

Chenrezig Retreat

Study Material



Chenrezig Practice

Collected Notes

Bodhi Path Natural Bridge, VA
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About Chenrezig

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In the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon of enlightened beings, Chenrezig is renowned as the embodiment of the compassion of all the Buddhas, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

Avalokiteshvara is the earthly manifestation of the self born, eternal Buddha, Amitabha. He guards this world in the interval between the historical Sakyamuni Buddha, and the next Buddha of the Future Maitreya.

Chenrezig made a a vow that he would not rest until he had liberated all the beings in all the realms of suffering. After working diligently at this task for a very long time, he looked out and realized the immense number of miserable beings yet to be saved. Seeing this, he became despondent and his head split into thousands of pieces. Amitabha Buddha put the pieces back together as a body with very many arms and many heads, so that Chenrezig could work with myriad beings all at the same time. Sometimes Chenrezig is visualized with eleven heads, and a thousand arms fanned out around him.

Chenrezig may be the most popular of all Buddhist deities, except for Buddha himself -- he is beloved throughout the Buddhist world. He is known by different names in different lands: as Avalokiteshvara in the ancient Sanskrit language of India, as Kuan-yin in China, as Kannon in Japan. As Chenrezig, he is considered the patron Bodhisattva of Tibet, and his meditation is practiced in all the great lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. The beloved king Songtsen Gampo was believed to be an emanation of Chenrezig, and some of the most respected meditation masters (lamas), like the Dalai Lamas and Karmapas, who are considered living Buddhas, are also believed to be emanations of Chenrezig.

Whenever we are compassionate, or feel love for anyone, or for an animal or some part of the natural world, we experience a taste of our own natural connection

with Chenrezig. Although we may not be as consistently compassionate as some of the great meditation masters, Tibetan Buddhists believe that we all share, in our basic nature, unconditional compassion and wisdom that is no different from what we see in Chenrezig and in these lamas. We might have trouble believing that we are no different than Chenrezig -- but learning about the nature of compassion, and learning about Chenrezig, repeating his mantra Om Mani Padme Hum and imagining that we would like to be like Chenrezig, pretending that we really are just like Chenrezig, we actually can become aware of increasing compassion in our lives, and ultimately, the lamas tell us, awaken as completely wise and compassionate Buddhas.

The Representation of Four-Arm Chenrezig

© MANI KABUM “SECTION 6 - CHAPTER 2, THE TRILOGY OF SADHANAS, THE WISHFULFILLING GREAT COMPASSION” translated by HE Trizin Rinpoche

“As for one face, it is looking at sentient beings with compassion. The four arms performing benefit for sentient beings by the four immeasurables (lovingkindness, compassion, joy and equanimity). As for the two legs, in performing benefit for beings, upaya and prajna abide in the equality of union. As for the form being white in colour, since he is not covered by the faults of samsara, he is spotlessly pure. As for the right hand holding a crystal mala, samsara is led to enlightenment. As for the left holding a lotus, though in samsara he performs benefits for sentient beings, he is not covered by the faults of samsara. Two hands clasped like a lotus bud at the heart symbolising emptiness and compassion in union and are inseparable for the equal benefit of all sentient beings. Endowed with precious gems inseparable dharmata like ornament arose. As for his head there being a jewel ornament and on the crown of his head the Buddha Amitabha abiding, he is a holder of the lotus family possessing the good qualities of all the Buddhas. As for the sun and moon seat, by upaya and prajna he impartially performs benefits for sentient beings.”

© MANI KABUM “SECTION 6 – CHAPTER 3, “GREAT COMPASSION WISH-FULFILLING GEM SADHANA PRACTICE, ONE CYCLE” translated by HE Trizin Rinpoche

“Moreover the white body colour is a symbol of spotless dharmakaya. The one face is a symbol of co-emergent wisdom which is non-dual with oneself. The two hands are a symbol of non-dual upaya and prajna. The mala in the right hand is a symbol of guiding the six realm beings on the path to enlightenment. The lotus in the left hand symbolises that though he produces the goal of sentient beings, he is not covered by the faults of samsara. The two legs symbolise the non-duality of dharmadhatu and wisdom. As for sitting on a sun, moon and lotus seat, it symbolizes that for sentient beings his compassion is without bias and partiality like the shining of the sun and moon, and that like a lotus he is not covered by the kleshas and discursive thoughts of samsara. As for the precious jewel ornaments, they symbolize that although he enjoys all desirable qualities, it is without attachment and accords with the style for the benefit of sentient beings”

Etymology

The name Avalokiteśvara is made of the following parts: the verbal prefix *ava*, which means "down"; *lokita*, a past participle of the verb *lok* ("to notice, behold, observe"), here used in an active sense (an occasional irregularity of Sanskrit grammar); and finally *īśvara*, "lord", "ruler", "sovereign" or "master". In accordance with sandhi (Sanskrit rules of sound combination), *a+īśvara* becomes *eśvara*. Combined, the parts mean "lord who gazes down (at the world)". The word *loka* ("world") is absent from the name, but the phrase is implied.

In Sanskrit, Avalokitesvara is also referred to as Padmapāni ("Holder of the Lotus") or Lokeśvara ("Lord of the World").

Translated into Chinese, the name is "*Kuan Shih Yin*" or *Quan Yin*.

Kuan: observe

Shih: the world / the region of sufferers

Yin: all the sounds of the world, in particular, the crying sounds of beings, verbal or mental, seeking help

It was initially thought that the Chinese mis-transliterated the word

Avalokiteśvara as Avalokitasvara which explained why Xuanzang translated it as Guānzìzài (Ch. 觀自在) instead of Guānyīn (Ch. 觀音). However, according to recent research, the original form was indeed Avalokitasvara with the ending *a-svara* ("sound, noise"), which means "sound perceiver", literally "he who looks down upon sound" (i.e., the cries of sentient beings who need his help; *a-svara* can be glossed as *ahr-svara*, "sound of lamentation").

This is the exact equivalent of the Chinese translation Guānyīn. This etymology was furthered in the Chinese by the tendency of some Chinese translators, notably Kumārajīva, to use the variant Guānshìyīn (Ch. 觀世音), literally "he who perceives the world's lamentations"—wherein *lok* was read as simultaneously meaning both "to look" and "world" (Skt. *loka*; Ch. 世, *shì*).

This name was later supplanted by the form containing the ending *-īśvara*, which does not occur in Sanskrit before the seventh century.

The original form Avalokitasvara already appears in Sanskrit fragments of the fifth century.

The original meaning of the name fits the Buddhist understanding of the role of a bodhisattva. The reinterpretation presenting him as an *īśvara* shows a strong influence of Hinduism, as the term *īśvara* was usually connected to the Hindu notion of Krishna (in Vaisnavism) or Śiva (in Śaivism) as the Supreme Lord, Creator and Ruler of the world. Some attributes of such a god were transmitted to the bodhisattva, but the mainstream of those who venerated Avalokiteśvara upheld the Buddhist rejection of the doctrine of any creator god.

An etymology of the Tibetan name Chenrezig is *chen* (eye), *re* (continuity) and *zig* (to look). This gives the meaning of one who always looks upon all beings (with the eye of compassion).

Mantra

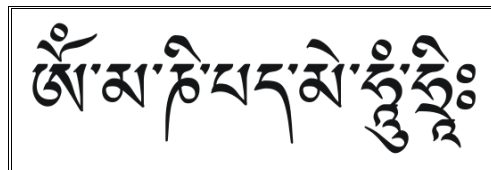
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« The mantra Om Mani Padme Hum is easy to say yet quite powerful, because it contains the essence of the entire teaching. When you say the first syllable **Om** it is blessed to help you achieve perfection in the practice of generosity, **Ma** helps

perfect the practice of pure ethics, and **Ni** helps achieve perfection in the practice of tolerance and patience. **Pad**, the fourth syllable, helps to achieve perfection of perseverance, **Me** helps achieve perfection in the practice of concentration, and the final sixth syllable **Hum** helps achieve perfection in the practice of wisdom. So in this way recitation of the mantra helps achieve perfection in the six practices from generosity to wisdom. The path of these six perfections is the path walked by all the Buddhas of the three times. What could then be more meaningful than to say the mantra and accomplish the six perfections? »

The Origin of the six-Syllable Mantra

© MANI KABUM “SECTION 1 - CHAPTER 11, THE SOURCE OF THE SUTRA” translated by H.E Trizin Rinpoche



OM MANI PADME HUM. Then the Bhagavan was abiding in the palace monastery of Zetaishel grove, in Shravasti, in the pleasure grove of Anathapindika. He was together with twelve and a half hundred sanghas and many Bodhisattvas. Then to the Bhagavan the Bodhisattva Nivaranavishkambin spoke these words, “Bhagavan the great vidya mantra benefits all the six kinds of beings, removes samsara from the root, completely liberating hell beings, pretas and animals from the lower realms, making human beings experience the taste of Dharma. Since I seek an explanation of omniscient wisdom, how will I attain it? Bhagavan, to the one who tells me the Six-Syllable, filling the world (Jambudvipa) with the seven precious things, I will offer them. Bhagavan, since I wish to write down the Six-Syllable even if there is no paper, birch bark, writing with pen and ink, using my blood for ink, flaying my skin, I will use it as paper, taking my bones I will use it as pen. Bhagavan for me there is no sadness and fatigue. As for that, it will be the root lama of our father and mother sentient

beings.”

