



White Lotus

AN EXPLANATION
OF THE SEVEN-LINE
PRAYER TO GURU
PADMASAMBHAVA

→ JAMGÖN MIPHAM ←

Translated by the Padmakara Translation Group

“Enshrining the most sacred prayer to Guru Padmasambhava, the Vajra Seven-Line Prayer, *White Lotus* elucidates its five layers of meaning as revealed by the eminent scholar Mipham the Great. This commentary now makes this treasure, which has been kept secret among the great masters of Tibet for generations, available as a source of blessings and learning for all.”

—Tulku Thondup, author of *Peaceful Death, Joyful Rebirth*

“The Seven-Line Prayer is the most majestic of all prayers to Guru Padmasambhava—the buddha for our time. It has been cherished over the centuries as the most powerful way to invoke his blessings. How wonderful that we have this commentary, one of Mipham Rinpoche’s most inspiring works, to elucidate these sacred verses and reveal their profound meaning.”

—Sogyal Rinpoche, author of *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*

“Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche’s *Pema Karpo* is a beautiful and essential text describing the outer, inner, and secret ways that the wisdom in Vajrayana manifests as Padmasambhava. This new translation will be of great benefit to those traveling on the path of tantra.”

—The Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche, author of *Turning the Mind into an Ally* and *Ruling Your World*

ABOUT THE BOOK

The commentary translated in these pages is unusual and rare. But if the commentary is a rarity, its subject matter—the seven-line invocation of Padmasambhava—is one of the best-known prayers in the Tibetan Buddhist world.

The overall significance of the Seven-Line Prayer is perhaps best appreciated in relation to a practice called guru-yoga, or “union with the nature of the guru.” The purpose of guru-yoga is to purify and deepen the student’s relationship with his or her teacher. It is introduced as one of the preliminary practices, and it remains crucial—in fact, its importance increases—as one progresses through the more advanced levels of the tantric path. The cultivation of devotion to the guru and the blending of one’s mind with his or her enlightened mind

is, in the words of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, “the most vital and necessary of all practices and is in itself the surest and fastest way to reach the goal of enlightenment.”

Regarding the origin of this commentary, Mipham refers in the colophon to an event that triggered the abrupt appearance in his mind of the hidden meaning of the prayer. It is interesting to note that the language Mipham uses suggests that the commentary itself is not an ordinary composition but perhaps a treasure teaching, specifically a “mind-treasure” or *gongter*.

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Buddha Shakyamuni



Guru Rinpoche

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WHITE LOTUS

AN EXPLANATION OF THE SEVEN-LINE PRAYER
TO GURU PADMASAMBHAVA

Jamgön Mipham

*Translated by the
Padmakara Translation Group*



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FOREWORD

THE ORIGIN of the Buddhist teachings in our world was the Buddha Shakyamuni, who in his unequalled compassion for beings and his wish to bring them all to perfect freedom is praised in the scriptures as a white lotus among the thousand Buddhas of this fortunate kalpa. Before he passed into mahaparinirvana, the Buddha prophesied that his activities would be prolonged and his teachings propagated and protected by Padmasambhava, whom Tibetan Buddhists frequently refer to as Guru Rinpoche, the Precious Master.

Invited by the Dharma king Trisongdetsen at the advice of the great abbot Shantarakshita, Guru Rinpoche went to Tibet and spread the teachings there on a vast scale. He made Tibet and the whole of the Himalayan region into a sacred land where the Buddhadharma would prosper even after it had long disappeared in India. Thanks to the power of Guru Rinpoche's blessings, not only the oral and treasure transmissions of the Nyingmapas but also the teachings and practices of the other schools of Tibetan Buddhism have been able to flourish and have been preserved intact into our time. All of us who have an interest in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition should be keenly aware of the debt we owe to Guru Rinpoche.

He is the perfect teacher, the guide for those who wish to progress on the path; and all prayers addressed to him are of immense value. Of these, the most important is surely the Seven-Line Prayer. Not only is it the most powerful of invocations, but its every word is filled with deep meaning. Thanks to the marvelous wisdom and learning of Mipham Rinpoche, we have a commentary that lays before us all the different ways in which the Seven-Line Prayer can be understood. It shows how this precious invocation contains the whole of the Secret Mantra in concentrated form.

At whatever stage we are, beginners or otherwise, the Seven-Line Prayer should be our constant companion. It is like a golden key to the treasure house of

the teachings. Above all, to recite the Seven-Line Prayer is the best way to invoke Guru Rinpoche so that we can rest in his presence, cultivate devotion toward him, and thus receive his blessings.

Jigme Khyentse
Dordogne, 2006



TRANSLATORS' INTRODUCTION

THE COMMENTARY translated in these pages is unusual and rare. Even within the Nyingma school, it appears to be little known outside the direct teaching lineage of its author, Mipham Rinpoche. We received the transmission and explanation of it in the course of teachings given by Tulku Pema Wangyal Rinpoche, who received it from his father, Kangyur Rinpoche, who in turn received it from Kathok Situ Chökyi Gyatso, one of Mipham's closest disciples. But if the commentary is a rarity, its subject matter, the seven-line invocation of Guru Padmasambhava, is one of the best-known prayers in the Tibetan Buddhist world. It is treasured and recited wherever the Precious Master, Guru Rinpoche, is revered—especially in the Nyingma school, which traces its origins to the dawn of Buddhism in Tibet. It is the primary supplication of the Guru, regarded, as the embodiment of all refuges, the personification of all enlightened beings, and the exemplar of all subsequent masters and teachers of the tradition. In the Nyingma school, no practice session, no meditation, no sadhana begins without three recitations of the Seven-Line Prayer, and as we can see from the colophon of the present commentary, it is not unusual for practitioners to devote months and even years of their lives to the accumulation of vast numbers of recitations of this prayer.

For many Westerners, even those who are attracted to Tibetan Buddhism, Guru Rinpoche must seem a strange and enigmatic figure. As the tantric Buddhist master from Oddiyana (a region perhaps located in what is now Pakistan), who according to the records visited Tibet in the eighth century, there is little *prima facie* reason for doubting his historicity. And yet the traditional literature concerning him, which includes several full-length biographies, is filled with marvels and miracles of the kind that we would normally associate with legend and myth.¹ Let us briefly review the main points of Guru Rinpoche's life and his relationship with Tibet and its people.

GURU RINPOCHE

According to the annals of Tibetan history, when King Trisongdetsen wished to establish the Buddhist teachings in his country, his first move was to invite to Tibet the great monk and scholar Shantarakshita, the renowned abbot of Nalanda, the vast monastic university that, at that time, was the glory of Buddhist India. Arriving in Tibet, Shantarakshita endeavored to instruct the king and people. He began the construction of the temple at Samye, ordained the first monks, and inaugurated the translation of Buddhist scriptures. His efforts, however, were less than successful. He met with powerful opposition from the Tibetan nobility and royal ministers, whose hearts and vested interests lay with the beliefs and practices of their native religion, the cult of the gods and spirits of Tibet. Intense as their hostility was, however, Shantarakshita sensed that the greatest opposition to his work came not from human agency at all but from the gods themselves. For the latter were disturbed by the presence of the foreign acharya, whose teachings threatened to abolish the blood sacrifices that sustained them and to disrupt the links they enjoyed with the land and its people; and they demonstrated their fury by an unprecedented series of natural disasters. Shantarakshita concluded that the only solution was to deal with the gods directly and to fight magic with magic. Frankly admitting that exploits of this kind were beyond his capacity, he advised the king to seek the protection of Guru Padmasambhava, a master of the Buddhist tantras and a yogi of unobstructed power.

The great Guru duly arrived and, in answer to the pleas of the king, transformed Tibet into a Buddhist land. As Shantarakshita had predicted, his first task was to subdue the gods, the strong and arrogant spirits that until then had reigned supreme. Tradition tells of many occasions in different parts of the country when Guru Rinpoche confronted and defeated them, not by destroying or driving them out, but by overwhelming them with his majesty, so that they became meek and submissive to his word. Many, it is said, took refuge in him. They entered the Dharma and became Buddhist. Others, less amenable, were subjugated by his yogic power and bound under oath to protect the Doctrine. Having thus pacified the spirit world, Guru Rinpoche was free to disseminate the Buddhist teachings, especially the Vajrayana, unhindered. And in so doing, it is said that he hallowed the land so completely that not a place remained untouched by his sacred feet, no clod of earth was not saturated with his blessing.

This was not the first time that an attempt had been made to effect the conversion of Tibet by occult means. Tibetan literature records that King

Songtsen Gampo, several generations before, had constructed a whole network of temples located in places of geomantic significance, the purpose of which was to pin down the unruly country, envisioned as an enormous female figure—the “supine ogress”—stretched out on her back. The texts tell us that, for a time, this method was successful and the Buddhist teachings began to spread and take root. Being widely scattered throughout the land, however, these “border-taming” temples were hard to maintain. And as they fell into disrepair following the death of Songtsen Gampo, Buddhist practice too began to diminish, overtaken by the encroaching shadows of the old ways.

As a safeguard against a similar decline, which was liable to occur after his own departure and the later collapse of the royal dynasty, it is said that Guru Rinpoche provided for the future of the country by concealing treasures of teachings to be revealed to future generations by the incarnations of his closest disciples. This treasure, or *terma*, tradition, which was and remains an important feature of the teachings and practice of the Nyingma school, is one of the most amazing legacies of Guru Rinpoche’s visit to Tibet. It has acted as a protection for the lineages of transmission, on which the practice of the tantras depends, and has been a recurrent means whereby the teachings have been revitalized and refreshed.

By his conversion of the human and nonhuman inhabitants of the country and by the power of his blessing, Guru Rinpoche thus created in Tibet and throughout the Himalayan region a protected land where the study and practice of the sutras and tantras could thrive uninterrupted for a thousand years. Here the teachings of the Buddha were to be kept vigorously alive for centuries after they had been annihilated in the land of their birth. At various stages in the history of Tibet, the tradition was enlarged and enriched by the appearance of other great masters who founded new schools and lineages. In so doing, they were able to build upon the foundations of an already existing tradition that had survived intact despite persecution and the lapse of time. And they and their teachings were able to flourish thanks to the protected environment created and sustained by the blessing of Guru Rinpoche. So closely was Guru Rinpoche associated with the destiny of Tibet that when, owing to sectarian intolerance, greatly aggravated during the disastrous interregnum between the death of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and the accession of the Fourteenth, the special rituals devised by Guru Rinpoche for the protection of the country were neglected, this was seen by many Tibetans as the certain harbinger of the catastrophe that effectively followed.²

Reading further in the traditional accounts of the life of Guru Rinpoche, we find that however great his exploits were in Tibet and its neighboring territories,

they were far from exhausting the activities of the great Guru. According to the traditional accounts and as prophesied in the tantras, Guru Rinpoche's first appearance in this world, in the form of a beautiful child sitting on a magnificent lotus in the lake of Dhanakosha, occurred not long after the mahaparinirvana of Buddha Shakyamuni. He was adopted and grew up in the household of the local king, Indrabhuti, and, on attaining manhood, received monastic vows from Ananda himself. At a later stage, through the practice of the Vajrayana and specifically the teachings of the Great Perfection, he achieved a level of accomplishment known as the "rainbow body of great transference" whereby his human body was transformed into light and never died.³ And by the time he encountered Trisongdetsen and Shantarakshita in Tibet, he was, by earthly reckoning, well over a thousand years old.

Neither were his activities confined to this world. He is said to have visited countless different world-systems in order to instruct the beings there. In his long career, he assumed many different shapes and forms according to need, including eight great manifestations and countless minor ones. Finally, after completing his work in Tibet, he left for the country of the demon rakshasas in the land of Chamara, the subcontinent that, according to ancient Indian cosmology, lies to the southwest of Jambudvipa (our world, itself the great continent situated to the south of Mount Meru, the axis of the universe). Even then, the story is far from over. Ever mindful of Tibet and his faithful disciples scattered about the world, Guru Rinpoche visits them regularly, especially on the tenth and twenty-fifth days of the lunar month, returning from Chamara astride the beams of the rising and the setting sun.

This brief account of the life and deeds of Guru Rinpoche is meant to spell out, without concessions to modern sensibilities, all that is generally believed about him within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Moreover, for his many devoted followers, Nyingmapas or otherwise, Guru Rinpoche is not simply a historical figure, a hero remembered from the past. He is a present reality. He is invoked constantly. His direct intervention in the affairs of everyday life is expected without hesitation and as a matter of course, and in teachings given by lamas and even in the conversation of ordinary people, the events of his life, the wonders he performed, and his appearances to saints and yogis are spoken of as if they were recent occurrences—as indeed some of them are.

An encounter with a living tradition of this kind can be perplexing for Westerners. It is disturbing to interact with people who take as literal, historical truth descriptions of events that seem to us to be plainly mythological. The implicit faith that Tibetan Buddhists have in Guru Rinpoche is a challenge to our way of thinking, and there are various strategies we may adopt in the attempt to

accommodate such a potentially uncomfortable state of affairs. We might tell ourselves, for example, that the details of his life—his lotus-birth, his immortality and supernormal powers—are not religious dogmas. They are not articles of faith requiring a blind and unquestioning assent. They can consequently be left aside while we concentrate on the more important aspects of the Dharma. We could take the view that the accounts of the Guru's life are symbolic, that his lotus-birth is really just a poetic way of expressing the doctrine of the nirmanakaya, that his riding on beams of light is actually a reference to the visions of the thögal practice, and so on. It is by using such reductive arguments that we explain away events and actions deemed a priori to be fantastic and factually impossible, and reformulate them in terms that are intellectually more palatable.

Up to a point, this procedure is understandable. There is, however, a risk involved in reducing religious ideas to a level at which we interpret them only in terms of our present understanding of the world. For people who take an interest in the Dharma as a means of spiritual evolution, to dilute and bowdlerize the teachings in this way is not a wise course. All that happens is that we find ourselves untouched and unchanged, confirmed in the materialistic ideas that it is precisely the role of the Dharma to transform. One makes oneself immune to the power that such images clearly exert on those who accept them in a spirit of openness and faith. For it cannot be denied that all the great yogis of the past and all the great masters of today have achieved their levels of realization by practicing within a view of the world in which they never found it necessary to question the life and exploits of Guru Rinpoche as we have just described them. This fact should give us pause and perhaps make us less ready to dismiss the stories of Guru Rinpoche's life as mere folklore. The problem with the reductionist approach is that, in attempting to arrive at a more sophisticated interpretation of the traditional accounts, it tends to result not in a deeper insight into the meaning of the Dharma, but in an attitude that is no more than materialism in practice.

This, however, is not the only approach available to us. We may need to tread a narrow line between naive credulity on the one hand and a proud and arid skepticism on the other, both of which effectively close the door to a deeper understanding. It may be difficult to believe, for example, that Guru Rinpoche was a thousand years old when he arrived in Tibet, or that he is still alive on an island somewhere to the southwest of Mount Meru. But one thing seems certain: we will never succeed in understanding anything if we begin with the decision that it is impossible. When confronted by the mysterious, it may be more profitable (it is certainly more interesting) to maintain an attitude of open

inquiry, rather than foreclosing on the issue in the name of a so-called modern way of looking at things.

A direct experience of the Tibetan tradition is no doubt helpful in overcoming our reluctance to countenance the possibility of events inexplicable in terms of a narrowly mechanistic view of the universe. In the world of Tibetan Buddhism, moments do occur when the boundaries of ordinary existence seem to be breached and the miraculous comes flooding in. Even now, there are well-documented cases of lamas who have withdrawn treasure teachings from rocks or lakes, or who have visited “hidden lands.” Even in recent years, there have been cases of yogis who at their deaths have manifested the rainbow body before many witnesses, dissolving their bodies into light and leaving behind only their hair and nails. And many Westerners, even if they have not been party to such prodigies, have felt for themselves the extraordinary effect upon their perceptions that is said to be exerted by the presence of a great master. To spend time in the vicinity of Kangyur Rinpoche, for example, was to enter a dimension in which literally any wonder seemed possible.

GURU-YOGA AND THE SEVEN-LINE PRAYER

The overall significance of the Seven-Line Prayer is perhaps best appreciated in relation to a practice called guru-yoga, or “union with the nature of the guru.” Although the importance of a spiritual teacher is spoken of at all levels of Buddhist teaching, it is in the Vajrayana especially that the finding and attendance upon a qualified master or guru is emphasized as the indispensable prerequisite for the successful implementation of the practice. The purpose of guru-yoga is to purify and deepen the disciple’s relationship with his or her teacher. It is introduced as one of the preliminary practices, and it remains crucial—in fact its importance increases—as one progresses through the more advanced levels of the tantric path. The cultivation of devotion to the guru and the blending of one’s mind with his or her enlightened mind is, in the words of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, “the most vital and necessary of all practices and is in itself the surest and fastest way to reach the goal of enlightenment.”⁴ But what actually is a guru? The nature and importance of this crucial figure is perhaps most easily understood in the context of the doctrine of the Buddha-nature.

The progress of the mind toward enlightenment is often spoken of in terms of the two accumulations of merit and of wisdom. These correspond to the two kinds of bodhichitta, relative and ultimate, which are respectively the practice of compassion and the wisdom of emptiness. The two accumulations are together

said to “result” in the state of Buddhahood. However, it should be understood that, as the teachings emphasize, this ultimate goal of the path is not compounded or newly produced; it is not something acquired. It would perhaps be more accurate to speak of enlightenment in terms of the actualization or uncovering of something already present in the mind itself.

This something, this “element,” is the so-called Buddha-nature. It is the innermost essence of the mind, which remains, and has always remained, unsullied by the delusions, defilements, and sufferings of samsara. The *Uttaratantra-shastra* gives many illustrations of how the Buddha-nature remains hidden, long buried in oblivion, in the depths even of the most deluded and vicious of beings. And the long and gradual evolution of the mind toward enlightenment really consists in the removal of the obscuring veils, produced by karma and defiled emotion, that conceal this inner treasure—a treasure that, like a piece of refined gold hidden in the ground, is already perfect, replete with all the qualities of enlightenment. The Buddha-nature, the nature of the mind, is neither spoiled by the state of samsara nor improved by the attainment of nirvana.

When considering the long process whereby Buddha-nature is uncovered, it is important to remember that, according to Buddhist teaching, the apparently external world and the mind that observes it are not two completely separate spheres. They are intimately linked. In brief, the kind of phenomena that beings perceive is closely dependent on the inner condition of their minds; and this is true to such an extent that it is often said that the world is “mind-created.” As the mind evolves and the veils of defilement that conceal the Buddha-nature are attenuated through the cultivation of positive thoughts and actions, changes are detected in the outer world. The signs of the Dharma begin to appear.

In the early stages, this may be no more than the brief noticing of symbols of the teachings: prayer-flags, for example, a picture of a stupa, an attractive image of the Buddha, an interesting press article about the Dalai Lama, and so on. Gradually, one’s interest in the Dharma becomes more clearly articulated, and eventually an encounter with the teachings will occur. One will meet with Buddhist practitioners and teachers, and thanks to them it will be possible to enter the path and engage in the practice. None of this is mere chance occurrence. The appearance of the Dharma in one’s outer world and the growth, or rather the unfolding, of the Buddha-nature from within correspond to each other like answering echoes. Finally, after a period of long preparation (which may extend over many lifetimes), the time will come when a truly qualified guru, endowed with perfect realization and enlightened skill, will appear within the disciple’s environment. And thanks to a spiritual aptitude born of great

reserves of positive spiritual energy or merit, the disciple will be able to perceive, more or less, the character of such a teacher as he or she really is. Later, as obscurations are further removed, the compassion and blessings of the teacher and the pure, unfeigned devotion of the disciple will meet and there will come a moment when the master is able to indicate directly, and the disciple is able to recognize for the first time, the true nature of the mind, the Buddha-nature. In such a context, this Buddha-nature is often referred to as the inner or ultimate guru. As Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche says,

On the absolute level, the teacher is one with the very nature of our own mind, which is itself the essence of Buddhahood, the *tathagatagarbha* . . . Through the outer or relative teacher and his pith instructions, we can bring ourselves to the realization of the inner or absolute teacher, which is awareness itself.⁵

It could perhaps be said that the appearance of such an authentic master in the perceptions of the disciple is the final and most perfect apparition of the disciple's Buddha-nature projected into outer experience. It is the culmination of a long and converging process at the end of which the outer and inner gurus finally coincide. It is a moment of revelation when the disciple inwardly recognizes the nature of the mind and outwardly experiences a spontaneous, uncontrived conviction that his or her teacher is Buddha indeed. The face of the inner guru is revealed, and the minds of master and disciple mingle inseparably together. There are many accounts of this extraordinary event to be found in the lives of the great practitioners of the past.

