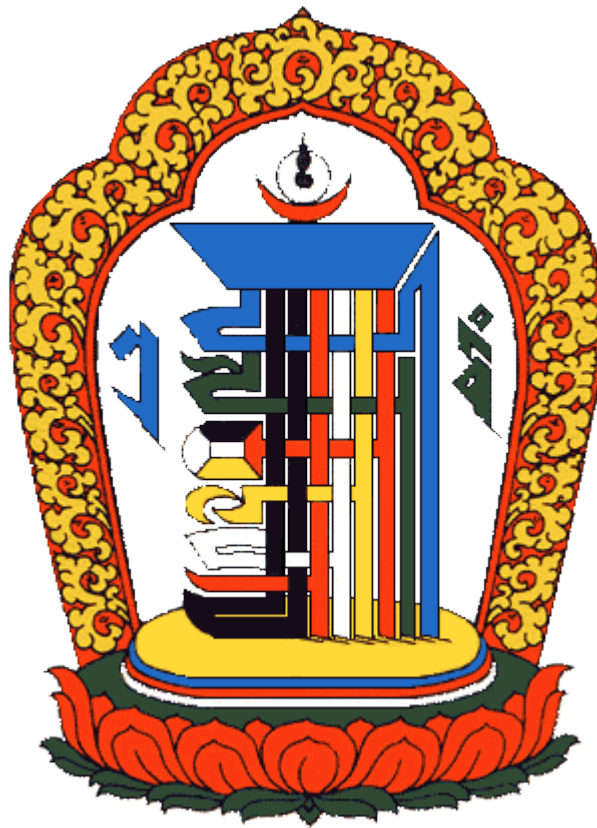


Meaningful to See

Guidance on the Profound Path of the Vajra-yogas

The Common Preliminaries

By Jetsun Tāranātha



Translated and edited by Adele Tomlin

Meaningful to See: Guidance on the Profound Path of the Vajra-yogas
The Common Preliminaries

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TO BE READ ONLY BY THOSE WITH A KALACAKRA EMPOWERMENT FROM A
QUALIFIED TEACHER.

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Translator's Introduction

Here is a translation of a short, but important, root text by Jonang and Shangpa Kagyu master, Jetsun [Tāranātha](#) (1575-1634), called *Meaningful to See: Guidance on the Profound Path of Vajra-Yogas*. The text contains essential instructions on the Kālacakra common preliminaries, the uncommon preliminaries and the completion stage practises of the six vajra-yogas. Until now, it has not been published or made publicly available in the English language.

In the colophon, Tāranātha says that he wrote it at the age of forty, while staying in the forest hermitage of Jomonang (the valley of the Jonang seat):

This Meaningful to See: Guidance on the Profound Path of the Vajra-Yogas is the practice, as it is, of the Omniscient Dharma Kings of Jonang. Even though these are all the essential points of the tradition of the previous lineage of siddha masters, I have abandoned their beautiful way of expressing it and has been composed in extremely ordinary words that are easy to understand. Even though the individual instructions of those previous ancestors are excellent words of the profound meaning, and they are the unsurpassable entrance point of experts, as many of the pith instructions are hidden and the meaning of the words is vast and difficult to understand, I saw that people were not able to enter the profound path. Thus, I have explained the guidance instructions of Dharma masters such as Kunpang Chenpo and Chogle Namgyal. Moreover, having been encouraged and urged to do so by others, in particular, by Amdo 'Bonpo' Yonten Lhundrub and so on, and as others also felt it would be beneficial, this Vagabond Tāranātha composed this, at the age of 40, in the Naggyel hermitage in Jomonang.

The other main texts within the Jonang tradition that are used to teach Kālacakra practice are the much larger supplementary commentary by Tāranātha, *A Hundred Blazing Lights*, and a text by Jonang and Rime master, Bamda Gelek Gyatso, *Chariot that Transports to the Four Kāyas*. I have already translated both of these texts, for the first time into English, up to and including the uncommon preliminaries of the 'generation stage' Innate Kālacakra. The Bamda Gelek text was published in 2019 and the longer commentary is still pending publication at this time (see Bibliography).

This publication of *Meaningful to See*, includes only the instructions on the five *common preliminaries*, which are refuge, generating the mind of awakening, Vajrasattva: hundred-syllable mantra, Mandala offering and guru-yoga.

The *uncommon preliminaries* section of this text, the ‘generation stage’ of Innate Kālacakra, I translated and published in 2019 (together with sections from *Chariot that Transports to the Four Kāyas*) as part of the Innate Kālacakra project, co-sponsored by the Khyentse Foundation¹. The supreme head of Jonang, Jigme Dorje Rinpoche, of Dzamthang Monastery, Tibet, has expressly forbidden public and/or commercial publication and dissemination of the pith instructions on the six vajra-yogas. However, in order to practice the six vajra-yogas it is essential to do the common preliminaries, regardless of whether or not one has ‘done’ them before in another tradition. The reason for this is because they have specific prayers and visualisations connected to Kālacakra and the Kālacakra lineage masters.

Both Dr. Cyrus Stearns and Edward Henning have previously translated *Meaningful to See* into English. Stearns told me that his was a draft, used only for oral translations he did of teachings in the 1990s by Sakya master, HH Chogye Trichen Rinpoche, which I have not seen. Edward Henning also did a draft translation (up to the third vajra-yoga), which he was sadly unable to complete and publish before he passed away. He sent me his draft (as it was December 2015) which has proved a useful guide in doing this new translation.

Although this root text, *Meaningful to See*, is not particularly complicated or difficult in terms of translation (and is short being only the preliminaries), it is nonetheless an essential component of teachings for practice in the Dro Kālacakra tradition of Jonang, and is used in conjunction with the other two texts mentioned above. Therefore, where suitable, I have added several annotations from my recent translation of Tāranātha’s longer commentary, *A Hundred Blazing Lights*. Computer graphic images of the mandala offering, which were created for the Bamda Gelek Gyamtso publication, have been re-produced here.

I was able to find the following extant editions of this text available online: 1) a modern computer print, 2) a block print from the Tagten Phuntshog Ling wood blocks, 3) two editions of the text in Jamgon Kongtrul’s *Treasury of Oral Instructions*, and 4) a block print from the Dzamthang Monastery block prints (see Bibliography for details). As this is not an

academic book, I have not done a critical edition and based the translation mainly on the computer print version.

I received the oral transmission and instruction on this text in 2017, from Jonang lama, Chokyi Nangwa Rinpoche. Sadly, due to a lack of harmonious and supportive conditions at that time, I was unable to complete and publish it until now. As a celebration of the Kālacakra New Year and the flourishing and preservation of Kālacakra, may it be of benefit!

Adele Tomlin, May 2020

N.B The text should only be read by those who have a Kālacakra empowerment from a qualified teacher.

The Root Text

oṃ svasti. Namo guru buddha harmakaya bhyaḥ

Homage and Introduction

Here is *Meaningful to See: Guidance² on the Profound³ Path of the Vajra-Yogas*. The profound path of vajra-yogas⁴ being the one travelled by all the Victors and their heirs.

I prostrate to the guru and glorious Vajrasattva!

I prostrate to primordial awareness; union of unchanging bliss⁵ and mahāmudrā⁶!

I prostrate to the authentic nectar of supreme siddhas that perfectly satisfies!

To the basis of all abundant excellence, that bestows on all beings the wish-fulfilling jewel of the unsurpassable state, I devotedly bow down at your feet!

The all-pervading expanse, that is 'all supreme aspects'⁷,

The nature of mind itself, a treasury of all good qualities;

Primordially inseparable from unconfined harmakaya;

May the ultimate, unchanging inner truth be victorious!

The finest from the vast ocean of thought that formed

the rivers of hundreds of thousands tantras,

Transformed into this essential vase

out of which streams excellent fortune.

It is:

- the unsurpassable essence of all tantras⁸;
- the source of all worldly and transcendent siddhis⁹;
- the one and only path travelled by all buddhas of the three times that leads to the supreme [siddhi]¹⁰;
- the entrance point for all powerful yogis¹¹;
- the exceptional path; the shortest, fastest path¹² capable of bringing all beings with a vajra-body of six elements¹³, to enlightenment in one lifetime¹⁴, with one body¹⁵, and one birth.

- that which is hidden by vajra-words in many other condensed tantrarājas, is unhidden and clearly taught in the Kālacakra Tantra¹⁶, also with the same meaning in the extensive Adibuddha and other mūlatantras.
- that which is called the yoga of mahāmudrā, the ‘six-branched yoga’, or the ‘profound path of the vajra-yogas’¹⁷, is the path for those endowed with ‘three confidences’¹⁸.

The guidance instructions are in three parts:

1. The preliminary guidance that makes one a suitable vessel for the profound path of vajra-yogas,
2. The meditation stages of the main profound path of vajra-yogas.
3. The concluding supplements to the path, the path structure and the collection of yogas

The first consists of the common preliminaries and the uncommon preliminaries.

The common preliminaries

As for the *common* preliminaries, the preliminaries for all dharma practices are refuge and the mind of awakening, the repeated meditation on Vajrasattva to purify negativities and obscurations, the maṇḍala offering to gather accumulations, and guru-yoga to receive blessings¹⁹. There is a tradition that does these as three meditation practices, but the guiding instructions based on experience suggests that five practices are easier. Doing it this way, the five are:

1. Guidance on refuge, the general ‘root’²⁰ of dharma.
2. Guidance on generation of the mind of awakening, the ‘root’ of Mahāyāna.
3. Guidance on the hundred-syllable mantra, purification of negativities and obscurations.
4. Guidance on maṇḍala offering, gathering of accumulations.
5. Guidance on guru-yoga, source of blessings.

1. The practice of refuge



Jonang Kālacakra refuge tree

In a solitary place, sit on a comfortable seat in a normal posture. Letting the mind rest naturally, imagine the place where one is as a great and vast pure realm, in the centre of which is an enormous palace made from various precious jewels. In its centre is a wish-fulfilling tree, full of branches, leaves, flowers and fruit. On the top of the tree, is a high and wide jewelled throne supported by lions, with disc seats of multi-coloured lotus, and sun and moon²¹. Seated on this is one's root guru appearing in the form of Vajradhara, surrounded by all the lineage gurus and all the deity hosts of the yidam maṇḍalas. Surrounding the root trunk of the tree are all the oceans of protectors with eyes of

primordial awareness; the *ḍākiṇīs* and *dharmapālas*, all arranged as protecting oneself. Visualise around the wish-fulfilling tree, in the four cardinal directions, on the floor of the palace in four places are tall and wide lion thrones, each with lotus, sun and moon seats upon them.