Then, the Bhagavan exhorted these words to the Bodhisattva Nivaranavishkambin, “Son of Noble family, for the sake of the vidya mantra of Six-Syllable, in former times, though I paid homage to centillion limitless Tathagatas, I did not hear from these Tathagatas. At that time the Tathagata, Arhat completely enlightened Red Buddha Amitabha, in front of Buddha, because of crying, tears arose in his eyes. From the face of the Tathagata, he exhorted, “Son of Noble family, why are you crying? With tears arising what is the fault?” He asked. “When centillion limitless of Tathagatas paid homage, the Six-Syllable that removes all the sufferings of beings was not given to them. I ask the Sugata, Knower of the world, Tamer of beings, Steersman, Teacher of gods and humans, the Buddha Bhagavan to explain it,” so he requested. Then by the Buddha Amitabha to the great Bodhisattva Lord Avalokiteshvara, he said these words, “Son of Noble family, as for this vidya mantra of Six-Syllable, these are rare words, vajra words, words of unsurpassable wisdom, words of inexhaustible wisdom, words of the completely pure wisdom of the Tathagata. Son of Noble family this great vidya mantra of Six-Syllable, because it was blessed by me, therefore centillion limitless sentient beings will be completely liberated from samsara, quickly in unsurpassable true complete enlightenment. They will be completely enlightened. Say this vidya mantra of Six-Syllable.” Then to the Bodhisattva, the Noble One, Lord Avalokiteshvara, he taught this vidya mantra of Six-Syllable.

OM MANI PADME HUM. Then the Buddha Amitabha exhorted the Bodhisattva Nivaranavishkambin, “This vidya mantra OM MANI PADME HUM if some hold it in their bodies, Son of Noble family, as for these bodies, they should be understood as vajra bodies. They should be understood as relic stupas. They should be understood as the wisdom of the Tathagata.

OM MANI PADME HUM. A son or daughter of Noble family if anyone recite this vidya mantra one time, their confidence will become inexhaustible. Their self-reliance wisdom, heap of wisdom will be completely pure. They will possess the

great kindness and the Great Compassion. Every day the six perfections will be completely perfected. They will attain the power of a chakravartin. They will become irreversible Bodhisattvas. They will be enlightened with unsurpassable, true, complete enlightenment.

OM MANI PADME HUM, these Six-Syllable when by the hand they have been written on walls and rocks, by the hand when it has been touched and the view have been produced, by these men and women, boys and girls by merely being seen they will become Bodhisattvas in their next life. Wild animals, birds, horses, cows and such sentient beings by which they are seen, all these will be Bodhisattvas in their next life. They will be without birth, old age, sickness and death, meeting with unpleasantness, free from pain and without suffering. Yoga siddhi will become inconceivable. Son of Noble family, OM MANI PADME HUM, this vidya mantra of Six-Syllable is the true essence of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. Saying this vidya mantra of Six-Syllable, make an effort always to recite it. This Six-Syllable possesses merit. At the time of reciting this, Buddha Bhagavans ninety-nine times as many as the atoms of the sand of Ganges River will gather. Son of Noble family, in every one of his hair pores, Tathagatas are abiding there. Son of Noble family, by you getting such a wish-fulfilling gem, you will be attained. By you the seven kinds of shravaka families will be enlightened, that is good. Son of Noble family, that even the limitless creatures living in your belly, having become irreversible Bodhisattvas, is excellent. Whatever is said they will be given.” Then the Bhagavan said these words to the Bodhisattva Nivaranavishkambin, “Son of Noble family, as for this vidya mantra of Six-Syllable, OM MANI PADME HUM. It is this for example, though the number of atoms of the earth could be grasped, the merits of reciting this vidya mantra of Six-Syllable one time could not be grasped. Though every drop of the water of the ocean could be counted, the merits of reciting this vidya mantra of Six-Syllable one time could not be counted.

OM MANI PADME HUM, Son of Noble family, it is like this, for example, the house of some person is one hundred pagtse and its height is three hundred

pagtse. It is completely filled with mustard seed or sesame grains. It is without even a hole the size of the eye of a needle and at its door a man who does not age and does not die is placed. If in every hundred eons a sesame grain is taken out by him, by the number of these it could go on until the foundation of the house is reached, until it is exhausted and no more, but the measure of merits of reciting this vidya mantra of Six-Syllable one time could not be grasped.

OM MANI PADME HUM, Son of Noble family, it is like this, for example, by the sentient beings living in the four continents, the barley, wheat, rice, white Chinese beans, Nepalese beans and so forth and little beans and juniper, a plant with very small seeds and so forth, various kinds are planted. By the naga king from time to time, rain falls. After these grains ripen they are reaped and harvested. In the earthly world, having put these to one side, on wagons, people carrying loads, animal loads and basket loads having been brought in these containers, transported by oxen and donkeys, having been thrashed by sticks by people, though every grain of that heap of grain could be counted, the measure of merits of reciting this vidya mantra of Six-Syllable one time could not be grasped.

OM MANI PADME HUM, Son of Noble family, it is like this, for example, flowing in the earthly world are the great rivers Sita, Ganga, Yamuna, Sindhu Pukcha, Shatadru, Tsendra-garva, Eyravati, Sumkata, Amakala, Kotari. Each river has five hundred tributaries; day and night they flow into the midst of the ocean. Son of Noble family, OM MANI PADME HUM, as for the merits of reciting this vidya mantra one time, they increase even more than that.

OM MANI PADME HUM, Son of Noble family, for example, it is like this. Those of the four-legged family, oxen, donkeys, buffaloes, horses, elephants, dogs, foxes, goats, these four-legged animals and likewise lions, tigers, zebras and so forth, deer, monkeys, rabbits, pigs, mice, these and so forth, every hair could be counted, but OM MANI PADME HUM, the merits of reciting this vidya mantra one time could not be counted.

OM MANI PADME HUM, Son of Noble family, for example it is like this, the king of mountains, the vajra iron mountains in height is one billion ten million fathoms (pagtse jatong). Every face of that mountain is also one billion ten million fathoms (pagtse jatong) and below it is one billion twenty million fathoms (pagtse jedtri). If there is a person who does not grow old and die and this person, after an eon had passed by, if he wiped it every time with a kashika cloth, one day it would be exhausted, but OM MANI PADME HUM, the measure of merits of reciting this vidya mantra one time could not be counted.

OM MANI PADME HUM, Son of Noble family, it is like this, for example, the midst of the ocean has a depth of one billion sixteen million fathoms. In width to the horse head mountain. From the existing immeasurable, by me a hair tip hundredth part if it is scattered, though I could count every drop, OM MANI PADME HUM, the measure of merits of reciting this vidya mantra one time could not be counted.

OM MANI PADME HUM, Son of Noble family, for example, it is like this. Every leaf of a sandalwood tree could be counted but OM MANI PADME HUM, the measure of merits of reciting this vidya mantra one time could not be counted.

OM MANI PADME HUM, Son of Noble family, for example, it is like this. Existing in the four continents the men, women, boys and girls, all these abiding on the seventh bhumi level of a Bodhisattva, the heap of merit of these Bodhisattvas could be counted, but OM MANI PADME HUM, the measure of merits of reciting this vidya mantra one time could not be counted.

