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# Yoga and Physical Culture in Vajrayāna Buddhism and Dzogchen, with special reference to Tertön Pema Lingpa's 'Secret Key to the Winds and Channels'

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> If the body is not mastered, the mind cannot be mastered.
> If the body is mastered; mind is mastered.
> Majjhima Nikāya Sutra 36

Vajrayāna, the Tantric form of Buddhism prevalent in Bhutan and Tibet, presents itself as offering the swiftest path to spiritual liberation, but the dynamic mind-body practices at the heart of the tradition are rarely revealed even to advanced initiates. As a result, Vajrayāna is better known for publically enacted monastic rituals than for the psychophysical disciplines that distinguish Vajrayāna from earlier forms of Buddhist practice.

This essay introduces the overlooked subject of yoga and physical culture within Vajrayāna Buddhism and Dzogchen, the 'Great Perfection', with reference to an exposition of twenty-three sequential yogic movements revealed by the fifteenth-century Bhutanese *tertön*, or spiritual 'treasure revealer', Orgyen Pema Lingpa (orgyan padma gling pa) (1450–1521) as "keys" for realizing the self-liberated nature of mind and body. In the last decade of the seventeenth-century, nearly two hundred years after its revelation, Pema Lingpa's treatise entitled 'Secret Key to the [Body's] Channels and Winds' (*Rtsa rlung gsang ba'i lde mig*) was illustrated on the walls of the private meditation chamber of Tibet's Sixth Dalai Lama, Rinchen Tsangyang Gyatso (tshang dbyangs rgya mtsho) (1683–1705), Pema Lingpa's direct descendent and lineage

holder. These previously hidden images in the Lukhang Temple in Lhasa illuminate the essence of Tantric Buddhist practices for realizing the full potential of the human mind and body, and bring renewed attention to the spiritual legacy of Bhutan's great treasure revealer Pema Lingpa.[1]

## Embodying Enlightenment

Vajrayāna Buddhist practices of bodily cultivation emerged within the larger context of Indian Tantrism, and especially within the *yoginītantra* class of Tantric Buddhist texts between the eighth and tenth-centuries. The crowning literary development of Indian Buddhism's Vajrayāna, or 'Adamantine Way', the Yoginī, or 'Mother' Tantras share common features with Tantric Śaivism and involve imaginal emulation of ecstatic, multi-limbed Tantric deities that signify the bliss–emptiness (*bde stong ye shes*) at the heart of all existence.[2] Transforming early Buddhism's ascetic disposition into compassionate engagement, Vajrayāna expanded Buddhism's influence and applicability beyond its monastic institutions. As the eighth-century Buddhist *Hevajra* Tantra famously proclaims, "One must rise by that by which one falls … By whatever binds the world, by that it must be freed."[3] Central to this endeavor

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[1] The Sixth Dalai Lama was a direct descendent of Pema Lingpa through his father, the Nyingma master Rigdzin Tashi Tendzin (rig 'dzin bkra shis bstan 'dzin) (1651–97), who hailed from the mountainous regions east of Bhutan and disseminated Pema Lingpa's lineage of non-celibate lay ordination to others of his Nyo clan, the progenitors of Bhutan's nobility and eventual royal family. For a full translation of Pema Lingpa's 'Secret Key to the Winds and Channels', see Baker 2012 and 2017.

[2] The 'Mother' Tantras are contrasted with earlier 'Father' Tantras that invoke more pacific, royally attired Buddhas such as Guhyasamāja (*gsang ba 'dus pa*) associated with 'illusory body' (*sgyu lus*) practices for attaining the light body of a Buddha. Tibetans classified the 'Mother' (*ma rgyud*) and 'Father' (*pha rgyud*) Tantras together as 'Unexcelled Yoga Tantra' (*bla ma med pa'i rgyud,* Skt. *anuttarayogatantra*), sometimes adding a third 'Non-Dual Tantra' (*gnyis med rgyud*) category when both aspects are combined. As a whole, the Anuttarayoga Tantras, or *Yoganiruttaratantra*-s as originally known in Sanskrit, were devoted to transforming sensual pleasure into enlightened activity through techniques focused on dissolving vital winds (*prāṇavāyu*) into the body's central channel (*suṣumnā*). In Tibetan rNying ma, or 'Old School' presentations of the Indian Tantras, the Anuttarayoga Tantras correspond to Mahāyoga, or 'Great Yoga', to which the successive catagories of Anuyoga, 'Unsurpassed Yoga', and Atiyoga, 'Supreme Yoga' (also called Dzogchen, or 'Great Perfection') were added later. For comprehensive accounts of the origins and development of the Hindu and Buddhist tantras and their social and institutional contexts, see Samuel 2008 and Davidson 2002 and 2005. For a clear exposition of the Yoginī Tantras' debt to Śaivite sources, see Mayer 1998 and Sanderson 2009.

[3] See Farrow & Menon 1992: 173. As the *Hevajratantra* further indicates; "the one who knows the nature of poison dispels the poison utilizing the poison itself."

was a revalorization of the body as an essential vehicle, rather than an obstacle, to existential and spiritual freedom.

The eighth-century Buddhist Tantra, the *Guhyasamāja* or 'Secret Assembly' (Tib. *Gsang 'dus rtsa rgyud*) is the first Indic text to use the term *haṭhayoga*. The word appears in the Secret Assembly's eighteenth chapter and is presented as a "forceful" means for inducing noetic visions (*darśana*) as well as for achieving "awakening" (*bodhi*) and "perfection of knowing" (*jñānasiddhi*).[4] The word *haṭha* recurs in the tenth-century *Kālacakra,* or 'Wheel of Time' Tantra as *haṭhena* ("forcefully") and is elaborated upon in Puṇḍarīka's 966 C. E. commentary on the Kālacakra entitled 'Stainless Light' (*Vimalaprabhā*) which defines Haṭha Yoga as a means for concentrating vital energy (*prāṇavāyu*) and seminal essences (*bindu,* Tib. *thig le*) [5] in the body's central channel (*madhyanāḍī,* Tib. *rtsa dbu ma*), thereby inducing unaltering present-moment (*akṣarakṣaṇam*) awareness and engendering the blissful adamantine body of a Buddha within one's own subtle anatomy.

The Kashmiri pandit Somanātha brought the Kālacakra teachings from India to Tibet in 1064 where they influenced the development of Buddhist practice as well as Tibet's emergent medical tradition.[6] According to the contemporary Tibetan doctor Nyida Chenagtsang, Yuthok Yönten Gönpo (gyu thog yon tan mgon po) (1126–1202) drew on the Kālacakra's exposition of the subtle body and tantric physiology in his revision of the 'Four Medical Tantras' (*rGyud bzhi*) and condensed its accounts of psychophysical yogas in the 'Turquoise Heart Essence' (*Gyu thog snying thig*)[7], his guide to spiritual practice for non-ordained Buddhist medical practitioners. Butön Rinchen Drup (bu ston rin chen grub) (1290–1364), the renowned scholar and abbot of Shalu Monastery in central Tibet, further systematized physical exercises deriving from the Kālacakra Tantra into practices with both therapeutic and yogic applications, including "wind meditation" (*rlung gom*) and techniques of "swift walking"

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[4] See Birch 2011: 535.

[5] *Bindu* (Tib. *thig le*) has multiple meanings depending on context. Within tantric practice it customarily refers to the energetic potency of male semen or related hormonal secretions. As the interface between consciousness and matter within the physical body, *thig le* can also be usefully compared with neuropeptides, the amino acid based molecules including endorphins that are distributed throughout the body and associated with subjective states of well-being. Candice Pert (1999) notes that information-bearing neuropeptides are concentrated on lateral sides of the spinal cord paralleling the energetic currents of the *iḍa* and *piṅgala* (Tib. *kyang ma* and *ro ma*). She also suggests that, as the physiological correlate of emotion, "peptide substrate [in the body] may provide the scientific rationale for the powerful healing effects of consciously controlled breathing patterns" (Pert 1999: 187).

[6] Nyida Chenagtsang, personal communication, September 2014.

[7] See Chenagtsang 2013.