For Nyingmapas, Guru Rinpoche is the archetype of such a teacher, the "perfect teacher" who is able to place the disciple directly in the enlightened state. In a very real sense, he *is* our own Buddha-nature. "Meditate upon the Guru," Yeshe Tsogyal once said, "as the glow of your awareness."⁶ This is doubtless why Guru Rinpoche appears in the world as such a marvelous figure, totally transcending the limitations of ordinary humanity. He concentrates within himself all the enlightened qualities of self-arisen wisdom, our Buddha-nature, which is ever present beyond the confines of space and time. As Guru Rinpoche declares to King Trisongdetsen in the biography of Yeshe Tsogyal,

From the Lotus-field of Great Felicity,
Devoid of place or bearings, nowhere found,
A globe of light, the vajra body, speech, and mind
Of Amitabha free from birth and death,

Came down upon a lotus cup, uncaused, unwrought,
Floating on an ocean vast, unbounded.
Thence am I.

No father, no mother, no lineage have I.
Wondrous, I have arisen by myself.
I was never born, and neither shall I die.
I am the Enlightened, I the Lotus-Born.⁷

It may be that some people who feel drawn to Buddhist teachings have yet to meet a fully qualified teacher. Others, for whom this meeting has occurred, may still need to refine their way of seeing their teacher to the point where the master-disciple relationship becomes meaningful in the way that we have tried to describe. Until that moment comes, one is encouraged to practice the guru-yoga using Guru Rinpoche as the meditative support. This technique consists of the visualization of Guru Rinpoche, the invocation of his presence, prayers and the recitation of his mantra, the visualized reception of his blessing, and the mingling of one's mind with his in a state of clear, nonconceptual awareness.⁸

If practitioners have sufficient confidence in their own teacher in this present life, it is of course possible, and indeed very effective, to practice this yoga in relation to them, visualizing them as they appear in ordinary life. But this kind of confidence, completely unspoiled by the tiniest moment of hesitation, is extremely rare. For the most part, one is encouraged to visualize one's teacher in the form of Guru Rinpoche, considering that they are inseparable. By doing this, it is said that the obscurations and doubts that prevent one from actually perceiving (as distinct from merely believing) one's teacher to be a Buddha are removed. Last but by no means least, it is important to remember that the practice of guru-yoga often demands that the meditator should also visualize him-or herself in an exalted form, as Yeshe Tsogyal, for example, appearing in the form of Vajra Yogini.⁹ The reason for this is that guru-yoga is a kind of meditative "preview" of the meeting of the perfect teacher and the perfect disciple that we have just described: the ultimate encounter in which the Buddha-nature, the inner or ultimate guru, is both revealed and recognized.¹⁰

Given the central role that Guru Rinpoche plays in the practice of guru-yoga, it is easy to appreciate the significance of the Seven-Line Prayer, the great and powerful invocation that unfailingly effects the presence of the Guru. It is no ordinary formula but appears, like Guru Rinpoche himself, from another dimension. Just as the Guru has arisen miraculously without the need of human parents, so too the Seven-Line Prayer is said to have manifested spontaneously

without the agency of human authorship. It is the “natural resonance of indestructible ultimate reality.” The dakinis were the first to hear and make use of it, and they transmitted it to the human world when need arose.

Guru-yoga (when based on Guru Rinpoche) and the Seven-Line Prayer are inextricably linked. And just as guru-yoga remains crucial at every stage of the Vajrayana path, so too the Seven-Line Prayer is relevant at all levels of the practice. Outwardly, it records Guru Rinpoche’s birth and place of origin; it celebrates his accomplishment and implores his blessing. Inwardly, its every word is shown to be heavy and pregnant with meanings that distill in concentrated form the whole of the Vajrayana. The Seven-Line Prayer is like a lovely, many-faceted jewel that receives and concentrates within itself the light of the entire path, reflecting it back with sparkling brilliance.

Regarding the origin of his commentary, Mipham refers in the colophon to an event that triggered the abrupt appearance in his mind of the hidden meaning of the prayer. We shall probably never know what it was that provoked this sudden epiphany, but it is interesting to note that the language Mipham uses suggests that the commentary itself is not an ordinary composition but a treasure teaching, specifically a “mind-treasure,” or *gongter*. If that is so, the text is itself a teaching by Guru Rinpoche himself, concealed long ago within the mind of his disciple, from which it was destined to reemerge when the right circumstances presented themselves, without the need for the discovery of the traditional yellow scrolls or some other material support.¹¹

There is no denying the beauty and profundity of this wonderful text. Whatever may be the nature of its origin, it is written with the elegance and clarity that are the hallmarks of all Mipham’s writings. Even so, it is a difficult text for the translator mainly because it contains many quotations from the tantras, which are famous for the subtle elusiveness of their style. We have done our utmost to secure the meaning of these citations, consulting learned authorities as often as we could. Yet despite our best efforts, there are some texts whose meaning has, to our conscious knowledge, escaped us—and there may of course be others that we have misunderstood without realizing it!

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White Lotus

༄༅། ཧྱཱོ། ཨོ་རྒྱན་ཡུལ་གྱི་རྣལ་བྱུང་མཚམས།
བཟླ་གེ་སར་སྡོང་པོ་ལ།
ཡ་མཚན་མཚོ་གཞི་དངོས་གྲུབ་བརྟེས།
བཟླ་འབྱུང་གནས་ཞེས་སུ་གྲགས།
འཁོར་དུ་མ་ཁའ་འགོ་མང་པོས་བསྐྱོར།
ཁྱེད་གྱི་རྗེས་སུ་བདག་བསྐྱབ་གྱིས།
བྱིན་གྱིས་སློབས་ཕྱིར་གཤེགས་སུ་གསོལ།
གུར་བཟླ་སྐྱིད་ཧྱཱོ།

Hung

In Orgyen's land, upon its northwest rim,
On lotus, pistil-cup, and stem,
Wondrous, supreme mastery you found
And as the Lotus-Born you are renowned.
A ring of many dakinis encircles you,
And in your footsteps practicing we follow you.
To grant your blessings, come, we pray.

Guru Padma Siddhi Hung



PROLOGUE

Namo Guru Padma Manjushri Vajra Tikshnaya

Holder of the Vajra,
You who are in truth all Buddhas of the triple time,
Lake-Born Lord
Appearing as an emanation in this world,
Body of undying wisdom, sovereign of vidyadharas,
Padmakara,¹ O glorious one
Protect me now this wanderer.

The lotus of my heart, endowed with threefold faith,
Is turned toward the daystar of the mighty Conqueror
And opens in the splendor of his blessings.
May the honey dewdrops of this explanation sweetly fall
And satisfy the wishes of the fortunate!

Of all the prayers to the great and glorious master of Oddiyana,² embodiment of all Buddhas past, present, and to come, the invocation composed of seven vajra verses is supreme. It arose spontaneously as the natural resonance of indestructible ultimate reality and is an immense treasure-mine of blessings and accomplishments. In the sadhana upon the Seven-Line Prayer taken from a Dharma treasure of Pema Garwang Chimé Yudrung Lingpa,³ Guru Rinpoche declares [to King Trisongdetsen and his companions],

When I, the Lotus that Upholds All Things,⁴
Was resting in absorption in the vast, primordial expanse,
I was invoked by vajra sound, the play of ultimate reality,
A self-arisen melody in seven lines.

I rose then in the boundless majesty of the sambhogakaya,
Revealing an array of Buddhas and their space-pervading fields
Endowed with fivefold certainty.⁵

Then the five exalted mothers of the ultimate expanse
Implored me with a seven-line song to work for beings' good.
And therefore on a lotus blossom raised upon its stem,
Within the milky ocean in the field of supreme bliss,
I was made manifest,
Renowned as Thödreng, Garlanded with Skulls,
In fivefold lineage.
My life and deeds are past imagining.

And then a hundred million wisdom dakinis
With one voice called to me
That I might propagate the doctrine of the Secret Mantra,
Entreating me with seven-lined song
To come into this world,
The field that Shakyamuni tamed.

And so in Orgyen's land, the cradle of the mantras,
On Dhanakosha Lake, upon a wondrous lotus raised upon its stem,
Appearing from the field of bliss I came.
As "Lake-Born Vajra" I am therefore known.
Revealing marvels inconceivable,
My wondrous forms are infinite.

For dakinis and dakas of the lake,
The secret essence of the greatly secret teachings I set forth:
One hundred million tantras, agamas, and upadeshas
Of the *Magic Net of Padma*,
To help the living and all those who yet will come,
According to their different inclinations.
These doctrines all have been distilled
In sadhanas upon myself, the Guru—
Myself, embodiment of the three roots.

The prayer in seven lines is root of all these sadhanas.

Within the Ground, these lines denote
The seven kinds of consciousness;⁶
Upon the Path, they represent
The seven branches of enlightenment;⁷
And when the Fruit is won, they are perfected
As the seven sacred riches of the ultimate.⁸

If thus you simply call upon me
With this melody of vajra sound,
I, Padma, cannot help but come to you.
I will give to you my blessings and will grant
Empowerment of great primordial wisdom.
The multitudes of deities
Of the three roots will gather like the clouds,

To grant, unhindered, common and supreme accomplishments.
And in your waking life, or in your meditation,
Or in the visions of your dreams, you will encounter me.
Swirls of rainbow light you'll see, and smell sweet scents,
And hear celestial airs and gentle tapping of the damaru.
Your body, speech, and mind with blessings drenched,
You will gain realization in a single leap
By virtue of the strength of your awareness.
Eight classes of proud spirits will be subject to your word.

All you thus linked with me will gain my blessing's power,
And, swift to gain attainment as vidyadharas,
You will never part from me, the Lotus-Born.
Samaya!

The three roots I myself personify,
The vajra form arisen from the lake,
Appearing as a magic net of emanations.
If you pray to me according to your aspirations,
I will grant accomplishments that correspond to them.

For you, who are now king and subjects,
And for the sake of my disciples yet to come,
I teach with love the essence of my heart.

Not divulged, but as deep treasure it must now be hid.
In evil times to come, my own disciple will appear;
And at that time, endowed with wisdom,
Through the power of Vairotsana's prayer,⁹
He will reveal this means for taming beings,
Gleaming with symbolic lettering of light.
Thus far and wide will spread a source of help for wanderers.
Samaya!

As recorded in its history, the Seven-Line Prayer is famous as the invocation used by the vajra dakinis to invite Guru Rinpoche to their sacred feasts.

Moreover, once, long ago, five hundred non-Buddhist masters, experts in grammar and logic, met at the glorious monastery of Nalanda, intending to put an end to the Buddhadharma. When the Buddhist scholars proved unable to contend with them, the dakini Supreme Peace appeared to most of them in their dreams and admonished them with the following prophecy. "How could *you* defeat the non-Buddhists?" she cried. "If you do not invite my brother Dorje Thödrengrtsel, now dwelling in the Dark Charnel Ground, the Buddha's teachings will be completely overthrown!"

"But the way there is hard," they said. "We cannot make the invitation."

"Go up to the roof of the temple," the dakini said, "and prepare a great offering. Burn incense and play music, and with deep devotion pray together as I shall teach you."

The scholars recited the Seven-Line Prayer that the dakini taught them, and in that very instant, Guru Rinpoche appeared to them out of the sky. Taking his position as the leader of the five hundred scholars, he overcame the five hundred non-Buddhist masters with reasoning and by appeal to scriptural authority. Then, when it came to a contest in miraculous power, the lion-faced dakini gave Guru Rinpoche a leather box and told him to subjugate the heathens. Lightning fell and all the non-Buddhists who had evil intentions were annihilated, while the rest were converted to the Buddhadharma. So it was that the Seven-Line Prayer spread far and wide.

When in later times Guru Rinpoche came to Tibet and established the Buddha's teaching there, he gave this prayer to the king and his subjects, who had the karmic fortune to receive it. He was mindful too of the generations to come, so much so that there is not a single terma, or hidden Dharma treasure, in which the Seven-Line Prayer is not present. And to this very day, this prayer is a great treasury of authentic blessings and accomplishments.

In brief, this prayer may be expounded on three levels. Outwardly, the literal

sense is explained; inwardly, the hidden meaning of the vajra words is unraveled; finally, an explanation is given of how this prayer is implemented on the path.

AN EXPLANATION OF THE OUTER, LITERAL MEANING OF THE SEVEN-LINE PRAYER

I, the master of Oddiyana, the embodiment of all the Buddhas of the three times, am indivisible from Samantabhadra, the self-arisen primordial dharmakaya, who, from the very beginning, is utterly liberated. Within the dharmakaya expanse, I am naturally and spontaneously present as the sambhogakaya in five lineages. And the natural radiance of the sambhogakaya manifests as the inconceivable display of the nirmanakaya. This is the sphere of Buddhas and of no one else.

As this quotation of Guru Rinpoche's vajra words shows, the display of the Guru's three kayas is infinite. Within this very field of Buddha Shakyamuni, in our three-thousandfold cosmic system named Endurance,¹⁰ in its hundreds of millions of pure fields and within each of the six realms or states of being within the thirty-six universes situated above, below, and in the four cardinal directions, Guru Rinpoche appears in a varied display of different forms and with different names. In our own world of Jambudvipa, he has eight manifestations,¹¹ twenty other different emanations, and so forth, together with an inconceivable array of secondary emanations. And thus he propagates the teachings of the Buddha. At the present time, he appears in three forms,¹² in the upper, middle, and lower stories of the palace of Lotus Light on the Copper-Colored Mountain in the heart of the land of Chamara. Different manifestations of Guru Rinpoche, known by various names, dwell in each of the twenty-one countries of the demons that surround that region. In short, just as the dharmadhatu is infinite, so too are Guru Rinpoche's activities.

He appeared also during the lifetimes of the Buddhas of past ages, and it is said that in our present age, the dispensation of Buddha Shakyamuni, most of the learned and accomplished beings in India and other places were, and are, his emanations. His blessing and guidance are bestowed on all the holders of the teachings. In India, China, Shambhala,¹³ Indonesia, and other realms, his manifestations work strenuously for the benefit of the Doctrine and of beings.

Here in Tibet, Guru Rinpoche set his feet in every region, blessing all the land. He hid many profound Dharma treasures and prophesied their subsequent discovery in different ages. He has placed the gods and spirits under vajra oath and made promises for the future, saying that, as long as the Buddhadharma

remains, his emanations will protect the land and people of Tibet. He has entrusted the country to the protection of the twelve Tenma goddesses, thereby guarding it against the incursions of those who are outside the Dharma. And in the future, when trouble threatens from barbarous forces, it will be as Taksham Samten Lingpa has foretold in secret prophecy: “I, Padmasambhava, will bear the name of Raudra Chakri;¹⁴ and with my twenty-five disciples, Lord and subjects, I, the lineage king, will be escorted by my army.” Thus he prophesied that he would subdue the barbarians and propagate the teachings of the Secret Mantra. Guru Rinpoche predicted also that most of the nonsectarian holders of the Old and New traditions in the cool land of Tibet would be his emanations. He has revealed his face and bestowed unnumbered blessings and instructions on the majority of learned and accomplished holy beings. This is clearly evident in their respective biographies.

Guru Rinpoche has also said that in the future, when Maitreya will be the Buddha of this world, he will himself appear as a Bodhisattva. He will be a teacher of beings and will greatly spread the doctrine of the Secret Mantra. Indeed, he promised to appear at the same time as each of the Buddhas of this fortunate kalpa. He will remain in his immortal, indestructible wisdom body, the ground of his emanations, for as long as there are sentient beings. He will display his emanations as limitless as space and time, working for the welfare of the beings of the future. As he himself has said in his vajra words,

Renowned am I as Padma the self-manifest,
Emanated from the heart of Buddha Amitabha, boundless light,
The sheen of high Avalokita’s speech.
The brother of the dakinis and king of dakas,
I am the action of the Buddhas of the triple time.
Great Samantabhadra, peerless Vajradhara
Both am I,
Mighty and compassionate, appearing in my emanated forms.
Strong are my activities, assisting beings as their needs require.
I am their wishing jewel, fulfillment of their hopes.

Guru Rinpoche also said,

For beings who are strong in their devoted faith
I am swifter in compassion than all other Buddhas.
Until the three worlds of samsara are all void of beings,
Padmasambhava’s compassion will not be exhausted.

Such are the inconceivable exploits of Guru Rinpoche. One of these, as the Seven-Line Prayer records, was the way in which he revealed his nirmanakaya in this world:

Hung
In Orgyen's land, upon its northwest rim,
On lotus, pistil-cup, and stem,
Wondrous, supreme mastery you found
And as the Lotus-Born you are renowned.
A ring of many dakinis encircles you,
And in your footsteps practicing we follow you.
To grant your blessings, come, we pray.
Guru Padma¹⁵ Siddhi Hung

The prayer begins with the utterance of the syllable **Hung**, which is the self-arisen seed-syllable of the mind of all the Buddhas. This invokes the enlightened mind of Guru Rinpoche himself.

Jambudvipa, this world of ours located to the south of the cosmic mountain Meru, numbers six main provinces. Of these, the westernmost region is the country of the vidyadharas. This is Oddiyana, or **Orgyen**, the dakinis' **land** where, **upon its northwest rim**, or frontier, there lies a stretch of water replete with eightfold excellence and free from every imperfection. This is Lake Dhanakosha. It is a symbol of emptiness endowed with supreme qualities, the queen of the ultimate expanse. This lake is perfect in every way, as is obvious even to the perceptions of ordinary people. It is filled with lotus flowers, the largest of which, growing in the center, is a **lotus** of exquisite beauty in both its petals and **pistil-cup**.¹⁶ From this flower's **stem** grow other lotuses, thus making five in all. Each is of a different color, corresponding to the five enlightened lineages and symbolizing the five wisdoms. The lotus in the middle is red to indicate the Lotus lineage.

The never-ending knot,¹⁷ the precious and immaculate treasury of the heart of Buddha Amitabha, is filled with the syllable HRI, shining with beams of five-colored light. It is the distillation of all the blessings and qualities of the three secrets of the unnumbered Buddhas of the past, present, and future. When the moment arrives for Guru Rinpoche to work for the benefit of beings, countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions scatter flowers, while the dakas and dakinis, together with the protectors and guardians of the buddhafi elds, perform the vajra dance and chant the vajra song. Then, in order to bring joy and

relief to beings of the three dimensions of existence, the syllable HRI descends onto the pistil-cup of the central red lotus and transforms into the king of vidyadharas, the great and fearless Guru, who is without a peer in the three worlds and who is noble, with many extraordinary qualities of greatness. Through his immense merit, his very body is a source of benefit for beings;¹⁸ by his teachings, he benefits them with his speech; and with his mind he benefits them through his awareness wisdom. With inconceivable, miraculous power, he guides beings to liberation.

He revealed himself in self-arisen, immaculate form, adorned with the major and minor marks of Buddhahood. He was empowered as the son of King Indrabhuti but later renounced the kingdom and embraced the life of a yogi practicing in the eight charnel grounds, where he trained in the boundless teachings of the outer and inner vehicles.¹⁹ The story of his life and deeds is beyond imagining. He displayed an illusory array of eight manifestations. With invincible strength, he annihilated demons, rakshasas, and evil spirits, and brought beneath his power the proud and haughty spirits of the world. He placed many beings on the path of the Great Secret that brings them to maturity and bestows liberation. He is the object of the most marvelous praises in the whole of the three worlds. And as we read of the **wondrous**, prodigious life of the Lord, the second Buddha, which is described in the trustworthy scriptures of the kahma and terma transmissions, we are inspired with faith in him. Moreover, not only does this great being possess the common accomplishments, but he is also perfectly and primordially enlightened: **Supreme mastery** he has **found**, the state of union of the great Vajradhara. **And as the Lotus-Born** he is **renowned** in the endless array of infinite buddhafi elds.

We recognize him, together with his retinue, as the personification of the Three Refuges, the ultimate, undeceiving protection, to whom we can pray with utter confidence. This supreme vidyadhara, greatest of the great, is attended by the extraordinary disciples of the Secret Mantra. For a **ring of many** dakas and **dakinis**, infinitely numerous like the seeds in an opened pod of sesame, **encircles** him. In truth, he is surrounded by an unbounded ocean of the deities of the three roots and protectors. But since this entourage is but the illusory display of Guru Rinpoche's own wisdom, which benefits beings according to their need, he and his retinue are not distinct in nature and are the common object of our supplication.

It is with complete trust that we pray to Guru Rinpoche. With vivid yearning and confident faith in his sublime qualities, which are like wish-fulfilling jewels, we express our devotion in word and deed, by prayer and prostration. Knowing that such a refuge is undeceiving, we abandon the things of this world like

worthless chaff, and with a concentrated faith and trust, we **follow in** Guru Rinpoche's **footsteps, practicing** without ceasing. Therefore we address him saying,

True unfailing Lord of unbounded compassion, in this very moment, do not turn away from us and those like us, who are drowning in the ocean of the three sufferings.²⁰ **To grant your blessings, come we pray.** Like an alchemist, transmute iron into gold: Bless with the three inconceivable secrets of your enlightened body, speech, and mind the ordinary body, speech, and mind of all of us who hope in you and fly to you for refuge. And from the Copper-Colored Mountain—or from whichever natural nirmanakaya buddhfield where you are residing²¹—come, in the great skillfulness of your compassion, and be with us.