OM MANI PADME HUM, Son of Noble family, for example, it is like this. Twelve months, a year, or twelve months with an extra lunar month a complete solar year, the rain falls day and night, every drop could be counted, but OM MANI PADME HUM, the measure of merits of reciting this vidya mantra one time could not be counted.

OM MANI PADME HUM, Son of Noble family, the number of merits and virtues though it need not be expressed, but if there exist centillion limitless Buddhas like me and these for an eon, requisites for life of divine clothing, food and medicines which are efficacious for sickness, the merit of paying them homage with these could be counted but OM MANI PADME HUM, the measure of merits of reciting this vidya mantra one time could not be counted. That I alone in this world realm exist, what need is there to say that they are inexpressibly countless.”

About Thangtong Gyalpo

©Thangtong Gyalpo: Architect, Philosopher and Iron Chain Bridge Builder
The Centre for Bhutan Studies ISBN 99936-14-39-4

Thangtong Gyalpo (Thang sTong rGyal po) is a historical figure reaching in the supernatural who impresses us with his versatility to liberate sentient beings. His teachings and writings are translated only partly. The far bigger part of his work is passed down traditionally. To a large extent, it is directly visible, learnable and conceivable in reality

monasteries, bridges, Further, we meet this Mahāsiddha in Thimphu in Bhutan the 17th reincarnation Ngawang Thinley phrin las lhun grub).

In Tibet, Bhutan and Mahāyāna Buddhism Thangtong Gyalpo is



in the form of plays and songs. reality of the another form: Living in and studying in India is of Thangtong Gyalpo, Lhundrub (Ngag dbang

the world of the in the Himalayas, known and revered by all people. If one questions this, his oeuvre, his whole work and actions will be known far less. This is one reason for the results shown in the present work, which is the result of about 30 years of research projects in Tibet and Bhutan and

in particular, fieldwork that was taken up in July 1974 in Bhutan and in April 1981 in Tibet.

Thangtong Gyalpo has developed complex philosophical ideas. However, unlike most other Buddhist masters, he not only noted them down in his writings and passed them on in theories, but has also found his own way for the spreading of the teachings: Thangtong Gyalpo has lived his teachings. He has cooperated with his people as a blacksmith, as well as a philosopher, and shared the results and failures with them, which made it possible for him to personally access people of different classes. Therefore, he is regarded as one of three unusual masters in Tibetan Drubchen Nyönpa (sGrub chen sMyon pa) or 'divine madman'. Thangtong Gyalpo's ideas richly yielded fruit: He inspired his fellow people, spurred them to top performances and with it achieved unexpected multiplicative effects in the spreading of the Buddhist doctrine in Tibet and Bhutan. For Buddhists, Thangtong Gyalpo's teachings, his life and works are as a whole, model, help and a clue. For westerners, who are more on 'logos' and 'ratios,' Thangtong Gyalpo shows methods for their own mental concepts. Far beyond that, he has iron suspension bridges built with a span of more than 100 metres at the beginning of 15th century; while in Europe, spans of more than 20 metres were regarded as significant achievement.

In this contribution, the biography of Thangtong Gyalpo, his teachings, songs, plays ('cham) and his whole work in brief, is touched slightly in as much as it seemed necessary for the clarification of his personality as an architect and a bridge builder. Instead, the paper attempts to draw the attention to the bridges he built in Tibet and Bhutan and their influence in Europe and America. Chakzampa Thangtong Gyalpo is one of the most significant Mahāsiddhas of Tibet who worked in the first half of the 15th century in Tibet and Bhutan. Thangtong Gyalpo was a yogi, philosopher, poet, exorcist, teacher, architect, engineer, painter, sculptor, doctor, treasure revealer and last but not east, an iron chain suspension bridge builder, a universal genius with supernatural abilities. The spectrum of his titles and epithets is accordingly wide, beginning with his name, 'Thangtong Gyalpo' (the King of the Empty Plains), 'iron bridge yogi' (lcags zam rnal 'byor pa), 'father of the Tibetan opera' and up to the 'Leonardo da Vinci

of Asia' as Wolf Kahlen called him. Tashi Tsering summarises his activities in superlatives as presented below:

The mad saint (sgrub smyon), the destroyer of illusion ('khrul zhig), the performer of miracles, the medicine man who dispelled epidemics, the protector from Hor invasions, and the mender of harmful geomantic configurations (me btsa' gso ba). He was also an accomplished master of technology, who built numerous iron bridges and ferries, erected many devotional objects symbolising body, speech and mind and allegedly pioneered the fashioning of statues out of precious stones. He was a great propagator of the Avalokiteshvara cycle and sadhana and, to come closer to our subject, and is considered to have been the initiator of a lce lha mo and bla ma ma ni, those who display thangkas and those who use a stupa with many doors (mchod rten bkra shis sgo mang). Thangtong Gyalpo is also credited with establishing the ritual of breaking the stone on the stomach (pho ba rdo gshag) and is famous for having discovered hidden treasures (gter). He started his own religious tradition (Thang lugs) within the Shangpa Kagyu (Shangs pa bka' brgyud) lineage. Although a graduate of the Sakyapa (Sa skya pa) school, he founded the Chakzampa (lCags zam pa) tradition by combining the Shangpa Kagyu and Jangter (Byang gter) traditions. Moreover, he attained the power of longevity ('chi med tshe'i rig 'dzin mnga' brnyes pa). Even to the present day, those with purified karma can be fortunate enough to see his wisdom body (ye shes kyi sku).¹

Thangtong Gyalpo is known as a Mahāsiddha and a treasure revealer (gter ston pa). But he is also mentioned as one of the three great Drubthobs, the Divine Madmen, who, as already explained, impelled the teachings not with the usual methods like meditation and prayer but taught through contact and work.

¹ Tsering, T. 2001, S. 37: Tashi Tsering in his work on Thangtong Gyalpo's contribution to the a lce lha mo tradition draws a sharp profile with the help of different original texts of the extraordinary abilities of an extraordinary personality.

Creation and Completion Phases

©Creation and Completion: Essential Points of Tantric Meditation

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Buddhism

The Buddhist teachings originated in India in the sixth century B.C.E. With Gautama, or Shakyamuni Buddha, (2) the prince who renounced his kingdom in search of wisdom. After an inner journey of many years, he experienced a total awakening, or enlightenment,(3) and went on to teach about this experience for forty-five years.

India at that time already had a strong tradition of contemplative practice, but these new teachings were unusual not only in their content but in that they reached across social and religious boundaries in their appeal. They offered to everyone equally the possibility of achieving liberation through personal effort. During the forty-five years that Buddha Shakyamuni traveled around India imparting his profound knowledge, many different aspects of it were presented in many different ways to a great variety of people. This special talent to present the truth (Dharma) in the way that is most practical and appropriate to a particular audience is called skillful means.(4) It is symbolically represented in the account of one of the Buddha's special qualities of speech: that he could deliver a discourse to a group of people all speaking different languages, and they would each hear it in their own language.

Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma

The first turning

The great variety of Buddhist teachings that arose in India over the next millennium are classified into the three "turnings of the wheel of Dharma."(5) They are all said to originate with the Buddha Shakyamuni during different phases of his teachings, at different places, speaking to different audiences, sometimes simultaneously to different audiences. In the first phase, the four

noble truth(6) were emphasized: the truth of suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path to its cessation. Since the first pair describe the reality of our experience of life-cyclic existence (samsara) and the second pair encompass all the modes of transcendence of it (nirvana), there is nothing not included in this simple classification. Among the important concepts revealed during this phase was the explanation of the totally dependent and interrelated nature of all phenomenal reality.(7) This is said to be the overarching vision that the Buddha experienced during the night of his awakening. If one can understand the intricate relationship of all phenomena, and particularly of one's own emotional and conceptual patterns, then the cycle of suffering can be broken.

An in-depth analysis of the process of suffering also reveals that the notion of an intrinsically, independently existing "self" is at the bottom of it. This is considered to be a false notion, since upon direct examination through meditation and analysis, such a self cannot be found. Ignorance is the belief in this myth of the self and the dualistic thinking that it spawns. In protecting the self and distinguishing what is other than it, the emotional reactions of attachment and aversion along with many other "afflictive emotions"(8) occur. These in turn give rise to actions and their consequences (karma). These are the sources of suffering. So the idea of non-self (9) is another crucial idea presented in the first turning teachings. These concepts form the basis for all further developments in Buddhist thought.