In front of the guru, imagine the sublime Victor Śākyamuni and the other ultimate *nirmāṇakāyas*, the buddhas of the ten directions and three times; on the right is the Saṃgha consisting of the bodhisattvas *Mañjuśrī* and so forth; to the left are the noble hosts of *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, *Śāriputra* and so forth; behind is the jewel of the dharma, in the form of texts. Alternatively, it is permissible to visualise the Buddha behind and the dharma in front. Do whichever is mentally easier²². Then imagine that oneself, together with all the beings in space, with immense devotional longing take refuge in the guru and all the oceans of hosts of protecting jewels. In particular, motivated by great compassion towards all beings, think that you fervently request them to protect all beings from the sufferings of cyclic existence, and recite the following²³:

From this time on, until the essence of enlightenment is attained, I and all beings equal to space, take refuge in the dharma lords, the glorious gurus; take refuge in the deity hosts of the yidam maṇḍalas; take refuge in the blessed ones, perfect buddhas; take refuge in the sublime Dharma; take refuge in the noble Saṃgha; take refuge in all those with the eyes of primordial awareness, the protector ḍākiṇīs and dharmapālas.

Whilst reciting this, bear in mind the qualities of the guru and the three jewels, and fearful of the sufferings of cyclic existence, as much as possible take refuge, trusting in the jewels with one's whole mind. At the end of a session, pray three times as follows:

I pray to the guru and the precious jewels to bless myself and all beings.

Imagine that the refuge field melts into light and dissolves into oneself, and then recite the dedication of merit for refuge, as one wishes, such as:

By this virtue may all beings perfect the accumulations of merit and primordial awareness, and by that merit and wisdom, attain the two sublime states.

This completes the guidance on the first meditation practice, refuge. Having explained this meditation, the students should practise the meditation of refuge for three days or more. Also, the students should listen, the guru should explain. As much as the students are able

to understand, that much the guru should explain. If the important main points are explained and understood, the mind transforms into dharma, but, if they are not explained and were not previously understood, the mind will not transform into dharma. If they are points that definitely require explanation, when the students are practising the meditation, the students should be taught daily so that they gradually understand the actual meaning of refuge, within the sūtras and tantras and Hinayāna and Mahāyāna²⁴.

The yoga for sleeping in this context is this. Imagine that the refuge objects do not dissolve and that on the ground in front of the guru's body, you lie down on a lotus and moon disc seat. Then, while falling asleep, cultivate great devotion to the refuge objects. This is a supplementary instruction.

2. The basis of Mahāyāna: the mind of awakening

Perform refuge as before, as many times as appropriate. Then, after the refuge field has dissolved into oneself, carefully contemplate all the world systems in the ten directions, and that even in all the ten directions, like limitless space, the world systems are infinite. All these world systems are totally filled with the six classes of beings²⁵, and that all these beings are one's kind parents. Consider them with compassion²⁶, since they all wish to achieve happiness, but not knowing how to achieve it they experience only suffering, think:

I will lead them out of this cycle of suffering, and quickly take them to the perfect and complete state of enlightenment, which is the highest and ultimate liberation. But as I currently do not have this ability, I must quickly attain the state of enlightenment which does possess this ability, and to this end will practise the profound vajra-yogas.

Contemplate the meaning of this, while reciting as much as possible the following verse²⁷:

May all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness, be free from suffering and the causes of suffering, never be separated from the perfect bliss that is free from suffering, and, abide in the limitless equanimity that is free from bias and discrimination.

At the end of the session, recite the dedication of merit as with the practice of refuge. This completes the guidance for the second meditation, generation of the mind of awakening. If desired, for three days or more, whilst practising the generation of the mind of awakening, explain in detail the meaning of love, compassion and the mind of awakening²⁸.

3. One hundred-syllable mantra: purification of negativities and obscurations



As before, perform refuge and generate the mind of awakening with the four immeasurables, each for a short period, establishing each meditation clearly; then immediately after contemplating the four immeasurables, imagine the following.

Above the crown of my head a 'paṃ' transforms into a lotus, on which an 'a' transforms into a moon disc. Above this a 'hūṃ' transforms into a five-pronged white vajra, the hub of which is marked by a 'hūṃ'. This radiates light making offerings to the noble ones and purifying the negativities and obscurations of all beings. The light returns and dissolves into the 'hūṃ' which melts into light and transforms into Vajrasattva. He is white with one face and two hands; the right holds a vajra, the left a bell and with them he embraces the consort. He is in union with the consort Vajragarvā, who is white and holds a curved knife and a skull. They are both adorned with bone and jewel ornaments and sit respectively in

the vajra and lotus postures²⁹. At their foreheads are the letters 'om', at the throat 'āḥ', the heart 'huṃ' and the navel 'hoḥ'. The 'huṃ' in the heart radiates light and draws out the blessings of all buddhas in the form of awareness nectar which dissolves and becomes non-dual with me while reciting: 'dzaḥ hūṃ baṃ hoḥ'.

Blessed one, I pray cleanse and purify negativities, obscurations, transgressions and defilements accumulated through beginningless cyclic existence by myself and all beings.

Repeat as much as possible³⁰:

om śrī vajra heruka samaya, manu pālaya, vajra heruka tvenopa tiṣṭha, ḍṛiḍho mebhava, suto ṣyomebhava, anurakto mebhava, supo ṣyomebhava, sarva siddhimme prayaccha, sarva karma sucame, cittaṃ śreyāḥ kuru hūṃ, ha ha ha ha hoḥ, bhagavān, vajra heruka māme muñca, heruko bhava, mahā samayasatva āḥ hūṃ phaṭ.

Finally, recite³¹:

Guru Protector, deluded and ignorant, I have violated and broken my commitments, please protect me. Lord, Vajra-holder, embodiment of great compassion, Lord of beings, to you I go for refuge. I confess and repent each violation and breach of the commitments of body, speech and mind, and the root and branch samaya commitments. I supplicate you to cleanse and purify the negativities, obscurations, transgressions and defilements accumulated through beginningless cyclic existence." The Vajrasattva couple melt into light and dissolve into myself.

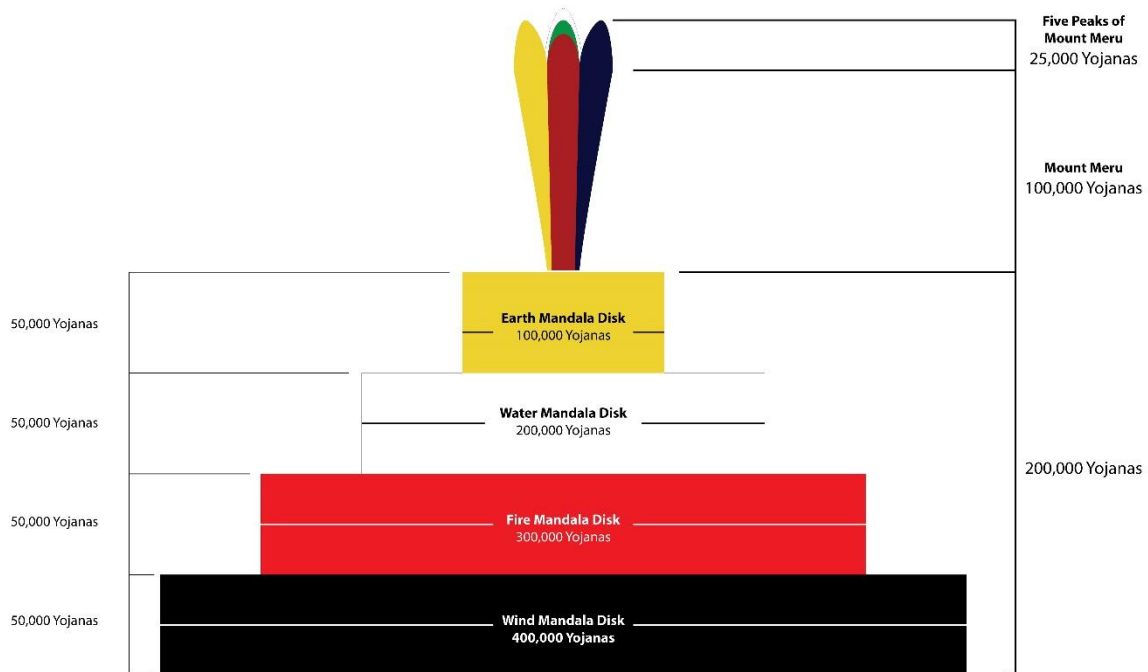
In this instance, the dedication of merit is: "Through the virtue of this practice, may I quickly realize Vajrasattva, and establish all beings in that same enlightened state." Plus: "Through this virtue may all beings perfect the accumulations..." as before.

This completes the guidance on the third meditation for the hundred-syllable mantra. Here, if it is possible and there is time, one should practise the repetition meditation for a month or two, and one should meditate until signs of the purification of negativities and obscurations arise. Such signs are experiences, or many very clear dream experiences, of: flying through the sky, washing, crossing a great river, diarrhoea and vomiting, or pus, blood and other bodily secretions. Also by practising this meditation, the greatest signs of purifying negativities are: the mind becomes much sharper than before, the meditation

clearer, the body lighter, increased confidence, compassion, renunciation, and so on, and drowsiness, laziness, desire, hatred, and so on, all become diminished.

If the instruction is being given quickly and there is no more than a couple of days available, until the guidance is completed, at the beginning of each session make sure this meditation is practised each time. And if one wishes, explain carefully the harmfulness of negativities³², the methods of confession³³, samaya commitments, and the significance of the repetition meditation.

4. Mandala offering: gathering accumulations³⁴



Mandala visualisation from side

First, having performed refuge and generation of the mind of awakening as before, imagine in the space in front of you, the gurus, yidams, buddhas and bodhisattvas, just like before with the refuge field. Then, make prostrations, go for refuge, and perform the maṇḍala as follows.

I bow to the lotus-feet of the vajra-holder, the jewel-like embodiment of the guru, the one whose kindness instantly creates great bliss³⁵.

Or, recite:

Praise to the guru, the sun whose kind brilliance dispels with its precious rays all mental darkness concerning reality, enabling direct awareness.