(*rkang mgyogs*) that purportedly allowed adepts to cover vast distances on foot by modulating the effects of gravity.[8]

The most direct source of Haṭha Yoga-related practices in Tibetan Buddhism is a corpus of eleventh to twelfth-century texts entitled *Amṛtasiddhi,* or 'Perfection of the Immortal Elixir' (Tib. *bdud rtsi grub pa*) which scholarly opinion currently considers the source text of India's subsequent Haṭha Yoga tradition.[9] Despite the Amṛtasiddhi's explicitly Śaiva orientation, it was disseminated in Tibet from the twelfth until at least the sixteenth-century[10] and was incorporated into the Tibetan canon in 1322 by Butön Rinchen Drup.[11] The Amṛtasiddhi expounds a system of internal yoga focused on uniting the solar "female" energy (*rajas*) in the pelvic cavity with the lunar *bindu,* or seminal "ambrosia" (*amṛta*), in the cranium towards the attainment of a divinized human condition.[12] The Haṭha Yoga techniques of "great seal" (*mahāmudrā*), "great lock" (*mahābandha*), and "great piercing" (*mahāvedha*)

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[8] The "body exercises" called Lujong (lus sbyong) and "vital point exercises" called Nejong (gnas sbyong) that were transmitted by Butön Rinchen Drup reputedly derive from the Kālacakratantra and were classified as "outer" exercises to be used both by Buddhist practitioners and physicians for maintaining personal health (Nyida Chenagtsang, personal communication, September 2014). Nejong, as transmitted today by Nyida Chenagtsang, consists of twenty-four sequential exercises each of which is performed with a held "vase breath" (bum pa can, Skt. kumbhaka) with the intent of balancing the body's internal energies, unblocking obstructions in the channels (rtsa, Skt. nāḍī), and pacifying diseases of mind and body (personal communication, Nyida Chenagtsang, London, September 2014). Tibetan physicians prescribe specific exercises from the series to their patients in modified forms that omit the held "vase breath". Nejong is also undertaken as a preliminary practice to more demanding Trulkhor ('khrul 'khor) exercises that concentrate the flow of psychophysical energy within the body's central channel and lead to vibrant, coalescent states of consciousness and reputed paranormal abilities (siddhi). Popular accounts of "trance walkers" were reported by Lama Anagarika Govinda in The Way of the White Clouds, by Alexandra David-Néel in Mystics and Magicians in Tibet, as well as by Heinrich Harrer, the author of Seven Years in Tibet, in his personal diaries. The practice was reputedly maintained at Samding and Shalu Monasteries in Tibet until the depredations of Chinese occupation in 1959. Based on controlling the body's internal energy flows through specialized breathing techniques (rlung gom) and yogic locks (gag, Skt. bandha), "swift walking" was described by Alexandra David-Néel as follows: "The man did not run. He seemed to lift himself from the ground, proceeding by leaps. It looked as if he had been endowed with the elasticity of a ball and rebounded each time his feet touched the ground." See David-Néel 1937: 186.

[9] See Mallinson 2016 and Mallinson and Singleton 2017.

[10] Schaeffer 2002: 520.

[11] Ibid., p. 518.

[12] Mallinson 2012: 332.

are described for the first time in the Amṛtasiddhi as methods for opening the body's inner energy channels (*nāḍī*), reversing the natural downward flow of vital energy, and severing the three knots (*granthi*-s) along the body's medial axis (*madhyamā*).[13] In consequence, "the life force flows to all places [and] mind, luminescent by nature, is instantly adorned [with the qualities] of fruition … Such a yogin is made of everything, composed of all elements, always dwelling in omniscience … Delighted, he liberates the world."[14]

The Amṛtasiddhi makes no mention of either *cakra*-s or *kuṇḍalinī,* but is clearly based on principles of Tantric yoga whereby elements of a subtle anatomy are controlled through physical, respiratory, and mental discipline leading to a divinized psychophysical state. At the heart of this process are techniques for causing the body's vital essences to infuse its axial core (*madhyamā, suṣumnā,* Tib. *rtsa dbu ma*) [15] so as to induce a self-transcendent awakening of one's indwelling Buddha Nature (*tathāgatagarbha*). In its perceived transformation and optimization of physical, emotional, and mental processes the Amṛtasiddhi embodies the tantric ideal of *jīvanmukti* (*srog thar*), or "living liberation",[16] that

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[13] Ibid., p. 332.

[14] For a detailed introduction to the *Amṛtasiddhi* corpus and the source of this quotation, see Schaeffer 2002. For an account of the Haṭha Yoga techniques central to the *Amṛtasiddhi* see Mallinson 2012: 332. In the *Amṛtasiddhi*, the practitioner imaginatively transforms into the Hindu deity Śiva who is often presented within Vajrayāna as having been converted into a Buddha by the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi. Within the Trika Śaivism of Kashmir, Śiva is synonymous with "pure consciousness" and non-dual awareness.

[15] The body's central channel is invoked as the unconditioned self-transcendent core of human embodiment in both Hindu and Buddhist Tantra. Within non-dual traditions of Śaivism, it is referred to as the "channel of consciousness" (*cittānāḍī*) and is likened to "a line without thickness", symbolizing both infinity and non-duality. Independent of its psychophysical effects, drawing vital "winds" and "essences" into the body's central channel metaphorically describes a process of psychosomatic integration in which *nāḍī* can be seen to represent an open heuristic structure, *prāṇa* primordial motility, and *bindu* innate somatic creativity. The process culminates in a regenerated unitary awareness in which self-organizing somatic intelligence aligns with conscious experience or, more simply, an integration of somatic and cognitive intelligence.

[16] The ideal of jīvanmukti is referred to in a twelfth-century Amṛtasiddhi text compiled by Avadhūtacandra. See Schaeffer 2002: 521 for further explication of this concept. As Schaeffer further points out, Avadhūtacandra's edition of the Amṛtasiddhi promotes an ideal of unrestricted access markedly distinct from earlier and later tantric lineages based on secrecy and exclusivity. A similarly open ethos at the origins of Haṭha Yoga can be discerned in another early Haṭha Yoga work, the thirteenth-century Dattātreyayogaśāstra that advocates its practices irrespective of ethnicity or caste. For more extensive commentary on the Dattātreyayogaśāstra and Amṛtasiddhi in the context of the historical roots of Haṭha Yoga, see Mallinson 2016. Other examples in early Vajrayāna of yogic exercises being presented openly as preliminaries to meditation

lies at the heart of the Vajrayāna Buddhist understanding of 'yoga', a word translated into the Tibetan language as Neljor (*rnal 'byor*), or "union with the natural [unaltering] state".

**Magical Gymnastics**

The Amṛtasiddhi, or 'Perfection of the Immortal Elixir', makes the first known reference to the well-known Haṭha Yoga techniques of mahāmudrā, mahābandha, and mahāvedha.[17] In his autobiography, the Tibetan Shangpa Kagyu master Nyenton Chökyi Sherap (gnyan ston chos kyi shes rab) (1175–1255) elaborates on these foundational yogic practices from the Amṛtasiddhi after reputedly learning them from an Indian teacher who attributed them to a master named Eṇadeva.[18] Described as a 'Magical Wheel of [yogic movements for realizing] Immortality' (*'chi med kyi 'khrul 'khor*), the physical practices of the Amṛtasiddhi were further codified by Nyenton Chökyi Sherap's successor, Sangye Tönpa Tsondrü Senge (sangs rgyas ston pa brtson 'grus seng ge) (1213–1285), and were subsequently transmitted within Tibet's Shangpa Kagyu suborder.[19]

Transformative exercises for amplifying innate somatic processes and expanding vitality and awareness within the body's medial core (*suṣumnā,* Tib. *rtsa dbu ma*) are referred to in Tibetan as Tsalung Trulkhor (*rtsa rlung 'khrul 'khor*), literally "magical wheel of channels and winds", with the Tibetan root word *'khor* infering "wheel" (*'khor lo*) or "cyclical movement" and *'khrul* implying "magical", in the sense that all phenomena, from a Buddhist perspective, lack true existence while simultaneously "magically" appearing. Trulkhor's breath-synchronized movements are also commonly referred to as Yantra Yoga (*'khrul 'khor gyi rnal 'byor*), with the composite *rtsa rlung 'khrul 'khor* translating the Sanskrit *nāḍīvāyuyantra*, or 'instrument of channels and winds', and implying a transformative device or technology, in this case, for reconfiguring human experience.[20]

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include Drakpa Gyeltsen's (rags pa rgyal mtshan) twelfth-century 'Miraculous Channel Wheel of the Thirty-Two Auspicious Actions'. Drakpa Gyeltsen specifically indicates in his colophon that the movements remove obstacles to spiritual practice and "are suitable for beginners as well as advanced students" (Davidson 2005: 358).