The people who received, practiced, and accomplished the teachings of this early phase of Buddhism were called arhats. (10) This group includes most of the earliest disciples. The lifestyle that was stressed was one of renunciation and moral discipline, and the goal was to attain one's own liberation from the cycle of existence. These teachings developed over time into at least eighteen separate schools. Today they are represented by the School of the Elders (Theravada), prevalent in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia. This path was later called the "Lesser Vehicle" (Hinayana) by other traditions.

The second turning

The second phase of teachings coincided with the wisdom literature, (11) a new

phase of literature that began to spread between 100 B.C.E. And 100 c.e. and continued to develop for centuries. The two great ideas emphasized in this phase were emptiness and compassion.(12) Emptiness is a further development of non-self and of the interdependent nature of phenomena. Not only was the self discovered to be empty of any independent existence, but so too was all phenomena. The lack of independent existence of phenomena is emptiness, and this truth is called the absolute truth. (13) On an ordinary level, the interrelated existence of phenomena and the functioning of cause and effect (karma) are considered the relative truth. (14)To comprehend these two truths simultaneously is to maintain a "middle path" without falling into extreme notions of either existence or non-existence. With no ground to stand on and no concepts to cling to, the causes of suffering are no longer operating. This is wisdom, the opposite of ignorance, which must be perceived experientially through meditative practice, not only by philosophical contemplation.

Compassion is the recognition that other beings are embroiled in lives of suffering exactly because they lack this understanding of emptiness. Their suffering is not inevitable, but it is self-perpetuating unless insight into the cyclic pattern arises. The person who begins to comprehend the true nature of emptiness naturally feels less self-cherishing and develops concern for others who exist interdependently. Compassion in turn promotes the experience of selflessness. Thus compassion and emptiness, or wisdom, are seen as the two necessary qualities to cultivate together on the Buddhist path, like the two wings of a bird.

The people who received, practiced, and accomplished these teachings were called bodhisattvas.(15) The lifestyle emphasized was one of great compassion and good deeds for the sake of others, as well as meditative discipline. For this, a monastic life was not necessarily relevant, so laypeople could be equally involved. The goal was the full enlightenment of all sentient beings, and thus it came to be called the "Great Vehicle," or Mahayana.

The third turning

The third phase was again based on these same concepts, but with a further development, that of Buddha nature, (16) the inherent potential for

enlightenment. This seemed to spring out of the meditative experience of a radiant awareness, or knowing capacity, inherent in the mind that could not exactly be just empty. Speculation on emptiness can lead to the question of whether the essential nature of everything is empty of a concrete self and other dualistic notions, or whether everything is truly empty in and of itself. The direct experience of intrinsic awareness would tend to indicate the former, and this essence that could be experienced came to be called Buddha nature. This nature is an integral part of every single sentient being and endows that being with the opportunity to become enlightened. Enlightenment then comes to mean the recognition and full realization of this true nature of the Buddha that one already is.

The goal is still the liberation of all sentient beings, and so the teachings of this turning belong to the Mahayana, and the practitioners are bodhisattvas. The literature connected with this phase as well as with the first two turnings are called sutras, (17) the discourses attributed to Buddha Shakyamuni. The idea of Buddha nature that developed in this last phase is crucial for an understanding of another kind of literature that existed in Buddhist India, that of the tantras.

Tantra

Tantra(18) refers to a special kind of literature of esoteric teachings and also to those teachings themselves and their practice. The path of tantra is also called Vajrayana(19) the "Indestructible Vehicle." Thus it is often classified as a third vehicle, although it is actually part of the Mahayana since the intention is the liberation of all beings. Another name for it is the "secret mantra,"(20) reflecting the widespread use of special sounds and syllables called mantras. There were both Hindu and Buddhist tantras in ancient India, and it is unclear how much one influenced the other. The Buddhist tantras are said to have been taught by the Buddha Shakyamuni manifesting in various forms on specific occasions to special groups of adepts. The main emphasis in Buddhist tantras is the natural purity or intrinsic perfection of all being. The method for realizing this is to cultivate pure vision(21) or sacred outlook, at all times. The lifestyle tends to emphasize the unconventional in order to break through ordinary barriers and personal

inhibitions to a non-conceptual understanding of true nature. The techniques that are taught in the tantras are visualization of enlightened forms (deities and mandalas(22)) and cultivation of the subtle energies of the psycho-physical body, along with recognition of the ultimate inherent nature.

These two are the stages of creation and completion that are the subject of the text translated here.

Buddhism in Tibet

Buddhism in Tibet and the other Himalayan regions not only preserved all of these strands of Buddhist thought without denigration or contradiction, but it also maintained a tradition of actual practice incorporating all the vehicles in an effective way. In addition, it encompassed the practices of the native Bon religion already present in Tibet when it first spread there, thus becoming the rich treasure of spiritual wisdom that we still benefit from today.

Buddhism may have entered Tibet as early as the fifth century c.e., but it was during the reign of several religious kings from the seventh to ninth centuries that it became the established religion. King Trisong Detsen(23) invited the great scholar-monk Shantarakshita(24) who founded the monastic lineage, and the tantric master Guru Padmasambhava(25) who brought the esoteric teachings of Buddhism and subdued opposition from local forces. This first spreading of the Dharma in Tibet established the Nyingma, or Ancient, School(26) which continues today. After a dark period, when the anti-Buddhist king Langdarma(27) suppressed the religion, the later spreading(28) took place in the eleventh century, with a new influx of great teachers from India and new translations of sacred texts. Eight main practice lineages(29) flourished, as well as many smaller ones. From those, the four main schools, which are well known today, were established: the Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug.

Many great saints and scholars from these traditions have appeared continuously in the Himalayan regions and have contributed richly to the great treasury of Buddhist literature that had been brought from India and translated into Tibetan. In terms of practical application, scholars such as Jamgon Kongtrul have simply classified all those teachings and practices into the two approaches of sutra and

mantra,(30) representing, roughly, exoteric and esoteric.

The sutra approach encompasses the general methods and ideas expressed in the three turnings of the wheel of Dharma. In our text, Kongtrul summarizes that approach with the famous verse:

*Doing no unvirtuous deed whatsoever,
engaging in prolific virtuous activity,
completely controlling one's own mind,
this is the teaching of the Buddha.(31)*

The approach of mantra (Secret Mantra Vehicle) or tantric Buddhism is basically the two stages of creation and completion. But to try to practice them without the ethical foundation and mental control gained through the sutra approach is considered useless, at best. Kongtrul thus advises us in this small meditation guide on ways to practice all of the characteristic methods of both approaches. He summarizes them into three techniques for dealing with the afflictive emotions: rejection, transformation, and recognition. These three techniques for dealing with emotions that would interfere with the meditation process clearly correspond to the three phases of teachings described above as the three turnings. Rejection of afflictive emotion reinforces the attitude of renunciation so important in the First Turning teachings. The second turning teachings are applied in transforming so-called negative states into conducive conditions on the spiritual path through meditations based on compassion and the realization of emptiness. Finally, recognition of one's own true nature, which is intrinsically pure and pervasive even within one's affects, represents the ideas of Buddha nature expressed in the third turning as they are applied in the practices of secret mantra. In Tibetan Buddhism this involves primarily meditation using visualized forms representing the awakened mind: the deities and mandalas.

Deity Practice

Tibetan Buddhist spiritual practice centers around the deities in its devotional rituals and meditation techniques. It may be disconcerting for those who have heard that Buddhism is a "non-theistic" religion to discover an elaborate system of worship with a pantheon of goddesses and gods. It is for this reason that some

other Buddhist schools have considered the Buddhism in Tibet to be corrupt or untrue to its original form. However, these deity practices are deeply rooted in the very foundations of Buddhist thought and represent an exceptionally skillful use of technique to evoke realization of those ideas on the deepest levels. One can impute emptiness logically when an independent reality of the self or of other phenomena is sought and not found. One also experiences it directly through meditation when the mind abides without ideas of existence or non-existence or both or neither. Meditators experience emptiness as a kind of fullness. Emptiness allows for the unimpeded radiance of intrinsic awareness. In the experiential sense, then, it is not only a lack of something, but also a quality of knowing, or pristine cognition, a luminous quality that is the actual nature of the mind that can be experienced once the veils of concepts and emotions have been cleared away. This experience is often referred to as clear light or radiance and also as "compassion."