Then, prostrate and take refuge with:

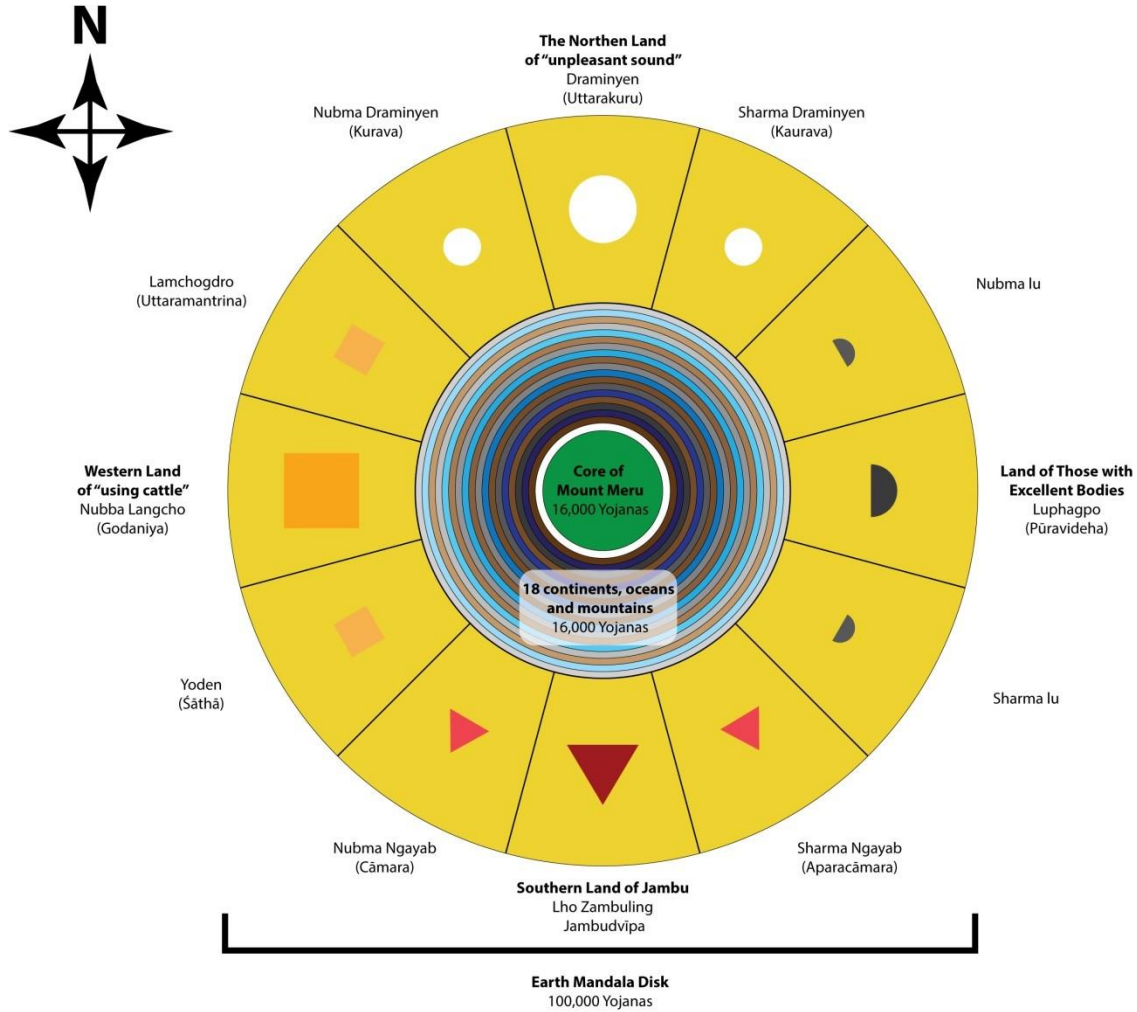
You are mother, you are father, you are the teacher of beings, you are family and the best of friends, you are the protector, you are the one who acts for benefit, removing suffering, you

Meaningful to See by Tāranātha

are the centre of supreme qualities, destroyer of all faults, this is you; you are the protector of all the wretched. To you, the wish-fulfilling jewel, the mighty victor, I go for refuge.

Or, more briefly:

I go for refuge to the glorious true gurus, the precious buddhas of the three times.



Then, physically arrange the maṇḍala heaps³⁶, and, visualise, the complete world system, supported on a base of the four elements, the four continents, Mount Meru and its perimeters, complete from the tip of the world down to the three realms; piled up completely full with all the wonderful possessions of gods and men, the seven jewels and so forth. Offer this to all the gurus and precious jewels, and then, pray that one will quickly

attain enlightenment and achieve the experiences and insights of the profound path of the vajra-yogas.

For this, one recites the following:

Oṃ vajra bhumi āḥ hūṃ; on the pure base of the mighty golden ground; oṃ vajra re khe āḥ hūṃ; in the middle of an external surrounding perimeter of iron mountains; hūṃ, the king of mountains, Meru, in the east Videha, in the south Jambūdvīpa, in the north Kuru, in the west Godānīya, Rāhu, Sun, Moon, Kālāgni, and in the middle the total wondrous possessions of gods and men; all this I offer to all the pure root and lineage gurus, to the hosts of deities of the yidam maṇḍalas, and to the communities of the buddhas and bodhisattvas; in compassion accept for the benefit of beings, and having accepted, grant your blessing." "The body, speech and mind, together with all the virtues of the three times, of myself and all beings, this jewelled maṇḍala with all the offerings of Samantabhadra, are all imagined offered to the gurus and the jewels, through the power of compassion, I pray accept and grant your blessings.

Or:

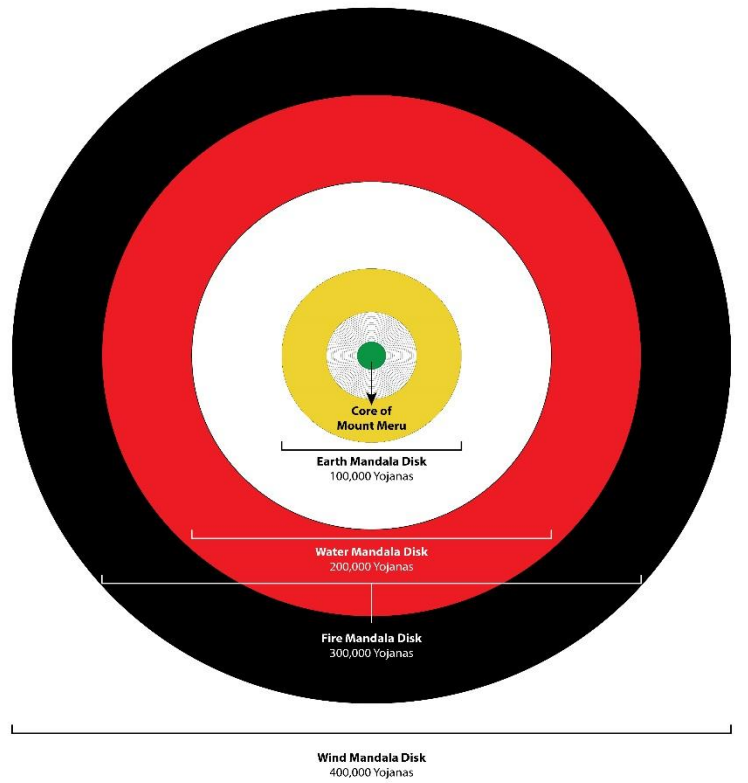
This ground, anointed with perfume and scattered with flowers, adorned with Meru, the four continents and the Sun and Moon, is imagined offered to the buddha realms, so all beings may experience the pure realms.

In this way, offer as many maṇḍalas as possible. When the session is finished, the recipients of the offering melt into light and dissolve into oneself; then, dedicate the merit as before with the practice of refuge. This completes the guiding instruction on the fourth meditation, the maṇḍala offering.

Meditate on the practice for a month or so, until signs appear that one is able newly to accumulate causes of the experiences and insights that are the essence of the instruction. Such signs are: experiences or dreams of sitting on a lion throne, wearing a crown, having excellent dharma clothes, many people prostrating to you, and so on. The main signs are similar to the signs for the purification of negativities and obscurations. If the instruction is being given quickly, and there are only three days or so available, during the instruction, perform the practice at the beginning of each session, and if one likes, explain in detail the benefits of the maṇḍala offering³⁷, the arrangement of the worlds according to the tradition

of Kālacakra, and the reasons that it is necessary to accumulate merit by many different methods³⁸.

From Above



5. Guru-yoga: the source of all blessings

Having first performed refuge and generated the mind of awakening as before: In the middle of this place, imagined as a pure realm, on a seat of lion throne, lotus, sun and moon³⁹, is the root guru, great Vajradhara⁴⁰, body colour blue with one face and two hands crossed over his heart holding a vajra and bell. His feet are in the vajra posture, he is adorned with silk and jewelled ornaments, and he has all the enlightened marks and characteristics. He is delighted and smiling at me, and his body radiates infinite rays of light. Around him are all the lineage gurus, the hosts of yidam maṇḍalas, buddhas, bodhisattvas, noble śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas and all protectors and dharmapālas. If one wishes, make prostration and offerings with the longer 'seven branch' offering.

Or, in brief, visualise countless offerings being presented, and continue:

To the glorious Guru I pay homage, present offerings, confess negativities, rejoice in virtue, request you to turn the wheel of the Dharma, supplicate you not to enter nirvāṇa; I dedicate this virtue to the highest enlightenment; I take refuge, generate the mind of awakening, and rely upon the ultimate path; please look on me with compassion.

Contemplate the meaning⁴¹ of this whilst reciting it. At this point, if one wishes, if there are separate prayers for the root and lineage gurus, they can be recited here. For a briefer version, these can be omitted if one wishes. However, the following prayer⁴² should definitely be recited, with strong and clear devotion⁴³:

I pray to the glorious guru, the Dharma-lord, the essence of all buddhas. I pray to the precious guru, embodying the four kāyas. I pray to the glorious guru, the unequalled and supreme refuge. I pray to the glorious guru, the unequalled and supreme leader. I pray to the glorious guru, who teaches the path of liberation. I pray to the glorious guru, the source of all realizations. I pray to the glorious guru, who eliminates the darkness of ignorance. I pray please inspire and empower me. I pray bless me with the ability to achieve realization in an instant. I pray bless me that no obstacles to realization arise. I pray bless me that I accomplish the essence of practice. I pray bless me to complete and thoroughly perfect realization. I pray bless me that I master the enlightened mind of loving-kindness and compassion. I pray bless me to attain the power of the meditative absorption that is the union of śamatha (calm-abiding) and vipaśyanā (special insight) I pray bless me with the arising of special experiences and insights. I pray bless me with the ability to traverse all the

stages of the profound path of vajra-yogas. I pray bless me with the power to attain in this lifetime the ultimate realization of Mahāmudra.