Having thus invoked the Guru's blessings we recite his mantra.

The **Guru** is the one who is “heavy with perfect qualities,” the teacher unsurpassed.²² **Padma** is the first part of the name of the great master of Orgyen, whereas **Siddhi** refers to the supreme and ordinary accomplishments that are our goal. Finally, with **Hung** we invoke the precious master, imploring him to grant accomplishment.

This then is how we pray to the great master of Orgyen, embodiment of all the Buddhas. The first line of the prayer reveals the place of his birth; the second, the manner in which he was born; the third shows the extraordinary nature of his greatness; and the fourth specifically reveals Guru Rinpoche's actual name. The fifth line mentions the Guru's retinue, the dakas and dakinis to whom we also pray but who are in truth none other than the display of his compassion, which helps beings according to their need. The sixth line shows us how we should pray. Having beheld the Guru's qualities, we turn our hearts to him and pray with irreversible faith, expressing our devotion both physically and verbally—yearning to become finally inseparable from him. The seventh line, together with the mantra, shows that, by such an invocation, our mind is blessed and we will gain accomplishment. If we have devotion and if we pray to Guru Rinpoche, who abides in an undying body of wisdom in the natural nirmanakaya buddhfields, the blessings of his compassion will immediately and certainly enter us.

In *The Seven-Line Heart Essence*,²³ a treasure text revealed by Guru Chökyi Wangchuk, Guru Rinpoche himself describes the way in which we should confidently pray to him:

I bow in homage to the yidam deity!

If you, my noble child, the happy offspring of a future age,
Would take me, lord of Orgyen, as your refuge,
Stay in solitude and let your heart be filled
With sadness at this passing world,
And—this is a crucial point—be weary with samsara.
Then give to me your mind, your heart, the very vitals of your being,
Regarding me, the Lord of Orgyen,
As the one in whom to rest your hope, the perfect refuge.
Rely on me in all your hopes and griefs.
No need for wealth, no need for offerings and praises!
Simply with devotion in your body, speech, and mind,
Invoke me with this prayer of seven lines:

“Hung
In Orgyen’s land upon its northwest rim,
On lotus, pistil-cup, and stem,
Wondrous, supreme mastery you found
And as the Lotus-Born you are renowned.
A ring of many dakinis encircles you,
And in your footsteps practicing we follow you.
To grant your blessings, come, we pray.
Guru Padma Siddhi Hung”

Thus pray to me again and yet again,
With deep devotion, tears in your eyes.
And when, through faith’s intensity, your mind is without thoughts,
With “Ha!” exhale, and settle in a state of limpid clarity,
Watching undistractedly the free and stainless purity!

What need is there to say that I protect
The sons and daughters praying thus to me!
They become the offspring of the Buddhas of the triple time.
Empowerment of awareness gained within their minds,
Their concentration rests in steady strength and wisdom blossoms.
By force of great and self-arisen blessings,
They will come to ripeness;
They will drive away the sufferings of beings and be their protectors.

Themselves transformed,
The experience of others they will also change,
And thus bring forth the works of Buddhahood.
In them all qualities will be perfected.

May my heart-son meet and bring to light
This mighty instrument of ripening and freedom
In the state of great enlightenment, the dharmakaya.

The Seven-Line Prayer, a practice endowed with extraordinary blessings, is extremely profound. May this secret instruction, the treasure of my heart, be found by Chökyi Wangchuk, compassionate and wise.

In accordance with this instruction, we should visualize the supreme Lotus King clearly and steadily in the sky in front of ourselves, seated on a spotless lotus flower in the lake of Dhanakosha in the land of Orgyen, accompanied by his retinue of dakas and dakinis as numerous as the seeds in a pod of sesame. This constitutes the approach phase. To pray devotedly to Guru Rinpoche with the aspiration to accomplish the three vajras²⁴ within our body, speech, and mind is the phase of close approach. These two practices (of approach and close approach) constitute the generation stage.

In conclusion, like iron fragments drawn toward a lodestone, infinite Buddhas and Bodhisattvas dwelling in the ten directions come and dissolve into the Guru and his retinue. The latter then melt into light, which then dissolves into us. This constitutes the phase of accomplishment.

The ultimate mode of being, the ground wherein both we and Guru Rinpoche are primordially inseparable—namely, the self-arisen primordial wisdom, which is subject to no movement of discursive thought—is referred to as **Guru**. Because deluded perceptions are themselves primordially pure, the path is free from all striving and the fruit is present spontaneously like a lotus in full flower. Therefore [the path itself] is referred to as **Padma**, or lotus. For the fruit is not something that occurs at a later stage as a result of the practice. In the ultimate expanse, which is self-arisen and spontaneously present, the primordial wisdom of self-awareness is clearly [and already] manifest. This is referred to as **Siddhi**, or accomplishment. And, although in terms of conceptual distinctions the self-arisen primordial wisdom may be classified as ground, path, and fruit, these three are not different in nature. This is directly perceived by self-cognizing

awareness and is indicated by the syllable **Hung**. This refers to the great accomplishment phase of practice. The two steps of accomplishment and great accomplishment make up the perfection-stage practice.²⁵

The meaning of this is that we should recite the Seven-Line Prayer while never parting from the practice wherein the generation and perfection stages are united. The first five lines describe the visualization and thus constitute the phase of approach. The sixth line expresses trust and confidence in Guru Rinpoche and is thus the phase of close approach. Then, with the seventh line, we mingle inseparably with the Guru, and this is the accomplishment phase. As we recite the mantra with our minds indivisible from the Guru, we behold the countenance of the great dharmakaya.²⁶ This is the phase of great accomplishment. Therefore, all four phases of approach and accomplishment are complete within this very prayer.

If we strive in the recitation of the Seven-Line Prayer (as described)—having established beforehand the time that we will give to the practice²⁷—and if we persevere in our efforts with one-pointed devotion and without being carried away by distraction, this constitutes the approach phase. When we begin to feel the effect of Guru Rinpoche’s blessings, this is the close approach. When, on receiving signs of realization (whether in waking life, in meditation, or in dreams), we continue to strive in the recitation of the prayer to the Guru, this is the accomplishment phase. Finally, when our body, speech, and mind are blessed and we realize that the Guru and our minds are inseparable, this is the great accomplishment.

As it is said in the treasure text discovered by Ngari Rigdzin called *The Outer Sadhana of the Vidyadhara That Embodies the Eight Herukas*,²⁸

An all-sufficing sovereign is this prayer in seven lines.
By the power of aspiration you will see the Guru’s face directly.
For seven days or twenty-one recite this prayer.
Accomplishments and blessings will rain down on you;
From every obstacle you will be freed.

And Guru Rinpoche himself promised in his own words:

If with yearning melody you sing these seven lines,
Invoking me intensely to the skull-drum’s beat,
From Ngayab’s glorious mountain, I will bless you, I of Orgyen,
Like a mother helpless to resist
Her darling baby’s tears.

This I pledge or else I'll go to hell!

In the uncataloged text *The Guru as the Gathering of Secrets*,²⁹ Guru Rinpoche says,

Upon that day of days,
The tenth day of the monkey month, the monkey year,
And all the tenth days of the moon—such times of power as these,
Sending emanations, I will fill the world,
Supreme and common siddhis richly to bestow.
If you spend your life accomplishing the Teacher,
When the time of dissolution comes,
You'll melt into the heart of me the Orgyen Guru.

The Secret Guide to Accomplishing the Guru,³⁰ it is said,

When in the generation stage
Of whichever sadhana,
You clearly meditate,
There I am before you.
When you make the mandala
And set out tormas and the substances of offering,
Do not doubt it; I will come to you.

The same text also says,

Meditate on Padmasambhava
Embodied in a form of light and not of flesh,
And have great confidence.

And,

I shall come, unable to resist,
When with devotion and strong, fervent prayers
You pray to me, the Lotus-Born of Orgyen.
I will come to you.

And,

.

Again and yet again pray thus to me:
“In joy and sorrow, fortune and adversity,
In death, in life, in this world and the next,
In every circumstance both now and ultimate,
In good or ill you are my hope, my knowing refuge.
No other hope is there for me.
O Orgyen Guru, you who know, I trust in you.”

And,

Attaining me, all other Buddhas you attain;
All other Buddhas do you see in seeing me,
For I am the embodiment of all the Sugatas.

And,

With those who have devoted hearts I stay;
From them I’m never separate.

And,

As far as space itself extends,
So living beings there are found;
As far as karma and defilements last,
Thus swift are my activities.

It is written in the *Notes on the Practice of the Guru as the Gathering of Secrets*,³¹

If you wish for swift completion of the two accumulations,
Attainment of the quintessential goal,
Then—better than the tantras and their commentaries
Of the resultant Vajra Vehicle of Secret Mantra—
Meditate upon the Guru!

Likewise the *Nectar-Spring Tantra*³² declares,

Compared with meditation on a hundred thousand deities,
Meditation on the one and only Guru is supreme.

And the *Invocation for the Tenth Day*,³³ a treasure text of Ratna Lingpa, contains these words of Guru Rinpoche:

Through me the Lotus-Born—
And through my virtuous thought for others' good—
Treasure-finders, emanations, will appear at different times
And will bring forth deep treasures . . .

In brief, past all conception are my means of benefit,
The kindness of the teacher come from Orgyen is not small but great.
Every region has a high and hallowed place,
A monument where Orgyen is remembered.
At every frontier there shall be a treasure trove.
This too shall be the mark of Orgyen's memory.

And likewise it is said that the different rituals and practices for the subjugation of evil forces, which in every village are performed by monks or lay practitioners of the Secret Mantra—these too are memorials of the master of Orgyen. And the text says more:

If briefly told, my ways to benefit are past imagining,
And all shall be memorials of me the Orgyen Guru.
In times to come when people yearn for me
And think of me with longing love,
Behold, I shall be standing at their side.
And all who on the tenth day of the waxing moon
Recall and make remembrance of me—
They and I shall never separate . . .

I am Padmasambhava; I speak no lies.
And so, devoted ones, be happy . . .

To king and court, my followers in Tibet,
I say that on the tenth day of the swelling moon
I pledge myself to come,
And Padmasambhava does not deceive . . .

And when you pray with seven-line invocation,

My blessings flow in an unending stream;
And when my blessings fall and when your meditation blazes,
Know this as the sign that I am present . . .

And yet for me, in truth, there is no going and no coming.
You meet me when your karma and your obscurations
Both are cleansed.
According to the prayers and relative perceptions
Of the ones whom I might train,
I am indeed residing in the land of rakshasas.

And yet because the stream of my compassion is unbroken,
I am present constantly to those with faith in me . . .

And so, upon the tenth day of the month,
Invoke me fervently,
Knowing you have fallen in samsara.
Give to me your mind, your heart, the very vitals of your being.

These are only some of the unfailing, vajra promises of Guru Rinpoche. There are many more.

In the *Epic of Padma*,³⁴ Guru Rinpoche addressed the princess as follows:

In this noble field that Buddha tamed,
An emanation of the Teacher is in front of every being.
In former ages I was Amitabha, Lord of Boundless Light,
And, on the hill of Potala, the Lord Who Sees,³⁵
And Padmasambhava on Dhanakosha Lake.
Only do I seem to have these three identities,
For they in truth are never separate from each other.
Samantabhadra in the dharmadhatu,
Great Vajradhara in the field of Dense Adornment,
The Mighty One upon the Vajra Throne.³⁶
All inseparable, all by nature Padmasambhava, myself.
My blessings, which achieve the benefit of beings, are great and
wonderful . . .

My two accumulations are complete, all qualities perfected.
I am the greatest of the Buddhas' heirs, my emanations inconceivable,

Which at all times, in present, past, and future,
Hoist and plant the banner of the Doctrine in the ten directions.

In the colophon to the advice imparted to Tsogyal, taken from the *Prayer in Seven Chapters*,³⁷ Guru Rinpoche declares,

I am blessed by all the Buddhas of the dharmakaya, empowered by all the Buddhas of the sambhogakaya, and enjoined by all the Buddhas of the nirmanakaya that I might propagate the Buddha's Doctrine in the southern cosmic continent and that I might guide beings with the resultant teachings of the Secret Mantra. To that end,

Upon a lotus stem within a precious lake,
I was bodied forth in self-arisen, emanated form.
Wherefore, all those who, graced with karma and endowed with faith,
Invoke me with a deep and fervent longing,
Through their prayers, which bind the link between both cause and its effect—
My love for them is swifter than the love of other Buddhas.
And so with faith, O Tsogyal, pray to me unceasingly.

When, in the *Epic of Padma*, Guru Rinpoche is entreated by the princess, he replies, "Results are gained according to the nature of one's prayers. Pray to me. Your needs and wishes thus will be fulfilled." In the *Guide to Accomplishing the Guru*,³⁸ it is written,

On the tenth day of the monkey month, the monkey year,
In every region of Tibet,
I of Orgyen will appear,
And this is sure, my pledge and promise.
On every tenth day of the moon I'll come,
And with my emanations will Tibet be filled.
This is my sacred pledge. The Lotus-Born is powerless to deceive.

Fix your minds on me, all you who have devotion.
Make a tormo like a blazing jewel, adorn it with an incense stick,
And call to me with music and the skull-drum's sound.
Recite the prayer of seven lines, invoking me with fervent melody.
And from the hill of Ngayab, I of Orgyen,

LIKE a mother neipress to resist
The weeping of her darling child,
Will come, my blessings to bestow.
This is my pledge, and hell awaits me should I fail.

Guru Rinpoche made many of these undeceiving vajra promises.

In the fourth chapter of a text discovered by Ratna Lingpa, *The Jeweled Treasury of the Oral Transmission*,³⁹ it is said in the advice given to Yeshe Tsogyal,

From time to time, go to some pleasant place, a mountaintop or some lonely valley, and pray to me at the top of your voice—loudly as if your very head would burst. Filled with devotion, allow a weariness of samsara and a longing to be freed from it to flood into you until great tears come welling up. This is a crucial instruction since it will wash away a great many of your karmic obscurations. Meditative experiences will naturally occur.

In the historical section of *The Wrathful Guru*,⁴⁰ a treasure text of the vidyadhara Terdag Lingpa, Guru Rinpoche is reported as saying,

If you wish for swift accomplishments and special blessings,
Make offerings and meditate on me the Lotus-Born.
And just as all the needs and wishes are spontaneously fulfilled
For those who pray before the wishing jewel,
Just so will countless Buddhas bless you and protect you as their only child.
The oath-bound and the dakinis will rain on you accomplishments;
The proud demonic spirits of the world will do your bidding;
Your own spontaneous works will be a source of freedom for all living beings.
Relying thus on me brings forth these benefits.
Throw away your doubts; make effort in the practice!
O king and subjects, if you are deceived,
Then Padmasambhava is weak indeed!

All these infallible vajra promises we should lay up in our hearts. We should consider Guru Rinpoche as our wish-fulfilling jewel, the all-sufficing embodiment of all refuges. And we should consider this sovereign invocation of

the seven lines as our main practice, reciting it with a steady, balanced devotion, not too tense and not too slack. As it is said in the *Crystal Mountain* (the tantra of the enlightened body from the *Distillation of the Guru's Wisdom*),⁴¹

Upon a spotless lake and on a swelling pistil-cup
Sits Padma Vajra Tsel, unstained by human birth,
And with him Mandarava, bliss-bestowing queen.
As means and wisdom, emptiness and bliss, they dance supreme.
He is the essence and embodiment of all the Conquerors,
Displaying and appearing in many emanations.

As has been said, we should, in our meditation sessions, visualize Guru Rinpoche and his retinue of dakas and dakinis. We should invoke him with one-pointed concentration and again and again receive blessings and empowerments. We should make this our main practice as much as we can; and, in the post-meditation period, considering that all phenomena are the display of the Guru, we should train ourselves in pure perception, compassion, and bodhichitta. It is said later in the previously mentioned text,

If you meditate on compassion and bodhichitta, your mind will be blessed. If you consider the place where you live as Oddiyana, your neighborhood will be blessed, and your house will be blessed if you visualize it as an immeasurable palace. If you perceive other people as deities, they will be blessed as wisdom deities. Finally, by considering all your food and drink as amrita, you will bless them as substances of offering. Such are the five aspects of blessing, though there are other inconceivable blessings besides these.

If we practice as described above, we will attain mastery of the supreme and ordinary accomplishments.

AN EXPLANATION OF THE SEVEN-LINE PRAYER ACCORDING TO ITS HIDDEN MEANING

This part consists of three sections: first, an explanation according to the teachings of the path of liberation; second, an explanation according to the teaching of the path of skillful means; and third, an explanation according to the conclusive pith instructions related to both the path of liberation and the path of skillful means together.⁴²

An explanation of the Seven-Line Prayer according to the teachings of the path of liberation

Hung, the seed-syllable of the enlightened mind, symbolizes the ultimate status of samsara and nirvana: the naturally luminous, self-arisen primordial wisdom. **Orgyen's land** is the source par excellence of the Secret Mantra teachings. From the point of view of the inner meaning, however, we should understand that the nature of our own mind is the wellspring of the Secret Mantra.

In the Tibetan word for **northwest**, *nub byang*, the element nub (west) also conveys the idea of sinking—into the mire for example—whereas byang (north) also means to extricate or free oneself. Therefore, “west,” here, signifies samsara, whereas “north” refers to the pure state of nirvana. Consider the text in the *Mahaparinirvana-sutra*:

The seven steps in the western direction that the Tathagata made on being born indicated that there would be no further birth for him, no more aging and death, and that this was to be his last embodiment [in samsara]. The seven steps made in the northern direction indicated that he was to be liberated from samsara.

Rim, or frontier, symbolizes a nonabiding in extremes (such as samsara or nirvana). That which is referred to as a rim or frontier is indeed impossible to pinpoint. It is like the “path of the Middle Way,” a term used to refer to the absence of ontological extremes. This rim, therefore, indicates the nature of the mind, unaffected by either the defects of samsara or the excellence of nirvana, the ultimate primordial ground. This is, in a general sense, the object of the view.

What is the primordial ground like when it is unerringly realized? The ground, symbolized here by the word **lotus**, is emptiness, the ultimate expanse of primordial purity. From the very beginning, it is utterly beyond conceptual ascription and is, like a lotus flower, free from every defect. Beyond all location, this ultimate nature is posited as an object of realization. The subject that realizes the ultimate nature is the naturally luminous awareness wisdom, radiant and in full flower. This is the vajra of awareness and is represented by the **pistil-cup**.

These two (subject and object, lotus and pistil-cup) are not different entities; they are indivisible like a vajra. And the wisdom of equality, which realizes this, is indicated by the stem, which holds the lotus flower and its pistil together. The ultimate expanse and primordial wisdom are thus inseparably united. As an aid to our understanding, however, they are provisionally described in terms of subject and object, though this does not mean that awareness actually realizes emptiness as if it were an object placed before it. For from the very beginning, primordial wisdom and the ultimate expanse are indivisible.

This is the self-arisen wisdom of great bliss, also called the “nature of the mind,” or the “mind of uncontrived luminosity.” It is on this ground that all phenomena of samsara and nirvana, both compounded and un-compounded, rest. This ground, which is recognized by self-cognizing awareness-wisdom alone, is beyond all extreme positions of existence, nonexistence, both or neither. It is beyond all language and conception, all formulation. As it is said in one of the dohas (songs of realization),

The nature of the mind alone is seed of everything;
From it samsara and nirvana both arise.
I venerate this mind, which like a wishing gem
Brings forth the fruits that we desire.

And in the *Praise to the Mother*,⁴³ it is said,

No name, no thought, no formulation is there for the Wisdom that Has
Gone Beyond;
Unceasing and unborn, the very nature of the open sky;
The purview of awareness-wisdom self-cognizing:
To this, the mother of the Buddhas past, present, and to come, I bow.

The tantra *Self-Arising Awareness*⁴⁴ says, “If you know awareness, the root, you also know all phenomena, the stem.” And,

Awareness, dharmakaya, transcending birth and death,
Is known nondually within the thought-free state.
All-embracing, it is boundless light.
Within the vastness of the universal ground encompassing all things,
Awareness, which pervades it, manifests as primal wisdom's play.
This primal wisdom unconfined you have within you.

In the Great Perfection tantra *Revelation of Bodhichitta: The Perfect Pure Reality*,⁴⁵ it is said,

The self-arisen Buddhahood, endowed with the essence of the lotus,
Appears as two and yet it is not two. It is a bliss-pervading space.
Teacher, place, attendance, teaching—all are indivisible.
Throughout the three times, all is perfect.
Everything appears, through blessings gained, in nonduality;
And all things have the nature of great bliss.

In the *Flame Garland Tantra*,⁴⁶ it is said,

Space and primal wisdom are not two,
And all things have a single taste,
Abiding in the mind's unbounded nature—
The fourth and glorious heruka.

