



**EMPOWERMENT
AND
ATIIYOGA**

BY TONY DUFF

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by

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The Meaning of Empowerment in General and in Relation to the Maha Ati System in Particular

Ripening and Liberating

The process of the Vajra Vehicle in Buddhism is summed up as twofold “ripening and liberating”. Ripening refers to a process of maturing one’s being in preparation for the actual process of liberating it. Liberation, done on the basis of the ripening empowerment is the application of the specific techniques that liberate you from your samsaric style of being into an enlightened style of being.

Ripening is done using the technique called “empowerment”. Empowerment consists of four major steps in the Buddhist tradition, each of which is a specific type of empowerment. The end result of being taken through the four steps of empowerment is that you have been shown all aspects of your being in their enlightened form.

This demonstration through empowerment of the enlightened side of the various aspects of your being plants a seed in your experience which can then be nurtured into the full-blown form, the full enlightenment of a truly complete buddha. Thus, empowerment is called the “doorway” and also the “gateway” to the vajra vehicle journey. You have to go through the departure gate at an airport otherwise you cannot go on the flight and similarly, you have to be entered into and ripened within the mandala of a deity before you

can take your seat on the vajra jet-liner in which you fly through the space of reality as the first class deity.

Once you have been entered and ripened through the process of empowerment, you are given the actual techniques of the Vajra Vehicle which you then use to liberate yourself from cyclic existence. In this way, the Vajra Vehicle is a process of ripening and liberating, with empowerment being the means for ripening and the actual practice of the techniques of the system being the means for actual liberation.

Empowerment

“Empowerment” was originally called “abhiṣheka” in India. It is none other than the process of coronation of a king. As with Europe, India used to be a collection of fiefdoms ruled by kings and there was a process of coronation for the king which put the king-to-be on the seat of rulership and invested in him the power to rule over his particular realm. These coronation ceremonies whether European or Indian relied on a universal set of principles: the king-to-be is put on his seat in a ceremony of pomp and circumstance; is introduced to the beings of his new realm, from consort, down through ministers, even to the most menial subjects in the distant corners of his realm; is given the sceptres that represent his particular power; and, finally, is anointed as a king with specially consecrated water.

Tibetan Buddhist texts that discuss the process of empowerment say that the Indian word “abhiṣheka” means “scattering” and “pouring”. Some commentaries say that scattering means scattering obstacles to enlightenment and so comes to mean “destroying”. However, scattering can also be understood to mean “sprinkling” water as part of the coronation and some teachers explain it that way. In fact, the word “abhiṣheka” when used in ancient India, and

now, too, means “coronation” or other rite of ascension to power in which anointment with water is a hallmark of the ceremony involved. In short, just as we Europeans speak of coronation, the Indians speak of abhiṣheka.

In Buddhist practice, the process of being empowered into the vajra vehicle is consistent with the worldly procedure of crowning a king. You, as a potential deity, are made into the deity, put on your throne, and introduced to your realm. Following that, you are given your various sceptres of power and are, usually, sprinkled with consecrated water to complete the coronation. Of course, the empowerment ceremonies of Buddhist tantra are not mere replicas of the coronation ceremonies of worldly kings. The actual process of empowerment in Buddhist tantra is the process of putting a practitioner on the throne of enlightenment. This has two parts to it: first the practitioner has to be introduced to the enlightened realm of the deity concerned, then has to have his raw, un-enlightened body, speech, and mind matured into an enlightened body, speech, and mind. This two-fold process, which sums up the meaning of empowerment, is called “entering and ripening”. The disciple is entered into the mandala by the vajra master then has his samsaric body, speech, and mind ripened into its inherent, enlightened body, speech, and mind.

Entrance into the mandala of the deity is the first step. The main step, following it, of ripening, is done in a series of four steps called the four empowerments. These steps correspond to the fact that, as a human being, you have body, speech, mind, and a pure thread that runs through all of that but which is covered over by delusion. The four empowerments address each of those aspects in that order, which is a sequence of going progressively from coarse to subtle.

The first empowerment is called the vase empowerment. It deals with the obscurations of the outer or body level of existence, which

includes all of the physical senses and the world that we have based on those senses. The empowerment ripens your five, ordinary aggregates into their inherently pure aspects and plants the seed for future attainment of the physical form body of a buddha, the *nirmāṇakāya*.

The second empowerment is called the secret empowerment. It deals with the obscurations of the subtle body within the physical body. It ripens the subtle body into its pure form, which is particularly connected with primordial sound. Because of that, this empowerment is where you are given the mantra of the deity. The empowerment plants the seed for the future attainment of the subtle form body of a buddha, the *saṃbhogakāya*.

The third empowerment is called the *prajñā-jñāna* empowerment. It deals with the obscurations of mind. It uses a consort, which is the *prajna* part of the name, to lead the disciple, through unification of masculine and feminine principles, to the wisdom of a buddha, which is the *jnana* part of the name; hence it is called the *prajñā-jñāna* empowerment. The empowerment ripens mind into the luminosity aspect of the essence of mind. It plants the seed for the future attainment of the *dharmakāya*.

The fourth empowerment is called the word or precious word empowerment. It uses words or other signals to point to reality as it is, which is the thread that runs through all experience, both enlightened and un-enlightened. It matures the entire being into the *rigpa*-emptiness which is the ultimate reality that marks all things. It plants the seed for the future attainment of the *svabhavikakāya*.

As mentioned earlier, empowerment ripens your being so that you could fully liberate yourself by the practices done following empowerment. Thus there is the question of whether or not liberation also can occur within the ripening of empowerment. Liberation, to

a greater or lesser extent, can occur within empowerment. However, the extent to which this happens, if it happens at all, is dependent on a variety of factors, especially the capacity of the disciple. For most of us, liberation happens because we go through the coronation ceremony that fully invests us with the right to be the deity and then practice consistently until liberation, which is the full manifestation of our capabilities and activities as a king of all existence, is obtained. However, for those rare few individuals who have already journeyed sufficiently down the spiritual path so are ready vessels, significant amounts of liberation can occur within the empowerment ceremony itself.