At the forehead of the guru is an 'oṃ', at the throat an 'āḥ', in the heart a 'huṃ' and at the navel a 'hoḥ', the essence of the vajras of body, speech, mind and awareness of all buddhas. White light radiates from the 'oṃ', enters my forehead, purifying the negativities and obscurations of body, I attain the *vase empowerment*, and receive the blessings of body. Red light radiates from the 'āḥ', enters my throat, purifying the negativities and obscurations of speech, I attain the *secret empowerment*, and receive the blessings of speech. Dark blue light radiates from the 'huṃ', enters my throat, purifying the negativities and obscurations of mind, I attain the *special insight-awareness empowerment*, and receive the blessings of mind. Yellow light radiates from the 'hoḥ', enters my navel, purifying the disposition of sexual desire⁴⁴, I attain the fourth, *vajra-primordial awareness empowerment*, and receive the blessings of primordial awareness-vajra. Then, having prayed in this way with great devotion, the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and their retinues, all dissolve into the guru.



Extremely delighted, the guru moves to the crown of my head, and melting into either light, or nectar, dissolves into me. Rest briefly in the state of the guru inseparable from one's own mind. Repeating this, meditate in that way as much as one is able. Finally, perform the dedication of merit as before. Also recite: "In all births, may I never be separated from the true guru...", etc, as one wishes.

This completes the instruction on the fifth meditation, guru-yoga. As the blessings⁴⁵ of the guru are necessary for all experiences and insights on the mantra path, it is essential to practice this for months and years. When giving quick instruction in just two or three days,

and there is no time for practice, each session should start with this meditation until all the guiding instructions are completed. If wished, the practice of devotion to the guru⁴⁶, the benefits of devotion, the characteristics of the guru, how to serve and rely on a guru, and so on, can also be explained here.

An additional meditation here is the sleeping yoga. Imagine at one's heart, in the centre of an eight-petalled lotus, the smiling form of the guru, merely an inch in height. Fall asleep in a state of great devotion to him [or her].

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- *'Celestial Stairway: Preliminary Practice Recitations of the Profound Path of the Vajra-Yogas'* by Tāranātha. (Kālacakra Six Yogas Monastery, 2017). Translated and edited by Edward Henning and Adele Tomlin.
- *'Chariot that Transports to the Four Kāyas: Excellent Path of Meditation on the Vajra-Yogas'* by Bamda Gelek Gyamtso (CTK). Translated and edited by Adele Tomlin (LTWA, 2019). For details on the book and how to purchase it see [here](#).
- *'A Hundred Blazing Lights: Supplementary Commentary on 'Meaningful to See'' (HBL)* by Jetsun Tāranātha. Translated and edited by Adele Tomlin (forthcoming publication, 2020).
- *'Innate Kālacakra: A Collection of Essential Texts'*. Translated and edited by Adele Tomlin (Dakini Publications, 2019). Available for free download [here](#).
- *Tāranātha's Commentary on the Heart Sūtra*. Translated and edited by Adele Tomlin (LTWA, 2017).
- *Vajrasattva: Guiding Instructions on the Hundred-Syllable Mantra* by Jetsun Tāranātha and Bamda Gelek Gyamtso. Translated and edited by Adele Tomlin (Dakini Publications, 2020). Available for free download [here](#).

ENDNOTES

¹ *Innate Kālacakra*, translated and edited by Adele Tomlin (Dakini Publications, 2020). See here: <https://dakinitranslations.com/2019/11/19/new-publication-innate-kalacakra-instruction-texts-and-recitations/>

² Tāranātha uses the word '*khrid*' in Tibetan which means to 'lead' or 'guide'. He gives more explanation of the term in his extensive commentary, *A Hundred Blazing Lights* (HBL) (Ch. 2) as:

Those who taught this precious Dharma itself in the precious land of India, called this Dharma the 'oral instructions of the sacred guru or 'the spoken advice', the 'giving of the ultimate suchness', and also renowned as the 'oral transmission of the supreme guru'. Even though the term, 'to guide' (in Tibetan '*khrid*') was not present then, later the term, 'to guide' became prevalent here, in the land of Tibet. Realised people invented such sublime language that is extremely accordant with the meaning. Therefore, it is termed 'the method that guides one on the path of liberation'. There are four meanings [to the term]. Who does it guide? It guides the mind of the vajra disciple. Where does it guide? It guides one to the state of a fully awakened Buddha, endowed with the five wisdoms and four kāyas. Who guides [the vajra disciple]? The excellent teacher guides.

³ In the introductory chapter of HBL, the term 'profound' is explained by Tāranātha as meaning:

The other paths of Mantrayana related to a focal object also draw out the different primordial awarenesses and generally it is not suitable to say they are not profound. Compared to the lower vehicles, they are extremely profound methods of accomplishment. However, compared to the path of direct realization of the six vajra-yogas they are not profound. First of all, [on these other paths] giving rise to *experience is extremely slow*, they rely on inner and outer *concepts*, and even though one meditates for a long time, they do not have *the power to join one to the final ultimate result* [of Buddhahood]. In addition to those, it is necessary to engage in this [practice] of vajra-yogas. Since this method is vastly more profound compared to other paths, which are not as profound, it is called the *profound* path.

In terms of the meaning of 'profound' in the context of guru-yoga, see footnote 45 below.

⁴ The term here is referring to the six yogas (*sbyor drug*, *ṣaḍaṅga-yoga*), or vajra-yogas (*rdo rje'i rnal 'byor*), the completion stage (*rdzogs rim*) meditations of Kālacakra. As Edward Henning states on his website (<http://www.kalacakra.org/6ytheory.htm>):

These [six yogas] are often confused with the Six Dharmas of Nāropa (nā ro'i chos drug), which are often called, quite wrongly, the Six Yogas of Nāropa. Wikipedia, for example, calls them this, and very bizarrely has that the "Tibetan term chos or chos is often translated as 'dharma'", and that they are "also called the six dharmas of Naropa". This is getting it completely the wrong way around. The

Tibetan terms for both the Six Yogas and the Six Dharmas are translations from the Sanskrit in the first place!

The original Sanskrit term for Nāropa's system is dharma, and it is quite silly to translate the Tibetan translation of this (chos) back into Sanskrit as yoga. An authority? In the short instruction text on these Six Dharmas, written by Tilopa and translated into Tibetan by Nāropa and Marpa, the practice is referred to in the title as the ṣaḍdharma (six dharmas) – ṣaḍdharmopadeśa, chos drug gi man ngag.

⁵ In HBL, Tāranātha explains 'unchanging bliss' as a distinctive quality of the Vajrayāna being the 'unchanging bliss of compassion' (ibid.: Ch. 1):

Furthermore, the distinctive qualities of the unexcelled yogas of the vajra vehicle of secret mantra are the uncommon and special characteristics of the *unchanging bliss of great compassion*⁵ and the *emptiness that possesses all the supreme qualities of empty forms*⁵. The union of these two is that which has the essence of emptiness-compassion. The only way of practising Dharma, in terms of the path of union, is the path of the six-branch yogas alone. I guarantee there are no other paths.

⁶ Tāranātha gives more explanation of what is meant by the term *mahāmudrā* (*phyag rgya chen po*) in HBL as meaning (ibid., Ch. 1):

As for that which is called the 'mahāmudrā yoga of the six stages of union' or the 'profound path of the vajra-yogas'. There are many explanations of the meaning of mahāmudrā in the tantra texts. There are also different Indian and Tibetan traditions. There are also many cited viewpoints and assertions [about its meaning] and statements about how to practice. However, this does not have the meaning settled on by those others. Here [the six vajra yogas] within the unexcelled highest yoga path vehicle, mahāmudrā is the completion stage. Also, in terms of that [mahāmudrā as the completion stage] there are many assertions and viewpoints, which I will not take up explaining. Here in this context, the main intention of the supreme Kālacakra Tantra and *Trilogy of Bodhisattva Commentaries*, this [the six vajra-yogas] is the 'complete path that cultivates the empty-form mahāmudrā, via the stages of non-conceptual realization without characteristics'. Others practices have the three mudras of mahāmudrā, karmamudra and jnana mudra; or the four mudras: mahāmudrā, karmamudra, dharmamudra and samayamudra.

⁷ This term, 'all supreme aspects' is used often in Jonang literature on the 'empty-of-other' (*gzhan stong*) ultimate nature. It has been discussed in various academic articles. I reproduce here my extended footnote on Tāranātha's use of the term (from *Tāranātha's Commentary on the Heart Sūtra* (TOMLIN 2017: fn 114):

For a detailed consideration of the meaning and scriptural sources for the expression 'endowed with all supreme aspects' in the Sūtra, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions, see BRUNNHÖLZL 2014: Appendix 3. According to Brunnhölzl:

In the sūtra system, the meaning of the term 'the emptiness endowed with all supreme aspects' is that genuine emptiness is not just some blank state of nothingness, but entails many supreme qualities. 'All

aspects' is usually explained as the six pāramitās and further pure qualities that represent the means on the path and reach their 'supreme' culmination on the level of Buddha-hood.

Brunnhölzl gives a beautiful quote from the *Ratnacūḍaparipṛcchāsūtra* [gTsug na rin chen gyis zhus pa'i mdo] that describes the qualities (or aspects) of such emptiness in significant detail. He also quotes a verse from the Eighth Karmapa's commentary on the *Abhisamayālamkāra* that he attributes to Mañjuśrī and explains it as follows:

The emptiness of analyzing all aspects

Is without a core, just like a banana tree.

The emptiness endowed with all supreme aspects

Will never be like that.

When the nature of all imagined and dependent phenomena (such as the skandhas) is analyzed, their own nature is emptiness, just as in the example of a banana tree without pith. As for the perfect nature (the emptiness endowed with all supreme aspects), in general, it cannot be analyzed and no matter how it may be analyzed, it does not become like that—empty of a nature of its own. For it never changes into anything else than this supreme kind of wisdom [of the perfect nature].

In the vajrayāna teachings and in accordance with the four empowerments, the term "the emptiness endowed with all supreme aspects" is explained as indicating the inseparability of appearance and emptiness, luminosity and emptiness and so on.

⁸ Tāranātha explains in HBL that the 'essence' (*snying po*) is:

The union of great love-compassion and the [emptiness] free from all types of conceptual boundaries, is the essence of this Dharma itself, which abides permanently.