It is not something other than emptiness, for without emptiness it could not occur. It is the radiance-awareness that is the primordially pure basis of all manifestation and perception, the Buddha nature. This very nature of mind was always already there and is never corrupted or damaged, but only covered up by confusion. As such, it is the basis of spiritual practice, and also the goal or result. For this reason, tantra is called the resultant vehicle(32) because the approach is to rediscover the result already within. Buddha is not found anywhere outside of the intrinsic state of one's own mind. In the traditional breakdown, then, of ground, path, and fruition, the ground is one's own true nature, the fruition is the discovery of that, and the path is whatever it takes to make the discovery.

Kongtrul describes the identity of ground (basis) and fruition when he says:

The basis of purification is the eternal, non-composite realm of reality that fully permeates all beings as the Buddha nature. (33)

Since every aspect of ourselves is intrinsically pure, the path can employ any method to bring us back to our own nature. The deities used in tantric practice are a manifestation of this pure nature. In one sense, they exist as a method to undermine our pathetic projection of ourselves and our universe as flawed, a way of connecting with our true human/Buddha nature. At the same time, they are

that nature. Due to the complex process involved in engendering and maintaining a sense of a substantial self and of the world around us, we have lost touch with our basic nature. It is often explained that the actual emptiness nature of mind is misconstrued as a self, while the clear or radiant aspect is projected outward as the separate, external world of others.(34) As the confusion proliferates, the concepts of duality, feelings of attachment and aversion, and consequent karmic actions and imprints become self-perpetuating. Thus it is called cyclic existence and is "characterized by the experience of suffering."(35) But the essential nature of emptiness and clarity has never for a moment been absent.

In contemplative practice we can watch this process in our minds moment by moment and recognize how we create our world. Then there is the possibility of creating it consciously. Now, because of the complications of our confusion, we visualize the world and ourselves as a mixture of bad and good, creating a constant tension of dissatisfaction. But we could choose to regard it as continuously manifesting the basic purity of emptiness/awareness. The deities represent an alternate reality that more precisely reflects the innate purity of our minds. In any case we visualize and create a world with its beings. The tantric approach is to use whatever we have, whatever we do already, as the method. So we use this capacity of projection and creation, which is really the unimpeded radiance of mind, as the path of meditation, but with a radical shift. Instead of imperfect women and men, we have goddesses and gods embodying the Buddha qualities. Rather than run-down houses, there are brilliant palaces in divine configurations. The whole sorry world, in fact, is the Buddha realm of magnificent glory manifesting as the mandala pattern of enlightened mind.

Emptiness and pure awareness allow us to do this. Deity visualization may seem contrived, and it is acknowledged as such, but if the fact that we create our own version of reality is deeply understood, it is very reasonable. We perceive water as something to drink, a fish perceives it as something to live in. We perceive the world now as impure, but we might as well see it as pure, which is closer to the truth if one considers its essential nature.

The deities are forms that display the immanence of Buddha nature in everything. All the different ways of relating with deities are ways we already have of relating

to our experience. In this sense, the practice of deity meditation is a skillful way of undermining our ordinary mistaken sense of solid reality and moving closer to a true mode of perception.

The natural array of perceptions and feelings that arises can be regarded differently through deity practice. For instance, in Jamgon Kongtrul's last example of transformation, when desire arises, it arises as the deity, and we relate to it, or to ourselves, in that form. The deity shares some familiar characteristics with desire, has the same energy, but is by nature a pure manifestation, untainted by ego's complications. The deity in this meditation might be an embodiment of pure (com)passion, such as Chakrasamvara, (36) and thus represent an aspect of enlightenment. But the process itself also recaptures and demonstrates that the essential nature of neurotic thought is none other than Buddha nature, whatever its shape. By creatively using forms that recall innate purity, the habitual mistake of relating to thoughts and emotions as other than pure is reversed.

This does not mean that tantric deities are merely an abstract, symbolic form representing something other than themselves. This again would be a dualistic concept. They are enlightened form, and they are intrinsic as part of Buddha nature. Even the specific forms are understood as an integral part of awareness. This is a difficult point to comprehend. Jamgon Kongtrul refers to this truth when he says:

The basis of purification, which is this very Buddha nature, abides as the body with its clear and complete vajra signs and marks. A similar form is used as the path and leads to the fruition of purification: that very divine form that existed as the basis.(37)

"A similar form ... used as the path" is the deity visualized in creation-stage meditation. Such practice leads to the realization of that divine form as it already exists within the true nature of mind. The idea of the intrinsic qualities of enlightenment, including actual physical attributes, can be found in such early texts as the Uttaratantra(38) and other sutras and commentaries associated with the teachings ascribed to the third turning.

Qualities and activity manifest from the fundamental enlightened nature in response to the needs of sentient beings, and yet are inseparable from that very

nature, not something added on to it. In the Uttaratantra, thirty two specific attributes of the form manifestation are listed, concluding with the reminder that they are intrinsic and inseparable:

Those qualities of thirty and two are distinguished through the dharmakaya; yet they are inseparable like a gem's radiant color and its shape.(39)

Different dimensions or manifestations of the enlightened principle, Buddha, are traditionally called bodies (kaya). The most common division is into three bodies. (40)

The body of reality (dharmakaya) is the ultimate true nature, beyond concept. Buddha nature refers to the same thing when it is obscured by the incidental veils in sentient beings. Although itself without form, this body of reality manifests spontaneously in ways to benefit beings, just as our intrinsic awareness radiates naturally from emptiness.

The enlightened manifestations are called the form bodies (rupakaya). They are the body of perfect rapture (sambhogakaya), only visible to those of high realization; and the emanation body (nirmanakaya), the actual manifestations of the Buddha to our normal perceptions. The Buddha Shakyamuni is said to be such an emanation body. The deities visualized in Tibetan meditation practice for the most part represent the body of perfect rapture. When visualized for purposes of meditation or ceremony, the deity is called yidam, that which binds the mind.

It is taught that the practice of visualizing deities plants the seed for our later manifestation of form bodies for the benefit of beings at the time of enlightenment. This is why the seemingly simple approach of directly apprehending the empty, radiant nature of mind is not enough. The body of reality alone would be the result of that apprehension. But that would be, in a sense, emptiness without form, and would accomplish only one's own purpose. The body of reality must be accessible somehow to sentient beings in whom it is still hidden. That is the natural function of the form manifestations. It is still necessary to work with the whole phenomenal world, form and emptiness inseparable.

The Guru

The single most important factor in effective tantric practice of any kind is the relationship between the practitioner and the spiritual master. Although a teacher is also stressed in the other approaches, it is only in the Mantrayana approach that this relationship itself forms the basis of a spiritual evolution. Thus the covenant (dam tshig, Skt. samaya) between master and disciple must be carefully guarded and honored at all times from both sides or the process won't work. Given the difficulties of relationships in general, and the delicacy and profundity of this tantric relationship in particular, it is not surprising that many misunderstandings and abuses have occurred, particularly in the West, where a committed, devotional relationship to another human being is quite alien and often confused with a personality cult. Although these problems require extensive consideration, here we are discussing the ideal.

The relationship with the guru informs both creation-stage and completion-stage practice. In the creation stage, it constitutes the connecting factor between one's own Buddha nature and the visualized deity, which is always conceived of as essentially the guru. The guru becomes the external, identifiable form of the ultimate Buddha. All Buddha qualities are projected and identified with the guru. Longing and devotion directed toward the guru are so intensified that one is moved to the very core of one's being; one's heart is fully opened, providing the space for connection, that is, blessing, to occur. In the development of this relationship, there is more and more capacity for intimacy until finally full union takes place: the guru's mind and the disciple's mind are recognized as identical, and all the enlightened attributes of the guru are reclaimed as one's own. This is the fruition of deity practice and specifically the recognition attained in the completion stage. As the hallmark of tantric practice, guru devotion employs as its means perhaps the most powerful factor of human existence-relationship-both to others and to "other" in an abstract sense. Working with the general projection of self and other, and even more, with all the feelings and affections one develops in relationships, deity practice skillfully uses these affects themselves in devotional practice in order to transcend them.