The *Hevajra Tantra*⁴⁷ and other scriptures say [about the glorious heruka],

SHRI, or glorious, is the nondual primal wisdom;
HÉ reveals that it is void of cause,
RU that it's beyond accumulation;
KA implies that nowhere does it dwell . . .

The vajra is accounted indivisible,
And sattva is the oneness of the three dimensions.
Thus the wisdom that cognizes this
Goes by the name of Vajrasattva.

It is said in the *Supreme and Glorious First Buddha*⁴⁸ and other tantras,

The endless and beginningless great hero

Is Vajrasattva, great felicity,
All-good universal essence.
Vajratopa is his nature.⁴⁹

The *Hevajra Tantra* says,

Always does it have the nature of great bliss.
Wherever in the three realms you may go,
Buddha is not found outside yourself;
Indeed the perfect Buddha is the mind.

And it is written in the *Abridged Kalachakra Tantra*,⁵⁰ “When the mind is purified, one becomes oneself a mighty Conqueror. What need have we of any other Buddha?” And, “All beings are Buddhas. Aside from them, there is no other mighty Buddha in this universe.” The *Tantra of Chakrasamvara*⁵¹ says,

These beings by their nature dwell
Within the naturally present mandala.

The tantra called *The Four Seats*⁵² says,

Not existent and not nonexistent,
Beyond both purity and stains,
Duality it utterly transcends;
It therefore has been called the nondual nature.

In the king of tantras, *The Inconceivable Secret of Chakrasamvara*,⁵³ it is said,

Permanence, annihilation, origin and end—
All these extremes the nature of the mind transcends.
It is self-awareness, primordial freedom from conceptuality; it is bliss
itself,
Completely inconceivable. This is certain!

The tantra *Vajrasattva the Equal of Space*⁵⁴ says,

The nature of the mind, a vajra self-arisen,
Has not been born and therefore does not die.
It's pure like undivided space:

Enlightenment is there not found

ENLIGHTENMENT IS TRUS SET FORTH.

The *Guhyagarbha Tantra*⁵⁵ says,

Neither one nor many is this very nature.
It has no center, no circumference.
Even Buddhas do not see it.
Self-arisen primal wisdom
Appears yet has no dwelling place.

The *Hevajra Tantra* says,

This primal wisdom is extremely subtle,
Like a vajra, like the heart of space.
Free from all defilement, it is peace.
This is yourself, your father too . . .

In this there is no origin, no dwelling place, no ending.
No samsara is there; there is no nirvana.
There is no “I,” there is no “other”:
This, supremely, is great bliss itself.

Also in the tantras entitled *The Great Space Vajrasattva*⁵⁶ and *The All-Creating King*,⁵⁷ it is said,

Vajrasattva is the vast abyss of space,
The all-good vast expanse of dharmadhatu.
That you might tread entirely the path of perfect purity,
Do not give birth to thought, but do not hinder it: Have no intentions
of whatever kind.

In the tantra *Union with the Buddha*,⁵⁸ it is said,

Beyond equality and nonequality,
The ultimate expanse of dharmadhatu is unbounded.
All phenomena are that very space—
Space the splendor of all things.
This is Vajrasattva, Tathagata.
Every Buddha is united
With the sky dancer of illusion. This is supreme bliss.

with the sky-dancer of illusion. This is supreme bliss.

The *Heruka Galpo Tantra*⁵⁹ says,

The excellent accomplishment is one:
Buddhahood, consisting of the highest bliss,
Deep union with the nature of one's mind, perfection of the triple kaya
—
Sky-dancer of illusion, it is bliss, the supreme bliss.

It is said in the *Abridged Kalachakra Tantra*,

The vowels and consonants, the hare-marked moon and the daystar,
are one nature indestructible; they are not two seats. The syllable
HUNG is not transformed into forms with color; being brought forth by
the unchanging nature, it is beyond all change . . .⁶⁰

The root tantra of the *Kalachakra*⁶¹ says,

In emptiness, phenomena
Are neither imputations nor material things.
When they are seen, it is as when a youthful maiden's face
Is seen in an enchanted looking glass.

All things thus are equal,
And they dwell unchanging in the ultimate.
They take their rise from changeless primal wisdom.
They do not end nor are they permanently real.

Sounds that constitute a name
Are all implicit in the sound of A and thence arise.
But when the place of great immutability is reached,
There are no names, nor things endowed with names.

In the unborn nature
Free of all compoundedness,
There is no Buddha, no enlightenment.
There are no living beings, and there is no life.

The nature of the ordinary mind lies utterly beyond

The nature of the ordinary mind lies utterly beyond.
It is the primal wisdom, pure of stain,
Expressed in qualities of luminosity
Pervaded by the dharmadhatu.

These five quatrains successively denote the five wisdoms (mirrorlike, equality, all-perceiving, all-accomplishing, and the wisdom of the dharmadhatu), which correspond to the pure aspects of the five aggregates.

The Recitation of the Names of Manjushri,⁶² who is the personification of the wisdom body of all the Buddhas, declares,

Consciousness is utterly transcendent by its nature;
It is primal wisdom in the guise of nonduality.
It is free of thought, spontaneously present,
Performing all the actions of the Buddhas of the triple time.
There are no Buddhas first or last.
Primordial Buddha lists to neither side.
Wisdom is the only eye that is immaculate.
The one who has the wisdom body is the Tathagata.

And,

Definitively freed from every obscuration,
It rests in evenness like space itself.
Transcending all defiled emotion,
It is knower of the no-time of the triple time.

In these and other ways, the tantras of the Vajrayana indicate the ultimate primordial wisdom, the coemergent wisdom of the fourth empowerment. Since this wisdom, in transcending every object of thought and word, is by nature inconceivable, it is **wondrous**. It is referred to by expressions like “luminous great perfection” and “ultimate coemergent [bliss].” Herein lies the principal realization of all the Buddhas: the **supreme mastery** whereby the sovereignty of the primordial and spontaneously present state of union of the great Vajradhara is **found**. The three kayas are naturally present within this state, which is itself referred to as the self-arisen, ultimate **lotus**.

As it is said,

Awakened from the sleep of ignorance,
Their minds made vast with every knowledge-object.

Buddhas are compared with lotuses in blossom.

Self-arisen primordial wisdom, free from all attachment, is called “Buddha” or “lotus.”

All the Tathagatas of the past and present and those who will gain enlightenment in the future are indivisible within the realization of ultimate reality, or suchness. They cannot be distinguished. As it is said in the tantra *The Auspicious Cuckoo of Awareness*,⁶³

Of one taste in the dharmakaya, equal in their work for beings,
They appear quite differently to those who might be trained.
But since within the dharmadhatu all are one,
When a single Tathagata is accomplished, so too are all the Buddhas.

Consequently, it is said that, on the level of ultimate truth, the wisdom kayas of all the Buddhas cannot be differentiated; they are one and the same.

On the level of conventional truth, however, the Buddhas of the three times practice their respective paths and gain their fruit—they burst into flower like lotus blossoms. They are, so to speak, **born** from the fundamental ground of the ultimate reality, the dharmata. In other words, this ultimate reality is **renowned** as their “source.” On the level of ultimate meaning therefore, this is recognized as “Buddha Padmasambhava.”⁶⁴ According to the different points of view expressed in various texts, this ultimate reality is also known by the following names: Samantabhadra, primal Buddha, dharmadhatu, utmost perfect purity, ultimate bodhichitta, suchness, ultimate truth, self-arisen primordial wisdom, sugatagarbha, the primal wisdom that pervades samsara and nirvana, the uncontrived mind of natural luminosity, wisdom unsurpassed, coemergent great bliss, and the cause-heruka. The ultimate truth established in the three great traditions of Mahamadhyamaka (the Great Middle Way), Mahamudra (the Great Seal), and Mahasandhi (the Great Perfection) and the ultimate truth indicated by expressions found in the sutras and the tantras are none other than this primordial wisdom.

From this primordial wisdom there emanates an inconceivable illusory display of the five wisdoms and the other qualities of enlightenment⁶⁵ (which are simply aspects of primordial wisdom distinguished conceptually). This is the **ring of many dakinis**, awareness-wisdom’s unhindered display, which moves and **encircles** it in the immaculate space of the ultimate expanse. For the one primordial wisdom manifests as an inconceivable display, an illusory tapestry of

emanations: the principal Buddha, the retinue, and all the rest.
As it is said in the tantras,

Within a single lineage are assemblies of Tathagatas,
And in each assembly of one such lineage are many lineages.
In one sole lineage are unnumbered lineages,
All arising from the lineage of Great Joy.

Though this ultimate reality is the primordial nature of the mind of every being, it is nevertheless something that has to be actualized on the Mahayana path—specifically through the power of the profound maturation [occurring through the empowerments received] and thanks to the liberating instructions of the Vajra Vehicle of the Secret Mantra. While one remains in an ordinary state of mind, this nature is like a beautiful statue hidden inside a lotus and is called the sugatagarbha.

In order to indicate ultimate reality as it actually is, the teachings of the middle (that is, the second) turning of the Dharma wheel describe it as emptiness set forth in terms of the three doors of perfect liberation.⁶⁶ The sutras of ultimate meaning belonging to the third turning, however, refer to this reality as the primordially and spontaneously present kayas and wisdoms. These two views complement each other without any contradiction and are taught in such texts as the treatises on reasoning and the *Hymns* composed by the lord Nagarjuna, as well as the *Sublime Continuum* and *Ornament of Realization* of the regent Maitreya.⁶⁷ Elucidated in this way, the authentic ultimate nature may be actualized thanks to the pith instructions of the Vajrayana. When this occurs, we arrive at the heart of the view of a myriad sutras and tantras.

It is through supreme knowledge free from doubts that we come to an irreversible certainty about ultimate reality, the primordial wisdom of the inseparable union [of appearance and emptiness]. This is what is referred to by the words **in your footsteps practicing we follow you**. If, by means of the view, we become convinced of this ultimate reality—the supreme goal of all paths and tenets—and if, by means of meditation, we gain skill [in recognizing it], we will come to realize it. The naturally luminous primordial wisdom will manifest. All impure, ordinary perceptions will be transmuted into pure wisdom and will thus be blessed.

If this has not happened, however, and if the dreamlike experiences of samsaric suffering continue without interruption, [we invoke the Guru with the words] **to grant your blessings**. And by this we mean that in order for our mindstream to be blessed by the path, we pray that, through the teachings we

receive and reflect upon, and through the pith instructions of the teacher, the realization of ultimate reality may **come** to us. For as it is said in the *Pramanavarttika*,⁶⁸ “to come” means “to realize.” Within that state of ultimate nature, subject and object, like the ocean and its waves, are not separate. That we might come to this state and attain to its realization, **we pray**, thereby expressing our aspiration.

The various stages of the path, beginning with the views of the Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas and proceeding right through to the view of the luminous vajra-essence, are progressively more effective for the realization of ultimate reality, until finally the primordial wisdom transcending the ordinary mind is reached. The empty nature of this primordial wisdom, the dharmakaya beyond all conceptual description, is **Guru**. Its expression is luminosity, the unobstructed display. It is the spontaneously present sambhogakaya—which, however, is not different from the ultimate expanse itself and is thus unstained by conventional attributes. This is **Padma**. The indivisibility of these two is all-pervading “compassion,” which arises as the display of samsara and nirvana. Like a wishing jewel, it fulfills the hopes and wishes of an infinity of beings. This is **Siddhi**. The syllable Hung, endowed with the five wisdoms, is the seed-syllable of the enlightened mind and symbolizes the self-arisen primordial wisdom.

An explanation of the Seven-Line Prayer according to the path of skillful means

This part consists of two sections: an explanation of the Seven-Line Prayer according to the general perfection stage of the unsurpassable Secret Mantra⁶⁹ and an explanation according to the extraordinary and most secret view of the Great Perfection, the view of the Heart-Essence of Luminosity.

An explanation of the Seven-Line Prayer according to the general perfection stage of the unsurpassable Secret Mantra

Those who are unable to realize ultimate primordial wisdom as established through the supreme knowledge of the path of liberation may actualize it by means of the extraordinary path of skillful means.

Hung indicates the ultimate, coemergent, self-arisen primordial wisdom. According to the inner meaning, **Orgyen’s land** represents the basis or support par excellence of the Secret Mantra. This is the aggregate of the vajra body as a

whole,⁷⁰ or else the chitta, its essential heart.

The Tibetan genitive particle *gyi* [rendered into English by the locative preposition **upon**] indicates the link between this same support and the channels roma and kyangma symbolically expressed as the west and **north** (nub and byang respectively).⁷¹ Roma, the red channel, is on the right side of the body. It is here that the solar wind-energy courses, causing a diminution—a setting or westering (nub)—of the essential constituents.⁷² Kyangma, the white channel, is on the left side of the body. Here the lunar wind-energy courses. It causes the essential constituents to increase, or rather it mitigates (or cools) their gross aspect. In other words, it cleanses or purges (byang) the impurities of the essential constituents. Finally, the **rim**, or frontier, is what lies in the center, between these two.

The **lotus** indicates the dharmachakra, the “channel-wheel of reality,” which, located at the level of the heart, is endowed with eight petal-like channels. The **pistil-cup** refers to the essence-drop composed of the quintessence of the five elements. The **stem** symbolizes Rahu, by which is meant “space,” in other words, the central channel, or uma, wherein the wisdom wind-energy moves. The preposition **on** indicates that the coemergent, self-arisen wisdom rests upon this same extraordinary quintessential channel and upon its wind-energy and essence-drop⁷³—within the aggregate of the vajra body—like the fragrance enveloping a piece of camphor.

This self-arisen primordial wisdom—undefiled great bliss, or bodhichitta—is the naturally luminous essence-drop, spotless and unchanging. This essence-drop is exceedingly **wondrous**, for it is the indivisible union of immutable great bliss and great emptiness endowed with all supreme aspects. It is the ultimate nature, inconceivable and ineffable, marvelous and unbounded. This is certainly the wisdom body of the union [of bliss and emptiness], the realization itself of all the Buddhas. This is referred to as **supreme mastery**, the state of the great Vajradhara, which is spontaneously present or **found** and is endowed with the oceanic qualities of enlightenment. This is what is **renowned** as the self-arisen, the ultimate, **Lotus-Born**. It is said in the *Hevajra Tantra*,

Great primordial wisdom dwells within the body,
Pure and free from every thought.
Every entity does it pervade:
It dwells within the body but is not from body born.

Similarly in the *Samata* tantra, *Chakrasamvara* tantra, the *Union with the Buddha* tantra, and the *Ocean of Dakinis* tantra,⁷⁴ it is said,

The nature of all things dwells constantly
In secret, supreme joy:
Embodiment of all the Buddhas, fearless hero,
Vajrasattva, supreme bliss.
He, the self-arisen Bhagavan,⁷⁵
The great and single deity
At one with all the Buddhas,
Is the greatest deity.

The *Hevajra Tantra* says,

The perfect form of E is graced
With VAM residing in its center.
It is the place of every bliss,
The precious casket of the Buddhas.

The tantra *The Mirror of Illusions*⁷⁶ says,

The imperishable essence-drop is supreme bliss,
Quintessence that, endowed with the five wisdoms,
Self-arises, and in all embodied beings dwells.
This is the teacher who sets forth all knowledge,
Dharmachakra, the dharmata's dwelling place.

And,

The moment when the essence-drop immaculate
Of means and wisdom undivided takes its birth—
When, inconceivable, it takes its coemergent birth—
Is said to be the moment of great bliss.

And,

Self and other—all things, leaving none aside—
Are primal wisdom coemergent.
They are not existent, nor are nonexistent;
They are not both, nor are they neither.
Illusory, the self-arisen great felicity

(A vajra, firm and self-appearing,
The illusion of primordial wisdom) is spontaneously present.

The tantra *The Vajra-Tent of the Dakinis*⁷⁷ says,

As many realms of space there are,
In universes thousand fold,
The Buddhas dwell therein like space itself,
In Mahamudra, excellent great bliss.

According to the *Kalachakra Tantra*, “One may try to draw water from the center of the vase of space, but water will not come. The same is true [when one tries to take] the space-pervading indestructible awareness, free of object and subject, from the center of the body.” And, “Emptiness mixed with primordial wisdom—such an unchanging even taste will always change. Based on this, three kinds of peace abide in phenomenal existence. And in your body you will know it.”⁷⁸ These quotations indicate a profound key point of the Vajrayana path, as expounded in the tantras of the Great Secret.

The essence-drop of self-arisen primordial wisdom, in other words, the Lotus-Born, is **encircled** by its own display, **a ring of** many wind-energies and essence-drops that course within the empty space of the central channel and the other channels that radiate from it.⁷⁹ The wind-energies and essence-drops that dwell within these channels and in the four chakras are of four kinds: extremely pure, subtle, gross, and residual. If these are skillfully brought under control, they help the wisdom of great bliss to manifest. The wind-energies and essence-drops are the host of inner **dakinis**.

Once the structure of the aggregate of the vajra body has been understood, the skillful pith instructions can be implemented, whereby one can strike upon its vital points. This refers to the practice of physical yoga,⁸⁰ control of the wind-energy, and concentration on the subtle essence-drop. By such methods, one may train in tummo (the practice of inner fire), whereby the karmic wind-energy is made to dissolve into the central channel and the essence-drop melts and generates the sensation of bliss. One may also train in the yoga in which one takes the support of a partner’s body. One may train likewise in the methods that cause the mind mounted on the wind-energy⁸¹ to enter the central channel; one can train in the practice of the illusory body and luminosity induced by such methods; and one can train in the yoga of dreams, itself an aspect of the path. By the power of these and other Mantrayana practices of the profound perfection stage endowed with characteristics, one will accomplish primordial wisdom.

Therefore the prayer says, **in your footsteps practicing we follow you.**

By training in this way, implementing the skillful means of the aggregate of the vajra body, the quintessential essence-drop of primordial wisdom will gain in strength. All impure, residual essential constituents will be purified in the expanse of great bliss, and the whole of phenomenal existence (the universe and the beings it contains) will be transformed into great bliss, pure and undefiled. The prayer says, **grant your blessings** so that the whole of existence may be purified in the mandala of the enlightened body, speech, and mind.

Viewed from the standpoint of primordial wisdom, phenomenal existence is from the very beginning perfectly pure. But this truth is veiled by the dualistic thoughts of the ordinary mind, with the result that the nature of reality is no longer manifest. The impure perceptions of samsara (included within the truth of suffering and the truth of origin) arise without end. The cause of all these perceptions is the karmic wind-energy, in other words, all propensity to movement.⁸² When this is reversed and driven back into the central channel, where primordial wisdom dwells unmoving, and when it is secured in the expanse of the ground of suchness—the unchanging essence-drop—perfect enlightenment is attained. And for as long as space endures, there can be no returning to samsara. For the vajra-like body of great bliss has been gained. Therefore, with the words **come, we pray**, the prayer calls upon the great dharmakaya of the ground expanse, the wisdom space of all the Buddhas.

Having gained conviction in this view, one pronounces the mantra. The primordial wisdom, gained through this extraordinary path, is the **Guru**, whom nothing excels. By means of the profound, crucial points of this same path, all the defilements of the five poisons and so on arise as the helpers of undefiled great bliss and then dissolve all by themselves. This is **Padma**. Finally, the ultimate primordial wisdom, the highest truth, is swiftly accomplished, and this is **Siddhi**. In short, primordial wisdom, manifesting through the skillful methods of the Secret Mantra, which protect one's mind swiftly and with ease, is wonderful and supreme. This is **Hung**, the seed-syllable of the mind of all the Buddhas.

When this coemergent wisdom of great bliss is realized, the whole of phenomenal existence arises as its expression. As Saraha says,

In front, behind, in all the ten directions,
Where'er I look, there, there it is . . .

When this is realized, everything is this.
No other thing can anyone discover . . .

When you experience this,
The sky, too small, cannot contain
The great and supreme bliss.

Moreover, the tantra *Self-Arising Awareness* says,

Profound immensity: This is Manjushri's very name!
Hard to sound his depth, Manjushri is supreme above all things.
Within Manjushri's state is born the pure and perfect bliss.
Manjushri thus is not a lack; he is not "empty."

Likewise, the *Tantra of the Yoginis' Complete Activity*⁸³ says,

These wanderers possess the nature of five Buddhas.
Like dancers are they, or like lovely pictures.
All possess the one and only nature of great bliss,
One nature that displays the dance of manifold expression.

It is thus that, in accordance with these and other quotations, the Seven-Line Prayer is to be understood.

An explanation of the Seven-Line Prayer according to the innermost, secret Great Perfection, the Heart-Essence of Luminosity

Just as a sesame seed is filled with oil, so too is the nature of the mind pervaded by primordial wisdom, ultimate and self-arisen, dwelling within it as the youthful vase-body. The latter is, however, constrained and hampered by the ordinary aggregates, the elements and sense fields, karma and negative emotion. The natural, luminous wisdom body, the multicolored lights, the primordial wisdom, and ultimate reality are consequently obscured, with the result that beings fail to behold what is in fact their own true nature. Nevertheless, thanks to the essential instructions of [highest atiyoga], the sovereign vehicle, even ordinary people are able to glimpse this nature—their own self-arisen primordial wisdom—within the luminosity that is spontaneously present. Thus the crucial point of thögal, the path of "spontaneous presence," is the self-arisen primordial wisdom, here symbolized by the syllable **Hung**.