It is the essence of all sūtras and tantras because:

In India and Tibet, many follow the renowned oral instructions of other paths than the six vajra yogas, such as the *Five Stages* [of Nagarjuna] ⁸, the Four Mudras⁸, Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen, *zhi gcod*⁸, the Six Yogas of Naropa and *lam dre*⁸ and so on. Nonetheless, whatever [path] it is, if they do not have the full and complete characteristics of the completely perfect path of union [the union of the *unchanging bliss of great compassion* and the *emptiness that possesses all the supreme qualities of empty forms*], there is no need at all to speak about the signs and realisations of other foolish and confusing religions and philosophies!

Moreover, even the explanations of those particular traditions that are followed in India and Tibet like that, such as the *Five Stages* of Nagarjuna, Jnanapa's *Bindu of Liberation*, *The Five Stages of Ghanta*, the *Four Stages of the Black One* [Mahakala] and so on. Since the hidden intention of these root texts is the same as this Dharma, those siddhas also attained realisation of this Dharma path [the six vajra yogas] alone. If one understands the explanation of those texts as being concordant with this Dharma, that is the unmistakable ultimate intention. The main meaning is like that.

In terms of other [practices], like having faith, renunciation, knowing what is to be adopted and abandoned, shamatha, vipassana and the four immeasurables, the ten pāramitās, the four attractive qualities, the thirty-seven factors conducive to enlightenment and so on, are in accordance with the common [path] of the sutras. The paths of ripening liberation *with characteristics*, the *yoga without characteristics*, the primordial awarenesses of the four empowerments, all the various different frameworks of the generation and creation stages; since the main purpose and ultimate intention of all of these are also included within the meaning and purpose of the six vajra-yogas. Thus, this Dharma is said to be the actual intention of all the sutras and tantras.

⁹ Tāranātha elaborates on the difference between the levels of common and extraordinary siddhis in HBL (ibid.):

The pill, eye medicine, speed-walking and so on, are the *small* [common siddhis]. Being an awareness-holder [Vidyadhara] of the *desire realms* is the *medium* [common siddhi]. Being an awareness-holder of the *form realms* is the *great* [common siddhi]. All of these are worldly siddhis. In terms of the *supraworldly siddhi*, it is the supreme accomplishment of Mahāmudrā; the accomplishment of the non-dual primordial awareness *kāya* up to and including the ultimate perfection of Buddhahood...

The *extraordinary* siddhi [of supreme enlightenment], is accomplished only by means of the completion stage. As that path of completion (which is not merely a label but the actual and definite path, without error and true) is the vajra-yogas alone, it is the unsurpassable method for accomplishing these two types of siddhis [worldly and supraworldly].

Since the [four] great activities of pacifying and so on are not the actual siddhis, and merely similar to it, they are known as subtle incidental siddhis. Nowadays, due to the spread of human wealth, merely having only a few clothes and food is called a siddhi! As for those that are known as the siddhis of *thedrang pretas* and siddhis of the malicious spirits, these are merely bad people's foolish common sayings, and should not be spoken as Dharma language. Even though from this practise here [the six yogas] some small, trivial objects of the sense pleasures are also effortlessly achieved, apart from merely talking about them, their value is not supreme.

¹⁰ Tāranātha explains why the six-yogas are the *only* path to full awakening in HBL (ibid.):

All past Buddhas who practised the path of vajra-yogas attained fully awakened enlightenment. Also, all the future Buddhas by practising this path will attain fully awakened enlightenment. Similarly, all the Buddhas residing in the ten directions, attained Buddhahood by practising this path alone. For that reason, from the beginning, one does not need to state that Bodhisattvas must enter onto the Mantrayāna path. Also, abiding on the Sutra path alone for some time will not ultimately bring us to the full, complete enlightenment. There is absolutely no other method for doing that which involves not entering the Mantrayāna path. However, this Mantrayāna path, is not only the path of the three lower tantras, such as the path of Excellent Yoga Tantra, generation stage and the all-encompassing

activities and so on. To accomplish the unsurpassable mind of enlightenment one must depend on the *ultimate path of the completion stage*. Likewise, other than the *completion stage of stages of the six yogas* alone, there is no other path than that. Leaving to one side that which is not about attaining Buddhahood, if it is about Buddhahood, since only the path of the stages of the six yogas is the main and genuine practice for the path of accomplishing Buddhahood, it should be known as the *only* path that travels there [to final, ultimate liberation].

¹¹ In HBL, Tāranātha explains in more detail why all the great mahasiddhas and yogis entered the path of the six-yogas to attain full awakening and that the intention and goal of their own individual texts and practices, even though named differently, are the same as the six-yogas.

¹² The reason why it is the shortest and quickest path is explained further in HBL, concluding that:

The attainment of Buddhahood *in one lifetime* is not explained in the generation stage of the unexcelled yoga tantra path. Only the completion stage of the vajra-yogas alone is the most direct and quickest path.

¹³ Tāranātha is referring to the vajra-body of ‘six elements’ (*kham s drug*), which he explains in greater detail in HBL as being *coarser* (or more pronounced) in human beings (who possess all five elements and the all-pervasive primordial awareness element) and that is what makes them ideal candidates for enlightenment:

The six elements are:

- earth element,
- water element,
- fire element,
- wind element,
- space element and
- primordial awareness element.

Later explaining that:

...If the other elements are subtle, the primordial awareness is also subtle. If the other elements are more pronounced, the primordial awareness is also more pronounced. So, the coarser the elements of that which it pervades, such as the human body endowed with the five elements, the pervading primordial awareness is also much stronger and greater. This is what we call being endowed with the six elements.

¹⁴ Tāranātha elaborates on the meaning of ‘one life’ in HBL (ibid.):

In terms of ‘one life’, the meaning/purpose of the *supreme accomplishment of one life* is until the death state arrives before the next life, abandoning the impure body without casting off this *fully ripened karmic body*, and *transforming it into a primordial awareness body* is known as ‘*the supreme accomplishment in one life*’ or the ‘*realisation of Mahāmudrā*’ or the ‘*accomplishment of the non-dualistic primordial awareness kāya*’ or the ‘*attainment of union*’.

Since this is not the *actual* full state of Buddhahood [i.e. the four kāyas and omniscience], one applies the label of Buddha. Since even though from that time on, one does not take rebirth or die due to karma and afflictive mental states, it is still not the *continual uninterrupted* state of the primordial awareness kāya. It is in dependence on that [the continual uninterrupted state of the primordial awareness kāya] that the state of the *ultimate, final complete and perfect Buddha*, or the *union of no more learning*, is actually realised.

¹⁵ Here is an excerpt of Tāranātha's explanation of the meaning of 'one body' in HBL (ibid.):

Generally, *body* means the 'karmically ripened body', not that which is exhausted in terms of the previous life and next life, but regarding the [body] that becomes purer and purer and manifestly transforms; it is the uninterrupted, karmically ripened body of flesh and blood that transforms. Since it is not the body that one renounces and leaves behind [when dying] and it is not a second karmically ripened body that one newly appropriates [in the next life], it talks about '*one body*'.

¹⁶ Tāranātha then lists other tantras where the meaning of the 'vajra-yogas' is 'hidden' and asserts that:

As for the Kālacakra [tradition], in the extensive root tantra of the supreme Primordial Buddha Kālacakra of 12 000 lines it is taught clearly and extensively. In the condensed Kālacakra tantra the meaning is not hidden and is taught clearly. It is different from other condensed tantras [the meaning is hidden and not clear].

¹⁷ In HBL (ibid., Ch. 1), Tāranātha explains the meaning of the term 'vajra-yoga' as:

Here the general *embodiment of all the Tathagatas*, the ultimate *dharmakāya Buddha*, the great vajra holder is the one who has '*seen*' the attributes of the vajra body, who has *experienced the vajra speech* and *abides naturally in the vajra mind* and *vajra primordial awareness*, the one that has those *four primordial vajras*. Because the yogic practitioner realizes these [vajras] with direct means, it is called '*vajra-yoga*'. Therefore, it is a path of direct realization, not merely a path of making aspirations.

¹⁸ For more on the 'three confidences' (*yi ches gsum*) see Tāranātha's HBL (ibid., Ch. 2), in which he quotes the main commentary on the Kālacakra tantra:

Where does it guide? It guides those endowed with the three confidences on the path to the distinctive non-conceptual samadhi. From the *Glorious Stainless Light Commentary*:

This mantrayāna vehicle, endowed with the three confidences was taught by the Buddha. First, is the confidence in the tantras. Then, confidence in the teacher. Then, confidence in oneself. With these three confidences, it is the completely perfect path of complete and full awakening. There is no way of guiding other than with these three confidences. If the guru teaches a path to the student, which is not endowed with the three confidences, one will not

attain the completely, pure and full result of Buddhahood. This is because the student has a foolish faith. Since it is conventionally true, it will be a worldly result.

Here the meaning is: if someone endowed with the three confidences encounters the path, one is a very fortunate person who will be able to attain the level of full and complete awakening in one life and one body. If someone only has confidence in the tantras, but does not have confidence in the teacher, in future rebirths, the cause for obtaining Buddhahood is indeed still there after a long time has passed. However, since the immediate experiential realisation will not arise, there is no power to attain the supreme result in this lifetime. If there is no confidence in the tantras, then the fully complete confidence in the guru will not arise. Even if one presently experiences a little trust like that in the master, and there may be a few realisations, it is not a sign of having actual confidence in the authentic path. It is said that even though it is possible to generate a little experience, which is like the completion stage and a small accumulation of virtuous activities, it will not become the authentic, actual path.

¹⁹ The Tibetan word here is *byin brlabs*, a commonly used term which I have translated here as ‘blessings’. See footnote below for a more detailed description of it from Bamda Gelek Gyamtso in the context of guru-yoga.

²⁰ Here, Tāranātha uses the Tibetan word *rtsa ba* which etymologically is more equivalent to ‘root’, and not ‘foundation’ or ‘basis’, which have specific words in Tibetan.

²¹ In CTK (ibid.), Bamda Gelek includes Rāhu and Kālagṇi as seats, making five in total.

²² In CTK (ibid., pp.44-47) Bamda Gelek explains that there are *three* ways in which to visualise the refuge objects as explained by: 1) Kunkhyen Chogle Namgyal, 2) Tāranātha and 3) in the oral instructions. He also states that it is not essential to visualise all the refuge objects clearly as that is not the primary purpose of the meditation.

²³ For the words to be recited, see also Tāranātha’s text ‘*Celestial Stairway*’ (see HENNING AND TOMLIN 2017).