Ultimate completion stage is direct recognition of our fundamental nature, but it

is impossible to approach with the conceptual mind. How can we even begin to recognize non-conceptual pure nature? It is like the eye trying to see the eye. The mystery of tantra is that the only thing to do is to pray to the guru for realization to dawn, because there is no other thing to do.

A pithy text on great seal (mahamudra), a practice for realization of the ultimate nature, says:

Mahamudra has no cause; faith and devotion are the cause of mahamudra.

Mahamudra has no condition; the holy lama is the condition for mahamudra.(41)

In the usual sense of "cause," there is nothing that can cause mahamudra, the ultimate realization. The relationship of devotion is the only attitude that creates the condition for it to happen. This is why the guru plays such a crucial role in Vajrayana.

In Creation and Completion the pre-eminent role of the guru relationship is indicated in the first line of homage to Jamgon Kongtrul's primary guru. It is taken for granted as the foundation of the practices that are being described. The consummating event in that guru-disciple relationship, the initiation or empowerment,(42) is not mentioned, but assumed. Without empowerment from the guru, the practitioner will not reap the benefits of deity practice. It is customary for a student to request a ritual empowerment for each deity to be practiced in order to be fully empowered both in the sense of permission to do the practice and of establishing the relationship and receptivity needed for such practice.

Creation Stage

Visualization practice works with our relationship to the phenomenal world of appearance and seeks to undermine its solidity and shift it into an alternate, awakened perspective. The word often used for this process is *jong wa* (sbyong ba), which has a wide range of meanings, including to purify, purge, train, exercise, study, accustom, and cultivate. In this translation, "purify" is used in the sense of a thorough workover and radical shift.

Four aspects of purification are mentioned as a framework for understanding. The basis, or ground, of purification is Buddha nature. That which needs purifying or removing are the conceptual and emotional obscurations to this nature, which are merely incidental and not intrinsic to it. That which does the purifying is deity practice. The fruition of purification is full recognition of the ground.

The discussion of the actual purification process can be very obscure, and this text really only gives us some clues, as do most Tibetan lamas. Apparently this is all that is really necessary for it to "work." Deity practice takes place within the framework of a ritual, liturgical text called a "means of accomplishment" (sgrub thabs, Skt. sadhana). There is great variety in the sequence of practices within these texts, depending on which level of tantra and which tradition they belong to. (43) Different relationships with the deity are cultivated, such as that of lord, friend, and sibling, and then total identification through visualization of oneself as the deity. (44) But there are many common aspects as well. The general idea is that the process and sequence of visualizations correspond exactly to certain experiences of our life cycle, and that through "re-envisioning" them in this pure way, the process is basically recreated or purified, and can be recognized as the pure display of radiant mind.

Jamgon Kongtrul mentions four visualization sequences (45) as corresponding to the four possible kinds of birth: womb, egg, moisture-warmth, or miraculous. The first sequence of five stages (46) purifying womb birth is given as an example to convey this idea. Beginning with the three meditative absorptions (ting nge 'dzin; samadhi), the first, absorption of suchness (de bzhin nyid), corresponds to the experience of death in one's previous life. This absorption is basically the meditation on emptiness, the pure ground from which everything arises. Along with this, the all-appearing or all-illuminating absorption (kun snang), corresponds to and purifies the previous experience of the intermediate state (bar do) between death and rebirth. This is the meditation of the clarity or compassionate aspect, the natural radiance of emptiness, the energy of the natural mind. Then the absorption of the cause, or seed (rgyu), corresponds to the process of conception in rebirth, the sperm and ovum coming together as the

physical basis of the future body. Here it is described as the visualization of the sun and moon and lotus seat, the first appearance of form in the visualization process.(47) In its pure, enlightened aspect, it is the inseparability of the previous two, emptiness and its radiance, compassion.



Then there is the visualization of the deity's seed syllable upon the seat, corresponding to the consciousness of the individual entering the womb with the combination of sperm and ovum. Just as all life begins with a seed or quintessence of that form, deities also emanate from a quintessential syllable or vibration.

Then the visualization of the special implement or insignia (phyag mtshan), such as a vajra or a sword, representing the particular deity, corresponds to fetal growth in the womb, when one's distinctive characteristics begin to develop.

Finally, the visualization of the complete body of the deity corresponds to and purifies the actual birth from the womb and the development into an individual. These five stages may also be correlated with the five wisdoms, the pure aspect of the five afflictive emotions.(48)

In the more complex deity practices, the process continues through many stages, all the stages of our life. Finally there may be full-blown visualization of the entire mandala palace and surrounding environment, including many other deities as retinue in the mandala. This mandala corresponds to our complex life, with all of its relationships to



beings, and to the environment surrounding our notion of ourself in concentric circles of importance all around. We have already created this mandala, but

without awareness. Recreating the process in visualization, we see how we did it in the first place, and how, as the natural process of the creative energy of mind, it is essentially pure already.

Three aspect of the creation stage

Traditionally there are three aspects, or techniques, to develop in visualization practice: clarity, recollecting purity, and pride.

Clarity of form (*rnam par gsal ba*) is the art of visualizing with steady, vivid precision. The deity is held in the mind clearly, yet is always empty of solid reality, like a vivid rainbow. This is not only a focus for achieving one-pointed attention (*rtse gcig*) and stillness (*zhi gnas*, Skt. *shamata*), but also provides instant feedback on the state of one's mind. It is immediately apparent that a relaxed mind is a necessary condition for sustained visualization, as it is for any kind of exercise in memory. Advice on how to cultivate this clarity is given in the text.

Recollecting the purity means knowing and remembering the symbolic meaning of each of the aspects of the visualized deity. These meanings are usually found in the course of the practice liturgy to refresh the memory for practice. For instance, the deity's legs crossed in vajra posture indicates abiding in the inseparability of cyclic existence and transcendence; sitting on a lotus indicates utter purity of the form manifesting for beings, like a lotus growing in a swamp but untouched by its filth. None of these details are arbitrary, and as manifestations of the body of reality, they are naturally meaningful and potent. As such, one might wonder if they are equally effective whether or not they are consciously remembered. It is interesting that in this text Jamgon Kongtrul goes against mainstream teachings in suggesting that all this recollecting might just interfere with the real meditation process, particularly for the beginner. He suggests that rather than cluttering the mind with these details, it is more important to simply recall that the mind projecting the empty, radiant deity is fundamental emptiness radiating its intrinsic qualities in the arising of hands, faces, and so on.

The third aspect to cultivate is called pride of the deity or divine pride (*lha'i nga rgyal*). Generally, this means maintaining the deep sense of actually being the

deity, pure and perfect in every way. It is not the feeling of dressing up in a costume and mask, assuming another weird form, or superimposing an alien personality on top of the old one. A sense of confidence in being the actual deity counteracts one's sense of ordinariness and frees one from all the limitations usually imposed by our mundane sense of self.

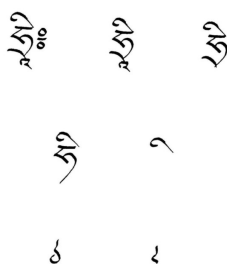
As the deity, boundless compassion and wisdom are only natural, whereas normally we feel burdened by our own inadequacy in such matters. Many teachings emphasize this as the main point of deity practice. Even if the visualization itself is unclear, just this sense of actually being the deity achieves the purpose of the practice. However, pride of the deity is in no way to be confused with its opposite: ordinary, ego-oriented pride.

Apparently Jamgon Kongtrul felt that this was very important: the two lines on the subject concern the benefit of meditating without (ordinary) pride. Kongtrul's discussion of creation-stage practice ends with a description of the signs of accomplishment, such as the deity arising effortlessly at all times and even being visible to others. But even if these experiences don't happen and the visualization remains obscured, that obscuration itself is not different from the true spacious nature of mind itself. It always comes back to that. So the real accomplishment of the creation stage is the natural state of the completion stage.

Completion Stage

The true nature of mind and all phenomena is "beyond intellect and inexpressible." (49) There is no intentional effort that causes its realization except that, as the text says, "the power of devotion causes it to arise from within." (50) This makes it difficult to write about, but a few points need to be mentioned. The creation stage undermines attachment to the solid, impure phenomenal world, but can still leave us with the traces of attachment to this new manifestation that we have created or perceived. So in the completion stage, the whole new wonderful world dissolves back into basic ground, from which it never really departed. In the context of relationship with life cycles mentioned above, this stage corresponds to death. Recognizing that the visualization was created in the first place by mind, empty and radiant, and dissolves back into it, purifies or

prepares us for the process of actual death, when this realization can result in full awakening.