The words **Orgyen's land** refer to the "lamp of the heart of flesh."⁸⁴ The

Tibetan genitive particle *gyi* [rendered into English as **upon**], indicates the connection between the “lamp of the heart of flesh” and the youthful vase-body, in other words, the luminous essence-drop of primordial wisdom in the center of the heart. West indicates that the latter is sunk (nub) within the aggregate of the vajra body—meaning that it dwells in it. This luminous essence-drop of primordial wisdom is the inner expanse. **North**, understood here in the sense of purity (byang), refers to the external expanse, namely, the unclouded sky. The **rim**, or frontier, is the meeting place of these two expanses. It is the “lamp of the far-catching water lasso,”⁸⁵ the path of the inner visual sense power, thanks to which, within the pure sky of the external expanse, there arises the “lamp of the utterly pure expanse,”⁸⁶ blue and limpid, filled with nets of rainbows and adorned with bright mirrorlike disks of light. When one becomes accustomed to this, the “lamp of the empty disk of light”⁸⁷ will manifest, bright red, round and limpid, displaying the kind of configuration that one sees on the surface of a pool when one throws a stone into it. These latter two lamps are indicated by the word **lotus**. The lotus flower, being immaculate, symbolizes the flawless dharmadhatu, the perfectly pure expanse of the mother, which is like a measureless palace.

The **pistil-cup** represents the radiance of awareness, the vajra-chains interlinked and curving—like gold chains or strings of pearls or else like knotted strands of horsehair. These mobile configurations and disks of light are the radiance of the “lamp of self-arisen knowledge,”⁸⁸ the natural light of awareness-wisdom. The word stem indicates that when, in accordance with the pith instructions of the path of thögal, the three doors are left in their natural state and one concentrates strongly on the three key points of this practice,⁸⁹ one’s awareness will be in its natural, uncontrived state, free of thoughts, and its radiance will be “imprisoned” within the fence of space. In other words, through concentration on these key points, space-awareness will become perfectly firm. One will lay the foundation for the extreme stability of space-awareness by means of the three kinds of motionlessness;⁹⁰ one will take its measure with the three kinds of resting;⁹¹ and one will rivet it by means of the three attainments.⁹² In this way, one will have an unmediated, direct experience [of space-awareness], without depending on the conceptual mind. And based on these methods, the four kinds of confident certainty will gradually grow from within.⁹³

To begin with, one will perfect the **wondrous** experiences of the three visions: the “direct perception of ultimate reality,” the “intensification of experience,” and the “climax of awareness.” Then will follow the fourth vision, the “wearing out [of phenomena] in ultimate reality.”⁹⁴ This is **supreme mastery**, the level of the great Vajradhara, **found** without difficulty in this very life. At that moment,

one's mind is indistinguishable from the primordial protector, the Buddha Samantabhadra—indistinguishable from the self-arisen Pema Thödrengetsel, “the Powerful Lotus Garlanded with Skulls.” Wherefore the prayer declares **and as the Lotus-Born you are renowned.**

When the radiance of space-awareness is fixed in this way, the self-arisen primordial wisdom rests in a state of evenness within the natural luminosity of the “lamp of self-arisen knowledge.” Though it does not stir from this state, its creative power, displayed as rainbow rays, greater and lesser disks of light, and so on (in other words, **a ring of many dakinis**), moves through space and encircles the primordial wisdom. These appearances are very clear and mobile, and one's experience of them naturally intensifies. All these luminous appearances are but the radiance of self-arisen awareness. Resting in the view of primordial purity—the spontaneous flow that is fresh, comfortable, and naturally free—without ever parting from the four methods of “leaving things as they are,”⁹⁵ one is striking at the very heart of the appearances of luminosity. And this is referred to by the words **in your footsteps practicing we follow you.**

By means of such practice, all phenomenal appearance, generated by impure karmic wind-energy, will be purified in the expanse of indestructible primordial wisdom. The vajra body, the rainbow body beyond all transference, will be thus attained. This is the meaning of the words **to grant your blessings, come, we pray.**

This path is unknown even in the most secret mother tantras and other anuttara scriptures. It is extremely hidden. Indeed, this path is not named even in the texts belonging to the outer and inner cycles of the Great Perfection. It is the quintessential path of the heart-essence of luminosity, the specific feature of which is the direct utilization, as the path, of actual Buddhahood itself. This path is completely unsurpassed. It is utterly free of stain⁹⁶ and brings in this very life supreme accomplishment extremely swiftly and with ease. This is the sense of the mantra **Guru Padma Siddhi.** And Hung, the spontaneously manifested seed-syllable of the enlightened mind, is an expression of wonder and awe.

The Great Perfection tantra *The View: The Perfect Profundity of Primal Wisdom*⁹⁷ says,

This self-arisen essence from the outset dwells within;
Arising not from causes, through conditions it was not brought forth.
Beyond all effort, it is primal wisdom self-arising as the dharmakaya.
Be sure of this!

And the tantra *Self-Arising Awareness* says,

Awareness, void of thoughts, is dharmakaya;
Awareness, clarity unhindered, is sambhogakaya;
Awareness, arising in whatever form, is nirmanakaya.

And,

What delusion can there be in changeless bodhichitta?
Undeluded bodhichitta is completely present in all wanderers.
The essence of enlightenment is equal to all Buddhas.
The lamp of self-awareness, which unfolds in self-appearing radiance,
Dwells in every being yet is barred, self-secret, to the ones who lack
the means.
It is the sublime mind of all the Buddhas past, present, and to come—
In every Buddha dwelling, motionless and even . . .

The mind of perfect Buddha
Abides within the minds of living beings
In the guise of kayas and of wisdoms.
Within the very center of the heart,
No greater than a sesame or mustard grain,
It dwells unborn and perfect . . .

The seed of all the Buddhas is declared
To be awareness free of thoughts.
The perfect eyes of all the Buddhas
Are renowned as the four lamps.

And,

To see the self-arisen wisdom mind of Buddhahood,
Is simply to behold awareness
With unmoving, undistracted eyes
And no involvement with one's trammeling thoughts.
'Tis thus that one will see one's own awareness . . .

Manjushri, Gentle Glory, perfect blissful form,
Is perfect primal wisdom endowed with the five lights.
Uncolored dharmakaya, he is gentle;

From the mandala not parted, he is glorious—
Gentle, for appearances are his self-radiance,
Glorious in the cleansing of all ignorance.
Gentle, he is permeated with the light of the four lamps,
Glorious with a timeless luminosity.

And,

Manjushri, supreme knowledge,
Primal wisdom, radiance vast,
From whom comes forth a light wherein all things are truly known:
All this is said to be Manjushri's mighty mandala.

Manjushri, emanation of primordial wisdom—
However he is viewed, so too does he appear!
Manjushri does in truth transcend all things,
The perfect Manjushri is primal wisdom.
This wisdom is his only eye, devoid of defects,
Endowed with wisdom body, he is Tathagata.

It is said in *The Recitation of the Names of Manjushri*,⁹⁸

Nonform is the best and supreme form;
For all that has a form is mind-created.
Forms are the glory of perception—
Manjushri is the holder of reflections each and every one . . .

From space arisen, he is self-arisen,
The blazing fire of perfect knowledge and of primal wisdom.
Within his light all things appear.
The light of wisdom is an intense brilliance,
The wisdom lamp, the light of wanderers;
It is a brilliant clarity of sublime majesty:
The supreme mantra, mantra-owner and awareness-king,
The king of secret mantra, great benefit procuring.

The tantra *The Precious Blazing Lamp: The Beauteous Golden Flower*⁹⁹ says,

In every region of the world,

Awareness is untrammled, appearing by itself,
Yet no one notices . . .

The lamp of the far-catching water lasso
Gathers form in suchness.
The lamp of self-arisen knowledge drives out
Every doubt about the vehicles.
The lamp of the empty disk of light
Mingles and conjoins samsara with nirvana.
The lamp of the utterly pure expanse
Will cause the experience of yogis to progress . . .

Within the great primordial purity, as its expression,
Is spontaneous luminosity
That no one has contrived.
This is its nature from the very outset.

In empty space,
Appearances are ceaseless.
They dwell within the great and self-arisen essence-drop.

The tantra *Perfect Prowess of the Lion*¹⁰⁰ says,

Ema!
Within the center of your heart,
Awareness dwells,
Abiding in the manner of both means and wisdom
Appearing in the form of father-mother deities.

And,

Emaho! If you do not know the body that transcends phenomena,
watch the body of the vajra-chains of awareness. If you wish to
recognize the wisdom nature of phenomena, familiarize yourself with
the self-arisen wisdom of awareness . . . If you wish to gain the five
eyes of perfect awareness,¹⁰¹ watch the body of the vajra-chains of
awareness.

Similarly, if you wish to assimilate the wisdom of the Buddhas, if you wish to

understand all phenomena essentially and in detail, it is said that you should watch the body of the vajra-chains:

The palace of a jewel eight-faceted,
The palace of the channels that contain the movement,
The palace of the skull, the bony vault,
The palace of the peering eyes:
Within these four great palaces,
The mighty secret of the Secret Mantra dwells,
Immobile kaya of self-awareness.
From their doors, it strongly issues forth
Upon the path, dissolving into empty space.
This ultimate primordial wisdom may appear in any form,
The latter being perfect in the state from which it manifests.
Within the great and ultimate reality,
You watch the vajra-chains.
Appearances unnumbered there may be,
Yet they are one in ultimate reality . . .

The vajra-chains are errorless;
Mistakes appear to minds upon the path . . .

The essential nature is one's own awareness;
The kayas that appear are signs of it.
The essence is unchanging utter truth,
Brilliant, splendid, luminous.
Within great bliss, the vajra seed
Is free of causes and conditions.
This is but the perfect ultimate reality
That dwells in emptiness endowed with skillful means.

Furthermore, when referring to the use of the appearances of natural luminosity as the path, the *Abridged Kalachakra Tantra* says,

Regarding supreme knowledge, primordial wisdom, and the mind and its display, there are ten aspects. The empowerment that penetrates this spotless nature similar to the moon, which is like a reflection in a mirror—wherein the immutable bliss of nirvana, coemergent and unchanging, takes its birth—constitutes the fourth empowerment. The

one who has the face of Buddhahood in his heart or mouth is the glorious teacher.¹⁰²

And,

In its center are the forms of Buddha, which do not have the character of [knowledge] objects. They are many, and this is the sambhogakaya. The yogi should watch a cloudless sky with fixed and stable stare.

So it is said. Samaya! I pray that, in their kindness, the dakinis of the ultimate expanse will unravel the teaching and grant accomplishment.

Alala-ho mahasiddhi hung

An explanation of the Seven-Line Prayer according to the conclusive pith instructions related to the achievement of the practice of the paths of liberation and skillful means previously explained

Through the practice just explained, namely, that of the paths of liberation and skillful means, realization will occur. **Hung** refers to supreme primordial wisdom. **Orgyen** is the **land** in which the Secret Mantra first arose. The word “Orgyen” is a Tibetan variant of the original name “Oddiyana,” which means “to fly and to progress.” This is a reference to the nature of our own mind, the root of both samsara and nirvana, and indicates that—as though we were waking from a deluded dream—our capacity for the Mantrayana is aroused. We will thus fly away from the mire of samsara with its dualistic appearances and will make progress on the path. Of all the paths that give freedom from samsara, the Secret Mantra is the easiest. It is also the swiftest to give protection—so much so that, for those who practice it, it is as if they were flying.

Bondage and freedom are dependent on the mind. The link between the mind and the skillful methods of the Secret Mantra in which it engages is indicated by the Tibetan possessive particle *gyi* [translated into English as **upon**]. Formerly, the mind had set or was sunk (*nub* in Tibetan, which also means west) in the mire of the habitual patterns of samsara. Now, being liberated, it is freed from them or cleansed (*byang* in Tibetan, which also means **north**). It could also be said that when delusions subside, they sink (*nub*) into the pure and ultimate expanse, with the result that all defects are purified (*byang*). And the **rim** or frontier is the practice that separates samsara from nirvana.

Thanks to this practice, all sounds, as well as the faculty of hearing, are purified in the mandala of enlightened speech. All thoughts are perfected in the mandala of the enlightened mind. All things, in whatever form they appear, are brought to ripeness in the mandala of the enlightened body, its net of illusory emanations. These three aspects are successively indicated by the words **lotus, pistil-cup, and stem**. In the communication and understanding of the teachings, the speech and hearing faculties are united. It is thanks to this that one can penetrate the meaning of the Secret Mantra. First, therefore, enlightened speech is symbolized by a lotus untainted by attachment [to the mud in which it grows]. Then, by means of the pith instructions of the path of the Secret Mantra, one is introduced to awareness-wisdom, indicated by the pistil-cup (for the latter is the very heart of the lotus flower and is extremely bright and beautiful). Finally, the stem symbolizes the enlightened body. When one has achieved glory for oneself, that is, one's own realization, one can, out of compassion, send forth an illusory net of emanations that are a glory for the sake of others. And like a wish-fulfilling tree, one can provide [beings with] the cooling shade of the higher realms and the ripe fruit of the definitive goodness of enlightenment. The major and minor marks [of this enlightened body] are lovely flowers that release a ravishing fragrance of benefit and happiness. Because this body is the support of every glory and perfection, it is indicated here by the word "stem."

The citation of scriptural passages for each of these symbols of the Secret Mantra would make for a very long text, but to describe the matter in its brief essentials, we may quote *The Magic Key to the Treasury*:¹⁰³

All dualistic and discursive thoughts
Sink and set in nondual primal wisdom;
Therefore the enlightened mind lies to the west.
And in itself, the enlightened mind
Is pure of every flaw of the afflictions;
Therefore the enlightened mind lies to the north.

The Great Perfection tantra *The United Level of Phenomenal Existence*¹⁰⁴ says,

All discursive, dualistic thoughts
Sink into thought-free, unborn space.
Therefore the enlightened mind lies west.
Affliction, subject, object, affirmation and denial are cleansed.
Therefore the enlightened mind lies north.

The Great Perfection tantra *Equal to the Sky*¹⁰⁵ says,

Just as the lotus is unstained by mire,
The nature of enlightened mind, the ground,
By subject and by object is unstained.

And, “Although appearing variously, it is unstained and flawless like a lotus flower.” On the basis of these and other scriptures, it is clear that this is how the words “lotus,” “pistil-cup,” and “stem” are to be interpreted.

The whole of phenomenal existence appears as the mandala of the three secrets. Appearances fall to neither side [of existence or nonexistence]. Dualistic concepts do not apply to them; appearances are but the display of the one and only self-arisen wisdom. Phenomena are never anything other than this; they abide in the vajra nature of the wisdom of equality. And this is **wondrous**. Therefore, the *Abridged Kalachakra Tantra* says,

The vajra body of the Victorious Ones is not accessible in the state of subject-object duality. Their vajra speech can cause beings to understand the Dharma in all their respective languages. Their vajra mind dwells like a stainless (wish-fulfilling) gem within the nature of the mind of every being. It is the vajra-awareness, which contains all things.

It is by receiving the teachings based on enlightened speech that one initially enters the great, natural, spontaneously present mandala. By reflecting on these teachings, one becomes convinced of their truth; and then by meditating on them, one’s mind absorbs them. Finally one gains the fruit of accomplishment. These four stages are successively alluded to with the words “lotus,” “pistil-cup,” “stem,” and “wondrous.” The lotus and pistil-cup indicate knowledge of the view through the reception of, and reflection on, the teachings. The stem denotes the integration of this knowledge into the mind, and the word “wondrous” refers to the fruit of accomplishment. These four words, therefore, directly indicate the different sections of practice, namely, the four phases of approach, close approach, accomplishment, and great accomplishment,¹⁰⁶ whereby the four maras, or demons, are overcome.¹⁰⁷ In any case, all the crucial points of the path of Secret Mantra come together and are included in the maturation of the wisdom of the four vajras within one’s own mindstream.

This primordial wisdom is referred to by many names. Since it is free from negative emotions, it is called “primordial freedom.” Being unconstrained by

karma and transcending all causes and conditions, it is “self-arisen primordial wisdom.” Since it is free from pain, it is known as the “bodhichitta of great bliss.” Devoid of all references and beyond all assertions, it is a state devoid of conceptual fixation and is therefore called the “wisdom that abides in no extreme position.” Since it is the seal of everything (in other words, nothing is separate from it and nothing can prevail against it), it is “indestructible (vajra-like) primordial wisdom.” Nothing in the whole of samsara and nirvana goes beyond this wisdom nature. It remains even and unchanging throughout the three times. This wisdom is like a seal upon a royal decree making it incontestable, with the result that it is called a “wisdom that none can go beyond.” It is also referred to as the “one and only essence-drop,”¹⁰⁸ the “awareness-dharmakaya,” the “inseparability of the two superior truths,” the “mandala of the child bodhichitta of great bliss,” the “ultimate ground,” the “causal continuum of the universal ground,” the “spontaneously present natural mandala,” the “indivisibility of the two truths,” the “mandala of the three vajras,” the “mandala of the ultimate nature, its expression and compassion (or creative power),” the “indivisible expanse of samsara and nirvana,” the “mandala of primordial Buddhahood,” the “mandala of primordial purity and spontaneous presence,” and so on.

Primordial wisdom has many names, but in truth it refers simply to the inseparability of the ground and fruit, the one and only essence-drop of the dharmakaya. If it is assessed from the standpoint of its utterly pure nature, it is the actual dharmakaya, primordial Buddhahood. For, from its own side, it is free from every obscuration. We must understand that we are Buddha from the very beginning. Without this understanding, we will fail to recognize the spontaneously present mandala of the ground, and we will be obliged to assert, in accordance with the vehicle of the paramitas, that Buddhahood has a cause. We will fail to recognize the authentic view of the Secret Mantra. The *Heruka Galpo Tantra* says,

In the expository vehicle of cause,
Living beings are known to be the cause of Buddhas.¹⁰⁹
In the resultant vajra vehicle,
One meditates upon the Buddhahood of mind itself.

By contrast, from the standpoint of the way in which the mind appears, we can say that the nature of the mind, though primordially pure, is stained by adventitious defilements arising in the minds of beings. Therefore, from the point of view of ordinary beings, we must say that Buddhahood, endowed with twofold purity, is not yet won and that it is only when defilements are purified

that Buddhahood is attained.

It should be understood that these two ways of speaking are in accordance, first, with the mind's ultimate mode of being and, second, with its mode of appearance; they are not in contradiction. It is for this reason that in the *Mahaparinirvana-sutra* it is said that because the sugatagarbha consists in the qualities of enlightenment, which are spontaneously present from the very beginning, all the various paths that may be implemented serve only to render these qualities manifest. Likewise in the tantra *Compendium of Indestructible Primal Wisdom*¹¹⁰ and elsewhere, it is said that the paths simply render the primordial luminosity of the dharmakaya manifest. They do not create it. It is important to understand that this is a particularly crucial point and is extremely profound. Once it is understood, the view of the Secret Mantra has been correctly assimilated.

When the mandala of the primordial ground—the authentic nature of primordial Buddhahood—is realized, the mind becomes inseparable from the wisdom of all the Buddhas of the three times. The irreversible ground of realization (whence there is no return) is thereby achieved. In that very instant **supreme mastery is found**—in which the ground and fruit are inseparably united. Such is the attainment of the level of the great Vajradhara, and of this we may be absolutely certain. Phenomenal existence is utterly pure—the wisdom of the dharmakaya. Perfectly convinced of this, we should take our stand on the primordial “Buddha” of phenomenal existence and be utterly resolved on it.

This [wisdom of the dharmakaya] is the ultimate and spontaneously arisen **Lotus-Born** and is **renowned** as such in the unnumbered buddhafiels of the ten directions. And this, appearing as the jnanasattva within the heart of all the Buddhas, is “vajra-sharp” Manjushri, who is indeed the glorious Buddha, lotus-born. In the chapter of the *Praise of the Illusory Net of Manjushri*¹¹¹ that is presented in the form of a song, it is said,

Glorious Buddha, lotus-born,
Who holds the treasure of all-knowing wisdom,
The king displayed in many miragelike forms,
The mighty Buddha, wielder of the vidya-mantras.

Moreover, the Buddhas of the three times and their Bodhisattva children appear in unnumbered mandalas of peaceful and wrathful deities, in various forms and under various names, bringing benefit according to particular needs. However, when one understands that, on the ultimate level, all of them are this wisdom of the dharmakaya; and when, with this understanding, one's meditation

attains confident certainty, then no matter how one acts and behaves, everything will turn into the path of Mantrayana. For in that case, one will have attained the level of the powerful king of yogis. The tantra *Self-Arising Awareness* says,

When there is no clinging or attachment, then the unsurpassed is gained;
When there is no veneration, then the deity is achieved;
When there's nothing to recite, the mantra is perfected;
When there's nothing to accomplish, accomplishment is won.