²⁴ In HBL (ibid. Ch. 3), Tāranātha gives an extensive explanation of refuge in terms of the worldly and transcendent refuge, the differences between Sutra and Mantrayāna refuge, the reasons for going for refuge, how refuge protects, how to measure the extent to which one has gone for refuge, the benefits of and precepts of taking refuge, and the differences between the Hinayāna, Mahāyāna and Mantrayāna refuge. In terms of the difference in *scope*:

There is the *difference in time*. In terms of the common Hinayāna tradition, they say ‘until I die’. In the extraordinary Mahāyāna tradition, they say ‘until I attain enlightenment’.

The *difference in intention*. In the Hinayāna, the predominant wish is to free oneself from the suffering of samsara. In the Mahāyāna, it is to protect all sentient beings from the suffering of samsara.

The *difference in aspiration*. One supplicates with different aspirations for attaining enlightenment. Even though the scope of the objects of refuge, the rituals and function and so on are a little different, since the lower practice is included in the higher practice, there is no contradiction. The distinctive characteristics of the secret mantrayāna refuge are also the difference in relation to time, which is *infinite*²⁴. The intention is also different, as one aspires to *quickly* provide refuge to all sentient beings. The difference in aspiration is that by entering the path of bliss, one aspires to attain the result of the innately arising body.

²⁵ In HBL (ibid. Ch. 4), Tāranātha gives an extensive explanation of the six classes of beings in cyclic existence in relation to developing love and compassion for them. Bamda Gelek Gyamtso also gives an extensive explanation in CTK (ibid.: pp30-37).

²⁶ Tāranātha concludes that when meditating on the four immeasurables of love, compassion, joy and equanimity, in order to give rise to the mind of awakening (bodhicitta), compassion is the most important:

If one has compassion, the six pāramitās can arise. If one does not have compassion, one cannot enter into the training of the Bodhisattvas.

He gives a beautiful and poetic quote on the importance and necessity of compassion from the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras* (Chapter XVIII, verses 36-40), comparing it to the root of a tree, with love being the 'water' that increases and nourishes its growth:

36. Compassion, tolerance, ambition, aspiration, life, and the full maturation of living beings; this is the great tree of compassion beginning with the root and ending with the superior fruit.
37. If compassion were not the root, there would be no endurance of difficult deeds. If one could not bear up under suffering, she would have no ambition for the sake of beings.
38. without such ambition one would not make the aspiration for higher lives. If one does not manifest higher lives, then she would not develop beings.
39. One should recognize that love is the watering (for the tree) of compassion; its broad growth comes from joyous willingness to undergo suffering; and the vast spread of its branches of great bliss comes from correctly applied mental attitudes.
40. The growth and fall of leaves comes from the unbroken continuum of aspirations. Fertile flowers and fruits come from success in the two objectives, oneself and others.

As for loving-kindness, it is the *cause* that increases compassion. If there is compassion, then one has the power to be patient with performing difficult actions for the sake of sentient beings. If one has that patience and forbearance, then the distinct mind [bodhicitta] that carries the burden of acting for the welfare of sentient beings will arise. Due to that, it plants that kind of mind that is similar to that which one aspires will arise, the distinctive aspiration for the benefit of beings. Then from that,

one can perform the infinite benefit for all wanderers. By those causes, one will perfect the two accumulations and become a fully awakened Buddha. Yet if one abandons compassion, since all of that will not arise, for the aspiration of bodhicitta, the accomplishment of compassion is particularly emphasized.

²⁷ These verses are the four immeasurables. In HBL (ibid.), Tāranātha describes the nature of the four immeasurables, one of which is compassion:

Loving-kindness is the wish that sentient beings meet with fresh and unprecedented bliss. Similarly, *compassion* is the wish that they be separated from suffering and, from now onwards, the ways in which suffering arises are stopped. *Joy* is the mental bliss that is brought forth by rejoicing and liking it when other sentient beings experience happiness and joy.

When these three [immeasurables] are drawn out, it is a specific mind that is similar to not having any aversion or anger and not possessing any attachment. That is called *equanimity*. Equanimity itself is a steadfast basis for virtuous minds and so on. The mind that equalises those who are close and distant is the source of the cause of non-attachment and non-aversion. With loving-kindness, the first of the three, since it is possible for attachment to be mixed with it and this is an affliction, faults could occur afterwards. With equanimity, since this potential fault is eliminated, it is taught as having the characteristic of being pure and without, or not mixed with, the afflictions.

Compassion is that which wants to eliminate the obstacles to happiness of sentient beings. Both *love* and *joy*, are wanting genuine happiness and bliss for sentient beings. Thus, those three are about the thought of happiness alone. Since the mind of equanimity is devoid of hostility and aversion on side but also has the attribute of the intention of happiness with no attachment to oneself, to also establish sentient beings in a state without aversion or attachment, it is the mind itself that *benefits*. So, equanimity is a mind that is both about [wanting] *benefit* and *happiness* [for others]. The nature of the four immeasurables, such as loving-kindness and so on, are like that.

Tāranātha later goes on to explain that *each* of the four immeasurables has a three-fold division [in terms of the focus of the meditation]:

1. sentient beings as the focus,
2. phenomena as the focus, and
3. without any focus.

After explaining the meaning of the first two, he then explains that the third, 'without any focus' is:

After seeing that the phenomena of sentient beings and the aggregates and so on are naturally empty, one recognizes that the mistaken appearances are completely extinguished in the space of the fundamental purity of reality. This is the *focus beyond* (or *without*) *any focus* of the four immeasurables of love, and so on. Moreover, gradually via the *focus without focus* of the four

immeasurables of love and so on, the ultimate perfect state will be realised, mistaken appearances will be completely exhausted and abiding in that final state [dharmadhatu], free from increase and decrease, of the supreme enlightened mind will arise for sentient beings.

²⁸ In HBL (ibid.), Tāranātha gives an extensive explanation of the topic of generating the ‘mind of awakening’ (*bodhicitta*). He explains the essence of it, the divisions of ultimate and relative ‘bodhicitta’, the meaning of the word ‘bodhicitta’, the benefits, training in it and forsaking it, and then gives detailed guidance on the four immeasurables of love, compassion, joy and equanimity. He begins by explaining the ‘essence’:

The first point, at the outset, is identifying the essence of the *mind of awakening* [also known as *bodhicitta*]. Generally, that which is known as *bodhicitta* [mind of awakening] is that which enters into the *dharmadhatu* (the ultimate space) and the fundamental nature of reality itself. It is entering the direct realization of *primordial awareness free from mental conceptualizations*. It is the name for the generation of the ultimate nature of mind in one’s mental continuum.

However, if one does not divide into ‘ultimate’ and ‘conventional bodhicitta, the basis for whether one has generating or not generating the mind of awakening, or holding or not holding the mind of awakening, is based on the most important and well-known term for it, the love and great compassion of the well-known ‘conventional mind of awakening’.

Here in the Māhayāna, there is a little difference between ‘compassion’ and ‘great compassion’. In terms of ‘compassion’, it is simply not being able to stand the suffering of others and wanting to free them from it, which is the compassion in the *four immeasurables*. In terms of ‘great compassion’, it is the name for the mind of awakening. Moreover, the root basis of feeling ‘compassion’ is *the cause of great powerful wave of compassion and love bursting forth*. *The ‘helper’* [which helps it to become stronger and vaster] is the strong courage of the *altruistic intention* that takes on the burden of carrying the heavy load of attaining enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. *The essence* is wishing to attain the full, complete awakening for the benefit of others. At that time, ‘for the benefit of others’ means, ‘to establish all sentient beings in complete awakening’.

See also Bamda Gelek’s CTK, Ch. 2.

²⁹ In this tradition, Vajrasattva is the wrathful Heruka form and mantra, and both himself and consort are naked, apart from bone ornaments. In HBL (ibid. Ch.4), Tāranātha explains:

In terms of those [hundred-syllable mantras] that have not [had the name] changed or added, there are two main categories: *the hundred syllables of peaceful Vajrasattva* and the *hundred syllables of wrathful Heruka Vajrasattva*.

In terms of the first [peaceful Vajrasattva], these days, this is the most well-known hundred syllable mantra of Vajrasattva. Also, in the Yoga Tantras and that which is accordant with it, [Vajrasattva] is meditated on as a sovereign of the Bodhisattvas, as one single hero. In the tradition of Secret Mantra [the highest tantra], one meditates on the innately arisen Tathagata, face-to-face in union with consort as two. The mantra is the same.

In terms of the hundred syllables of Heruka, the mantra is mostly the same as before. It has not been added to [in terms of the name]. It was clearly taught in *Glorious Tantra of Unexcelled Utterance*. At this time, in other traditions of Vajrasattva, there has originated [a form of the deity], which is boasted as being in the tradition of Kālacakra, that is blue with three faces and six hands. This is nothing but a self-fabrication alone. Why is that? Even though that deity is taught in the Kālacakra Tantra, it did not state it has a purpose in terms of purifying negativities and obscurations. Also, the mantra [of that deity] is not one hundred syllables. The hundred syllables here purifies negativities, repairs degenerated and broken [vows and commitments] and for supplicating the deity. But not all mantras of Vajrasattva are like that. Meditating on the deity like that, one recites the one hundred-syllable mantra. By meditating on that deity [form of Vajrasattva] and reciting the hundred-syllable mantra, they are merely thinking that all Vajrasattvas are the same type.

Some previous lamas of the Dro tradition had the male consort as peaceful, white Vajrasattva embracing a red, female consort and reciting the peaceful hundred-syllable mantra. Generally, it is not that this is not good, however, in the guidance instructions of the omniscient Buddha of the three times, Dolpopa on upwards, the Heruka Vajrasattva is generally done, as it is considered to be very good and from an excellent source. The reason for this is generally, since it is the intention of all the six-yoga lineages that the Kālacakra is the generation stage alone and does not have other things added in. So even though the generation stage is uniquely Kālacakra, it is not necessary for the lesser stages to be special or different, so that they are not in common with other traditions. For example, like refuge and bodhicitta.

³⁰ For extended explanations of the hundred-syllable mantra, see *Vajrasattva: Guiding Instructions on the Hundred-Syllable Mantra* by Jetsun Tāranātha and Bamda Gelek Gyamtso (TOMLIN 2020). In the appendix of this text, I have reproduced a visual of the meaning of the hundred-syllable mantra according to Bamda Gelek, as explained in CTK, Chapter 3.