Steps of the HRI Dissolution

Within the context of meditation, there is no longer a visualized form to work with, but there is still mind. So the discussion of the completion stage begins with a description of the mental process itself, so that the practitioner can be aware of exactly what is happening. The tradition of examining and analyzing the mental process has been a mainstay of Buddhist practice since its inception. It is sometimes referred to as Buddhist psychology. In this text the discussion centers on the eight aggregates of consciousness, (51) a model of the perceptive process that emerged during the development of the Mahayana. The purpose of the detailed analysis is for the meditator to be able to recognize and interfere in the process at just that precise point before mental events imprint on the foundation consciousness and become karmically effective. The thought process is not expected to cease, as in any case it is the natural, pure radiance of emptiness. But the product of attachment-that is, karma-must be prevented to achieve freedom from the process. Working with the mind in this way, cutting through the very creation process of our self-imposed cyclic existence, is fundamentally the same as the practices of working with the afflictive emotions described earlier in the text.

Various experiences arise as this method becomes effective, but the meditator is warned not to fixate on them, for they too are unreal, passing away like everything else. The one single tool that is stressed continuously to get through all manner of mental events, obstacles, distractions, and even positive meditative

experiences is called mindfulness,(52) the ability to focus and know what is happening. Various ways of applying this mindfulness to different situations form most of the last part of this text. Mindfulness develops initially in the meditation of calm abiding, which is held as the preparatory foundation for many practices that aim at direct realization of the mind's nature, such as the mahamudra and completion stage practice in its broadest sense. Only mindfulness sees one through the whole way and is the final technique. Then "ultimately, even mindfulness itself does not exist."(53)

The exceptional esoteric instructions of great perfection (dzogchen)(54) are mentioned as an approach of total non-contrivance, requiring only naked awareness itself. Even the foundation of calm abiding is unnecessary. Kongtrul mentions this exceptional approach several times, as it is subtly, but profoundly, different. However, each mention comes with a note of warning, not in the sense of any doubt as to the edifying nature of the instructions, but to caution against the grave possibility of misconstruing these very fine points. Kongtrul claims it would be "better to tread the gradual path."(55)

Completion-stage meditation, the simple state of resting in intrinsic awareness, is rife with pitfalls and challenges. Methods for identifying and processing all of the experiences that could arise in this stage constitute the bulk of the literature on the subject. Otherwise, there is nothing to say.

One last clarification about the term itself: completion stage actually has two applications, and this could cause some confusion. In the context of this present teaching, it is the second of the two stages of deity practice, and usually corresponds to the actual dissolution of the visualization, where mind rests without contrivance in its own nature. Since this is ideally the ultimate realization, the term may take on a very expansive meaning.../

.../Creation-stage and completion-stage practices are set within this context of a wholly spiritual and awakened life. So it is said:

Therefore the view is higher than the sky; karmic cause and effect is finer than flour.(59)

Notes

1. rdzogs: I have used "completion" rather than "perfection" since it seems to imply a sense of wholeness and inclusion,

whereas perfection might connote a thing perfected due to the elimination of its imperfect parts. In the case of dzogchen (see note 54) however, I have used "great perfection," which is in common usage by now, even though "great completion" might have been better. The reader should understand that the term in Tibetan is the same in both cases.

2. Shakyamuni means "the sage of the Shakya clan," and is the name usually used when distinguishing the historical Buddha from other Buddhas. His personal name was Gautama or Siddhartha. The dates of his life are generally given as 563 to 483 B.C.E., although various traditions offer a number of different dating. There are also many different perspectives on his life, the so-called historical version being only one possible interpretation.

3. byang chub, Skt. bodhi: the Tibetan term means purification (byang) of all obscurations, and realization (chub) of all qualities.

4. thabs mkhas pa, Skt. upaya.

5. chos 'khor rim pa gsum, Skt. triparivartadharmacakrapravartana: the early, the middle, and the last (snga bar phyi gsum) "turnings of the wheel of Dharma" are called, respectively, the Dharma turning of the four truths (bden pa bzhi'i chos 'khor); of absence of defining characteristics (mtshan_ nyid med pa'i chos 'khor); and of thorough distinction (legs par rnam par phyed ba'i chos 'khor). The wheel is a metaphoric reference to the legendary universal king whose instrument of sovereignty is a wheel that subdues any territory without violence.

6. 'phags pa 'i bden pa bzhi, Skt. catvāryasatya: first recorded in the first sermon of the Buddha, Dharmacakrapravartana Sutra, "Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dharma."

7. rten cing 'brei bar 'byung ba, Skt. pratityasamutpada: the interdependent relationship, or "dependent origination," that is the nature of all phenomena. This idea is at the core of all Buddhist philosophy.

8. nyon mongs pa, Skt. klesa: the definition in the Great Tibetan Dictionary (bod kyi tshig mdzod chen mo) is: "mental events that incite one to unvirtuous actions and cause one's being to be very disturbed," (midge ba'i las bskul bas rang rgyud rab tu ma zhi bar byed pa'i sems byung), vol. 2, p. 970. The three main afflictive emotions, or "poisons," are desire, hatred, and stupidity.

9. bdag med, Skt. anatman.

10. dgra bcom pa: one who has conquered (bcom) the enemy (dgra) of afflictive emotion.

11. shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i mdo sde, Skt. prajnaparamitasutra: the teachings on the perfection of transcendent intelligence first appeared in India beginning around 100 B.C.E., according to Edward Conze. There are about forty texts, varying in size from 100,000 verses to a single letter: A. They represent the evolution of the emphasis on emptiness and compassion.

12. stongpa nyid, Skt. sunyata and snying rje, Skt. karuna.

13. don dam bden pa, Skt. paramarthasatya.

14. kun rdzob bden pa, Skt. samvrtisatya: these two truths (bden pa gnyis, Skt. satyadvaya), the absolute and the relative, are to be understood as inseparable.

15. byang chub sems dpa: Skt. Bodhisattva: "hero of awakening," the ideal Mahayana paradigm, who is completely devoted to the awakening of all sentient beings.

16. de bzhin gshegs pa 'i snying po, Skt. tathagatagarbha; or bde bar gshegs pa 'i snying po, Skt. sugatagarbha: literally, "the essence or womb of the one gone to suchness (or bliss)," in other words, a Buddha

17. Sutras (mdo) are the discourses attributed to the Buddha Sakyamuni. They include the early teachings spoken directly by the Buddha, collected and preserved in the Pali canon during the early Buddhist councils, and texts that appeared much later, usually in Sanskrit, Prakrit, or Buddhist-hybrid Sanskrit, that are attributed to the influence of the Buddha and included in the Mahayana canon.

18. rgyud, "continuity": refers both to the class of literature, both Hindu and Buddhist, and the teachings contained in that literature.

19. rdo rje thegpa, Skt. vajrayana.

20. gsang sngags, Skt. guhyamantra.

21. dag snang: the vision or outlook that recognizes the innate perfection or purity of all phenomena. In tantra, this means specifically regarding all beings as deities, the surroundings as the pure lands of the buddhas, all sound as