The *Two Segments*, the condensed version of the *Hevajra Tantra*¹¹² says,

There is no meditation, and there is no meditator;
There is no deity, nor even any mantra.
Within the nature that transcends all concepts,
Deity and mantra perfectly abide.

The tantra *The Great Light that Is the Absence of Conceptual Construction*¹¹³ says,

Self-awareness, therefore, goes beyond all objects of the mind.
All we label is no more than name; all we think of is no more than thought.
All we see is but appearance of objects; all that's made is destined for destruction.
Past, present, future thoughts, when these dissolve,
'Tis there we find the unborn and unmanifest, great self-arisen kaya,
Unchanged, unmarred, unreachable, ungrasped.
There is no clinging and no thought, no grasping, no dependency.
This is how awareness dwells.

The tantra *The All-Creating King* says,

In their suchness, all appearances are one.
Let no one tamper with or alter it.
In this sovereign state of uncontrived equality
The thought-free dharmakaya wisdom is spontaneously present . . .

“In one thing all is perfect and complete”—

It's here that Buddha's wisdom lies.
And in this all-embracing view,
All is perfect and sublime.
Those who rest within this state of nonactivity
May seemingly have bodies human or divine.
They yet have wisdom of enlightened Buddhas.
Such beings work the benefit of others
In bliss and without striving or intention . . .

This bodhichitta, essence of all things,
Is my spontaneous nature from the very outset.
No need to search for it, traversing the ten grounds.

My nature may be thus compared with space,
And no one has with labor contrived space.

The Great Perfection tantra *Primal Wisdom Equal to the Sky*¹¹⁴ says,

Once the self-arisen dharmakaya is known,
There is no need for busyness or action.
It is as though one finds a precious gem—
Enlightened action manifests spontaneously . . .

Yogis who have grasped this view
Are human in their bodies, Buddhas in their minds.
Their self-arisen kaya is endowed with Brahma's speech,
And straightaway they are Samantabhadra.

The tantra entitled *Great Samantabhadra Dwelling in Ourselves*¹¹⁵ says,

Ultimate truth—when this is not yet known
And self-arisen wisdom is not manifest,
There's nothing that does not turn into poison
And nothing that is not a harmful foe.
But when the meaning of great bliss is known,
And open, thus, the door of bodhichitta,
There's no one who does not attain the fruit,
And no one who is not indeed a Buddha . . .

No permanence and no annihilation,
There is just great bliss,
Unchanging, effortless, spontaneously arising—
No “I,” no “self,” no one side and no other . . .

Resplendent in the ultimate expanse beyond all movement,
Perfect, unproduced, it is a state of great perfection.
Beyond all action and all striving, it is uncompounded.
Beyond all aspiration, it is perfect in ourselves.
The triple realm, the world and all that it contains
Are but the ornaments of perfect bliss.
In fields of perfect qualities,
All are Buddhas, all without exception.

The tantra entitled *The Six Expanses of Samantabhadra*¹¹⁶ says,

I, the primordial lord, am spontaneously manifest and arise in pure and stainless light. The king of enlightened action, I possess the body of the supreme, great secret. Any yogi with the good fortune of sharp and powerful intelligence, who recognizes me, brings to perfection the fruit of his practice and is thus equal to me, Samantabhadra.

The tantra *The King of Infinite Space*¹¹⁷ says,

Though he has samsara and nirvana both beneath his sway,
From the state of evenness he never stirs.
In Samantabhadra all is one.

Thus highest wisdom (the ultimate Lotus-Born) is clearly indicated in the vajra scriptures.

From the point of view of the ultimate mode of being, no phenomenon has ever stirred, is not stirring, and will never stir from the mandala of the primordial ground, which itself has the nature of primordial Buddhahood. Yet, from the standpoint of the appearing mode, the manifold phenomena of samsara and nirvana arise as the creative display of this same primordial ground, as though surrounding it in a **ring**.

And so for beings who have not yet realized the ultimate state, or who have understood it incorrectly or only in part (in other words, those who have not yet realized it as it is), inconceivable appearances endlessly unfold. These manifest

constantly throughout the three times, irradiating and arising in the infinite expanse of the all-pervading dharmadhatu. They are sky-dancing dakinis. These appearances are limitless and surround, so to speak, the primordial ground—on account of which the prayer says **many dakinis encircle you**. All these appearances are the spontaneous display of the ultimate nature; they are the mere projection of the mind.¹¹⁸ Even in the sutras of the Mahayana, it is said that the phenomena of samsara and nirvana are just the “deposit” of thoughts.¹¹⁹ Although they never at any time move from the ultimate nature of equality, phenomena endlessly occur, pure or impure, in all their variety, throughout the three times.

On the other hand, for those who understand that, within the expanse of the ultimate nature, the whole of phenomenal existence possesses, from the very beginning, the utterly pure nature of the four vajras, and for those who never lose this understanding but settle at their ease in the fresh, uncontrived natural state—for those who are thus wise, ordinary impure appearances and thoughts no longer occur. They cannot occur, just as it is impossible for ordinary stones to be found in a land of gold. All phenomena arise as infinite purity.

By maintaining this yoga, seamless like a flowing stream, wherein, in the absence of clinging, all thoughts melt away at the moment of their rising, one will free oneself from all the fetters imposed by the conventional, ordinary mind. All the resultant qualities of the Mahayana path will be automatically and effortlessly perfected, and the indestructible citadel of the dharmakaya will be captured. One will abide in the ultimate view of all paths and vehicles, the view of atiyoga, beyond all action and effort. With this view of the ultimate nature in mind, **in your footsteps practicing** (so the prayer says) **we follow you**. And through our meditation in accordance with the view, all phenomena will manifest as the mandala of the four vajras. Therefore, in order that primordial wisdom might **grant** us **blessings**, and that we might actualize this ultimate view and **come** into or reach the mandala of the primordial ground—to that end, **we pray**.

Since this path is the essence of all pith instructions and is the highest of all wisdoms, it is the **Guru**. Since the perception of primordial wisdom free from all attachment and hindrance is without stain, it is **Padma**. Since it is the actualization of the final accomplishment, it is **Siddhi**. And finally, the realization of the inseparability of the ground and fruit is indicated by the seed-syllable of the mind of all the Buddhas, namely, **Hung**.

This realization is the actualization, through self-cognizing primordial wisdom, of the profound and ultimate view of suchness, as set forth in the sutras and tantras. All defective views, the domain of dualistic discursive thought, which apprehend existence and nonexistence—all fall naturally apart. It is as the

tantra *The Promise of the Dakinis*¹²⁰ declares:

If you have the nectar in your mouth, you will not spit it out.
You will not eat again what you have vomited.
Once you taste the nectar of the self-awareness—bodhichitta,
Wrong thoughts, fallacious cause and fruit, you will not seek.

Phenomenal existence is nothing but the indivisible union [of the two truths, appearance and emptiness], the uncontrived state of coemergent great bliss. Speaking of the yogis who have discovered this irreversible, unchanging, and fearless path, the *Kalachakra Tantra* says,

Their bodies are pure, transparent, without a single atom of materiality, similar to space. They possess all the major and minor marks of Buddhahood. They perceive all the varied phenomena of the three dimensions of existence as dreamlike—as pure, transparent, and free of obscuration. Their speech is uninterrupted and touches other beings' hearts, for it is expressed in language appropriate to them. Their minds are filled with supreme bliss, unshakable, constantly permeated with coemergent primal wisdom.

The yogis and yoginis thus described possess the accomplishment of Mahamudra.

A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF HOW THE FOREGOING EXPOSITION MAY BE IMPLEMENTED AS A PRACTICE

In the beginning, we can use the Seven-Line Prayer as a part of the guru-yoga practice. It establishes the favorable conditions for the actualization of primordial wisdom. Then, with the help of a fully qualified teacher, we should gain a clear understanding of the essential points of the common paths of skillful means and liberation, and of the ultimate and swift path of the Great Perfection. Next, we should make these the heart of our practice and meditate with diligence. This is how to gain certainty in the view, as explained in the conclusive pith instructions; and it is how one accomplishes the level of vidyadhara.

With an irreversible faith in Guru Rinpoche, considering him the embodiment of all refuges, we should meditate upon him, visualizing him above the crown of our heads, praying to him intensely with the seven vajra verses [of the Seven-Line Prayer]. From the body of the Guru, there flows a stream of amrita, which cleanses away all our illnesses, and all the evil forces to which we have fallen victim, as well as all the sins, defilements, and sufferings of body, speech, and mind. All these negativities leave us in the form of pus, blood, insects, smoky-colored liquids, and various other impurities. Finally, like salt dissolving into water, our body melts into a pure liquid, which falls into the gaping mouths of Yama—the lord of death—and all the other evil forces and spirits beneath the earth to whom we owe karmic debts, so that these creditors are wholly satisfied. All evil and karmic debts are thus cleansed and dissolve into emptiness.

Then we should meditate on our bodies as being the luminous body of the yidam deity to whom we feel an affinity, and we should consider that Guru Rinpoche, visualized above the crown of our heads, descends into the center of the eight-petaled lotus of our hearts and mingles in a single taste with the indestructible essence-drop. We should then remain in a state of meditative equipoise in the primordial wisdom of great bliss.

In the post-meditation period, we should consider that everything that appears is a pure buddhafiield peopled by deities. We should use the activities of eating, walking, and sitting as part of the practice, considering them as offerings, circumambulation, and so on, respectively. When we go to bed, we should visualize the teacher in the center of our hearts and practice accordingly. Thus in all our daily conduct, we should endeavor in the practice in a constant,

uninterrupted stream, making a virtue of everything we do.

We should visualize Guru Rinpoche in the sky in front of us and pray to him, making offerings and praises. This is the way to receive the blessings of his body, speech, and mind. Such prayers are of the highest importance. For, generally speaking, all the perfect qualities of the upper realms and the ultimate excellence of Buddhahood manifest when we follow a teacher. This is particularly true of the realization of the profound path,¹²¹ which depends entirely on the reception of the teacher's blessings. As it is said,

The ultimate and coemergent wisdom
Comes only through the gathering of merit and the cleansing of all
faults,
And from the blessings of accomplished gurus.
To seek it elsewhere—you should understand—is folly.

And,

Moreover it is coemergent and ineffable.
You find it nowhere else
Except through timely teachings of the guru
And by virtue of your merit. Know this well.

In order to actualize the highest primordial wisdom, we should study the texts of the sutras and the tantras, together with their commentaries. In particular, we should familiarize ourselves with the pith instructions that introduce directly and nakedly the ultimate primordial wisdom, the union of emptiness and appearance. It is by such means that we will be able to dispel all doubts regarding the view. Then, by exerting ourselves according to our understanding and experience, either on the path of skillful means or on the path of liberation, we will reap the fruit both now and ultimately.

COLOPHON

If trivial subjects spun with strings of words
Imputed by obscured and shadowed minds—
When scholars set them forth with skillful gloss—
May prove replete with wonders thousandfold,
What shall we say of perfect vajra speech,
Profound in sense, that lightning-dances forth
From vast reserves of knowledge that beholds,
With primal wisdom's clear, unsullied eyes,
The whole array of things just as they are,
Appearing without toil to minds that fortune blessed?

The feckless, childish mind, which speculates
And understates or overshoots its mark,
Is fearful, cannot broach the vast expanse.
But those graced with good fortune, who with faith
Embrace this prayer, will find that it reveals
A dance of wish-fulfilling nourishment.
For it indeed is able to express
The sutras, tantras: all the Dharma's teaching.

To set forth all its prodigies, construe its sense,
Great Bodhisattvas are themselves unable.
How could such as I?
Not knowing its profundity, some narrow fools declare
That it is hollow words and has no depth.
“There's no profundity,” they say. “There's nothing hard to grasp.”
They have no praises for these vajra verses vast and deep.

But when, upon the limpid ocean of the wondrous mind,
The stars of faith cast down their shining images,
The hare-marked moon (this wondrous vajra prayer)
Is seen supreme above all other texts.

This depth of meaning hid like treasure in the earth,

Sealed up within the wording of this prayer,
Resounding in my constant recitation,
Spontaneously appeared. And here I found
The secret of the enlightened mind.

Within the center of my heart,
In spotless essence of awareness,
Meditating on the glorious perfect Buddha Lotus-Born,
The jnanasattva Manjushri,
There came to me within my mind
Transmission of the lineage of blessings.
All this I have contrived in words,
And thus this commentary, *White Lotus*, I set down.

Through this may all behold
Primordial wisdom, self-arisen Lotus King,
At play within the spacelike reaches of their minds.
May I and all who have connections with this prayer
Be taken into Padma's care for all our lives.
May we receive, reflect, and meditate
Upon the teachings without let or obstacle,
And gain with ease our own and others' good.
And may the general teachings of the Conqueror,
The yogas of the threefold inner tantras,
Especially the precious teachings of the light of vajra-essence,
Be strongly spread in all the ten directions.
May every being's joy and wealth of Dharma powerfully increase!

The *White Lotus*, this commentary on the Seven-Line Prayer, has three aspects. Outwardly, its petals are in full flower, for the explanation of the words is clear and easily understood. Inwardly, the taste of its hidden meaning has the sweetness of nectar. Finally, through the practice, it releases a sublime perfume of blessings.

When I, Mipham Namgyal, was twenty-five years old, while I was staying near Dza'i Gyalpo, in the sixth month of the iron horse year (1870), an event occurred that caused all the hidden significance of the prayer to appear suddenly within my mind. On the fifteenth day of that same month, I set it all down in writing. Even though, later on, certain precious incarnations such as Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo expressed their approval of my efforts, the latter were nevertheless blemished with the shortcomings of a youthful composition. So I made some small improvements to it and put it to one side, with the result that, after some time, the original copy got lost.

But my attendant, Sherab Ösel, who considers me his main teacher and who has served me honestly for many a year, looked high and low for the manuscript and eventually found it. With firm faith in Guru Rinpoche, he had already completed thirteen hundred thousand recitations of the Seven-Line Prayer and promised to do more. He made offerings on numerous occasions, asking me to compose a commentary on the prayer, saying that he needed a detailed explanation that set forth all its outer, inner, and secret meanings.

Out of tenderness for him and for all followers of Guru Rinpoche, and indeed for all beings of this final age, I girded myself with a diligence that overcame the effects of my illness; and bringing into focus the earlier text (certain expressions

of which were rather diffuse), I improved it through the addition of many new points. The work was completed on an auspicious day in the sixth month of the year of the iron ox (1901) in my little hermitage at Shri Simha, the scriptural college of Dzogchen Monastery, where the teachings of the three vehicles resound. By this merit may all beings who have a connection with this prayer be born in Lotus Light, the pure land of Guru Rinpoche. May this commentary constantly send forth great goodness for the doctrine and for living beings!



THE RAIN OF BLESSINGS

A GURU-YOGA BASED UPON THE SEVEN-LINE PRAYER

Ah

Considering myself in usual human form, I see before me in the sky
The spotless lake of Dhanakosha in the land of Orgyen.
It is extremely deep and filled with water graced with eightfold excellence.
In the center of this lake upon a spreading lotus raised upon its precious stem
Sits the Orgyen Vajradhara, embodiment of every refuge,
Blazing with the glory of the marks of Buddhahood,
Embracing to himself his princess consort.
His right hand wields a vajra; and in his left he holds a skull-cup and a vase.
He looks magnificent in silken robes, in ornaments of jewels and bone.
Within a mass of five-colored light, he blazes with the splendor of great bliss.
The ocean of the three roots gathers thickly round him like a cloud.
He looks at me and showers down a rain of blessings of compassion.

Invocation

To your immortal wisdom body, nature of all Buddhas,
With fierce, unfeigned devotion I faithfully and constantly prostrate.
My body and my wealth and, in the three times, all my merit gained,
Considered like Samantabhadra's offering cloud, I lay it all before you.
I confess my every evil deed, all downfalls stored from time without beginning.
In the life and deeds of you, my Lord, in whom are gathered
All the excellence of all the Buddhas and their heirs,
I sincerely rejoice and pray to you devotedly.
I beg you to pour down on me a heavy rain of Dharma both profound and vast.
Gathering together all the virtues of myself and others,
For as long as all the worlds of beings, ocean-vast, endure,
I follow you, my Lord, in life and deed,
And dedicate this virtue to the guidance of all beings many as the sky is vast.
Great treasure-mine of love and knowledge, embodiment of every refuge,
Precious, only refuge in these evil times, this age of dregs—
Tormented by the pains provoked by five degenerations,
I pray to you with fierce devotion. Look quickly on your child with loving eyes.
And from your vast expanse of wisdom may the skill of your compassion
overflow
And bless and strengthen now my longing heart.
Quickly show to me the signs and portents of accomplishment
And grant to me supreme and ordinary siddhis.

Continue by reciting the Seven-Line Prayer as much as you can.

Hung

In Orgyen's land, upon its northwest rim,
On lotus, pistil-cup, and stem,
Wondrous, supreme mastery you found
And as the Lotus-Born you are renowned.
A ring of many dakinis encircles you,
And in your footsteps practicing we follow you.
To grant your blessings, come, we pray.

Guru Padma Siddhi Hung

In answer to my devoted prayer, from the hearts of the Guru and his consort and from the place of their union, five-colored rays of light of primal wisdom stream forth, spreading out like threads of gossamer. They sink into my heart and bless my mind.

*Then recite the mantra:*¹²²

OM AH HUNG BENZAR GURU PEMA SIDDHI HUNG

At the end of the session:

From the three syllables resting in the three centers of the Guru,
Rays of light, white, red, and blue, stream forth.
They sink into my own three centers, whereby my three doors
Are cleansed of their obscuring veils and become the vajras of body, speech, and
mind.

Finally, the Guru and his entourage melt into light,
Into drops of light, white and red, marked with the syllable HUNG.
They sink into my heart—the Guru's mind
And my own mind become inseparable.
I rest now in the state of inborn dharmakaya.

A AH

Saying this, look upon the very face of the great primordial dharmakaya, the nature of your own mind, changeless from the very beginning, beyond all acceptance and rejection . . .

Once again appearances arise as in a mirage. Look upon them all as having the nature of the Guru. Dedicate the merit, and by making prayers of good wishes, make everything auspicious.

On the eighth day of the waxing moon of the seventh month, with prayers to be, in all his lives, a servant of the Lotus Guru, Mipham Namgyal drew this from the lake of his mind. Virtue! Mangalam.



NOTES

TRANSLATORS' INTRODUCTION

- [1.](#) See Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born: The Life Story of Padmasambhava* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1993). This book, which is a mine of fascinating detail, contains a very full list of the Tibetan sources. See pp. 223–30.
- [2.](#) See Dudjom Rinpoche, *Counsels from My Heart* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2001), p. 54.
- [3.](#) The rainbow body represents the attainment of enlightenment according to the teachings of the Great Perfection. There are several levels of rainbow body, of which the great transference (*'ja' lus 'pho ba chen po*) is the highest. As Tulku Thondup explains, the yogi “transforms his impure ordinary body as a rainbow-like body and then he lives for centuries without dying as long as it benefits others. Sometimes he remains invisible from ordinary beings but when the opportunity of teaching and serving others arises he will become visible in his original form or in different forms again and again. This body is also known as Vajra-Body (*rdo rje sku*).” Tulku Thondup, *The Tantric Tradition of the Nyingmapa* (Marion, Mass.: Buddhayana, 1984), p. 193. Although the attainment of the rainbow body of great transference is very rare, other masters besides Guru Rinpoche (for example, Vimalamitra) are said to have attained it.

4. Dilgo Khyentse, *The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1988), p. 3.
5. Khyentse, *The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel*, p. 9.
6. Gyalwa Changchub and Namkhai Nyingpo, *Lady of the Lotus-Born* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999), p. 176.
7. Changchub and Nyingpo, *Lady of the Lotus-Born*, p. 20.
8. As an example of this practice, we have added at the end of this book a translation of *The Rain of Blessings*, a guru-yoga practice composed by Mipham Rinpoche, which places special emphasis on the recitation of the Seven-Line Prayer.
9. See Khyentse, *The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel*, p. 19.
10. The whole of Yeshe Tsogyal's life story, as depicted in *Lady of the Lotus-Born*, could be regarded as an exemplar of the guru-disciple relationship and as an extended illustration of the guru-yoga practice.
11. See Tulku Thondup, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1986), p. 61.