[17] Mallinson 2016: 6.

[18] Schaeffer 2002: 520.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Following Lokesh Chandra, another Sanskritized rendering of Trulkhor is vāyvadhisāra, derived from the Sanskrit root adhi-sṛ "to move, go, run, flow towards something" (personal communication Karin Preisendanz, January 2017) and attested in Chagme 1998: 69. Trulkhor is alternatively spelled 'phrul 'khor, which can be interpreted as "magical wheel", with reference to the fact that the yogic exercises are to

Although the root texts of eighth-century Yoginī Tantras such as the Hevajra and the Cakrasaṃvara Tantra describe internal yogic practices connected to *nāḍī, prāṇa,* and *bindu* (Tib. *rtsa, rlung, thig le*), accounts of associated physical exercises and yogic "seals" (*mudrā*) seem only to have appeared in later commentaries and redactions rather than in the original root Tantras. However, the Hevajra Tantra makes repeated reference to the importance of transformational dance for embodying the qualities of the deity and purifying a specified thirty-two subtle energy channels within the body. As the Hevajra Tantra states; "When joy arises if the yogin dances for the sake of liberation, then let him dance the vajra postures [of Hevajra] with fullest attention … The yogin must always sing and dance".[21] Such statements suggest that the origins of Trulkhor, as a means of embodying the qualities of Vajrayāna deities and supporting internal psychophysical processes, may lie not only in early Haṭha Yoga-like techniques, but also in traditions of Tantric dance, such as the yogic *tāndava* dance form transmitted within Kashmiri Śaivism and the Newar Buddhist tradition of *caryānṛtya.*[22]

The sixteenth-century Tibetan scholar–adept Tāranātha (1575–1634) described Trulkhor as "esoteric instructions for dissolving the energy-mind into the central channel and for releasing knots in the channels, primarily using one's own body as the method".[23] In his 'Eighteen Physical Trainings' (*Lus sbyong bco brgyad pa*), Tāranātha consolidated yogic exercises attributed to the

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be undertaken while visualizing oneself in the non-ordinary form of a "hollow", i. e., insubstantial, Tantric deity which, though appearing, is not held to be intrinsically real and can thus be considered as appearing "magically". For further elaboration of the etymology of 'phrul 'khor and 'khrul 'khor see Chaoul 2007: 286.

[21] Farrow & Menon 1992: 64 – 65. The Hevajra Tantra further states that "the dance is performed assuming the postures of the divine Heruka [Hevajra], emanating them with an impassioned mind within a state of uninterrupted attention" (ibid.: 209) and that the movements "reveal the adamantine nature of the Buddhas, Yoginīs, and Mother Goddesses." (ibid.: 230). The Hevajra Tantra also states that "The protection of the assembly and oneself is by means of such song and dance" (ibid.: 230).

[22] Although no firm dates can be established for when they first became part of Newar tradition, the ritual dance movements of *caryānṛtya* associated with the Cakrasaṃvara Tantra can be considered a form of Trulkhor in their intended purpose of embodying the qualities of Vajrayāna deities. As Cakrasaṃvara's consort is the tantric meditational deity Vajravārāhī, several movements of caryānṛtya involve direct emulations of her visualized form, including the raising to one's lips of an imagined skull cup brimming with ambrosial nectar. In all forms of caryānṛtya consecrated dancers embody the qualities of specific Vajrayāna deities with the express intention of benefitting all living beings. A similar conception is central to the Tibetan ritual dances known as Cham (*'cham*) that, prior to the thirteenth century, were performed only within an assembly of consecrated initiates.

[23] Quoted in Harding 2010: 184.

eleventh-century Kashmiri female *mahāsiddhā* Niguma that had been disseminated in Tibet through the Shangpa Kagyu lineage originating with Khyungpo Naljor (khyung po rnal 'byor) (c. 1050–1140).[24] A separate transmission of external yogic exercises in Tibet is said to have originated with Niguma's consort, Nāropadā who, in turn, ostensibly received them from his Bengali teacher Tilopadā (988–1069). The dating of these practices, however, is problematic.

The 'Oral Instruction on the Six Doctrines' (*Ṣaḍdharmopadeśa,* Tib. *Chos drug gi man ngag*) ascribed to Tilopa is non-extant in Sanskrit, but said to have been translated into Tibetan by Nāropa and his Tibetan disciple Marpa Chökyi Lodrö (mar pa chos kyi blo gros) (1012–1097) in the eleventh century. But the 'Oral Instruction on the Six Doctrines' only became part of the Kagyu transmission from the fifteenth century onward, implying a possible later origin. Similarly, 'Vajra Verses of Oral Transmission' (*Karṇatantravajrapāda,* Tib. *sNyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang*), with a colophon attributing the text to Nāropa, is also non-extant in Sanskrit, but widely held to have been translated into Tibetan by Marpa Chökyi Lodrö.[25] However, it only appears as a transmitted text from the time of Rechungpa (ras chung pa) (1083/4 - 1161), a century later.[26] The verses make passing reference to six "root" Trulkhor with thirty-nine "branches", suggesting that, as with the 'Oral Instruction on the Six Doctrines' attributed to Tilopa, the transmission of Trulkhor within the Kagyu lineage was not primarily based on texts, but on oral transmission and physical demonstrations to select initiates.

The earliest datable descriptions of external yogic practices in Tibetan Buddhism appears to be those of Phagmo Drupa Dorje Gyalpo (phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po) (1110–1170), the twefth-century Kagyu and Sakya master whose 'The Path of Fruition's Thirty-two Auspicious Actions' (*Lam 'bras kyi 'phrin las sum bcu so gnyis*) used Sanskrit and pseudo-Sanskrit names to describe sequential yogic movements.[27] Phagmo Drupa also wrote 'The Path of Fruition's Five-Branch Yoga' (*Lam 'bras kyi yan lag lnga sbyong*), which consists

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[24] Harding 2010: 184. Harding's book includes translations of Niguma's foundational yogic exercises, which are ascribed with both medical and emancipatory effects.

[25] Kragh 2006: 135. See also dnz.tsadra.org for details concerning 'Cakrasamvara's Oral Transmission of Miraculous Yogic Movements for Fierce Heat and the Path of Skillful Means' (bDe mchog snyan brgyud kyi gtum mo dang thabs lam gyi 'khrul 'khor) attributed to Marpa Chökyi Lodrö (mar pa chos kyi blo gros).

[26] Ibid: 138. See also the anonymously authored gtum mo'i 'khrul 'khor bco brgyad pa in the gdams ngag rin po che'i mdzod, Volume 007 (ja), 537–541. Folios 19a4 to 21a2. New Delhi: Shechen Publications, 1999, listed at dnz.tsadra.org and connected with the oral transmission of Rechungpa (ras chung snyan brgyud).

[27] Wang-Toutain 2009: 29.

of basic instructions for loosening the neck, head, hands and legs, as well as a manual entitled 'Supplementary Verses on the Path of Method' (*Thabs lam tshigs bcad ma'i lhan thabs*) which describes six physical exercises[28] for removing obstacles and preparing the body for advanced internal yogas based on drawing psychosomatic "winds" into the body's central channel.