Padma Karpo, of the Drukpa Kagyu, says,

“Discursive thought¹ is a non-wisdom-mode thought of body, speech, and mind that generates the four circumstances—waking, dreaming, sleeping, and the fourth one²—which, since it binds tightly into samsara, is like a seal-knot. The empowerments outer, inner, secret, and ultimate—outer vase empowerment, inner secret empowerment, secret prajñājñāna empowerment, and the ultimate fourth empowerment—cause the seal of the knot of discursive thought to collapse. The way the collapse occurs is through “the essence of mind self-liberated”: when the essence of mind, which is as-it-is, is communicated with, then discursive thought, which is not-as-it-is, collapses; it is like knowing the truth causes the collapse of falsity.”

The Four Empowerments in Relation to Levels of Practice in the Vajra Vehicle

¹ The use of concepts as the way of relating to your world; this is the way of saṃsāra.

² Sexual union.

There are various levels of practice in the Vajra Vehicle. The highest ones are called Mahāmudrā and Maha Ati (which is most commonly called these days by its Tibetan name Dzogchen or its English name Great Completion). Both of these practices are typified as practices that focus on the meaning of the fourth level of empowerment; as is said,

“The fourth is the precious word empowerment. In it, all degradations and obscurations of body, speech, and mind, taken all together, are cleared off simultaneously. By it, you are empowered to practice vajra wisdom—Mahāmudrā and Maha Ati—that is, rigpa-emptiness. Having received it, you have planted a seed so that you are worthy to obtain the svabhavikakaya.”

All four empowerments are necessary for all levels of Vajra Vehicle practice because each of the empowerments addresses a specific aspect of being. Thus, saying that the practices of Mahāmudrā and Maha Ati focus on the fourth empowerment does not mean that empowerments in their systems of practice only have the fourth empowerment in them. They do have all four empowerments and all four are needed and properly represented. What it means is that the liberating part, the actual practice of the main techniques of the system itself, focusses on the meaning that is shown in the fourth empowerment rather than in the first to third empowerments. Therefore, for those who intend to practice these systems, the fourth empowerment is of special interest.

Other types of practice focus on other levels of the four empowerments and those empowerments then become of special interest to people who are doing those practices. For example, all development stage practices focus on the meaning of the first empowerment. However, again, it is not that one empowerment is of interest to the exclusion of the others. Rather, all four are important and needed, but one might be of special interest.

Therefore, the next chapter in this book is the root empowerment of Great Completion as found in the Longchen Nyingthig transmission of Great Completion. There are many empowerments in the Longchen Nyingthig system but there is one which is the root of all of them. It is the first empowerment in the original *Root Volumes of the Longchen Nyingthig* and is the base empowerment of the whole set of empowerments contained in those volumes. This type of empowerment is special to the Maha Ati system and is called “The King’s Coronation Anointing Vase” empowerment. It empowers a practitioner into the Great Completion view and, as such, is the root of all other empowerments in the transmission. The text of the empowerment is very short, making it an easy-to-understand overview of the procedure of empowerment in this system. Several of the verses used in the empowerment are used throughout the set of empowerments, for example, the lines used to accept the samayas at the end of the empowerment are used repeatedly in the other empowerments of the transmission.

Following that, two fourth empowerment texts taken from the empowerment texts of the Nyingma Kama transmission are presented. They were chosen because they present the fourth empowerment very clearly. The first is the most important of the Eight Logos empowerments—*The Narrow Fortress of The Eight Logos*—of the Nyingma Kama transmission. It is very similar to the root empowerment of the Longchen Nyingthig transmission and helps illustrate fourth empowerment principles—which is the meaning of Maha Ati—very clearly. The second is called a suchness empowerment but this is just another name for fourth empowerment. It is from one of the Red Yamāntaka empowerments contained in the Nyingma Kama. This text is less explicit about the meaning of fourth empowerment than the first but helps to amplify on the principles involved. I have written copious notes for these two texts and these should help you to understand further the idea of the king’s ascension at the Ati level. In addition, the Eight Logos empowerment text gives an

especially nice introduction, in words, to the nature of mind that can inform and help your practice, especially of the Thorough Cut.

As mentioned above, ripening empowerment is the gateway to the vajra vehicle journey. After ripening empowerment has been received, you must obtain the liberating instructions and then, by practising them, liberate yourself. The Great Completion practice that corresponds to the two empowerment texts contained in here is the Thorough Cut. Therefore, I have included a practical instruction from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche on it. The instruction comes in the form of a letter written to one of his lady disciples. It is short but contains all the features of the path of the Thorough Cut. Rabjam Rinpoche taught the text to the disciples who gathered at Bodhgaya for the annual Shechen retreat there in 2005.

There are two main practices in Maha Ati. The first is the Thorough Cut whose ripening empowerment and liberating instructions for practice are contained in here, as just mentioned. In addition to the Thorough Cut, there is also the practice of Direct Crossing. This practice requires its own, specific type of empowerment, called "The Empowerment of the Liveliness of Rigpa"³. Once that empowerment has been obtained, the liberating instructions of Direct Crossing can be received and practised. This level of empowerment is included in the root empowerment of the Longchen Nyingthig system found in the next chapter. It is mentioned in one line of the fourth empowerment. However, it is not very explicit. To receive the empowerment explicitly, there are several methods. In the Longchen Nyingthig system, rigpa's liveliness empowerment is contained within the famous text called *Written Instruction called Wisdom Guru*⁴. That text is usually kept very private but an authoritative translation can be obtained from the author. Alternatively, it is presented extensively in the empowerments of the Nyingthig

³ Tib. rig pa'i rstal dbang

⁴ Tib. khrid yig ye shes bla ma

Yazhi, which are connected with Longchen Nyingthig.

Sources of the Empowerment Texts: Nyingma Kama and Longchen Nyingthig

The Vajra Vehicle dharma that originally came into Tibet with Padmasambhava, Vairochana, and Vimalamitra is maintained by the Tibetan Buddhist tradition called “Nyingma”. Nyingma simply means “The Early System” and the name is given to set it off from the other systems that came later and were called “newer” systems (although sometimes translated as “The Ancient Ones”, that is not really the meaning of the word). Maha Ati is the ultimate teaching within the Nyingma tradition and accordingly, all of the texts here are from the Nyingma system.