WHITE LOTUS

1. Padmakara and Padmasambhava are equally the names of Guru Rinpoche and both are translated in Tibetan as *pad ma 'byung gnas*. The name may be understood in two ways: either as "Lotus-Born" (the more common interpretation) or as "Lotus-Source." The second interpretation is referred to later in the commentary. See also Padmasambhava and Jamgön Kongtrul, *The Light of Wisdom* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1995), pp. 45–46.
2. Oddiyana, the realm of dakinis, is traditionally located to the northwest of the

Indian subcontinent, perhaps in the area of the Swat valley, adjacent to Kashmir, in what is now Pakistan. Before the arrival of Islam, this region was renowned for its traditions of tantric Buddhism, a fact attested to by its rich archaeological heritage. “Oddiyana” was the Sanskrit name for what was locally known as “Udyan,” the name from which the Tibetans apparently derived their “Orgyen.” See Ngawang Zangpo, *Guru Rinpoche: His Life and Times* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 2002), pp. 57–59.

In the present translation, our policy has been to use both the Sanskrit and Tibetan variants since both are current, but to give preference to the Tibetan “Orgyen,” as this is the form most familiar to practitioners, many of whom recite the prayer to Guru Rinpoche in Tibetan.

3. This was the name given to Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thayé (1813–1899) in his capacity as tertön, or revealer of sacred texts.
4. This is a literal translation of *pad ma kun tu 'chang*, an epithet of Guru Padmasambhava.
5. *nges pa lnga*. The five certainties of the sambhogakaya refer to the teacher (Akshobhya, for instance), his retinue (Bodhisattvas on the tenth ground of realization), the teaching (the Secret Mantra), the place (his buddhafiield of Abhirati, or Manifest Joy), and the time (the wheel of everlasting continuity beyond time).
6. *rnam shes bdun*. Namely, the consciousnesses of the six senses (the mind is considered the sixth sense) together with the defiled consciousness that conceives of “I.”
7. *byang chub yan lag bdun*. Among the thirty-seven elements leading to enlightenment, these are the seven factors of the path of seeing, namely, mindfulness, perfect discernment, diligence, joy, flexibility, concentration, and evenness.
8. *don dam dkor bdun*. The enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, activities, ultimate expanse, and primordial wisdom.

9. It is said that Vairotsana was later reborn as Jamgön Kongtrul, the tertön who revealed this treasure text. This reference to Vairotsana is Guru Rinpoche's prophetic authorization (*bka' babs lung bstan*), designating Vairotsana as the vehicle for the transmission of the treasure teaching. The prophetic authorization is not "a mere prediction of future happenings but has the power to make happen whatever has been said, owing to the power of the words of truth of Guru Padmasambhava." See Tulku Thondup, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*, p. 68.
10. Our universe is so called because its inhabitants endure defiled emotion and suffering in great measure and Bodhisattvas endure hardships and practice with courage. See Longchen Yeshe Dorje, Kangyur Rinpoche, *Treasury of Precious Qualities* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2001), p. 395, n. 260.
11. Eight manifestations, *mtshan brgyad*. These are Padmasambhava, Loden Chokse, Padma Gyalpo, Nyima Özer, Senge Dradok, Shakya Senge, Dorje Drolö, and Vajradhara of Orgyen.
12. That is, respectively, Amitabha, Avalokiteshvara, and Guru Padmasambhava.
13. Shambhala of the North is a hidden land located in our human world. Its kings are enlightened emanations, and the teachings of the *Kalachakra Tantra* are preserved and practiced there.
14. The Ferocious Holder of the Wheel, the name of the future kalki (*rigs ldan*), the "lineage king" of Shambhala, who with his army will vanquish the hordes of barbarians, bringing the period of degeneration to an end and ushering in the new golden age. See note 13.
15. It seems desirable to leave the Sanskrit spelling of *padma* here, but the reader should be aware that it is pronounced *pema* by Tibetans and by most practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism.
16. Botanically speaking, the Tibetan word *ge sar* is somewhat imprecise. It simply refers to the center or heart of a flower, which Western science

analyzes into different items: stamens, anthers, pistil, and so on. The striking feature of the Indian lotus blossom (*nelumbo nucifera*) is that, at the center of a corona of golden, pollen-bearing stamens, the pistil takes the form of a cup-shaped, flat-topped, seed-containing pod, which is also golden-yellow in color. One can well imagine that if the flower were big enough, the pistil-cup would constitute an admirable seat.

[17.](#) *dpal gyi beu*. A latticelike configuration that is a symbol of the enlightened mind. As Khenpo Yonten Gyamtso says in his commentary to Jigme Lingpa's *Treasury of Precious Qualities*, "the dharma chakra situated at the heart is referred to as the 'never-ending knot' on account of its profound expanse." See Yonten Gyamtso, *yon tan rin po che 'i mdzod kyi 'grel pa zab don snang byed nyi ma 'od zer*, volume *Hung*, p. 350.

[18.](#) Simply to see Guru Rinpoche (or representations of him) is a source of benefit for beings.

[19.](#) The outer vehicle is the causal vehicle comprising the Hinayana and the general (sutra) section of the Mahayana. The inner, or "resultant" vehicle is the Secret Mantra, or Vajrayana.

[20.](#) The three kinds of suffering are the "suffering of suffering," that is, physical and mental pain in the usual sense of the term; the "suffering of change," the apparently happy states that will sooner or later turn into their opposites; and "all-pervading suffering-in-the-making," which is the inescapable suffering implicit in every kind of compounded action.

[21.](#) Natural nirmanakaya buddhafiield, *rang bzhin sprul sku'i zhing khams*. According to Khenpo Yonten Gyamtso, the natural nirmanakaya buddhafiields are the display of the spontaneous radiance of the inner luminosity of primordial wisdom. See Yonten Gyamtso, *yon tan rin po che 'i mdzod kyi 'grel pa zab don snang byed nyi ma 'od zer*, volume *Hung*, p. 805.

[22.](#) "Unsurpassed" is the literal meaning of *bla ma* (which is an abbreviation of *bla na med pa*), the Tibetan equivalent of the Sanskrit *guru*.

[23.](#) *snying thig tshig bdun ma*. A sadhana of Guru Rinpoche belonging to the *bla ma gsang 'dus* cycle.

[24.](#) The three vajras are the three indestructible states of the enlightened body, speech, and mind.

[25.](#) The context here is that of *kye rim (skyed rim)*, or the generation stage. The practice of a sadhana is said to pass through four phases: approach (*bsnyen pa*), close approach (*nye bsnyen*), accomplishment (*sgrub pa*), and great accomplishment (*sgrub chen*). Here, the latter two phases constitute a perfection stage *within* the stage of generation.

[26.](#) *chos sku chen po*. This refers to the indivisible union of the two higher truths of the Mantrayana, namely, the indivisible aspects of the purity and the equality of all phenomena (that is, their relative and ultimate truth, respectively). The great dharmakaya must not be understood as an aspect of mere emptiness.

[27.](#) There are three ways to accumulate the recitation of a prayer or mantra: (1) by practicing the recitation for a predetermined period of time, (2) by practicing until one has accumulated a predetermined number of recitations, or (3) by practicing the recitation until signs of accomplishment appear.

[28.](#) *bka' brgyad yongs 'dus kyi rig 'dzin phyi sgrub*.

[29.](#) *bla ma gsang 'dus them med*.

[30.](#) *bla ma sgrub pa'i gsang them gnad yig*. This text belongs most probably to the cycle of *The Guru as the Gathering of Secrets (bla ma gsang 'dus)*.

[31.](#) *bla ma gsang ba 'dus pa'i sgrub pa lung gi byang bu*.

[32.](#) *bdud rtsi 'byung rgyud*.

[33.](#) *tshes bcu bskul thabs.*

[34.](#) *pad ma bka' yi thang yig.* A biography of Guru Padmasambhava hidden as a treasure text and discovered by Orgyen Lingpa (1323–?).

[35.](#) That is, Avalokiteshvara.

[36.](#) This and the two preceding lines are a reference to the three kayas, or dimensions of Buddhahood: the dharmakaya aspect, or Samantabhadra, in the dharmadhatu; the sambhogakaya aspect, or Vajradhara, in the buddhfield of Dense Adornment; and the nirmanakaya aspect, or Buddha Shakyamuni, in Vajrasana (the Vajra Throne, in Bodh Gaya).

[37.](#) *leu bdun ma.* The celebrated final teaching of Guru Rinpoche given to his disciples before he left Tibet, concealed as terma and discovered by Rigdzin Godem (1337–1408).

[38.](#) *bla ma sgrub pa'i gnad yig.*

[39.](#) *snyan brgyud nor bu'i mdzod khang.*

[40.](#) *bla ma drag po.*

[41.](#) *bla ma dgongs 'dus sku rgyud shel gyi ri bo.* A cycle of teachings concealed as a treasure and discovered by Sangye Lingpa (1340–96).

[42.](#) There are two types of meditation in the tantra tradition: meditation according to the path of liberation and meditation according to the path of skillful means. In brief, the path of liberation emphasizes the three kinds of wisdom (deriving from hearing, reflection, and meditation on the teachings) through which understanding and realization are gained. The path of skillful means emphasizes methods and involves practices related to, among other things, the subtle channels, wind-energies, and essence-drops of the physical body.

[43.](#) *yum la bstod pa.*

[44.](#) *rig pa rang shar gyi rgyud.*

[45.](#) *rdzogs chen chos nyid byang chub sems rnam dag ston pa'i rgyud.*

[46.](#) *me lce phreng ba'i rgyud.*

[47.](#) *kye rdo rje rgyud.*

[48.](#) *dpal mchog dang po.*

[49.](#) Vajratopa (*rdo rje snyem ma*) is the name of Vajrasattva's consort.

[50.](#) *dus kyi 'khor lo bsdus pa'i rgyud.*

[51.](#) *bde mchog gi rgyud.*

[52.](#) *gdan bzhi pa'i rgyud.*

[53.](#) *'khor lo sdom pa gsang ba bsam gyis mi khyab pa.*

[54.](#) *rdo rje sems dpa' nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud.*

[55.](#) *gsang ba snying po'i rgyud.*

[56.](#) *rdo rje sems dpa' nam mkha' che.*

[57.](#) *kun byed rgyal po'i rgyud.*

[58.](#) *sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor.*

[59.](#) *he ru ka gal po'i rgyud.*

[60.](#) Unfortunately, we have been unable to produce an adequate translation of this quotation. The Tibetan text reads as follows: *gang phyir a sogs ka sogs ri bong can dang nyin byed gcig nyid rdo rje can gyi gdan min zhing / hung yig nyid kyi mtshan ma dang ni yongs su gyur pa gzhan pa kha dog gzugs dag mi 'dod de 'gyur med dag gis bskyed cing 'gyur ba nyams par gyur pa mchog gi dbang po dag dang ldan pa ni rnam pa kun ldan thig le mtha' dag rgyal ba'i bdag po sna tshogs sgyu ma 'dzin pa 'di la'o.*

[61.](#) *dus kyi 'khor lo rtsa ba'i rgyud.*

[62.](#) *Manjushri-nama-samghiti, 'jam dpal gyi don dam pa'i mtshan yang dag par brjod pa.*

[63.](#) *bkra shis rig pa'i khyu byug.*

[64.](#) In other words, the name Buddha Padmasambhava (like Padmakara) is interpreted as meaning “the source of lotus[-like] Buddhas.” See White Lotus endnote 1.

[65.](#) *'bras chos.* Literally, the qualities of the fruit or result.

[66.](#) *rnam thar sgo gsum.* The three doors of perfect liberation are three ways of expressing the ultimate reality of all phenomena. Phenomena are said to be (1) empty (in that they are without inherent existence), (2) devoid of attributes (in that the conceptual ascriptions of existence and nonexistence, good and bad, and so forth, cannot be properly applied to them), and (3) beyond expectation (for in the nature of the mind, samsara and nirvana are indistinguishable—with the result that nirvana, or buddhahood, is not something to be looked forward to).

[67.](#) Of the two masters Nagarjuna and Asanga, the former is usually regarded as the primary exponent of the profound view of emptiness, which he sets out in

his texts on reasoning, basing himself on the Prajnaparamita sutras belonging to the second turning of the Dharma wheel. However, in his *Hymns*, or devotional texts, he appeals to the view of the tathagatagarbha as set forth in the sutras of the third turning of the Dharma wheel, a view that is extensively expounded and elaborated in the teachings of the Bodhisattva Maitreya as transmitted to, and committed to writing by, Asanga. It is important to bear in mind that from the Nyingma standpoint, the views of the two turnings are complementary (one is not considered higher than the other), and their associated scriptures are regarded as being of ultimate meaning.

[68.](#) *tshad ma rnam 'grel*. The celebrated commentary by Dharmakirti on the *Pramanasamucchaya* of Dignaga. The texts of Dignaga and Dharmakirti are prime sources for the Buddhist teachings on logic and epistemology.

[69.](#) That is, the anuttarayoga tantra, the highest class of teachings according to the fourfold classification of the tantras.

[70.](#) “Aggregate of the vajra body” is a rendering of *rdo rje lus* in contrast with *rdo rje sku*, which is translated simply as “vajra body.” The former is the subtle aspect of the physical body and is composed of the channels, wind-energies, and essence-drops. The latter is the indestructible wisdom body, which utterly transcends these categories.

[71.](#) *Ro ma* and *rkyang ma* are Tibetan terms. In Sanskrit, the right and left channels are called *rasana* and *lalana*, respectively. The central channel is called *uma* (*dbu ma*) in Tibetan, *avadhuti* in Sanskrit.

[72.](#) Namely, *khams*, which is another term for *thig le*, the essence-drop. For an interesting discussion of the solar and lunar wind-energies in relation to the decrease or increase of the potency of the five elements, see Jamgön Kongtrul, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, book 6, part 4, *Systems of Buddhist Tantra* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 2005), p. 179, and notes.

[73.](#) Essence-drop, Skt. *tilaka*, Tib. *thig le*. According to Jamgön Kongtrul, this is “the core or seed of great bliss.” It has two aspects: first, the ultimate essence-drop of primordial wisdom (*don dam ye shes kyi thig le*), and second, the

substantial red and white essence-drops (*rdzas kyi thig le*). The substantial essence-drops are of two kinds: the quintessential or refined (*dwangs ma*) and the residual (*snyigs ma*). The residual essence-drop is further subdivided into refined and residual. The first (refined-residual) gives radiance and strength to the body; the second (residual-residual) refers to the essential fluids that are emitted from the body. See Kongtrul, *Systems of Buddhist Tantra*, pp. 181–82, and notes.

[74.](#) *mkha' 'gro rgya mtsho'i rgyud.*

[75.](#) *bcom ldan 'das.* An epithet of the Buddha. The Tibetan rendering of Bhagavan is interpretative and is understood to imply that the Buddha is victorious (*bcom*), possessed of [all virtuous qualities] (*ldan*), and transcendent (*'das*).

[76.](#) *sgyu 'phrul me long gi rgyud.*

[77.](#) *mkha' 'gro ma rdo rje gur gyi rgyud.*

[78.](#) This is no more than an approximate rendering of a particularly difficult passage. In Tibetan it reads as follows: *nam mkha' bum pa'i dbus nas chu ni len par byed pa na yang 'gro ba min pa ji lta ba mkha' khyab mkha' yi rdo rje can ni yul dang rnam bral lus kyi dbus dag tu yang de bzhin no zhes dang stong pa la ni ye shes rnam par bsres ba ro mnyam 'gyur med rtag par yang ni 'gyur ba ste de ltar 'byung ba la gnas zhi ba rnam gsum srid pa la gnas rang gi lus la rig par bya.*

[79.](#) The words “space” and “course” are the translation of *mkha' 'gro*, the equivalent in Tibetan of the Sanskrit word *dakini*.

[80.](#) *'khrul 'khor.* Systems of physical exercises that straighten the subtle channels of the body and undo the knots on the central channel.

[81.](#) *rlung sems.*

[82.](#) *'pho ba'i bag chags*. According to the *Kalachakra Tantra*, the propensity to movement refers to the tendency to emit the essence-drop in its gross aspect. See Kongtrul, *Systems of Buddhist Tantra*, p. 429, n. 30.

[83.](#) *rnal 'byor ma'i rgyud kun tu spyod pa*.

[84.](#) *tsitta sha'i sgron ma*.

[85.](#) *rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*.

[86.](#) *dbyings rnam dag gi sgron ma*.

[87.](#) *thig le stong ba'i sgron ma*.

[88.](#) *shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*.

[89.](#) This refers to the specific techniques of gazing (*'char byed sgo'i gnad*); the use of the support of a cloudless sky, the sun and moon and so forth (*'char gzhi yul gyi gnad*); respiration through the mouth, and awareness (*rlung rig gi gnad*).

[90.](#) *mi 'gul ba gsum*. The body should be motionless in one of the three special postures; the eyes should be steady and set in the appropriate way of looking; the mind mounted on the wind-energy should be without any movement or alteration.

[91.](#) *sdod pa gsum*. If external appearances rest unwavering, all adversities arise as friends; if the body rests without anything to do, there will be no deluded thoughts; if the mind mounted on the wind-energy rests unmoving and without proliferation, thoughts cannot arise.

[92.](#) *thob pa gsum*. When one has mastery over external appearances, the environment arises as a buddhfield; when one has mastery over the body, the latter dissolves into the light; when one has mastery over space-awareness,

deluded thoughts naturally come to a halt.

93. The four kinds of confident certainty are the *gdengs bzhi*: (1) the confident certainty whereby one has no fear of the lower realms, (2) the confident certainty thanks to which one has no expectation of fully ripened karmic effects, (3) the confident certainty that consists in not hoping for the attainment of the goal, and (4) the confident certainty on account of which the joy of reaching the ground-nature is purified in the state of evenness.

94. These four visions are respectively called in Tibetan *chos nyid mngon sum, nyams snang gong 'phel, rig pa tshad phebs,* and *chos nyid zad sa.*

95. *cog bzhag bzhi.* These four methods of “leaving things as they are” are related to the view, meditation, action, and result, and refer to the practice of *trekchö* focused on the primordial purity of phenomena.

96. That is, it is not dependent on conceptual construction, unlike the path according to mahayoga, for instance.

97. *rdzogs chen lta ba ye shes gting rdzogs kyi rgyud.*

98. *'jam dpal don dam pa'i mtshan brjod pa.*

99. *gser gyi me tog mdzes pa rin chen sgron ma 'bar ba.*

100. *seng ge rtsal rdzogs kyi rgyud.*

101. That is, the five wisdoms. See the root tantra of the *Kalachakra* earlier in the book.

102. This rendering is largely conjectural. The Tibetan text is as follows: *shes rab ye shes dag ni sems dang de yi snang ba dag kyang rnam pa bcu po nyid du gyur dbang ni dri med ri bong can mtshung me long gzugs brnyan lta bu 'di la zhugs pa gang yin pa de las mya ngan 'das pa'i bde ba 'pho med lhan*

cig skyes pa 'gyur med nyid ni bzhi pa ste / sangs rgyas zhal 'di gsang gi snying dang kha la gnas par gyur pa de ni dpal ldan bla ma'o.

[103.](#) *bang mdzod 'phrul lde'u.*

[104.](#) *rdzogs chen snang srid kha sbyor gyi rgyud.*

[105.](#) *rdzogs chen nam mkha' mnyam pa'i rgyud.*

[106.](#) These four stages, previously referred to as phases of the generation stage (see [note 25](#)), are here used to describe progress along the entire path.

[107.](#) The four demons are symbols of obstacles encountered on the path. The demon of the aggregates refers to the five psychophysical constituents that together give rise to the impression of an individual self. The demon of defilements refers to the afflictive emotions. The demon of death refers not only to death itself but also to the momentary transience of all phenomena. The child-of-the-gods demon refers to distraction and mental wandering.

[108.](#) *thig le nyag gcig.*

[109.](#) That is, living beings are the material (not efficient) cause of Buddhas, in the same way that clay is the cause of the vase that it becomes.

[110.](#) *ye shes rdo rje kun las btus pa.*

[111.](#) *'jam dpal sgyu 'phrul drva ba'i bstod pa.*

[112.](#) *kye rdo rje'i rgyud brtag gnyis.*

[113.](#) *spros bral don gsal chen po'i rgyud.*

[114.](#) *rdzogs chen ye shes nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud.*

[115.](#) *kun tu bzang po che ba rang la gnas pa'i rgyud.*

[116.](#) *kun tu bzang po klong drug pa'i rgyud.*

[117.](#) *klong rab 'byams rgyal po'i rgyud.*

[118.](#) *sems kyi snang ba.*

[119.](#) *rtog pas bzhag pa tsam.*

[120.](#) *mkha' 'gro ma'i sdom pa'i rgyud.*

[121.](#) That is, the Mantrayana and especially the Great Perfection.

[122.](#) The mantra has been spelled here according to the way it is pronounced by Tibetans. A strict transliteration of the Sanskrit would be: Om. Ah. Hum. Vajra Guru Padma Siddhi Hum.. For the purposes of recitation, we have found it more convenient to reproduce the sound of the mantra as we have heard it from our Tibetan teachers.