All traditions of Tsalung Trulkhor extol the remedial healing benefits of the physical disciplines while emphasizing their more profound transformative effects on the body and mind, including the reputed development of supranormal powers (*siddhi*).[29] Trulkhor is further distinguished from the medically-oriented exercises of Lujong (*lus sbyong*) and Nejong (*gnas sbyong*)[30] that Butön Rinchen Drup derived from the Kālacakra Tantra in its emphasis on sequentially performed movements with the breath retained "in a vase" below the navel (*bum pa can,* Skt. *kumbhaka*) while visualizing oneself in the form of one or another non-material Tantric deity, in accordance with the practice's line of transmission. As a method of self-consecration combining the development phase (*utpattikrama,* Tib. *skye rim*) and completion phase (*saṃpannakrama,* Tib. *rdzogs rim*) of Vajrayāna practice, Trulkhor is traditionally undertaken in strict secrecy with prescribed garments that symbolize interconnected psychophysical energies.[31] Vigorous and, at times, acrobatic movements combined with expanded respiration and associated visualizations direct neurobiological energies into the body's central channel (*suṣumnā,* Tib. *rtsa dbu ma*), quelling obscuring mental activity and arousing the blissful "fierce heat" of Tummo (*gtum mo*; Skt. *caṇḍālī*) that facilitates

[28] Wang-Toutain 2009: 29.

[29] The attainment of supernal powers associated with yogic cultivation is rarely an admitted or admired goal within Vajrayāna Buddhism, although provisionally useful worldly siddhi-s such as clairvoyance, invisibility, and control of natural phenomena are claimed to this day to arise spontaneously as a result of dedicated practice. Vajrayāna's more transcendent goal, however, remains the mahāsiddhi of transforming egotism, greed, and aggression into empathic wisdom and unconditional compassion (thugs rje chen po, Skt. mahākaruṇā). Attaining this awakened disposition in the most expedient manner possible is viewed as the essential intent of Śākyamuni Buddha's Eightfold Path to Nirvāṇa. Dynamic, physically-based yogic practices thus infuse the expansive "path of method" (thabs lam) central to Vajrayāna Buddhism.

[30] See n. 8. Trulkhor is further distinguished from Lujong in its tripartite purpose of clearing the body's subtle energy system, drawing seminal essence (bindu, Tib. thig le) into the central channel, and distributing it throughout the psychophysical organism to prepare it for internal Tantric practices such as Fierce Heat (caṇḍālī, Tib. gtum mo).

[31] Practitioners of Tsalung Trulkhor typically wear short pleated kilts called ang rak, the colors of which symbolize the elemental energies of space, air, fire, and water.

diverse possibilities during recurring cycles of wakefulness, sleep, sexual activity, and dream.[32]

Within the Nyingma (*rNying ma*) tradition, the earliest transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Tibet, the first textual evidence of Tsalung Trulkhor practices appears in the 'Turquoise Heart Essence' (*g'Yu thog snying thig*), a "subtle pure vision" (*zab mo dag snang*) compiled by Sumtön Yeshe Zung (sum ston ye shes gzungs) beginning in 1157 based on original writings and teachings of Yuthok Yönten Gönpo (g'yu thog yon tan mgon po) (1126–1202), the Tibetan physician and yogic adept credited with the compilation of the earlier 'Four Medical Tantras' (*rGyud bzhi*) which consolidate Tibetan medicine's approach to the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of disease. The Yuthok Nyingthik, or 'Turquoise Heart Essence' was reputedly compiled after Yuthok's second of five trips to India where he presumably received direct instructions from Indian tantric masters. The text outlines the process of spiritual development to be undertaken by non-monastic practitioners, condensing the core elements of Vajrayāna Buddhism into forty root texts, the twentieth of which describes a sequence of eighteen Trulkhor exercises for refining the body's subtle energy channels in preparation for practices of Fierce Heat (*gtum mo,* Skt. *caṇḍālī*) and the Yoga of Sexual Union (*sbyor ba, las kyi phyag rgya,* Skt. *karmamudrā*). As expounded in the Yuthok Nyingthik, the latter practices support the realization of Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen and the ultimate attainment of a dematerialized body of rainbow light (*'ja' lus*). The Yuthok Nyingthik's concise treatise on Trulkhor entitled 'The Root-Text of the Miraculous Movements for Supreme Mastery which Clear the Darkness of Suffering' is supplemented with a longer commentary written by Nyi Da Dragpa (nyi zla grags pa) entitled 'A Concise Synposis of the Supreme Accomplishment of the Profound Path of the Miraculous Wheel of Yogic Movements that Clear the Darkness of Suffering' (*bLa sgrub sdug bsngal mun sel gyi zab lam 'khrul 'khor zhin bris ni*) and elucidates the therapeutic and yogic applications of the Turquoise Heart Essence's Trulkhor teachings.[33] The first two of the eighteen exercises are said to clear obscuring karmic imprints from the subtle anatomy of the body, while the following five assist in generating the transformative heat of Tummo. The subsequent eleven exercises directly prepare the body for the Yoga of Sexual Union, held by non-monastic traditions within both Nyingma and Kagyu to be

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[32] The unification of the body's energetic poles through the merging of agni, as "divine fire", and soma, as "cosmic nectar", through the medium of psychophysiological "winds" (vāyu) in a subjectively experienced "central channel" is arguably the common goal and praxis of yoga in both Vajrayāna Buddhism and Tantric Śaivism, an ideal prefigured in ancient Vedic fire rituals (agnihotra) and embodied in Vajrayāna rites that customarily begin with the ritual invocation of fire, wind, and water through the resonant seed syllables (bīja) ram, yam, kham.

[33] See Chenagtsang 2013 and Naldjorpa 2014 for further details on the transmission and content of the Turquoise Heart Essence.

the most efficacious means for achieving the supreme realization of Dzogchen or Mahāmudrā, as prefigured in early Vajrayāna works such as the Guhyasamāja Tantra.[34] The Turquoise Heart Essence's twelfth century exposition of an eighteen-set Trulkhor is roughly contemporary with Phagmo Drupa's description of sets of six and thirty-two yogic exercises connected with the Path of Fruition. Both Yuthok's and Phagmo Drupa's works slightly predate Tibetan accounts of yogic exercises associated with The Perfection of the Immortal Elixir (Amṛtasiddhi) and thus, taken together, can provisionally be considered the earliest datable evidence of Haṭha Yoga-like practices within Tibetan Buddhism.[35]

Although Indian Yoganiruttara, or Yoginī Tantras such as the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara date to the eighth century or earlier, these systems only rose to prominence in Tibet during the second wave of Buddhist transmission from the late tenth century onward. As with the Kālacakra Tantra that was introduced in Tibet in 1064, the root texts of the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara do not describe sequenced yogic exercises although, as noted above, the Hevajra Tantra does advocate transformational dance movements.[36] The Hevajra Tantra was translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan from 1041 until 1046 by Drokmi Sakya Yeshe ('brog mi shakya ye shes) (993–1072) in collaboration with the Indian master Gayādhara who is also said to have introduced the associated

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[34] In its later monastic contexts in Tibet, the tantric axiom "without Karmamudrā [the yoga of sexual union] there is no Mahāmudrā [supreme attainment]" – attributed varyingly to both Saraha and Tilopa – was interpreted symbolically and celibate monks and nuns practiced instead with visualized "wisdom consorts" called ye shes kyi phyag rgya, (Skt. jñānamudrā) in order to generate "four joys" (dga'ba bzhi, Skt. caturānanda) of coalescent emptiness and bliss. The Four Joys are partly tantric reformulations of the Four Jhānas of Theravāda Buddhism which are held to lead to a "state of perfect equanimity and awareness" (upekṣā sati pārisuddhi) without reliance on an actual or imagined consort.

[35] This does not take into account the possible earlier dates of Bön Trulkhor. Furthermore, Robert Mayer has pointed out (personal communication, November 2014) that no mention can be found of Tsalung Trulkhor practices in the Nyingma and proto-Nyingma texts from the Dunhuang caves that were sealed in the early eleventh century. He notes that the only complete tantric scriptural texts to survive at Dunhuang are the thabs kyi zhags pa padma 'phreng ('The Noble Lotus Garland of Methods') and the Guhyasamāja Tantra and that only passing reference is made to other important Nyingma Tantras such as the 'Secret Nucleus' (Guhyagarbhatantra, Tib. gSang ba snying po) and the Śaivite derived eighth to ninth century 'Supreme Blissful Union with All Buddhas through the Net of the Sky Dancers' (Sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍākinījālasaṃvara, Tib. Dpal sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba mkha' 'gro ma sgyu ma bde ba'i mchog ces bya ba'i rgyud bla ma). Sexual union practices are described in these pre-eleventh century works, but not in the context of nāḍī, prāṇa and bindu (Tib. rtsa, rlung, thig le) or Tsalung Trulkhor. See Mayer & Cantwell 2012: 84ff.