The Vajra Vehicle teachings of the Nyingma were transmitted down through time in two main ways. They were transmitted directly from one person to another in a long succession of transmission; this is called “Kama”⁵ meaning “the word”. And they were transmitted by being concealed and then recovered at some later time in a short succession of transmission; this is called “Terma”⁶ meaning “treasure”.

This book uses texts of both Kama and Terma. There are two empowerment texts from the Nyingma Kama collection and there is the root empowerment text from the Longchen Nyingthig collection. The Nyingma Kama is a collection of all the empowerments that have been transmitted from one person to another since Padmasambhava and his associates. There are various forms of this collection, because there have been different compilations made by

⁵ bka’ ma.

⁶ gter ma. Although usually translated as “treasure”, the actual meaning of “terma” is actually just “something that has been hidden away for later use”.

various Tibetan masters. All of them are very large collections. The latest one, by Dudjom Rinpoche, numbers ninety-six volumes.

Longchen Nyingthig is the name given to the transmission of the teachings that came down to us from Longchen Rabjam through Jigmey Lingpa—who is considered to be an emanation of Longchen Rabjam—as a type of Terma. Jigmey Lingpa received the teachings in a series of visions and direct mental revelation so they are called “Mind Terma”. These teachings which are of the most ultimate Maha Ati were collectively called Longchen Nyingthig. They were written down and included in the collected works of Jigmey Lingpa which occupy fourteen volumes in total. Of them, three volumes are filled with the Longchen Nyingthig revelations and accordingly are called *The Root Volumes of the Longchen Nyingthig*⁷. These volumes start with three texts by Jigmey Lingpa that tell the story of how he received the teachings, which are followed by the texts for giving the empowerments of the transmissions and various sadhanas and liturgies for performing the practices.

Since that time, many other writings concerning Longchen Nyingthig have appeared, coming from various great gurus. Some of these writings directly concern the original transmission that was received by Jigmey Lingpa and in recent times these have been gathered together and put into additional volumes of teachings that are now included with the original, three *Root Volumes of the Longchen Nyingthig*. There was one extra volume to start with and now, in the latest print, there are two extra volumes making a five volume set. The extra material in the additional volumes is comprised of lineage prayers, sadhanas for the deities in Longchen Nyingthig that were received in visions, some commentaries on the practices, an explanation of an alternative sequence for the empowerments, and other, similar materials. The extra material in the additional volumes comes mainly from the first and third incarnations of

⁷ Tib. klong chen nying thig rtsa pod

Dodrupchen Rinpoche (there are various listings of the main disciples of Jigme Lingpa but, generally speaking, the two main ones were Jigme Thrinley Ozer, who became the first Dodrupchen Rinpoche, and Jigme Gyalway Nyugu, who was one of Patrul Rinpoche's gurus). There is also a significant amount of material from Khyentse Wangpo, the first Khyentse Rinpoche. There are several items from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. There are a couple of commentaries by two great khenpos of the tradition.

In the winter of 2005, Zhade'u Thrulzhig Rinpoche bestowed the Nyingma Kama Dilgo Khyentse and Dudjom Rinpoche's incarnations together with a large assembly at Shechen Monastery, Kathmandu, Nepal. Then in April, 2006, he bestowed the Longchen Nyingthig empowerments on a similar audience. I made a variety of translations during these empowerments in order to assist the Western students who were there. It culminated in this book which was put together in order to clarify the meaning of empowerment in general but especially in relation to Maha Ati, the ultimate teaching of the tradition that was being passed on.

Rabjam Rinpoche, who captains Shechen Monastery, said to me recently that he appreciated the production of this type of translation and commentary for the sake of participants at Shechen programs. As he said, it gives them something to take with them. It is immensely gratifying to please such a great hero of the teaching, of course. My real hope though is that it will open the door to empowerment in general for Western students and in particular to the wisdom of the fourth empowerment as the basis for the entire Ati journey.

Lotsawa Tony Duff,
Director,
Padma Karpo Translation Committee
25th April 2006



From Longchen Nyingthig Root Volume 1
of Jigmey Lingpa's Collected Works

The Root Empowerment,
The King's Coronation Anointing Vase
Empowerment

I bow to the self-knowing, the factual deity.

*The great secret vajra vehicle
Has for its entrance empowerment whose life-force is samaya
And for its nature actuality which is inexpressible;
Thus, in order to accept disciples of supreme fortune,
The base empowerment, The King's Coronation Anointing Vase is pre-
sented.*

SAMAYA

*In an excellent place, isolated and pleasant,
Nicely set up the maṇḍala which will form the basis.
In the centre, set a ratna vase
With mouth ornamentation and neck ties, filled with liquid.
To the right, put this text as the volume and
To the left, put the secret substance bhañja.
Above it, put a mirror with sindhura,
A Vajrasatva mirror¹, and
The family chakali² with a canopy erected over it.
Expel the obstructors. Do the activities according to*

Rigdzin Dupa's text and practice the capable one.

With samadhi, arise through self-entry.

Have the disciples sit in the rows.

Wash them with water from the activity vase. Banish the obstructors.

Meditate on a protection circle then explain the history.

Have them offer a mandala and supplicate:

HOḤ

I, a fortunate son of the family

Have been accepted by the great compassionate one;

Please enter and ripen me

In the great samaya mandala.

Have them request with that three times then give the reply:

HOḤ

In this the supreme of secret's mandalas,

Difficult to enter and of high rewards with high risks,

Because all is lost if samaya is corrupted,

An empowerment in which the samaya is to be kept will be given.

Having announced that, impart the vows of refuge and bodhicitta.

Perform an accumulation of virtue with the seven limbs.

Through that, they become a suitable basis for the empowerment.

After that, the son disciples³ are generated as the deity then

The descent of wisdom is done assiduously.

Seal with TĪṢṬṬHA VAJRA and

Empower by placing the vase on the crown.

HŪḤ

The auspicious vase, the deity's immeasurable palace and

The water of amrita non-dual with the deity

Empower the fortunate son through which

Attachment to appearances is finished as the symbol, the deity's
body.

