-9  
 mental suppleness 158, 174  
 mental wandering 158-60, 162  
 mere name 187  
 merit 11-2, g  
   collection of 47, 104, 203,  
   233, g  
 method 3, 155  
 middle way 192, g  
 Middle Way Consequentialists  
 (see Madhyamika-Prasangika)

- Mikyö Dorje, the eighth Karmapa 205
- Milarepa 7, 36, 109, 227, 231  
his songs 192
- mind (see also eight signs, the; isolated mind; mental factor(s); subtle mind; very subtle mind) 144-53  
conceptual (see also conceptual thoughts) 77, 87, g  
gross 87, 95, 110, 145, 149  
indestructible 38  
individual 149-51  
conventional nature and ultimate nature 145, 147, 151-3  
location 145-6, 147-8  
mistaken 183  
primary 105, 149  
resident 148  
root 146, 148, 170  
six methods for settling 171-4  
types 149
- mindfulness 116-7, 121, 143, 157-75  
general 157-64  
specific 164-71  
new 165  
old 165-6  
appropriate methods 166-9  
labels known to others 169-71  
natural cessation of conceptual thoughts 171  
gross 77-8, 88, 111  
subtle 77-8, 93, 110-1, 116, 122  
very subtle 78, 93, 121, 129
- mind of enlightenment (see bodhichitta)
- mind wheel 22-3
- miracle powers (see also clairvoyance) 70, 205, 213
- misleading teachings 151-5
- mixings, the nine (see nine mixings, the)
- Mother Tantra g
- motivation, appropriate 5, 240
- mudra (see action mudra; wisdom mudra)
- nada 13, 62, 64
- Nagarjuna 7, 109, 152, 196, 197, 198, 201, 205, 226 g  
view of 152, 190-3
- Nalanda, university of 118
- Naropa 7, g
- natural cessation of conceptual thoughts (see mindfulness, specific)
- negativities, purifying 12, 69-70
- Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo 192
- nine exhalations, practice of 40-2
- nine mental abidings 57, 163-4, 173-4
- nine mixings, the 109-33  
mixing with the Truth Body 110-2, 115-21, 128-9  
mixing with the Enjoyment Body 112-4, 121-3, 129-31, 204  
mixing with the Emanation Body 114-5, 123-6, 132-3
- nirvana 6, 175
- non-affirming negative 152, 177, g
- non-application 162
- non-duality 116
- non-grasping 91
- non-shame 91
- non-virtue 89
- Nyingma tradition 191-2
- object of negation 177-88, 191
- object-possessor g
- obstacles, eliminating 11, 37, 42, 158

INDEX

- obstructions  
to liberation 99, 103-4, 135,  
144, 237, g  
to omniscience 103-4, 135,  
144, 202, 233, 237, g  
*Ocean of Attainments* 12  
*Ocean of Nectar* 190, 238  
*Offering to the Spiritual Guide*  
37, 227  
ordinary appearance(s) 3, 13,  
132, 134, 137, 174, g  
ordinary being g  
ordinary conception(s) 3, g  
*Ornament of Clear Realizations*  
238
- Padmasambhava 192  
Panchen Lama, first 36, 146,  
152-3, 153-4  
path body  
truth 110-2, 122  
enjoyment 112-4, 122, 131,  
214  
emanation 114-5  
path(s) (see also Secret Mantra,  
superior paths) g  
of seeing 185, 221  
of meditation 221  
of No More Learning 224  
mundane 175  
supramundane 175  
peace 89  
penetrating the precise points  
of our own body 18-135  
of another's body 135-9  
*Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* 152,  
158, 191, g  
Perfection Vehicle 199, 221,  
233, g  
Performance Tantra 4  
pervading wind 26-8, 98, 210,  
236  
pervasion 180-1, 188-9  
petals of the channel wheels  
(see channel spokes)
- physical hindrances (see  
obstacles)  
physical suppleness 174  
posture (see vajra posture)  
powa (see transference of  
consciousness)  
precious human body 1-2, 29  
preliminary practices 37-8  
common 11-12  
uncommon 12-15  
pride (see also divine pride) 91,  
153, 179  
primary mind 105, g  
prostrations 47  
pure illusory body (see also  
illusory body) 7, 99, 204, 221,  
224-6, 233, 237  
Pure Land(s) 25, 223, 229-31, g  
purification 11-2  
bases of 99-100  
of impure winds 40-2
- rebirth 94-5, 100, 127, 131, 132-3  
its cause 206  
refuge 11, g  
*Refutation of Objections* 191  
rejoicing 90  
relationships of serial and  
reverse order 238-40  
Rendapa 192  
renunciation 175, g  
resultant bodies 99, 214  
root winds  
life-supporting 26-9  
downward-voiding 26-8, 61-4,  
101  
upward-moving 26-8  
equally-abiding 26-8  
pervading 26-8, 98, 210, 236
- sadhana g  
Sakya Pandita 193  
Sakya tradition 191  
*Samputa Tantra* 71  
samsara 1, 23, 206, g