[36] See n. 24 above.

Lamdre (*lam 'bras*), or 'Path of Fruition' cycle of teachings connected with the ninth-century *mahāsiddha* Virūpa. Although the Hevajra root Tantra does not describe external yogic exercises, the Lamdre teachings associated with Virūpa do.[37] Phagmo Drupa Dorje Gyalpo's early works on Lamdre Trulkhor were elaborated later in the twelfth century by Drakpa Gyaltsen (grags pa rgyal mtshan) (1147–1216) as the 'Miraculous Channel Wheel of Thirty-two Auspicious Actions' (*'Phrin las sum cu rtsa gnyis kyi 'khrul 'khor*), and he included them in his extensive 'Yellow Book' (*Pod ser*) as the last of four texts for removing obstacles (*gegs sel*) on the Path of Fruition.[38] Drakpa Gyaltsen described the medical benefits of the various exercises as well as their supporting function within the completion phase (*saṃpannakrama,* Tib. *rdzogs rim*) of the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara Tantras.[39] Like Phagmo Drupa before him, he assigned Sanskrit-derived names to the various yogic movements[40] (See Plate 1 for an example) and emphasized their importance in cultivating the yogic power of Fierce Heat (*gtum mo*) and other completion phase

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[37] See Wang-Toutain 2009: 28. There is no mention of Trulkhor practice in the Hevajra root tantra, only a name list of thirty-two energy channels (nāḍī) (see Farrow & Menon 1992: 13). The occurence of Trulkhor within the Hevajra Lamdre (lam 'bras) thus seems to be a later development, either attributable to Virūpa, as Sakya tradition maintains, or possibly influenced by the propagation of the Kālacakra Tantra during roughly the same time period. However, the Lamdre cycle was introduced in Tibet twenty-three years before Somanātha brought the Kālacakra teachings in 1064, thus making Lamdre one of the most fertile areas for further research in regard to the development of physical yoga within Vajrayāna and Tibet. For further information on the cycles of Trulkhor within Lamdre, see the lam 'bras slob bshad collection edited by Jamyang Loter Wangpo ('jam dbyangs blo gter dbang po) (1847 – c. 1914) and listed in the Lam 'bras catalogue of Lama Choedak Yuthok (available at http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/tib/sakya-la.htm. The Trulkhor texts associated with Lamdre are also catalogued at the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC) as item W23649, Volume 20, pp. 205–267. The text, in English translation, is given as 'The Profound Stages of the Path of Enlightenment of Vein, Channels, Yantra and Blazing and Blissful Heat of Caṇḍālī Yoga' (rtsa rlung 'khrul 'khor zab lam byang chub sgrub pa'i rim pa bklags chog ma dang gtum mo'i bde drod rab 'bar ma gnyis).

[38] See Stearns 2001: 26–34. The sequence of thirty-two Trulkhor exercises in Lamdre is significant in its reference to the thirty-two subtle energy pathways listed in the Hevajra root-tantra as well as to the thirty-two nāḍī that reputedly radiate from the eight petals of the heart cakra.

[39] Wang-Toutain 2009: 29. The Tibetan title of Drakpa Gyaltsen's work is given as Kyai rdo rje'i rnal 'byor las rtsa rlung.

[40] See Stearns 2001: 31, Wang-Toutain 2009: 29. The names of Drakpa Gyeltsen's Trulkhor movements use, at times, semi-corrupted Sanskrit words to refer to animals such as lion (rendered as singala instead of siṃha), goose (haṃsa), peacock (mayūra), and tortoise (kūrma), but also to auspicious objects such as vajras, wheels, and immortality vases (kumbha), as well as to mahāsiddha-s such as Jālandhara and Caurāṅgī, who were also prominent Nāth adepts (Wang-Toutain 2009: 33).

practices. He also advocated practicing the set of thirty-two exercises once in a forward direction, once in reverse, and once in random order to make a prescribed set of ninety-six movements.[41] As Drakpa Gyaltsen assures his audience at the end of his Yellow Book: "If one trains oneself [in the yogic exercises] as much as one can, one will achieve Buddhahood."[42]

*Plate 1: "Position of the Peacock" (Skt. mayūrāsana) as shown in a Qing Dynasty manuscript from the Imperial Treasury illustrating number twenty-eight of a sequence of thirty-two 'khrul 'khor exercises from the Hevajra Lamdre as presented by Drakpa Gyaltsen. Photograph courtesy of Library of the Palace Museum, Beijing, China.*
(Originally published in *Wang-Toutain 2009).*

Phagmo Drupa's initial elaboration of yogic exercises also influenced Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa (tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa) (1357–1419), the founding figure of the reformed Gelug order of Tibetan Buddhism. In his 'Book of Three Certainties: A Treatise on the Stages of Training in the Profound Path of Nāropa's Six Yogas' (*Zab lam nāro'i chos drug gi sgo nas 'khrid pai rim pa yid chos gsum ldan zhes ba*) and in 'A Brief Treatise for Practicing the Stages of Meditation in Nāropa's Six Yogas, compiled from the teachings of Jey Rinpoche by Sema Chenpo Kunzangpa' (*Nā ro'i chos drug gi dmigs rim lag tu len tshul bsdus pa rje'i gsungs bzhin sems dpa' chen po kun dzang pas bkod pa*), Tsongkhapa describes in detail six preliminary physical exercises based on

[41] Wang-Toutain 2009: 32.

[42] Quoted in Wang-Toutain 2009: 32. Drakpa Gyaltsen further claims that practicing the thirty-two exercises will result in acquiring the thirty-two major body characteristics (lakṣaṇa) of a Buddha (Wang-Toutain 2009: 46).

Phagmo Drupa's twelfth-century accounts.[43] Jey Sherab Gyatso (rje shes rab rgya mtsho) (1803–1875), in his commentary to the 'Book of Three Certainties', remarks that even though there are an impressive variety of exercises, "there seems to be no great advantage in doing more than the six recommended by Phagmo Drupa [as taught by Tsongkhapa] for accomplishing the inner heat [*gtum mo*] yogas."[44] Further indicating Phagmo Drupa's enduring influence, Muchen Konchok Gyaltsen (mus chen dkon mchog rgyal mtshan) (1388–1471) included a chapter entitled 'Thirty-two Auspicious Yogic Movements' (*'Nal 'byor gyi phrin las sum cu rtsa gnyis*) in his 'Little Red Volume' (*Pu sti dmar chung*), based on a prior book of oral instructions (*zhal shes*) by Lama Dampa Sönam Gyaltsen Pelsangpo (bla ma dam pa bsod nams rgyal mts'an), (1312–1375) that is almost identical to Phagmo Drupa's 'The Path of Fruition's Thirty Two Auspicious Actions' (*Lam 'bras kyi 'phrin las sum bcu so gnyis*).[45]

Over subsequent centuries Tsalung Trulkhor continued to evolve within all schools of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as within Bön. Its most celebrated exemplar, however, remains the mountain-dwelling yogi poet Jetsun Milarepa (rje btsun mi la ras pa) (1052 – c. 1135) who reputedly reached enlightenment through his committed practice of Fierce Heat (*gtum mo,* Skt. *caṇḍālī*) in conjunction with Trulkhor exercises to keep his energy channels open and supple.[46] (See Plate 2) Although not named as such, the physiological "seals"

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[43] See Mullin 1997: 58–60, 107–109. As is customary with Trulkhor, each movement is performed while visualizing oneself as a luminously transparent Tantric deity. The first exercise, "filling the body like a vase", consists of expanding the breath in the lower abdomen with a held "vase" breath. The second exercise, "circling like a wheel", involves churning the solar plexus while the third exercise, "hooking like a hook", involves stretching the arms and snapping the elbows against the rib cage to drive the lateral "winds" into the central channel. The fourth exercise, "the mudrā of vajra binding", draws vital energy down through the crown of the head while the fifth, "heaving like a dog", involves kneeling on the ground with the hands extended in front and the spine horizontal and forcibly expelling the air from the lungs. In the final exercise, the practitioner shakes the head and body, flexes the joints, pulls on the fingers to release stagnant "winds", and rubs the hands together. Textual analysis suggests that these six "proto-yantras" were a later addition to the Six Yogas of Nāropa practice and not originally taught by Tilopa, Nāropa, or even Marpa, but this does not take into account the possibility of a well-developed oral tradition outside of written texts.