You attain Full-Maturation Vidyadhara⁴;

Come and tread upon the Total Light level.

root mantra and KĀYA ABHIṢHIÑCHA OM

The secret substance⁵ is placed at the Bliss-Protector⁶ throat:

HŪM

The red and white bodhicittas of male and female uniting
Swirl together inside the bhandha.

The fortunate son is empowered through which

The channel constituents⁷ letters are fully ripened.

You attain Control-Over-Life Vidyadhara;

Come and tread upon the Padma-Containing level.

root mantra and VĀK ABHIṢHIÑCHA ĀḤ

Place a qualified consort in his hand:

HŪM

The source of all dharmas,

The great-bliss woman, the secret's consort⁸,

Is given to the son of the family through which

The wisdoms of the four joys are manifest.

You attain Mahāmudrā Vidyadhara;

Come and tread upon the Great Assemblage of Wheel level.

root mantra and CITTA ABHIṢHIÑCHA HŪM

Show, on top of a bell-metal, circular mirror,

The Vajrasatva mirror:

HOḤ

Alpha purity mirror, the pure portal, and

Spontaneous-existence crystal, clarity without stains⁹—

By the empowerment completed through symbolic signs

Stainless rigpa's actuality is realized.

You attain Spontaneous-existence Vidyadhara;

Come and tread upon the Great Bliss level.

root mantra and DHARMADHĀTU ABHIṢHIÑCHA HŪM

Give them the factual introduction to actuality¹⁰:

*Rest equipoised in the state free from extremes;
Saying, "PHAT", separate mind and rigpa;
Saying, "AH", give the reality introduction.*

Then entrust the command with the volume.

HOḤ

Dharmakāya Samantabhadra,
Saṃbhogakāya five conqueror families,
Nirmāṇakāya Garab Dorje,
Achārya Mañjuśrīmitra,
Vidyadhara Śhrī Singha,
Mahāpaṇḍita Vimalamitra,
Uddiyana Padma Thothreng,
Dākiṇī Yeshe Tsogyal,
Sovereign Trisong Deutsen,
Conqueror's son Drimey Ozer,
Longchen Namkha'i Yogin, and so on—

the Nature Great Completion's glorious guardian vidyadhara root together with lineage gurus, ocean of yidams and dākiṇīs, and assembly of oceans of samaya-bound dharmapālas all together, please here, today, empower the vajra disciples. Please bless them. Please make their realization blaze. Please rouse their yogic activity. You who have already attained the seat of rulership that goes with the mind of the space of Great Completion freed from the activities and efforts of rational mind, please act so that they obtain in one life and one body, the rainbow body, the supreme body of great transference, setting them at the rank of glorious Samantabhadra.

Say that three times and transfer the factual lineage¹¹.

Set the consciousness in a state without aim.

Then give the order of samaya by

Explaining the divisions and having them repeat them.

The root samayas—supreme body, speech, and mind,

The branches—twenty five,
And non-existent, solely, openness, and so on¹²,
You must keep according to the ritual text.
Say that then have them offer a mandala in return for what has been given.

And again, in order to proclaim obedience as servants:
Whatever the leader commands
All that I will do.
Have them say that three times, then dedicate the merit.
SAMAYA.
This is all.



Translated by Lotsawa Tony Duff on the occasion of the Longchen Nyingthig empowerments at Shechen Monastery, April 2006.

The Fourth Empowerment of The Narrow Fortress of The Eight Logos

Prostrations to glorious Samantabhadra!

*Next, the empowerment-general¹³ of the view of the vehicles
Is conferral of empowerment of the four intents of the authentic view¹⁴.
The master draws a white letter A on the palm of his hand
And rests his mind in the uncontrived dharmatā¹⁵.
The disciple's hand takes hold of a precious jewel.
The master with consort and disciple with consort,
Are evident as the form of the dharmakāya Samantabhadra with consort.*

HŪṂ

All is spontaneous existence¹⁶, Samantabhadra's phenomena,
Their nature is absence of elaboration¹⁷, Samantabhadri's state,
The two non-dual is the king of methods which runs throughout¹⁸,
The two non-dual is the dharmadhātu conferral of empowerment¹⁹.

Samantabhadri, the self-arisen bhagavat,
Is the abiding-only-in-dharmadhātu
One's-own-enlightened-mind deity;
Homage to the deity that is superfactual mind!²⁰

Then, the master places his right hand on the disciple's head and says:

HŪṂ

Samantabhadra, stainlessness's
Universal governor, shines forth as the wisdom king²¹;
Your own mind's complete purity²², shines forth as concept's king²³;
Enlightenment's essence shines forth as great bliss²⁴;

Everything without exception is the spontaneous existence of
dharmakāya;

All phenomena are contained within your own mind;

Since mind's personage²⁵ is nothing whatsoever,

Since the bindu's nature is absence of elaboration,

The equality king governs over all;

The very complete king of dharmatā rigpa,

That shows each without mixup is the supreme of vehicles²⁶.

These with none missed²⁷ are to be swiftly completed for which
reason

There is the supreme empowerment of view, the King's Coronation
Anointing Vase and by conferring it

May you have the kingship of coronation via the all-encompassing
supreme empowerment²⁸.

OM SARVA TATHĀGATA SALAPATRAPUTERACANA ŚHVA SVABHĀVA
ATMAKO 'HAM

By conferral of the King's Coronation Anointing Vase empower-
ment,

May you realize glorious Samantabhadra's intent from the depths
and so

Obtain the empowerment of dharmatā Great Completion²⁹!

*Next, the conferral of the view empowerment. Have the disciple stare
penetratingly into the space in front:*

HŪM

Look, look, you fortunate one!

Look at this space before you!

In the luminosity crystal-clarity devoid of extremes

Is the absence of grasping to any position—this

Is the view freed from the extremes of falling into sides.

Remaining in this fact³⁰

Is the intent³¹ of the buddhas of the three times.

Oh child of the family! In this space before you, where there is no colour or shape, this luminosity which is unobstructed, empty openness freed of the extremes of existing/not-existing, this absence of any and every grasping whatsoever, the view divorced from the extremes of falling into sides, is the intent of the buddha; recognize it!³²

Those were the words of the introduction.