- mantra, and all thoughts as intrinsic awareness. Also to always see one's spiritual teacher as a Buddha
22. *dkyil 'khor*, Skt. *mandala*: literally, center and circumference. A stylized configuration of peaceful or wrathful deities, or enlightened attributes, usually formed by a circle with a four-doored square within, representing the pure abode of the deities; may also represent the universe, psychic energy centers, and other correspondences.
23. King Trisong Detsen (*khri strong lde btsan*) lived from approximately 730 to 798 c.e., although dates vary a great deal according to different sources and ways of calculating.
24. *Santaraksita* (*zhi ba 'tsho*), also called Abbot Bodhisattva (*mkhan po bo dhi sa tva*) by Tibetans.
25. *pad ma 'byung gnas*, Skt. *padmakara*: "Lotus Born," known more commonly in Tibet as Guru Rinpoche, Precious Guru, and many other names. He was an Indian tantric master considered to be the "second Buddha" and is credited with establishing Buddhism in Tibet and founding the Ancient (*rnying ma*) lineage.
26. *bstan pa snga dar*: "the early spreading" is also referred to as the *snga bsgyur rnying ma*, "the early translation [period of the] Ancient [School]."
27. *glang dar ma*, who ruled from approximately 841 to 846 c.e.
28. *bstan pa phyi dar*: also referred to as the *phyi bsgyur gsar ma*, "the later translation [period of the] New [School]." Since the Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug traditions originated during this period, they are called collectively the "New (Sarma) School."
29. *sgrub brgyud shing rta chen po brgyad*: "the eight great chariots of practice lineages," they are the Nyingma (*rnying ma*), Kadam (*bka' gdams*), Kagyu (*bka' brgyud*), Lamdre (*lam 'bras*, path and fruition, i.e., *sa skya*), Shangpa (*shangs pa*), ShiJe and Chod (*zhi byed* and *gcod*; "pacification and severance"), Kalachakra (*dus 'khor*; also called *sbyor drug*), and Orgyen Nyengyu (*o rgyan bsnyen brgyud*).
30. *mdo lam sngags lam*, Skt. *sutramarga* and *mantramarga*: "mantra" being short for the Secret Mantra Vehicle.
31. *sdig pa ci yang mi bya zhing /*
dge ba phun sum tshog.r par spyad /
rang gi sems ni yongs su 'dul /
'di ni sangs rrgyas bstan pa yin /
32. *'bras bu 'i theg pa*, Skt. *phalayana*: which makes the result the path, as opposed to the Causal Vehicle (*rgyu 'i theg pa*), which makes the cause the path—a method ascribed to the "lower" approaches.
33. *sbyang gzhi chos dbyings rtag brtan 'dus ma byas /*
bde gshegs snying pos gro kun yongs la khyab /
- In Sanskrit, "realm of reality" is *dharmadhatu*, and "Buddha nature" is *sugatagarbha*. See page 41.
34. *stongpa la bdag dang gsal ba la gzhan*: "on emptiness 'self' and on radiance 'other' [is imputed]," from "Kalu Rinpoche's Comments on Foundation Consciousness, etc." (*ka lu rin po che'i kun gzhi sogs khrid*) as well as innumerable oral teachings. The late Kalu Rinpoche was a supreme meditation master in the Kagyu tradition and lineage holder of the Shangpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. He was said to be a manifestation of Jamgon Kongtrul.
35. *mtshan nyid sdug bsngal du shar ba yin*: from *dam chos yid bzhin nor bu thar pa rin po che'i rgyan Jewel Ornament of Liberation*) by Gampopa, f. 2.
36. Korlo Demchog (*'khor lo bde mchog*, Skt. *cakrasamvara*), "Wheel of Sublime Bliss," a name for one of the tantric deities.
37. *de yang sbyang gzhi bde gshegs snying po nyid /*
rdo rje mtshan dpe gsa[rdzogs skur bzhugs pas /
de dang 'dra ba 'i rnam pa lam byed kyis /
sbyangs 'bras gzhi fa yod pa 'i lha sku nyid /
- See page 47.
38. The *Ratnagotravibhaga*, more popularly known to Tibetans as the *Uttaratantra* (*rgyud bla ma*), a commentary on the ideas of Buddha nature said to be written down by the great third-century Indian Acarya Asanga (*thogs med*) through the inspiration of the Bodhisattva and future Buddha Maitreya (*byams pa*).
39. *de dag yon tan gsum bcu ni /*

gnyis 'di chos skus rab phye ste/
nor bu rin chen 'od mdog dang/
dbyibs bzhin dbye ba med phyir ro/

Uttaratantra, f. 28 b.

40. The three bodies (sku gsum, Skt. trikaya) of a Buddha: body of reality (chos sku; Skt. dharmakaya), body of perfect rapture (longs spyod rdzogs pa 'i sku, Skt. sambhogakaya), and emanation body (sprul pa 'i sku, Skt. nirmanakaya). There are a number of others as well, with similar or overlapping meanings, but this three-part classification seems to be the most common.

41. phyag rgya chen po la rgyu med de/
dad pa dang mos gus phyag rgya chen po 'i rgyu yin/
phyag rgya chen po la rkyen med de/
bla ma dam pa phyag rgya chen po 'i rkyen yin/

from mnyam med rje btsun sgam po pa 'i phyag rgya chen po lam gcig chod, (*The Single Decisive Path, the Mahamudra of the Unequaled and Revered Gampopa*) ff. 1b-2. Gampopa was a master in the two lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, the Kadam and the Kagyu, and is seen as the founder of the established order of the Kagyu, being the first monk. Mahamudra (phyag rgya chen po, "the great seal") is the culminating formless practice in the Kagyu system and is also synonymous with its fruition-recognition of ultimate reality.

42. dbang bskur, Skt. abhisheka: the Tibetan term means to transfer power, especially in the sense of authority to do the practice concerned with the particular empowerment ceremony. The Sanskrit term means anointing or consecration. Most deity practices require that the practitioner first receive a ceremonial empowerment from a qualified master.

43. There are two classifications of the tantric literature in Tibet, either according to the Old Translation School (Nyingma), in which case there are six classes, or the New Translation School (Sarma) (see note

28) with four classes. A thorough discussion in English can be found in Dudjom Rinpoche's *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*.

44. Tulku Thondup Rinpoche, *Buddha Mind: An Anthology of Longchen Rabjam's Writings on Dzogpa Chenpo*, pp. 15-46.

45. These are called the five actual enlightening factors (mngon byang lnga), four vajras (rdo rje bzhi), three rituals (cho ga gsum), and instantaneously complete (skad cig dran rdzogs). Each sequence covers the visualization process in greater or fewer stages, from the initial emptiness up to the full form of the deity.

46. These five are listed somewhat differently in different places, as Kongtrul himself notes. For instance, I have found differing lists in zab mo nang don [f. 41]; bde mchog lha lnga rnam bshad; nor bu 'od zer [f. 40]; and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's *Pure Appearance*, pp. 18-30.

Also see note 108.

47. In Khyentse's *Pure Appearance*, p. 24, the absorption of the cause includes the visualization of the seed syllable, or consciousness aspect, whereas here that visualization seems to come after the absorptions.

48. As all mental activity can be recognized as the pure radiance of awareness, the five basic emotions --ignorance, desire, anger, pride, and jealousy-- are described as being essentially five aspects of pristine wisdom (ye shes). They are the wisdoms of the realm of reality (chos dbyings), of discrimination (so sor rtog pa), mirror-like (me long Ita bu), of sameness (mnyam nyid), and of accomplishment (bya ba grub pa). These are also discussed in terms of five families (rigs nga), which are Buddha, lotus, vajra, jewel, and action. Tantric deities are usually manifestations of one of these energies and are said to belong to that family.

49. blo 'das brjod bral ba; see page 51.

50. mos gus stabs kyis nang nes shar ba la; see page 51.

51. The eight aggregates of consciousness (rnam shes tshogs brgyad) are the five associated with the five senses (dbang po lnga), plus the mental consciousness (sems kyi rnam shes), the afflictive mind (nyon yid), and the "foundation-of-all" consciousness (kun gzhi rnam shes, Skt. Alayavijnana). Kongtrul's explanation in this text is succinct but sufficient.

52. dran pa, (Skt. smṛti) or dran shes, "mindful awareness."

53· mthar thug don la dran pa nyid kyang med; see page 71.

54· Dzogchen (rdzogs pa chen po, Skt. mahasandhi): "the great perfection" is the highest non-conceptual practice in the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism and claims itself to be the culmination of all approaches. It is also called atiyoga, the highest of the six-part Nyingma division of tantra. Exceptional esoteric instructions (man ngag sde) are the third and highest of the divisions of the teachings of dzogchen. The other two are the mind class (sems sde) and the space class (klong sde). See Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, pp.

319-45, and Tulku Thondup Rinpoche, *Buddha Mind*, pp. 47-81.

55· de 'dras rim bgrod lam la 'bad na legs, see page 63, 'read in the woodblock should read bgrod.

59· des na Ita ba nam mkha' bas kyang mtho/

las rgyu 'bras bag phye bas kyang zhib/

attributed to Padmasambhava, quoted in rdzogs pa chen po klong chen snying thig gi sngon 'gro 'i khrid yig kun bzang bla ma 'i zhal lung, by Patrul Rinpoche, f. n2. (Translated as *Kun-zang La-may Zhal-lung* and as *Words of My Perfect Teacher*.)