[44] Quoted in Mullin 1997: 58. Jey Sherab Gyatso further notes that "when stability in these practices is achieved, one will experience a sense of subtle joy that pervades the body" (see Mullin 1997: 59).

[45] See Wang-Toutain 2009: 29.

[46] Although there is no direct evidence of the specific yogic exercises that Milarepa practiced in conjunction with his practice of Fierce Heat, the Kagyu, or "lineage of oral transmission", for which he was the seminal figure, continues to transmit a set of six exercises to release blockages in the nāḍī-s and improve the flow of prāṇa during the practice of Tummo (gtum mo). These yogic exercises are also practiced in support of

and associated breathing methods used in the cultivation of Fierce Heat are an elaborated practice of the Haṭha Yoga method of *mahābandha* in which the *mūladharabandha*, or "root lock" at the perineal floor, and *uḍḍiyānabandha* in the abdominal cavity move the "illuminating fire" upward through the body's axial channel while the application of *jālandharabandha* at the throat facilitates the downward flow of "nectar" from the cranium.[47] Fierce Heat in turn, is the foundation of six psychophysical yogas (*rnal 'byor drug*) undertaken during recurring phases of waking, sleeping, dreaming, and sexual activity as well as in preparation for death.[48] These "Six Yogas of Nāropa" (*na ro'i chos drug*)

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the subsequent Six Doctrines of Nāropa (Nā ro'i chos drug) in order to prevent obstructions in the channels during yogas of sexual union and more subtle practices undertaken during states of dreaming, sleeping, and dying.

[47] As noted by Wang-Toutain (2009: 35), Drakpa Gyaltsen refers to bandha-s and mudrā-s in the context of his twelfth-century 'Thirty-two Actions of the Miraculous Wheel of Channels' ('Phrin las sum bcu rtsa gnyis 'khrul 'khor).

[48] Distinct from the roughly contemporary Six-Fold Vajra Yoga of the Kālacakra Tantra and analogous systems within Hevajra Lamdre, the Six Doctrines of Nāropa (nā ro'i chos drug) originate with the Bengali mahāsiddha Tilopadā (988–1069) and distill the core Completion Phase (saṃpannakrama, Tib. rdzogs rim) practices of India's principal Buddhist Tantras into an algorithm for awakening dormant capacities of mind and body and cultivating lucid awareness within normally autonomic states of consciousness. Tilopa's original introductory text on these six interconnected practices refers to them as six dharma-s (ṣaḍdharmopadeśa, Tib. chos drug gi man ngag), but they are commonly referred to as a system of "yoga" (rnal 'byor) for unifying consciousness with the total expanse of reality (dharmadhātu, Tib. chos kyi dbyings) during states of waking, dreaming, sleeping, sexual union, and death. Tilopa presents the Six Yogas as the pith essence of the most prominent Buddhist Tantras, leading to an expanded experience of reality culminating in the liberating realization of mahāmudrā, interpreted to derive etymologically from rā, "to bestow", and mud, meaning "bliss". Although variant presentations exist, the series commonly begins with Illusory Body Yoga (sgyu lus, Skt. māyākāya) through which the practitioner recognizes his/her body and mind as transmutable constructions of consciousness. Tilopa describes this yoga as deriving from the Guhyasamāja Tantra. The second yoga, the Yoga of Fierce Heat (gtum mo, Skt. caṇḍālī), on which all of the subsequent yogas are based, correlates with Śaivite practices for arousing the primordial energy of kuṇḍalinī and first appears, in Buddhist tradition, in the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara Tantras. The auxiliary Yoga of Sexual Union (las kyi phyag rgya, Skt. karmamudrā) in which the practitioner engages sexually with a partner, either real or visualized, is said to derive from the Guhyasamāja Tantra while the subsequent Yoga of Radiant Light ('od gsal, Skt. prabhāsvara) is based on a synthesis of the Guhyasamāja and Cakrasaṃvara Tantras. The Yoga of Dream (rmi lam, Skt. svapnadarśana) was further said by Tilopa to derive from the Mahāmāyā Tantra while the Yoga of Liminality (bar do, Skt. antarābhava) that prepares the practitioner for a posited postmortem experience develops out of the Guhyasamāja Tantra. The Yoga of Transference ('pho ba, Skt. saṃkrānti), in which consciousness is projected beyond the bar do at the time of death into one or another Buddhafield, is said to originate both from the Guhyasamāja Tantra as well as from the Catuṣpīṭha Tantra. A similar, but more

subsequently became the basis of Tibet's Kagyu (*bKa' rgyud*), or "orally transmitted lineage". [49] Trulkhor practice within the Kagyu School subsequently diversified from the sets of six and thirty-two yogic exercises advocated by Phagmo Drupa to over one hundred and eight within the Drigung Kagyu (*'bri gung bka' brgyud*) suborder.[50] These longer and more complex systems were also periodically condensed, emphasizing five core movements combined with retained "vase" breaths (*kumbhaka,* Tib. *bum pa chen*), visualization, and internal neuro-muscular "seals" (*mudrā*-s, Tib. *gag*)

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condensed exposition of the Six Yogas attributed to Nāropa's consort is entitled the Six Yogas of Niguma (Ni gu chos drug) and, after its transmission to the Indian yogini Sukhasiddhi and her Tibetan disciple Khyungpo Naljor (khyung po rnal 'byor) became the basis of the Shangpa Kagyu (shangs pa bka' brgyud) school of Tibetan Buddhism. Within the Nyingma tradition, the Six Yogas are referred to as the "Six Yogas of the Completion Phase" (rdzogs rim chos drug) and are considered as revealed teachings of Padmasambhava. These and other versions of the Six Yoga doctrine, such as those found in the Kālacakra and Yuthok Nyingthik, customarily begin with cycles of physical exercises for amplifying and directing the flow of subtle energy into the body's central channel to enhance the practice of more internal yogas.

[49] The Shangpa Kagyu lineage originating with Kyungpo Naljor is based on an analogous system of Six Yogas associated with Nāropa's consort Niguma. The Six Yoga doctrine was also transmitted separately by Marpa Chökyi Lodrö in a condensed form known as "mixing and transference" ('se 'pho) in connection with the Hevajra Tantra. Marpa transmitted these practices to Ngok Chokdor and they subsequently became known as the Ngok Transmission, or Mar rngog bka' brgyud. According to Marpa scholar Cécile Ducher the 'se 'pho texts make no specific mention of Trulkhor although several other texts in Marpa's collected works (gsung 'bum) do. See Ducher 2014. As Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé ('jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas) (1813-1899) points out, the "mixing and transference" instructions are based on a core verse attributed to Nāropa: "Mixing refers to awakening through meditation and transference to awakening without meditation." Kongtrul further explicates that inner heat and illusory body practices are used for awakening through meditation while transference of consciousness beyond the body ('pho ba) and sexual union with a consort (las kyi phyag rgya, Skt. karmamudrā) are used for awakening without meditation. See Harding 2007: 150.