³¹ In Chapter 4 of HBL, Tāranātha gives a word-by-word explanation of this recitation in terms of the four 'opponent powers' (see footnote 29 below):

*Protector Master, deluded and ignorant, I have violated and broken my commitments.....*At the time of saying these words of confession in the meditation, one [brings to mind] the complete four powers [of the antidotes]. In terms of the power of the support, they are the objects one confesses to, the supreme Lama Vajrasattva, all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and noble assembly. The support in one's

own mind is the supplication of refuge and bodhicitta, the time it takes for the session, the contemplation of the meaning of the mantra and also having completed [the recitation before] *'Bhagavat, I supplicate you to cleanse and purify.....accumulated through beginningless cyclic existence by myself and all beings.'* In terms of the power of applying the antidote, that is meditating on the deity and reciting the mantra. [One recites] *Protector Master, deluded and ignorant, I have violated and broken my commitments....* is the confession. *Guardian Lama, please protect me....* is the remorse.

In this two-part confession are the two powers of regret and the power or resolve not to repeat the actions. So, the words: *I have violated and broken my commitments*, this is when one recalls the faults [of doing that]. *Deluded and ignorant.....* this is a direct expression of our regret. From acknowledging that fault in that way, the resolve never to repeat the actions again arises.

Also, the phrase *please protect me*, from now onwards I will not do this again, is the power of the resolve not to do it again. The former supplication [*Bhagavat, I supplicate you to cleanse and purify.....*] is requesting the Buddha's to act. The recitation after that [*Protector Master, deluded and ignorant.....*] since it is connected to the confession, is the request for tolerance [from them].

³² Tāranātha (ibid.) gives an explanation of karma and what is virtuous and non-virtuous:

In particular, one needs to identify the nature of non-virtuous karma which is harmful and negative actions. Actions committed out of the three [poisonous mental states], ignorance, aversion and attachment are non-virtuous it is said like that. Craving for pleasures and desires and becoming angry and averse, the karma and result of such actions motivated by blind ignorance, are all negative and non-virtuous karma.

The actual nature of karma is the mental intention (*sems pa*) combined with the mental formations and others. If it is not connected to the actions of body and speech then it is mental karma or the karma of mental intention. When it is joined together with the body and speech it gives them the power to come out. This conditioned intention is directly connected to what incites and encourages the attitude and appearance of body and mind is Mentally motivated actions or actions of speech and mind. Since all actions of body and speech, are beforehand directed and preceded by mind, one must understand that the karma of body and speech are solely mental karma.

³³ Here, Tāranātha is referring to the method of the four 'opponent powers', which he explains in greater detail in HBL, stressing that the 'power of vowing not to repeat' is the most important of the four:

What are the four [powers]? Here we will see.

1) The power of support,

-
- 2) The power of application,
 - 3) The power of remorse,
 - 4) The power of vowing not to repeat,

So, at the time of confessing one's previous negative actions, one has a mind of strong regret, like the intense mental regret at having drunk poison, that is the power of remorse. The mind that strongly vows not to do those actions again, even at the cost of my life, is the power of not wanting to repeat it. Here in this context, it is unsuitable for there not to be present both the mind of regret and the mind that vows, they are equal. If there is no mind of turning away [from the negativity] then even if one has a mind of regret, it is not a pure confession and so it will be merely reciting words. For that reason the mind that vows [not to repeat] is the most important one.

As for number 2) the power of application, Tāranātha explains in detail the 'six renowned methods' of the power of application:

Generally, even though doing virtuous actions are the antidote to transforming negative actions. However, in this context, specifically applying an antidote to one's negativities and to accomplishing virtue, is called the 'power of application'. So, when we are specifically intending to purify negativities and do any kind of virtuous action that can be considered applying the remedy. In terms of the renowned *six methods of the power of the application*, they are easy to practise and have great benefit and are a summary of all the important necessary points.

These are 1) reciting the names [of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas]; 2) constructing images and material representations [of the Buddha, stupas and dharma texts]; 3) making offerings; 4) relying on the profound teachings; 5) recitation of texts and mantras; and 6) interest and conviction in emptiness. See also Bamda Gelek (ibid.).

³⁴ In HBL (Ch. 5), Tāranātha provides an extensive explanation on the mandala offering, including the benefits, the meaning of the word 'accumulation', and the two general accumulations of 'merit' (*gso nam*) and 'primordial awareness' (*yeshe*):

So, the causes of accomplishing Buddhahood; the accumulations of Bodhisattvas, are two: the *accumulation of merit* and *of primordial awareness*. The *result* of cultivating *merit* is at the time of being a Bodhisattva working for the benefit of sentient beings in samsara, one attains the elevated states of the power and resources, enjoyments and body endowed with the power to benefit others. In terms of the ultimate [result], one is able to work for the benefit of beings via the [attainment of the] two form bodies.

The *self-result of [the accumulation of] primordial awareness* is at the temporary level, one performs conduct for the benefit of sentient beings, that eliminates the afflictive emotions by entering them into the wise method of primordial awareness. Ultimately, one accomplishes one's own purpose, the Dharmakāya.

Of these the specific [ways] of accumulating *merit* are *generosity* and *ethical discipline*. The specific [way] of accumulating *primordial awareness* is *special insight*. The other three *pāramitās* are both [methods for accumulating merit and primordial awareness].

Tāranātha then goes on to explain the three ‘accumulations’ (the additional one being ‘ethical discipline’ (*tshul khrim*)), which are unique to the Kālacakra tradition, and their relation to the ten *pāramitās*:

Here, it is called: ‘the guiding instructions on the mandala that gathers accumulations’. The *main methods* of collecting accumulations are the primary practices of the Vajra-yogas. Furthermore, here, if one has the attributes of having the residual karma of having gathered [accumulations] from previous lives, those [practices] are permissible. That is rare though. If one does not have the supporting basis of direct accumulation of the roots of virtue in one’s mindstream, even if there is a little propensity to virtue, one has no power to immediately awaken and ripen it. Due to not having this power, immediately giving rise to experience on the path of the main practices is difficult and will take a long time to produce a feeble effect, which will not increase significantly either. However, if one newly generates the supreme roots of virtue, one’s prior habitual tendencies [towards virtue] will be awakened and experience and realisations will quickly arise and be more powerful.

...In the *Glorious Kālacakra* [Tantra] and the *Trilogy of Commentaries by Bodhisattvas*³⁴, the uncommon and distinctive features asserted are the *three* accumulations. These are: 1) accumulation of merit, 2) accumulation of ethical discipline and 3) accumulation of primordial awareness.

1) Accumulation of merit

This is mainly accomplishing benefit for others with great compassion, such as conduct like generosity and so on. In terms of the strongest [accumulations], these are the special features of the Mantrayāna tradition, such as the generation stage and the four activities and the accomplishment of the ordinary siddhis.

2) Accumulation of ethical discipline

This is the generation of *unchanging melting bliss* in both the generation and completion stages.

3) Accumulation of primordial awareness

Apart from that which is similar to those above, [this accumulation] is the ultimate, unique feature of *the union of unchanging* [bliss] and [the emptiness] *endowed with all supreme aspects*.

Thus [these three] themselves are also the ten *pāramitās*. *Generosity, skilful means* and *aspiration* are accumulation of *merit*. *Discipline, patience* and *effort* are the accumulation of *discipline*. *Meditative*

concentration, insightful wisdom and primordial awareness are the accumulation of primordial awareness.

See also Bamda Gelek's explanation of mandala offering in CTK, Ch. 4.

³⁵ Bamda Gelek Gyamtso (ibid.: 75-76) says about this verse that:

One thinks of Lama Vajradhara, whose kindness of teaching the precious instructions and inspiring one's mindstream, instantly creates the illumination of the primordial awareness of immutable great bliss itself; the jewel-like embodiment of the excellent root lama, who arises as whatever is needed or desired. I bow with respect at the lotus-feet of the vajra holder. Thinking this, one recites: '*I bow to the lotus feet of the vajra-holder, the one whose kindness instantly creates great bliss...*'

It is due to Vajradhara's kindness of excellently teaching the essential instructions of the path of the vajra-yogas and whose inspiration gives rise to the vajra path in one's mindstream. Whose kindness, like the sun's light rays, completely illuminates, in the minds of oneself and others, the nature of ultimate reality itself; by illuminating and realising the Dharma. The mass of precious light rays of the primordial awareness that realises the ultimate abiding reality itself, dispels the mental darkness of not knowing the abiding ultimate reality. It transforms [one's mind] into the flawless vision of special insight (shes rab). By means of the possessions and resources and manifestations of immutable bliss and, in dependence on that, [the lama] is like that. One thinks: 'To the ultimate Vajradhara, the one who enables us to attain the state of Kālacakra; to the precious lama like the sun, I pay homage.' Thinking this, one pays homage [by reciting]: '*Homage to the lama, whose light of brilliant kindness, like the sun's precious rays....*'

³⁶ Both Tāranātha (ibid.) and Bamda Gelek Gyamtso (ibid.) teach that the nine-heap, or seven-heap, offering is acceptable:

Whatever the case, in this context, if one likes elaborate explanations, from the beginning and end of a session, offering with slightly more extensive words like the *thirty-seven heaps* is best. However, this is not absolutely necessary. The usual explanation [here referring to *Meaningful to See*] of the enumerations [of the heaps] is that in addition to the extensively practised *seven heaps* [mandala offering], two heaps for Rāhu and Kālagṇi are also offered, which makes *nine heaps*. See Appendix for a diagram of the nine-heaps offering visualisation.

³⁷ In terms of the *benefits* of offering the mandala, Tāranātha explains how the practice is vast encompassing body, speech and mind and the six pāramitās (ibid.):

Reciting the words is the *karmic activity of speech*. The mental thought of offering such as each visualisation is the *karmic activity of the mind*. It has the attributes of the complete virtue of the three doors [of body, speech and mind]. So, even though the material objects are few, since the visualisation and intentions are vast, it is of infinite virtue. It is the wise, skilful means of being able to accumulate great and vast merit with minor hardships and difficulties. From the *Mandala Sutra*:

[Offering the mandala], together with *bajung*, is *generosity*.

Cleaning it thoroughly is *discipline*.

Removing any life-forms is *patience*.

Practising with enthusiasm is *diligence*.

Meditative concentration is the mind in one moment

Drawing well the [mandala] design is *special insight*.

All the six pāramitās are done with

the excellent method of Mandala

Here, from these karmic actions by the body

One will become like gold in complexion,

completely liberated from sicknesses,

superior among humans and gods,

resplendent like the moon;

wealth and riches of gold and jewels;

born in the supreme families of buddhas and Kings.