Next, the conferral of the meditation empowerment:

HŪM

Look, look, you fortunate one!

Look within at your own mind!

In the luminosity³³ no concepts, no distraction;

Like a lamp unshaken by wind

Meditation is self-illumination³⁴, without grasping.

Always meditate on this fact!

It is the intent of the buddhas.

O, child of the family! Fortunate one! When you look within at your own mind: in mind there are no things or signs³⁵; in the luminosity there are no concepts, no distractions—it is unmoved by discursive thoughts—so; like a lamp unshaken by wind, relax and rest there! Just exactly this, meditation done as self-illumination without grasping, is the buddha's intent, so meditate always inseparable from it!

Those were the words of the introduction.

Next, the conferral of the fruition empowerment:

HŪM

Look, look, you fortunate one!

Look at the unchanging fact³⁶ of dharmakāya!

Beyond extremes of expression³⁷ through word or thought,

The state of emptiness in which nothing—

Just like water poured onto dough³⁸—is established,
 Is the no arising / no cessation dharmakāya;
 Fruition is to have unchanging assurance³⁹.

You are to remain in this fact!

The buddhas of the three times remain in this.

Say that and pour some bodhichitta combined with liquor into the disciple's mouth, then,

The fact of dharmatā beyond words, thoughts, expressions altogether; this empty nature, without the duality of arising and cessation, is to be done as a fruition of having unchanging assurance in the dharmakāya so, since all the buddhas of the three times remain in this state, you are to stay unchangeably in this fact!

Those were the words of the introduction.

Next, the conferral of the conduct empowerment:

HŪM

Listen, listen, you fortunate one!

In the play of self-arising wisdom,

The unobstructed king of methods

Conducts whatever appears as the deeds of buddha

And each being conducted in bliss, it is liberated in its own place.

The conduct-general which is without restriction,

Is the conduct of the intent of the buddhas of the three times.

O, child of the family! Fortunate one! The meaning of the empowerment from head to toe has been summed up into four topics of view, meditation, fruition, and conduct. As it cannot be bestowed using another empowerment more kingly than this, the view, meditation, fruition, and conduct are at the limit and the upadesha are at full measure. Thus, buddha has self-arisen in the mind. Thus, all vehicles of the precepts, outer and inner, and all phenomena of samsara and nirvana come from nowhere other than your own mind. Thus, the empowerment of the view-general

brings buddha devoid of good or bad; the empowerment of the meditation-general brings abiding without anything to meditate on or any meditation to do; the empowerment of the fruition-general brings realization of the non-duality of birth and death; and the the empowerment of the conduct-general brings remaining in absence of bondage or liberation. Thus, for the four empowerments of that sort, any yogin who hears them by ear and who has them stay in mind obtains the empowerment-general of the views of the vehicles. Thus, since every empowerment stems from this, it is the grandfather of all empowerments.

Thus, the introduction is given.

From the Vajramala, this is the twelfth chapter, the chapter on the view, meditation, fruition, and conduct empowerment-general of the vehicles.



Translated by Lotsawa Tony Duff on the occasion of the Nyingma Kama empowerments at Shechen Monastery, November, 2004.

The Suchness Empowerment of The Six-Faced Yamantaka

[The outer, inner, and secret empowerments of Six-Faced Yamantaka are given. Then the vajra master says:]

Having thus obtained the secret empowerment, it is now appropriate to receive the suchness empowerment... Repeat this supplication after me:

HOḤ

Teacher who is the Guiding Light, the Bhagavat;

Gods; and Master please consider me!

Please enter me into the mandala of riga bodhicitta

Via the self-liveliness of the five wisdoms.

Say that three times.

Then, the master and disciples both enter equipoise:

ĀḤ

In uncontrived dharma's complete purity,

Unsought, self-arising wisdom becomes

The equipoise, spontaneous presence, the fact of dharmakaya;

Rigpa's liveliness is the empowerment;

By it, may the Great Completion bodhichitta empowerment;

The ultimate supreme empowerment, be complete!⁴⁰

DHARMA PRAJÑĀ PAÑCA ABHIṢHIÑCA HOḤ

Self-arising wisdom—the nature co-emergent wisdom and the similitude wisdom of melting bliss co-emergent wisdom both inseparable—is like space, is absent of every expression and past being an

object of word and thought. The liveliness of its rigpa shining forth in great variety; is the essence of the five wisdoms appearing unhindered! That moreover, being the bodhicitta with essence of bliss, emptiness, and luminosity, is the enlightened body aspect, Akshobhya; the unborn emptiness not being contaminated with faults of conceptual structures is the speech aspect Amitabha; that wisdom of inseparable bliss-emptiness overcomes every one of grasped-grasping's concepts, so is the mind aspect Vajrasatva; that mindness's wisdom of great bliss is the source of every one of the buddha qualities, so it is the qualities aspect, Ratnasambhava; it liberates the concepts built on conceptual structures and expands the buddha's wisdom, so it is the activity aspect, Amoghasiddhi. Recognise the five aspects primordially complete within yourself, this is the self-shining-forth, great primordial liberation!⁴¹

*The actual explanation that goes with this suchness empowerment is not in the text as passed down so these root verses of the empowerment should be supplemented with other material, whatever is suitable.*⁴²



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Notes

1. A “Vajrasatva mirror” is actually a crystal. Together with the bronze mirror, it is used to give the fourth empowerment in all of the Longchen Nyingthig empowerments.
2. Chakali is Sanskrit for “picture card”; it is saying to put the picture cards of the empowerment deity’s family there.
3. This text is written for male practitioners. It is not the translator’s job to change the author’s words; ladies can simply change the wording to fit.
4. This empowerment ripens a disciple in four stages by taking them through the four steps of realization of the Nyingma system, the four levels of Vidyadhara, meaning the four levels of people who have gained rigpa.
5. Carried in the kapala.
6. The name of the chakra inside the throat.
7. The constituent of the body which is the channels through which the winds run.
8. Often translated as “the secret consort” but it does not mean a consort who is kept secret, it means a consort of the secret, where secret is a name for the vajra path.
9. The entirety of the view of Maha Ati is summed up in the two things of alpha purity (Tib. ka dag) and spontaneous existence (Tib. lhun grub). Alpha purity refers to the emptiness of the ground, which is therefore pure. Spontaneous existence refers to the appearances that come from the ground. The mirror and crystal are the

signs that communicate the fact, which is reality described as alpha purity and spontaneous existence.