[50] Trulkhor practice in Drigung Kagyu is based primarily on 'Chakrasamvara's Oral Transmission of the Miraculous Wheel of Channels and Winds' (bDe mchog snyan rgyud kyi rtsa rlung 'khrul 'khor) and texts such as 'The All-Illuminating Mirror: Oral Instructions on the Miraculous Wheel of Yogic Movements for Training the Body to Progress in the Practice of Fierce Heat from among the Six Yogas of Nāropa' (Nā ro'i chos drug las gtum mo'i bogs 'don lus sbyong 'phrul 'khor gyi zhal khrid kun gsal me long) (oral communication, Choeze Rinpoche, Lhasa, Tibet, July 2010). Drigung Kagyu also includes a cycle of thirty-seven Trulkhor revealed by the Second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi (1204/6–1283) (karma pakshi'i so bdun) (oral communication, Ani Rigsang, Terdrom, Tibet, August 2014). The Drigung Kagyu order was founded by Jikten Gonpo Rinchen Pel ('jig rten mgon po rin chen dpal) (1143–1217), Phagmo Drupa's principal disciple.

for activating and harmonizing the body's five elemental winds (*rtsa ba rlung lnga*).[51]

*Plate 2: As revealed by this contemporary practitioner from Bhutan – his identity concealed behind a mask representing Milarepa – the practice of Trulkhor, or 'magical gymnastics', includes forceful 'drops' ('beb) that concentrate vital essence and awareness in the body's central channel (susumnā) to facilitate the practice of 'fierce heat' (gtum mo). Photo courtesy of Dasho Karma Ura.*

## Nyingthik: Heart Essence of Tibetan Yoga

Tsalung Trulkhor and versions of the six associated yogas (*sbyor drug*) developed within all schools of Tibetan Buddhism as advanced Completion Phase (*rdzogs rim,* Skt. *saṃpannakrama*) practices in both monastic settings and among non-celibate male and female yogins (*sngags pa*). Within Tibet's Nyingma tradition, Tsalung Trulkhor and the "Six Yogas of the Completion Phase" (*rdzogs rim chos drug*) closely paralleled analogous practices in the

[51] Oral communication, Tshewang Sitar Rinpoche, Bumthang, Bhutan, May 2013. Each of the body's five elemental winds (rtsa ba rlung lnga) supports a specific function. The "life-supporting wind" (srog 'dzin rlung) located in the brain regulates swallowing, inhalation, and mental attention. The "upward-moving wind" (gyen rgyu rlung) in the chest and thorax regulates somatic energy, speech, memory, and related functions. The "all-pervading wind" (khyab byed rlung) in the heart controls all motor activities of the body. The "fire-accompanying wind" (me mnyam gnas rlung) in the stomach and abdomen area regulates digestion and metabolism. The "downward-clearing wind" (thur sel rlung) located in the rectum, bowels, and perineal region regulates excretion, urine, semen, menstrual blood, and uterine contractions during labour. For further elaboration of the Five Winds, see also Wangyal 2002: 76–110.

Tantras and commentaries of the "new" (*gsar ma*) translation schools, but were expediently presented as revealed "treasure texts" (*gter ma*) attributed to Nyingma's iconic eighth-century patron saint Padmasambhava. The imaginal anatomy of winds and channels and the practices based on them were presented differently, however, in light of the Nyingma's emphasis on the Dzogchen, or Atiyoga view of "self-liberation" (*rang grol*), which is held to supersede all effort-based Development and Completion Phase approaches. In Nyingma's division of the highest Vajrayāna teachings into Mahāyoga (*rnal 'byor chen po*), Anuyoga (*rjes su rnal 'byor*), and Atiyoga (*shin tu rnal 'byor*), practices connected with the psychophysical channels, winds, and vital essences (*rtsa, rlung, thig le,* Skt. *nāḍī, vāyu, bindu*) are categorized as Anuyoga, "unexcelled yoga". When such techniques are used in support of the direct realization of one's intrinsically awakened Buddha nature, the conjoined approach is often referred to with the Sanskrit-derived term "Ati Anu" (*shin tu rjes su*), *or* "supreme unexcelled", representing a synthesis of Atiyoga and Anuyoga methods.[52]

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[52] Personal communication, Chatral Sangye Dorje, Yolmo, Nepal, August 1987. Vajrayāna Buddhist practice customarily consists of a Development Phase (bskyed rim) based on mantra recitation and visualization followed by a Completion Phase (rdzogs rim) focused on the body's metaphysical anatomy of channels, winds, and essences. Dzogchen differs in its approach by "taking the goal as the path" and fusing Development and Completion Phase practices into unitary awareness (rig pa) of their ultimate inseparability. Dzogchen practices thus work directly with physiology and optical phenomena to reveal reality as an unfolding heuristic and creative process. Dzogchen is presented in Tibet's Nyingma School as the culmination of nine successive vehicles for transcending afflictive fluctuations of consciousness and uniting with all-encompassing awareness. The first two vehicles refer to the Hīnayāna stages of Śrāvakayāna and Pratyekabuddhayāna that lead to the solitary realization of the arhat, as promoted within Theravāda Buddhism. The third vehicle, the Bodhisattvayāna, introduces the Mahāyāna, or greater vehicle, and cultivates enlightenment not just for oneself, but for all beings. The fourth, fifth, and sixth vehicles are the so-called Outer Tantras of Kriyātantra, Caryātantra, and Yogatantra, all of which are part of Vajrayāna, the third turning of the wheel of doctrine, but remain dualistic in their orientation. The three Inner Tantras (nang rgyud sde gsum) were transmitted to those deemed of higher capacity and consist of Mahāyoga (rnal 'byor chen po), which emphasizes the Development Phase (bskyed rim) of imaginal perception, Anuyoga (rjes su rnal 'byor) which cultivates co-emergent bliss and emptiness through Completion Phase (rdzogs rim) practices based on a meta-anatomy of channels, winds and essences, and Atiyoga (shin tu rnal 'byor), the resultant non-duality of Dzogchen with its liberating view of primordial, self-existing perfection. The three Inner Tantras of the Nyingma further correlate with the Unsurpassed Yoga Tantras (Anuttarayogatantra) of the Kagyu, Sakya, and Geluk lineages, all of which culminate in the non-dual (advaita) view of reality as expressed in Essence Mahāmudra (ngo bo'i phyag rgya chen po) which is often presented as being identical to Dzogchen in terms of view, but differing in its method.

Although no descriptions of Trulkhor can be found in original texts associated with Tibet's earliest Vajrayāna lineage, early Nyingma masters such as Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo (*rong zom chos kyi bzang po)* (1012–1088) and Nyang Ral Nyima Özer (nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer) (1124–1192) were closely associated with early "New School" proponents such as Smṛtijñānakīrti and Padampa Sangye (pha dam pa sangs rgyas) and are likely to have received transmissions from them of Tsalung Trulkhor, thus gradually introducing codified practices of breath and movement into the Nyingma corpus. This new material was introduced into the Nyingma tradition through the expedient means of revealed "treasure texts" (*gter ma*), "mind treasures" (*dgongs gter*), and "pure visions" (*dag snang*) that allowed Trulkhor to be recontextualised within Dzogchen's view of self-existing enlightenment. However, none of the earliest Nyingma treasure texts such as the Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras (*rDzogs chen rgyud bcu bdun*) revealed by Neten Dangma Lhungyal (gnas brtan ldang ma lhun rgyal) in the eleventh century make any reference to prescribed sequences of transformative physical exercises.[53] In keeping with Dzogchen's non-gradualist approach to yogic practice, the Nyingma treasure texts advocate in their place spontaneous and unchoreographed physical practices that, from a Dzogchen point of view, preempt the codified regimens of Trulkhor. The fully embodied practices of Korde Rushen (*'khor 'das ru shan*) that facilitate realization of the unbound altruistic mind of enlightenment (*byang chub kyi sems*) are described in detail in the following section of this essay.

The clear absence of Trulkhor regimens in early Nyingma "treasure teachings" (*gter chos*) is further evident from an examination of the 'Heart Essence of Vimalamitra' (*Bi ma snying thig*), a three-volume compilation attributed to the eighth-century Indian master Vimalamitra, but revealed by his followers from the late tenth or early eleventh century until the middle of the twelfth century.[54] The two-volume 'Heart Essence of the Sky Dancers' (*mkha' 'gro snying thig*) attributed to Padmasambhava and revealed by Tsultrim Dorje (tshul khrims rdo rje) (1291–1315/17) in the early fourteenth century also omits any mention of Trulkhor practices. Yet, like the Vima Nyingthik before it, it does describe body mandala practices of channels, winds, and vital essences (*rtsa rlung thig le*) based on sexual union practices.[55]

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[53] Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (personal communication, Glass House Mountains, Australia, March 2012) maintains that the descriptions of spontaneous physical movements in the root text of the Seventeen Tantras, the Dra Thal Gyur (sgra thal 'gyur), represent a form of Trulkhor.