So it is said. Doing one complete mandala in the presence of the three supreme ones is also

doing it with the complete six pāramitās, it is taught.

³⁹ In CTK, the seats are five, including Rāhu and Kālagni.

⁴⁰ In CTK. Bamda Geleg Gyamtso suggests three texts and visualisations to do for a three-week retreat on guru-yoga:

The practice these days is like this: by viewing the kindness of the lama as like that of Buddha, one beholds the lama as the actual Buddha. By the sheer force of this meditation of seeing the lama as Buddha, guru-yoga arises in one's mindstream.

In terms of the meditation practice on guru-yoga: for a three-week guru-yoga retreat, in the first week, one should meditate on one's precious root lama as inseparable in nature from the Omniscient Dharma King [Dolpopa], in the aspect of Vajradhara. Using the text written by the Omniscient Dharma King [Dolpopa] called *The Rain of Blessings: Six-Branch Guru-Yoga*.

For the second week [of practise], meditate on one's precious root lama as inseparable in essence from Je Drolwai Gonpo [Tāranātha], in the aspect of Vajradhara. Using the text written by [Tāranātha] himself called *The Hook that Summons Realisations: Guru Yoga*.

In the third week, one recites the words from the *general* guru-yoga practice in the Preliminaries text, by meditating on one's own precious root lama in the aspect of Vajradhara.

During the main practices of the six-branches, one alternates the three practices of Guru Yoga, as was the practice tradition of previous masters.

⁴¹ In HBL, Ch. 6, the section on guru-yoga, Tāranātha 'identifies' (*dngos gzung ba*) guru-yoga:

The third point is identifying guru-yoga. In the tradition of the Vajrayana secret mantra, one should practise the profound path of guru-yoga. For those endowed with good fortune, this is the most important method for attaining Buddhahood in one life. This is renowned by all and has one definite meaning. Through this conduct in relation to the sacred lama, the manner of showing respect, of remembering their kindness; the process of serving them. In terms of serving the lama with this conduct immediately, there is no difference between the sutras and tantras, nor the Hinayana and Mahayana. It is clearly seen in the Sutra Pitikas of the Vinaya dharma and the Mahayana and is the same as that for the one who is the spiritual friend, the source of all the excellent qualities. Even up to and including learned [dra ma] non-Buddhists, it is on the same side. They also state that from the activities of respectfully serving the lama the blessings enter oneself and the realisations arise.

However, there is this difference. That which is called the guru-yoga, is the name for the meditation on the lama. One places in one's mind the aspects of the body, speech and mind of the lama. From visualising that, one performs the yoga of continual devotion and respect, without interruption, this path that is the sole root of this main practice is labelled [guru-yoga]. Generally, it is in the secret mantra and in particular, manifestly revealed in the Unsurpassable Yoga Tantras. Since it is not widely renowned in the other lower classes of tantra, it is extremely suitable to call it, in a general context, the most important path for the blessings of the lama of the Secret Mantra Vajrayana.

In CTK (Chapter 5, p.93) Bamda Gelek Gyamtso explains the meaning of the guru-yoga meditation as:

The fifth [preliminary practice] is the blessings of the root guru-yoga. As Kunkhyen Chokle Namgyal Chenpo stated, intensely supplicating with devotion the glorious lama as the actual Buddha; is the meaning of guru-yoga meditation. One does not meditate with devotion on the lama as the Buddha as if the lama's physical body and five aggregates themselves and so on are that of the actual Buddha. One meditates that due to their incredibly great kindness, by accomplishing all the enlightened activities and deeds of the Buddhas, such as teaching oneself the profound Dharma and so on, the lama is no different from the actual Buddha. As it is said [in the *Stainless Light Commentary* on Kālacakra]: 'The pure path of pure students originates from the kindness of the sacred lamas.'

⁴² In HBL (ibid.), Tāranātha lays out the qualities of a master and the importance of examining (and abandoning) a guru who is not qualified, who does not have the essential qualities:

The first point here is the explanation of the characteristics of the master and the student. As it is said:

A disciple with intelligence should not accept as a Guru someone who lacks compassion [1] or who is angry [2], malicious [3], arrogant [4], has desirous attachment [5], is undisciplined [6] or boastful of his knowledge [7]. (A Guru should be) stable (in his actions), cultivated (in his speech), wise, patient and honest. He should neither conceal his shortcomings, nor pretend to possess qualities he lacks. He should be an expert in the meanings (of tantra) and in its ritual procedures (of medicine and turning back obstacles). Also, he should have loving

compassion and a complete knowledge of the scriptures. Thoroughly proficient in the ten principles, skilled in the drawing of mandalas, skilled in explaining the secret mantra, with supreme faith and his senses fully under control.

Even though this was said in *The Fifty Verses to the Guru*, since it is cited in the scriptures on *Stainless Light*, it is clearly the same as the words of the tantra. From the *Glorious Kalacakra Tantra*:

First, the one to be followed, the *pure lama*. Endowed with samaya [1] and especially abiding in the vajrayana [2]. Meditates on ultimate reality [3]; completely pure without attachment [4] and free from stains[5]; a disposition that is patient and tolerant[6]. Entered the path and Enabling students by giving the path and robbing them of the fears and dangers of the hell realms [7]. Observes chaste, pure conduct [8]. Regarding demons, one who holds the support of the vajra staff [9] and has accomplished Vajrasattva[10].

These are the *excellent qualities* of the master.

Endowed with pride [1], suppressing others with anger [2], shredded samayas [3], craving [4] and without having listened purely[5]. One who strives to seduce and deceive students [6], who does [not have] experience of abiding in the supreme bliss [7] nor the empowerments [8]. Craving all wealth and resources[9], immodest and careless and using harsh words[10], and with lust for sensual objects [11]. Such experts in leading students to hell should be abandoned in order to attain the perfect bodhicitta.

This is the presentation of the *faults* [of the teacher].

..In terms of the master, there are two types: 1) the supreme type, who possesses all the characteristics of a master; and 2) one who, even though they have not completely perfected the excellent qualities and abandoned all the faults, does not possess any inappropriate qualities. Both these types are suitable.

Tāranātha also speaks about the essential qualities of a guru in the section on the ‘three confidences’. Bamda Gelek Gyatso gives a word-by-word explanation of this verse cited here in CTK (Ch.5, pp.97-101).

⁴³ In terms of what it means to have *reverence and devotion* for the guru in this context, First of all, Tāranātha teaches that there is no requirement to meditate on a teacher in such a way (seeing them as the Buddha) unless there is a genuine mantrayāna connection and an authentic empowerment has been given. He says:

The fourth point is how to meditate with devotion and reverence. In terms of the attributes of the object, it is possible they are emanations of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, if they are not [those] it is also permissible for them to manifest as ordinary beings. Since that vajra master accomplishes the benefit of beings with a body, speech and mind that is fully imbued with the yidam deities, it is like there is no difference between them and the actual Buddha. If one pleases them, one pleases the Buddhas. If one gather negativities [towards them], one accumulates negativities to the Buddha. If one makes

offerings to them, one makes offerings to all the Buddhas and all the obscurations of the student will be exhausted.

Nonetheless, the meditation with devotion and reverence on the root lama himself, whoever is the suitable object, one does not view them as an ordinary person, like an Arya master or an ordinary spiritual friend and so on. The meaning of needing to meditate on them as the actual Buddha is that there is no difference between one and many Buddhas. The distinctive way one engages the cultivation of meditation and reverence, is not like there are one or two Buddhas. [One meditates] on them being the same nature as the embodiment of all the Buddhas of the three times and ten directions. As well as being the embodiment of all the Dharma and Sangha. Thus, my lama here is actually the embodiment of all the three supreme jewels. The lama himself is the three supreme jewels; the three supreme jewels themselves are the lama.

⁴⁴ In CTK (ibid.) Bamda Gelek elaborates what is meant here by 'sexual desire':

The obscurations of primordial awareness, such as the habitual tendencies for lusting after the orgasmic bliss and the orgasmic bliss of the ejaculation are purified. Out of passionate desire for the empty form Mahāmudrā, the immutable bliss that arises from the binding of the bodhicitta at the vajra jewel tip that descended from the crown, is dissolved into the supreme immutable bliss of the realisation of the ultimate reality. That is the *principal fourth empowerment*. The union of that kind of primordial awareness and the empty form⁴⁴ body is the *principal fourth empowerment*. The mere visualisation of the primordial awareness of attaining the union like that at the time of the empowerment and the habitual tendency of that established in one's mindstream, is the *ordinary fourth empowerment*. This *ordinary fourth empowerment* is the empowerment that makes it suitable for the arising in one's mindstream of the branch of *Samadhi*. Like that one attains the fourth empowerment. One should with firm resolution from the bottom of one's heart, without any doubt, think that the blessing of the lama's Buddha primordial awareness is absorbed into one's mind. One receives the empowerment of *Samadhi*.

⁴⁵ In CTK (ibid.) Bamda Gelek describes the word 'blessing':

In terms of [the phrase] 'bestowing blessing' (*byin brlabs*) it means, 'bestowing' (*byin*) one's mindstream, in dependence on the body, speech and mind of the lama, with their excellent qualities and powers, that enable and empower one to abandon the obscurations. By the strength (*stobs*) of that bestowal, and strength of that power, one is able to train and transform one's previous mindstream into meditative absorption (*ting nge 'dzin*) and the mind of Bodhicitta; and purify the various obscurations. That is the meaning of 'blessing' (*brlab*).

⁴⁶ In the context of guru-yoga, Tāranātha (ibid.) teaches the meaning of the phrase 'profound path' in terms of the 'exceptional devotion' that is required to progress on it:

The sixth point is the meaning of the phrase, the 'profound path'. If there is no devotion or respect for the lama, how can anyone speak about accomplishments?! Even though one has entered into a

devotion that is without any degeneration of samaya and has not lost hope in all the excellent qualities, if there is not the exceptional devotion for the lama leading one on the path then, by seeking other methods to provide the supreme siddhi/accomplishment, it will be necessary to have many other ways of eliminating obstacles and enhancing one's practice. For other desires/wishes, even though there is a very nearby method, it will be necessary to search for many different ones. The accomplishments of long-life, wealth, magnetising and so on, will never be accomplished. This exceptional devotion for the lama that guides on the path, one will accomplish the supreme by devotion alone. Long-life, resources, powers and so on, all other wishes will be accomplished without much effort, by exceptional devotion alone. Since that alone is sufficient, it is called 'the profound path'.