10. The fourth empowerment communicates the fact of reality through a symbolic sign. The introduction to the nature of mind shows that reality in fact, not through symbolic means. Actuality is a word meaning reality, as it actually is.

11. The lineage of reality in fact, not a lineage of a conventional form of reality.

12. The first three of the four special samayas of Maha Ati. The fourth is spontaneously existent.

13. In general, the terminology of this empowerment is in the unique terminology of the Great Completion (Dzogchen) system. In particular, it is the specific terminology of the king's empowerment and the rulership over all that goes with it. The Great Completion is the very king of views. It not only rules over all lesser views but is contained within all of them, too, for they are just coarser expressions of this ultimate expression of reality. If you keep this in mind and read the text carefully, you will see a whole way of talking that corresponds to the sovereignty of a king. It is like the terminology that you would encounter when speaking of the highest levels of government.

The dharmakāya kind of king, which is the king we are speaking of here, governs all phenomena, with no phenomenon excluded. Not only does it govern every phenomenon but it suffuses every phenomenon as well. Therefore, anything to do with this king is "general". For example, the empowerment of this king is not just any supreme empowerment but is the empowerment-general of all empowerments. Just as the secular world of government has the term "secretary-general" to mean the secretary over all secretaries, so the realm of this king has an empowerment-general; it is the empowerment of all empowerments, the most supreme empowerment

that rules over and contains at once, all other empowerments.

In this system, the master brings his disciple, who is but yet a prince, to the level of being a king through empowerment. He uses the method of bringing the prince-in-waiting to the position of king. To bring someone to the position of king, there is the ceremony of coronation. In most cultures—including ancient India and Europe—coronation requires anointment which is done by sprinkling consecrated water on the head of the person being made a king. In the ancient Indian tradition, this process was called “abhiṣheka” which literally means “sprinkling and pouring” because it is the key feature of a king’s coronation.

In a coronation, a special vessel of consecrated water is used to do the anointing. In the ancient traditions of India, ascetics had a vase that they kept with them as a water container. This vase had a particular name—a “kamandalu”. It wasn’t a coronation vase but just the vase that spiritual practitioners kept with them for water. Later, the vase became used in the buddhist world. It was used by monks as their water vase. It also became the vase used for this kind of empowerment. Thus, this empowerment in Great Completion became known as the “King’s Coronation Kamandalu empowerment”. I’ve translated it here as “King’s Coronation Anointing Vase empowerment” though note that “anointing vase” is not what the name really means; it is the vase of a spiritual practitioner which was later pressed into use as the vase used to anoint a disciple.

You will find many other words in this text that belong to the language of sovereignty. If you look carefully and read and re-read the text, you will find all of the threads, I am sure. Words such as “universal” and “general” and “encompassing” are not accidental; they are part of the sovereignty of the king of the view of Great Completion.

Note that this is a very exacting translation of the original. There are very few things added to make it easy to understand. At the same time, I have deliberately retained some very unusual constructions of the original because they convey the meaning just as intended. If I were to have translated them into a more flowing style of English, the original meaning would have been lost.

This is not one of those texts that you can just pick up and read and understand. It contains the highest level of instructions of any of the buddhist vehicles and with much of the specialized language of that vehicle. In addition, the text itself is not composed for simple reading. It requires a great deal of knowledge of the subject to make sense of it. So, if you do not understand it, it might be that you still need more instruction on the Thorough Cut (thregcho). Or, even if you have had many instructions in that, try reading the text again and again to find the connections and the meaning.

14. In other words, the conferral of this empowerment-general will be performed here by conferring it in four empowerments, one each for view, meditation, fruition, and conduct.

15. A is the seed-syllable representing dharmatā.

16. Tib. lhun grub. A key term of Mahāmudrā and Maha Ati meaning existence that is not produced through causes and effects.

17. Tib. sprod pa med pa. Elaboration is the dualistic mind's mode of elaborating on non-conceptual reality using concepts..

18. The king of all methods is the Great Completion (Dzogchen), which rules over but also is present throughout all lesser methods, i.e., all of the lesser vehicles.

19. The two non-dual, i.e., that kind of reality, is not only the king of methods but is also the means by which this empowerment is conferred.

20. Empowerments are usually about a deity. This verse sets Samantabhadri as the deity of the empowerment by pointing out that she is the deity never separated from ultimate reality and the one which is thus the symbol of one's own enlightened mind. In other words, you are being empowered into ultimate reality on the basis of the ultimate reality contained in your own mind and that is the deity of the empowerment.

That kind of deity / reality is the so-called "absolute truth" level. "Relative" and "absolute" are quite incorrect; the actual terms are "fictional" and "superfactual" respectively; see the *Illuminator Tibetan-English Dictionary* for full explanation.

21. Samantabhadra is the governor or ruler who belongs to / comes from / is none other than stainlessness, i.e., reality totally devoid of any of the deluded apparatus of samsaric mind. Samantabhadra comes forth to the disciple as the wisdom (jñāna) king. Wisdom is the knower of a buddha's mind.

Tib. 'char ba. "Shines forth" is a specific term that means that something dawns in mind; comes forth into mind. There are other terms like this but most imply dualistic perception of whatever dawns; this term does not. It is an important term in the higher tantras because of this and hence it is translated in a way that allows you to distinguish it from other types of appearance that comes into mind.

22. Tib. rnam dag. Complete purity is a technical term that appears throughout the sutras and tantras but which has been inconsistently translated and whose meaning will not be obvious to most readers. Complete purity is the specific term for the enlightened aspect of any being's mind. It is complete purity because it is either the potential for the absence of all obscurations in a sentient being's mind or is the actual complete purity of a buddha compared to the obscured, impure state of a sentient being's mind.