GLOSSARY

AGAMA, Skt.; Tib. *lung*. Esoteric teachings that elucidate the tantras. In the tantra classification of the Nyingma school, the inner tantras are divided into three groups: mahayoga, anuyoga, and atiyoga. In this same system, these three groups are also referred to as *rgyud*, *lung*, and *man ngag* (Skt. tantra, agama, and upadesha, respectively), where mahayoga is regarded as tantra (*rgyud*), anuyoga is regarded as elucidation (agama, or *lung*), and atiyoga is regarded as pith instruction (upadesha, or *man ngag*).

AMITABHA, Skt.; Tib. *'od dpag med*; lit. immeasurable light. The Buddha of the Lotus lineage, symbolizing the speech of all the Buddhas.

AMRITA, Skt.; Tib. *bdud rtsi*; lit. the ambrosia that overcomes the demon of death. The draft of immortality and a symbol of wisdom.

ANUTTARA TANTRA, Skt.; Tib. *bla na med pa'i rgyud*; lit. unsurpassable tantra. The fourth and highest class of the tantra according to the fourfold classification of the tantras preferred in the New tradition. It corresponds to the three inner tantras (maha, anu, and ati) as contrasted with the three outer tantras (kriya, charya, and yoga) of the sixfold Nyingma classification.

AVALOKITA, Skt.; Tib. *spyen ras gzigs*. See Avalokiteshvara.

AVALOKITESHVARA, Skt.; Tib. *spyen ras gzigs*. The Bodhisattva considered to be the embodiment of the compassion of all the Buddhas. He is also regarded as the sambhogakaya for the threefold grouping in which Amitabha is the dharmakaya and Guru Padmasambhava is the nirmanakaya.

BUDDHAFIELD, Skt. *buddhakshetra*, Tib. *zhing khams*. A general term for a sphere or dimension in which a Buddha dwells. Buddhafields are categorized according to the three kayas, which are perceptible only to beings with

corresponding realization. There are, in addition, pure lands or fields, emanated by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of very high attainment, to which beings of appropriate karma and merit have access and where they are able to progress unhindered on the path. These pure lands are similar to the nirmanakaya buddhafiels and are categorized according to their location, whether in the sky (*mkha' spyod*), on the earth's surface (*sa spyod*), or even in subterranean regions (*'og spyod*). The Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain of Guru Padmasambhava, the mountain of Potala of Avalokiteshvara, the hidden land of Shambhala, and so on are regarded as pure lands of this kind.

CHAKRA, Skt.; Tib. *'khor lo*; lit. wheel or channel-wheel. A configuration of spokes or petal-like channels resembling a wheel, which is supported by the central channel. Depending on the tantra, four or six chakras are mentioned. The dharmachakra is the channel-wheel situated at the level of the heart.

CHAMARA, Skt.; Tib. *rnga yab*. The name of a subcontinent lying to the south and west of the continent of Jambudvīpa (our world) according to Buddhist cosmology. It is here that the glorious Copper-Colored Mountain, the buddhafiels of Guru Padmasambhava, is located.

COPPER-COLORED MOUNTAIN, Tib. *zang mdog dpal ri*. A name of the pure land of Padmasambhava, or Guru Rinpoche. *See also* Chamara.

DAKA, Skt.; Tib. *dpa' bo*; lit. hero. A title used in the tantras to refer to male Bodhisattvas; the male equivalent of a dakini. *See also* dakini.

DAKINI, Skt.; Tib. *mkha' 'gro ma*. A representation of wisdom in female form. The dakinis are divided into several classes. There are wisdom dakinis who are fully enlightened and worldly dakinis who possess various spiritual powers. The wisdom dakinis are classified into five groups according to the five enlightened lineages of Tathagata, Vajra, Jewel, Lotus, and Action. *See also* five enlightened lineages.

DAMARU, Skt.; Tib. *da ma ru*. A small ritual drum, traditionally made from the tops of two skulls fastened back-to-back.

DHARMACHAKRA, Skt.; Tib. *chos kyi 'khor lo*; lit. channel-wheel of reality. *See* chakra.

DHARMADHATU, Skt.; Tib. *chos dbyings*. The all-embracing expanse of ultimate reality; the emptiness of phenomena that is inseparable from their appearance.

DHARMAKAYA, Skt.; Tib. *chos sku*. Literally the “dharma-body.” According to context, this refers simply to the dimension of emptiness of Buddhahood. Alternatively, it may indicate the union of emptiness and luminous primordial wisdom.

DHARMATA, Skt.; Tib. *chos nyid*. Another term for emptiness; the nature of phenomena.

EIGHT CLASSES OF GODS AND DEMONS, Tib. *lha 'dre sde brgyad*. A classification of worldly spirits into the categories of gñg, dü, tñen, yaksha, rakshasa, mamö, rahula, and naga. On the inner level, they correspond to the eight kinds of consciousness, namely, the five sense consciousnesses, the mental consciousness, the defiled consciousness that conceives of “I,” and the consciousness of the *alaya*, the foundation of the mind that is the repository of karmic seeds and habitual tendencies.

EIGHT MANIFESTATIONS OF GURU RINPOCHE, Tib. *gu ru rin po che'i mtshan brgyad*. The names of eight celebrated manifestations of Guru Padmasambhava as described in his mystic biographies. They are Padmasambhava, Loden Chokse, Padma Gyalpo, Nyima Özer, Senge Dradok, Shakya Senge, Dorje Drolö, and Vajradhara of Oddiyana.

FIVE AGGREGATES, Skt. *skandha*, Tib. *phung po lnga*. The five constituents, one physical and four mental, found when, in the search for the self, the human “person” is subjected to analytical investigation. They are the material form or body, feelings, perceptions, conditioning factors, and consciousness. The coming together of these aggregates gives rise to the impression of “I.”

FIVE ENLIGHTENED LINEAGES, Tib. *rìgs lnga*. The five lineages of Tathagata, Vajra, Jewel, Lotus, and Action. They are represented by five Buddhas (respectively, Vairochana, Akshobhya or Vajrasattva, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, and Amoghasiddhi) who constitute the five aspects of Buddhahood. They are regarded as the nature of the five aggregates, and they correspond to the five wisdoms arising when the five emotional defilements are purified and transmuted.

FORTUNATE KALPA, Tib. *bskal pa bzang po*. The name of the present kalpa, so called because a thousand universal Buddhas will appear in the course of it. The Buddha Shakyamuni is the fourth in the series.

FOUR VAJRAS, Tib. *rdo rje bzhi*. A symbol of the indestructible enlightened body, speech, mind, and primal wisdom.

GROUND, PATH, AND FRUIT, Tib. *gzhi lam 'bras bu*. The threefold structure according to which each Buddhist system expresses its overall view. Generally speaking, the ground is the true status of phenomena (as this is conceived in a given system), the path consists of the meditation performed within the framework of that view, and the fruit is the final result of the practice. In the tantra system, these are understood as forming a single continuum (this is the literal meaning of the word *tantra*). In other words, the qualities of the path and fruit are already present, implicit in the ground.

GURU CHÖKYI WANGCHUK, Tib. *gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug* (1212– 70). One of the five “tertön kings,” who were the greatest of the treasure-revealers.

INNER TANTRA, Tib. *nang rgyud*. See *anuttara tantra*.

JAMBUDVIPA, Skt.; Tib. *'dzam bu'i gling*. The name given to our world in the cosmological system of ancient India.

JAMYANG KHYENTSE WANGPO, Tib. *'jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dbang po* (1820– 92). One of the greatest figures in the recent history of the Sakya and Nyingma traditions and one of the principal founders of the Rimé, or nonsectarian, movement in Eastern Tibet. He was a great treasure-revealer, being considered the last of the five “tertön kings.”

JNANASATTVA, Skt.; Tib. *ye shes sems dpa'*; lit. primordial-wisdom being. Invoked, in the context of the practice of the generation stage (*bskyed rim*), from the wisdom expanse of the dharmakaya. It then merges with, and abides in, the heart of the samayasattva (the commitment being), namely, the visualized meditational deity.

KAHMA, Tib. *bka' ma*. Name of the long oral lineage of transmission of the teachings from the Buddha down to the disciples of the present day.

KALPA, Tib. *bskal pa*. A time period corresponding to a cycle of formation, duration, and destruction of a universe, followed by a period of voidness, according to the cosmology of ancient India.

KAYA, Skt.; Tib. *sku*; lit. body. According to the Mahayana, the support of the enlightened qualities of Buddhahood, generally subdivided into the dharmakaya, or “dharma body” (the emptiness aspect), and the rupakaya, or “form body” (the appearance aspect). The dharmakaya is the mode of being of Buddhahood itself; it is perceptible to Buddhas alone. The rupakaya is the means whereby a Buddha is perceptible to non-Buddhas. It is subdivided into the sambhogakaya, the “body of enjoyment” (the clarity aspect) perceptible to great Bodhisattvas on the tenth ground of realization, and the nirmanakaya, the “body of manifestation” perceptible to ordinary beings.

LOTUS LIGHT, Tib. *pad ma 'od*. Name of the palace of Guru Padmasambhava in his pure land, the glorious Copper-Colored Mountain of Chamara. *See also* Chamara; Copper-Colored Mountain.

MAITREYA, Skt.; Tib. *byams pa*; lit. the loving one. The tenth-ground Bodhisattva now residing as the Buddha’s regent in the heaven of Tushita. When the age of Shakyamuni ends, Maitreya will manifest in the world as the fifth Buddha of this fortunate kalpa. *See also* fortunate kalpa.

MANDALA, Skt.; Tib. *dkyil 'khor*; lit. center and circumference. A term with numerous meanings. Most basically, it means a simple circular arrangement of offerings. More profoundly, it refers to the configuration of the deities within their sacred environment as visualized in the generation-stage practice. Finally, it may refer to the natural, spontaneously present expanse of primordial wisdom.

MANJUSHRI, Skt.; Tib. *'jam dpal*. A tenth-ground Bodhisattva and the personification of the wisdom of all the Buddhas.

MANTRA, Skt.; Tib. *sngags*. Syllables or formulas that, when recited with appropriate visualization, and so on, protect the mind of the practitioner from ordinary perceptions. They are invocations to the yidam deity and manifestations of the deity in the form of sound.

MOUNT MERU, Tib. *ri rab*. The great mountain at the center of a universal system

according to the cosmology of ancient India.

NALANDA. One of the most important monastic universities of medieval India. It was located at the birthplace of Shariputra to the north of Bodh Gaya (in present-day Bihar), not far from Vulture Peak, where the Buddha expounded his teachings on the Perfection of Wisdom. Nalanda grew to an immense size; it was famous all over Asia and was attended and administered by many of the greatest masters of Mahayana Buddhism. Founded in the second century and destroyed by the armies of Muhammad Khalji in 1235, Nalanda existed for a thousand years.

NEW TRADITION, Tib. *gsar ma*. A way of referring to the schools of Tibetan Buddhism founded during the later period of translation of Sanskrit texts into Tibetan, which coincided with the period of restoration of the teaching following the persecution by King Langdarma in the eleventh century.

NGARI RIGDZIN, Tib. *mnga' ri rig 'dzin* (1487–1542). Otherwise known as Ngari Penchen Pema Wangyal (*mnga' ri pan chen pad ma dbang rgyal*), a tertön and a scholar renowned for his treatise on the three vows (*sdom gsum rnam nges*), in which he expounds and defends the position of the Nyingma school.

NGAYAB, Tib. *rnga yab*. See Chamara.

NIRMANAKAYA, Skt.; Tib. *sprul sku*. See kaya.

NYINGMA, Tib. *rnying ma*. See Old tradition.

ODDIYANA, Skt.; Tib. *o rgyan*. According to modern scholarship, an ancient kingdom located in the Swat valley, lying in what is now the northwest frontier province of Pakistan. It was renowned as the cradle of the Secret Mantra teachings and is often referred to in Tibetan literature as the land of dakinis (*mkha' 'gro gling*).

OLD TRADITION, Tib. *rnying ma*. The original tradition of Buddhist teaching in Tibet dating from the eighth century, sometimes referred to as the Old Translation School, so-called in contrast with the schools of the New Translation tradition, founded from the twelfth century onward.

ORGYEN, Tib. *o rgyan*. The Tibetan form of Oddiyana. See Oddiyana.

PARAMITA, Skt.; Tib. *pha rol tu phyin pa*. A transcendent perfection or virtue, the practice of which leads to Buddhahood. There are six paramitas: generosity, ethical discipline, patience, diligence, concentration, and wisdom.

PEMA GARWANG CHIMÉ YUDRUNG LINGPA, Tib. *pad ma gar gyi dbang phyug chi med gyung drung gling pa* (1813–99). The tertön name of Jamgön Kongtrul, recognized as the incarnation of Vairotsana—one of the first, as well as the greatest, of Tibetan translators. Jamgön Kongtrul was instrumental in the development of the Rimé movement in Eastern Tibet. He was a prolific author of immense erudition, a highly realized master, and a tertön, or treasure-revealer.

PURE LAND, Tib. *mkha' spyod*. See buddhafiield.

RAHU, Skt.; Tib. *sgra gcan*. A mythical demon believed to devour the sun and moon, thereby causing the eclipses.

RAKSHASA, Skt.; Tib. *srin po*. A class of dangerous flesh-devouring demons.

RATNA LINGPA, Tib. *rat na gling pa* (1403–78). A great tertön and the first compiler of the Nyingma tantras (*rnying ma rgyud 'bum*).

RESULTANT VEHICLE, Tib. *'bras bu'i theg pa*. The Vajrayana, or the Secret Mantra, which takes the pure nature of the mind not as a goal to be attained at some point in the future, but as the actual path of practice.

SADHANA, Skt.; Tib. *sgrub thabs*; lit. method of practice. A systematized practice of the stage of generation comprising many steps and including the yogas related to the body, speech, and mind of the deity.

SAMANTABHADRA, Skt.; Tib. *kun tu bzang po*. The primordial Buddha who has never fallen into delusion; the symbolic personification of awareness; the ever-present and luminous nature of the mind.

SAMAYA, Skt.; Tib. *dam tshig*. The sacramental bond and commitment in the Vajrayana established between the master and the disciples on whom empowerment is conferred. The samaya bond exists also between the disciples of the same master and between the disciples and their practice.

SAMBHOGAKAYA, Skt.; Tib. *longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku*. See *kaya*.

SARAHA (c. tenth century). An Indian mahasiddha, or master of high accomplishment. He was the author of three famous cycles of dohas, or songs of realization.

SAUTRANTIKA, Skt.; Tib. *mdo sde pa*. The name of a tenet system belonging to the Hinayana, notable for its elaborate system of logic and epistemology.

SECRET MANTRA, Tib. *gsang sngags*. Another name for the Vajrayana. See resultant vehicle.

SIDDHI, Skt.; Tib. *dngos grub*. Accomplishments gained in the course of the spiritual path. Siddhis are of two kinds: the “ordinary” accomplishments of various preternatural powers and the supreme accomplishment, namely, the attainment of Buddhahood.

SUGATA, Skt.; Tib. *bde bar gshegs pa*; lit. one who has gone to, and proceeds in, bliss. A synonym for Buddha.

SUGATAGARBHA, Skt.; Tib. *bde gshegs snying po*; lit. the essence of the Sugata. The luminous and empty nature of the mind. A synonym of the tathagatagarbha, the Buddha-nature present in every sentient being.

TAKSHAM SAMTEN LINGPA, Tib. *stag gsham bsam gtan gling pa* (seventeenth century). A celebrated master and tertön of the Nyingma tradition. Among his discovered texts figures the autobiography of Yeshe Tsogyal, translated into English as the *Lady of the Lotus-Born*.

TANTRA, Skt.; Tib. *rgyud*; lit. continuum. The texts of Vajrayana Buddhism expounding the natural purity of the mind. See also *agama*.

TATHAGATA, Skt.; Tib. *de bzhin gshegs pa*; lit. one who has gone thus. A synonym for Buddha.

TATHAGATAGARBHA, Skt.; Tib. *de gshegs snying po*; lit. the essence of the Tathagata. See *sugatagarbha*.

TENMA GODDESSES, Tib. *brten ma bcu gnyis*. Twelve female spirits associated with mountain ranges in Tibet, who, in the presence of Guru Padmasambhava, vowed to protect the religion and people of Tibet.

TERDAG LINGPA, Tib. *gter bdag gling pa* (1646–1714). Another name of Minling Terchen Gyurme Dorje. A celebrated tertön and founder of the monastery of Mindroling, a major center of the Nyingma tradition in Central Tibet. Terdag Lingpa compiled the Nyingma kahma, the collection of the long (oral) lineage of the Nyingma school, and made a collection of all the earlier terma, or treasure teachings.

TERMA, Tib. *gter ma*; lit. treasure. Teachings and blessed substances concealed principally by Guru Padmasambhava, to be revealed later, at a time when they would be more beneficial for the world and its inhabitants.

TERTÖN, Tib. *gter ston*; lit. treasure-revealer. Reincarnations of the accomplished disciples of Guru Padmasambhava, who discover and reveal the spiritual treasures concealed by him and his consort Yeshe Tsogyal.

THÖGAL, Tib. *thod rgal*. A practice of the Great Perfection that focuses on the spontaneously present “clarity aspect” of ultimate reality. By contrast, trekchö focuses on the aspect of primordial purity.

THREE DIMENSIONS OF EXISTENCE, Tib. *sa gsum*. Generally speaking, the three dimensions are above, on, and under the earth. Occasionally this term refers to the three realms of Buddhist cosmology. *See also* three realms.

THREE REALMS, Tib. *khams gsum*. Three dimensions that together constitute a single world-system. These are the desire realm (comprising the six realms of the gods, asuras, humans, animals, pretas, and hell-beings), followed by the heavens of the form realm and the formless realm.

THREE REFUGES, Tib. *skyabs gsum*. The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, the latter consisting of the spiritual community of those who have attained the grounds of realization.

THREE ROOTS, Tib. *rtsa gsum*. The three objects of refuge as spoken of in the tantra teachings: the guru, the root of blessings; the yidam deity, the root of accomplishment; and the dakini, the root of enlightened activities. The three

roots are the tantric parallel to the Three Refuges of the sutra teachings.

THREE SECRETS OF A BUDDHA, Tib. *gsang ba gsum*. The enlightened body, speech, and mind. Also referred to as the three vajras.

THREE WORLDS, Tib. *khams gsum*. See three realms.

TORMA, Tib. *gtor ma*. A ritual offering, of more or less elaborate design, made usually of dough, but sometimes of clay.

TREKCHÖ, Tib. *khregs chod*. See thögal.

TWO TRUTHS, Tib. *bden gnyis*. The twofold status of every phenomenon: apparent existence on the relative level and emptiness of inherent existence on the ultimate level. The interpretation of the doctrine of the two truths is the criterion distinguishing the various levels of Buddhist tenet systems.

UPADESHA, Skt.; Tib. *man ngag*; lit. pith instructions. See also agama.

VAIBHASHIKA, Skt.; Tib. *bye brag smra ba*. The first of the Hinayana tenet systems, in which the indivisible particles of matter and the indivisible instants of consciousness are regarded as ultimate truths.

VAIROTSANA, Tib. *ba'i ro tsa na* (eighth century). One of the first Tibetan disciples of Guru Rinpoche and of Shantarakshita (by whom he was ordained and from whom he received his name). He was also a disciple of the Chinese master Shri Simha, and in addition received teachings in pure vision directly from Garab Dorje himself, thus becoming one of the conduits through which the Great Perfection teachings were introduced into Tibet. He was one of the earliest and greatest of the Tibetan translators of Buddhist sutras and tantras.

VAJRA, Skt.; Tib. *rdo rje*. A substance akin to adamant or diamond. Sometimes referred to as a thunderbolt, it is an emblem of indestructibility. In the form of a ritual implement, regularly used in tantric ceremonies, the vajra is the symbol of skillful means, that is, compassion, and is coupled with the bell (Skt. *ghanta*; Tib. *dril bu*), symbolizing the wisdom of emptiness.

VAJRADHARA, Skt.; Tib. *rdo rje 'chang*; lit. holder of the vajra. The name of a sambhogakaya Buddha who is the union of the five enlightened lineages.

Vajradhara is sometimes equated with Samantabhadra.

VAJRAYANA, Skt; Tib. *rdo rje theg pa*. See resultant vehicle.

VIDYADHARA, Skt.; Tib. *rig 'dzin*; lit. awareness-holder or knowledge-holder. A being of high attainment in the Vajrayana. According to the Nyingma tradition, there are four kinds of vidyadhara corresponding to the ten (or eleven) levels of realization of the sutra teachings.

YESHE TSOGYAL, Tib. *ye shes mtsho rgyal*. The foremost disciple and the Tibetan consort of Guru Padmasambhava. She was a great teacher in her own right and played a crucial role in concealing the termas, or treasure teachings. See her autobiography, *Lady of the Lotus-Born*.

YIDAM DEITY, Tib. *yi dam*. A tantric deity, in male or female form, representing different aspects of Buddhahood. Yidams may be peaceful or wrathful and are meditated upon according to the nature and needs of the individual practitioner.

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