- root of 70, 151, 183  
 Sangha g  
 Sangye Gyatso 70  
 Saraha, Mahasiddha 4, 7, 167, 172  
 Secret Mantra (see also generation stage; completion stage) 2-6, 61, 104, 105, attainment of Buddhahood 229-37 etymology 2-3 Foe Destroyer 223 four attributes 3 levels 4 need for human body 29 objects for tranquil abiding meditation 144 preliminaries 11-15 rarity of teachings 2, 151 Superior being 204, 221, 237 superior paths 99, 232, 237 ultimate view 191 vows and commitments 5 why superior to Sutra 7, 103, 151, 202-3, 230  
 secret place 19, 44  
 sectarianism 154-5  
 self-cherishing g  
 self-grasping 143, 151, 178-9, 183, 206, g  
 selflessness  
   of persons 177-88  
   of phenomena 178, 188-90  
   refuting the object of negation 180-4  
 seminal fluid 29  
 sense power 28, 146, 147-8, g  
 sentient being g  
 seven pre-eminent qualities of embrace 237-8  
*Seventy Emptinesses* 191  
 sexual intercourse 61-2, 136-7  
 Shakyamuni, Buddha 2, 154, 220, 229  
 ultimate intention 190-1  
 ultimate view 191  
 shame 90  
 Shantideva 1, 118, 184, g  
 Sherab Senge, Je 183  
 short-AH, letter 30-1, 36, 53, 53-67, 69, 101, 110, 116, 117, 119, 144  
   four fruits of meditating on 57  
 sign(s) (see also eight signs, the)  
   external signs of death 85-7, 94  
   of reverse order 94  
   that the winds have entered the central channel 73-4  
   that the winds are abiding in the central channel 74  
   that the winds have dissolved into the central channel 74-81, 85-8, 92-3  
   six magical wheels, the 44  
   six methods for settling the mind 171-3  
 Six Yogas of Naropa 30, 36, 209  
   Je Tsongkhapa's commentary 44  
*Sixty Reasonings* 191  
 sixty-four arts of love 137  
 sleep 32-3, 116-26  
 snake, analogy of rope and snake 182  
 Solitary Realizer Foe Destroyers 201  
 Spiritual Guide 132, 137, 190, 201, 202, 220, 227, 235, g  
   blessings 9, 12  
   instructions 55, 107, 144, 161, 197, 202  
   qualifications 5  
 spokes (see channel spokes)  
 spontaneous great bliss (see also union, of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness) 7, 18, 29, 35, 64, 103-5, 107, 135, 138, 203, 217, 220, 232, 237



INDEX

- stages of the path 5, 106  
 subsequent attainment (see also  
   yoga, of illusion-like  
   subsequent attainment) 124,  
   226, 233, g  
 substantial cause g  
 subtle form 122  
 subtle mind 77-80, 105, 111,  
   144-6, 149-50  
 subtle speech 38  
 Superior being 80, 143, 155, 185,  
   217, g  
   of Secret Mantra 204, 221, 237  
 superior seeing 36, g  
 Sutra 2, 3, 144, 151, 203, 214,  
   224, 229, g  
   ultimate view of 190-3  
   Mahamudra according to 6  
   Mahayana (see Perfection  
   Vehicle)
- Taktsang 205  
 Tantra (see Secret Mantra)  
 Tantric  
   Master 107  
   scriptures 47  
 three bringings (see bringings,  
   the three)  
 Three Jewels 37, g  
 three principal aspects of the  
   path 137  
 three states of unfortunate  
   migration 127  
 Tilopa 7  
 training the mind 240, g  
 tranquil abiding 36, 57, 70,  
   157-75, 185  
   actual attainment of 174-5  
   benefits 158  
   etymology 160  
   necessity of 141-4  
   obstacles to attaining 157,  
   158-60, 161-3  
   three labels describing how  
   to maintain it 169-71
- transference of consciousness  
   209, g  
 Trijang Rinpoche 9, g  
 Trinlay Gyatso (see Je Phabong-  
   khapa)  
 Truth Body (see Buddha's bodies)  
 Tulku 133  
 tummo (see inner fire)  
 Twenty-four Places, the 22-3,  
   25, g  
 two abandonments, the 20  
 two truths (see also conventional  
   truth; ultimate truth; union,  
   of the two truths) g
- ultimate truth (see also  
   emptiness; union, of the two  
   truths) 7, 24, 224-7, g.  
   definitive meaning 155  
*Understanding the Mind* 149  
 union  
   of method and wisdom 3  
   of spontaneous great bliss and  
   emptiness 3, 7, 23, 47, 134-5,  
   202-3  
   of the two truths (see also  
   union that needs learning)  
   7-8, 188, 224-7  
   resultant (see Union of No  
   More Learning)  
 Union of No More Learning 7,  
   195, 224, 229-41, g  
 union that needs learning (see  
   also union, of the two truths)  
   195, 233-4, g
- vacuole 29, 30-1, 45-8, 53-5, 59  
 Vairochana g  
   seven-point posture of 39, g  
 vajra g  
   vajra and bell g  
   vajra body (see also body, subtle;  
   illusory body) 19, 51, 214, 221,  
   238, g  
   Vajra Master 201, 202, g