23. In other words, the disciple's innate, complete purity appears as the true state of concepts, the king of concepts.

24. Enlightenment's essence is the tathāgatagarbha also known as the sugatagarbha; it shines forth as the great bliss of enlightenment.

25. Tib. bdag nyid. Personage means the being of mind, who or what it is.

26. The dharmatā's rigpa—its knowing—taken to completion by the practitioner, is Great Completion. The vehicle that comes into our world because of that reality is the supreme vehicle of Great Completion. That vehicle is king over and subsumes all lesser vehicles.

“That shows each without mixup” refers back two lines to “all things are the equality king that rules over all”. It rules over all so its knower, the dharmadhātu rigpa, knows / sees every single thing, just as it is, but does so without mixing up any of the individual items. It knows all but without any blurriness at all.

27. All of the vehicles, from bottom to top, not missing out any, everything included.

28. In other words, may you obtain the result of this empowerment which is that you become a king who has ascended the throne of rulership of the highest level of the view because of the supreme empowerment that is not just any supreme empowerment but the supreme empowerment of this level, the one of true universality.

29. “dharmatā Great Completion” is one of several epithets for Great Completion; it just emphasizes that it is really the dharmatā level.

30. Fact here does not mean abstract fact but the actual thing that is present to the mind.

31. Tib. dgongs pa. “Intent” is simply the honorific for mind.

32. Each of the four empowerments starts with a verse and then has a following prose section which expands on the verse, making it a

little clearer.

33.Tib. 'od gsal. This has been mistakenly translated as “clear light” for a long time now. In recent times it has also been translated as “lucidity” but this is also an error. The Tibetan exactly translates the Sanskrit “prabhasvara” meaning the illumination that comes from something and which illuminates i.e., the luminosity of some light source. The buddha used it as a metaphor for the illuminative quality of mind, i.e, it is a term pointing to the knowing quality of mind.

34.Self-illumination is the how the luminosity of mind functions in the non-dualistic case; it does not illuminate something other than itself; rather, it illuminates itself and that is what it knows. In other words, the essence of mind knows itself, not something projected as other.

35.Tib. mtshan ma. Signs here is a specific, technical term that refers to the conceptual structures that are the basis of dualistic perception ('du shes). In other words, it is saying, “In a non-dualistic mind where there are none of the dualistic things or their sub-conscious, perceptual supports, i.e., in luminosity which does not engage in concepts or the distractions belonging to them...”

36.See the earlier footnote about fact.

37.Expressions, according to Sanskrit and Tibetan grammar following it, are either mental or verbal. Thus, although this is often translated as “word, thought, and expression” it doesn't mean that; it means expressions, which can be either word or thought (and there is no other possibility).

38.If you pour water onto well-kneaded dough, it either just sits there, not doing anything or runs off the dough. The image is that nothing gets produced, even though something is happening.

39. Tib. gdengs. This term means assurance, not confidence. Note the difference between assurance and confidence.

40. When all phenomena are without the contrivances of dualistic mind, the complete purity of mind—the tathagatagarbha freed of all the muck of ignorance and its conceptual paraphernalia—is manifest. That complete purity is at core empty and has a nature of luminosity, i.e., a nature that knows. The luminosity functioning as a knower at the fruition level is called wisdom. Wisdom is not like the things of the conceptual domain for it arises in and of itself, without needing any causes or conditions for its existence. Moreover, in this case, it is not something that the disciple has to come up with by searching for intellectually but which has become present as part of the equipoise on the non-dualistic realm that the disciple has just entered through the master's blessings.

This unsought, self-arising wisdom is the equipoise itself of both master and disciple. That equipoise is not a mere, blank knowing but is the wisdom knowing all things. All these dharmas that it knows do not come into existence in the process of cause and effect of the dualistic realm but come into existence in the process, as it is called, of spontaneous presence of the dharmakaya's realm. This display of the empty-yet-full dharmakaya is the fact being directly perceived by master and disciple.

For a disciple on the path, the fruition wisdom being discussed here is given the special name "rigpa" which translates the Sanskrit "vidya". It does not mean "awareness" but means the very dynamic and alive *knower that has the sight of both emptiness and its concomitant, uncontrived phenomena*. The rigpa itself is the knower. The knower has the capacity for a display of phenomena. This capacity—whether it is merely the capacity or whether it is the capacity actually functioning as a display—is called the liveliness of the rigpa. It is not the expression of the rigpa but the expressivity of the rigpa; the ability to have a display, whether the ability is in effect or not. Therefore, this is the empowerment not merely of the rigpa but of

the liveliness of the rigpa, which is tantamount to the dharmakaya as a fully functioning, dynamic state.

Yamantaka is the body aspect of the eight logos and, as such, the empowerment focusses very much on the bodily connection to enlightenment. Therefore, in the preceding empowerments, and especially in the secret empowerment, there has been a great emphasis on the purification of the body constituents as the path to enlightenment. The bodhicitta has a subtle body constituent. This, this supreme empowerment of suchness—the ultimate empowerment of the outer, inner, secret, and suchness empowerments—is connected here with the bodhicitta. Earlier empowerments have also been bodhicitta empowerments but this one is a bodhicitta empowerment of the highest level of view, therefore it is called the Great Completion (Dzogchen) bodhicitta empowerment.

At this point, the master has led the disciple into this state of wisdom in a way that follows on from the previous empowerments and which has the specific emphases of Yamantaka as a yidam. The master then makes the wish that the disciples actually have this empowerment come to them completely, in full.

Having granted the empowerment in verse, the master then introduces the disciple to the fact of this wisdom in prose.

41. Wisdom can be both the actual wisdom present within yourself as your nature, co-emergent wisdom and the likeness of that actual wisdom which is produced through the bliss-melting practices connected with the earlier empowerments. The master instructs the student to understand that the similitude wisdom introduced in the earlier empowerments is none other than the actual nature, the co-emergent wisdom present within yourself. That wisdom is empty i.e., it is like space. It is ineffable; it cannot be expressed in word or thought. Nonetheless, the liveliness of the knowing factor of the

wisdom does come forth as the display of the wisdom; it comes out as the whole variety of appearances that can and do occur. When it comes out in that display, it is the five wisdoms on display. The essence of the five wisdoms is emptiness yet, despite that, it still appears, totally unhindered by the emptiness factor, as the whole variety of appearances. Moreover, those five wisdoms are not merely empty and capable of going on display as the whole variety of appearances, but they are the primordial state of your being. The master instructs the disciples in how the various aspects of our nature, wisdom, are none other than the five aspects of enlightenment that are, from the beginning, primordially present within us. This is the great liberation that comes because of the primordial reality of your being and which shines forth of itself, i.e., which does not need any dualistic causes or conditions for it to be present, doing what it does..

42. Then, as it says in the text, the master should add more, because the text of the empowerment as it has been passed down does not contain a full introduction to mind.

Khyentse Rinpoche's Advice
To a Lady Disciple
From his Collected Works, Volume Ga

In the land of Chamara on Glorious Mountain are
The father, all refuges embodied, the Lotus Born Lord and
The mother, queen of dakinis, Princess of Karchen;
I remember my gurus, the two inseparable⁴³.

Early and late, do your daily recitations, then
In between, if you can take a holiday, stay relaxed.
Look unswervingly at your own entity, the innate aspect of mind!
There are no dharmas showing there as things but
The totally relaxed openness brings ease to rational mind.
If you recognize that, it is Padma Jungnay.

It is all right not to have a big name or project though
Thinking that your mind is tough and unworkable is discursive
thought⁴⁴.
The liveliness⁴⁵, discursive thought, freed from birth, cessation, and
dwelling,
Is your basic disposition⁴⁶ like space; assume this, your natural seat,
beyond harm!

Without a draught, a lamp is luminous—
Within that state, familiarize your mind with whichever of
The *Seven Topics of Mind Training*⁴⁷ are agreeable to you.
Then through love and compassion, all prayers of aspiration are
obtained.
For speech, recitation of *The Good Conduct* is excellent.

None of the migrator beings, high or low, in these times of residue⁴⁸
Is not gripped by the negative forces that arise from karmic confu-
sion⁴⁹.

Because of it, worlds and the beings within are filled with evil
deeds.

If you tame your own mind, all dharmas, such as those, will be in-
cluded⁵⁰.

In mind's appearances there is no existence but they are vivid in-
deed.

The complexion, the luminosity part, not stopped is transparency⁵¹.

If you simply recognize it, well, that's enough!

Relaxing naturally in that, look without distraction!

When you have fully turned your thought to this,

There is, except for the bodies of man and woman, no difference
between us!

Through knowledge of the key points⁵², preserve in nakedness the
reality of the basic disposition⁵³!

Send all forms, good and bad, of mind's liveliness into self-libera-
tion⁵⁴!

For a bird, knowing as it does how to fly, the sky is easy;

Clouds and wind currents are not a bother.

For a fish, knowing as it does how to swim, the water is easy;

Why would thoughts of caution, due to worries of suffocation,
arise?

For a yogin who knows how to meditate, everything is easy;

All objects and circumstances are rainbow-drawings in the midst of
space!

Do not steer towards the appearances of mind's liveliness, instead,
look at the basic disposition!

When you attain finality in regard to the basic disposition, that is
dharmakāya!

May you attain manifest enlightenment in which

There is no distinction between glorious Samantabhadra, male and female⁵⁵!

Written by Mangala.



Translated following the commentary given by Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche to the students at Shechen Tennyi Ling's winter seminar at the buddha's seat of enlightenment in the aryan land, for the sake of the fellow practitioners by Lotsawa Tony Duff, 6/12/2005. May there be virtue!

Notes

43. Rabjam Rinpoche explained that this can be taken as a reference to both of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's two main gurus, Shechen Gyaltshab and Dzongsar Khyentse.

44. Rabjam Rinpoche explained that while it is all right not to be a big person with a big name or with large projects such as monasteries, and so on, it is not all right to fall to the other extreme and sink into faint-heartedness.

45. Tib: rtsal meaning the energy of the innate aspect of mind that comes out in various ways, such as discursive thought. Note the threads of meaning in relation to liveliness that run throughout this composition.

46. Tib: gshis meaning the innate character of your being, your most basic disposition, which is another name for the actuality of your own mind. Again, note the thread that runs throughout.

47. Atisha's text on mind training. Rabjam Rinpoche explains that, even though the basic state of mind has been recognized, we still need to train, and what better way to do it than through the bodhi-citta mind trainings of Atisha? Train your mind in this, then make prayers of aspiration based on the love and compassion developed and, in terms of recitations of prayers of aspiration, reciting Samantabhadra's well-known prayer of aspiration, *King of Prayers*, *The Good Conduct* will be excellent.

48. In these later, degenerate times, we only have the dregs of the five great qualities of life of those humans who lived in the earlier, golden ages.

49. Confusion here means the confusion of sentient beings in general, which is that they see what is not as what is and in so doing, do not see what is, reality, as it is.

50. By taming your own mind, all dharmas, including the bad situations of these degenerate times, will be tamed.

51. Mind's appearances have no intrinsic existence, still they do appear vividly and that very appearance is the complexion of the luminosity aspect of mind. When that is not-stopped, i.e., when you do not fall into extremes of emptiness or appearance while practising it, it becomes the transparency of all phenomena known to a practitioner.

52. Such as the ones just mentioned of how to rest the mind in its own actuality...

53. Preserve is a technical term meaning to maintain or keep the basic disposition without losing it to distraction.

54. No matter which way the liveliness of mind is expressed, send all of it into self-liberation

55. Mind's liveliness comes out as appearances and if you steer yourself outwardly towards those, you will fall back into dualistic mind with all the problems mentioned earlier. Do not do that, instead steer inwards, towards the basic disposition, the actuality of mind. If you practice at that, you will one day, come to the finish of the practice of that basic disposition, and at that time, the basic disposition will have become the fruition, dharmakāya. Dilgo Khyentse offers the prayer that the person to whom he is writing the letter, will attain to that state, which is the state of Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri undifferentiated. Note also the several threads of male and female woven into this composition, making a very beautiful piece of advice with great depth.