[54] See Germano & Gyatso 2001: 244. The "Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras" date to the same time period and also describe body-based practices, although more synoptically than the Vima Nyingthik.

[55] Germano & Gyatso 2001: 244.

Apart from the cycle of eighteen yogic exercises described in the twelfth-century Yuthok Nyingthik, Trulkhor seems to have formally entered into the Nyingma corpus through the literary work of the fourteenth-century Dzogchen master Longchen Rabjampa Drimé Özer (klong chen rab 'byams pa dri med 'od zer) (1308–1364). Longchenpa synthesized earlier Nyingma treasure texts in his composite Nyingthik Yabshi (*sNying thig ya bzhi*) that quotes widely from the Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras, but makes no mention of Trulkhor within its multiple volumes. It is in Longchenpa's 'Wishfulfilling Treasury' (*Yid bzhin mdzod*) – later catalogued as one of his 'Seven Treasuries' (*mdzod bdun*) – that the first formal evidence occurs of Trulkhor practice in the Nyingma tradition subsequent to the Turquoise Heart Essence.[56] The Wishfulfilling Treasury elucidates Buddhist cosmology and philosophical systems, but the concluding section of its final chapter, 'The Fruition that is the Culmination of Meditation' (*bGom pa mthar phyin pa 'bras bu*), describes twenty physical exercises (*lus sbyong*) for clearing obstacles (*gegs sel*) according to the "profound meaning vajra essence, the ultimate instruction of the Wishfulfilling Treasury" (*Yid bzhin mdzod kyi don khrid zab don rdo rJe snying po*). These exercises include bodily massage (*sku mnye*) and sequenced stretching exercises in support of the Dzogchen contemplative technique of Kadag Trekchö (*ka dag khregs chod*), or "cutting through [discursive mental activity] to primordial purity". Unlike preceding forms of Trulkhor presented within Tibetan Buddhism, Longchenpa's rendition is not based on visualizing oneself as a Tantric deity, but on vibrant awareness (*rig pa*, Skt. *vidyā*)[57] of one's innate Buddha Nature (*tathāgatagarbha*).[58]

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[56] Personal communication, Tshewang Sitar Rinpoche, Bumthang, Bhutan, April 2013.

[57] Rig pa is also rendered as "primordial awareness" and is experientially related to the spontaneous "recognition" (pratyabhijñā) of the nature of mind central to non-dual Kashmiri Śaivism.

[58] In most Nyingthik, or Heart Essence systems of Trulkhor, there is no visualisation of oneself as a Tantric diety because all divine forms arise from primary seed-syllables (as "vibrations") in the luminous expanse of the heart which is the ultimate deity (oral communication, Chatral Sangye Dorje Rinpoche, Pharping, Nepal, September 1992). The Trulkhor exercises described in chapter twenty-two of Longchenpa's Yid zhin dzod are less elaborate than later Nyingthik renditions for which they form the basis. The movements include interlocking the fingers against the chest and stretching them outward (no. 3), twisting the shoulders down to the hands and knees (no. 4), pushing outward from the chest with the hands held as fists (no. 5), twisting the body with the arms crossed and the hands on the shoulders (no. 6), drawing the hands along the arms as if shooting a bow (no. 8), pushing the fists outward as if against a mountain (no. 9), bending forward and backward (no. 10), joining the little fingers of the hands and forming a mudrā on the top of the head (no. 11), etc. For further details see the final volume of the Yid zhin dzod (p. 1579 in the edition published by Dodrupchen Rinpoche).

Having established a clear precedent, subsequent revealed treasure texts connected to the Dzogchen Nyingthik, or "Heart Essence of Great Perfection" transmission, largely all include cycles of Trulkhor. For example, in 1366, two years after Longchenpa's death, Rigdzin Godemchen (rig 'dzin rgod ldem can) (1337–1408) revealed his highly influential "Northern Treasure" (*byang gter*) with a Trulkhor cycle called *Phag mo'i zab rgya rtsa rlung*, based on the meditational deity Vajravārāhi. These teachings were expanded upon by the treasure revealer Tenyi Lingpa (bstan gnyis gling pa) (1480 – 1535) whose writings elaborated on the movement of energy through the channels during sexual union and the discipline of *vajroli*, in which sexual fluids are circulated through the body's yogic anatomy.[59]

Longchenpa's renowned fifteenth-century Bhutanese reincarnation, Orgyen Pema Lingpa (orgyan padma gling pa) (1450–1521), further clarified the "Ati Anu" practices of the Heart Essence tradition in his revealed treasure text 'Compendium of All-Embracing Great Perfection' (*rDzogs chen kun bzang dgongs 'dus*), a chapter of which entitled 'Secret Key to the Channels and Winds' (*Rtsa rlung gsang ba'i lde mig*) describes a sequence of twenty-three Trulkhor exercises within the context of Dzogchen's visionary practice of "Leaping over the Skull" (*thod rgal*).[60] The practices are performed with the breath retained in a "vase" (*bum pa can,* Skt. *kumbhaka*), in combination with *mūladharabandha,* and are described as "clearing hindrances" (*gegs sel*) to contemplative practice while also ensuring optimal health. The practices were eventually illustrated on the walls of the Sixth Dalai Lama's private meditation chamber in the late seventeenth century.[61] (See Plate 3).

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[59] Tenyi Lingpa's elaboration of Rigdzin Godemchen's Trulkhor, as first revealed in the Gongpa Zangthal (dgongs pa zang thal)– the highest Dzogchen teachings of the Northern Treasure lineage –reputedly consists of twelve preparatory exercises, thirteen principle movements, and twelve concluding movements. Oral communication, Kunzang Dorje Rinpoche, Pharping, Nepal, July 1985 and correspondance with Malcolm Smith, November 2016.

[60] 'Compendium of All-Embracing Great Perfection' is one of three texts revealed by Pema Lingpa that elucidate the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*) and the only one that describes practices of Trulkhor. For a full inventory of Pema Lingpa's revealed treasures, see Harding 2003: 142–144. Pema Lingpa's system of Trulkhor expands on the simpler exercises described by Longchenpa in his 'Wishfulfilling Treasury', in which there are neither forceful "drops" (*'beb*) nor the "adamantine wave" (*rdo rje'i rba rlabs*) practice of pressing on the carotid arteries at the neck to induce altered states of awareness. For a full translation of Pema Lingpa's 'Secret Key to the Channels and Winds', see Baker 2012 and 2017.

[61] For an account of how Pema Lingpa's text came to be illustrated on the walls of the Sixth Dalai Lama's meditation chamber in the late seventeenth century under direction of Tibet's political regent Desi Sangye Gyatso (sde srid sangs rgyas rgya mtsho) (1653–1705), See Baker 2012 and 2017 as well as Baker & Laird 2011.

Following Pema Lingpa's revelation, further cycles of Trulkhor in the Nyingma tradition emerged in the form of 'The Universal Embodiment of the Precious Ones' (*dkon mchog spyi 'dus*), a seventeenth-century treasure text revealed by Rigdzin Jatson Nyingpo (rig 'dzin 'ja' tshon snying po) (1585–1656), as well as within the approximately contemporaneous 'Accomplishing the Life-Force of the Wisdom Holders' (*Rig 'dzin srog sgrub*) revealed by Lhatsun Namkha Jigme (lha btsun nam mkha'i 'jigs med) (1597–1650/53).[62] The trend continued with the revelation of the 'Sky Teaching' (*gNam chos*) by Namchö Mingyur Dorje (gnam chos mi 'gyur rdo rje) (1645–1667) that contains a Trulkhor cycle with over sixty movements based on the Buddhist deity Vajrakīlaya (*rdo rje phur pa rtsa rlung 'khrul 'khor*).[63]

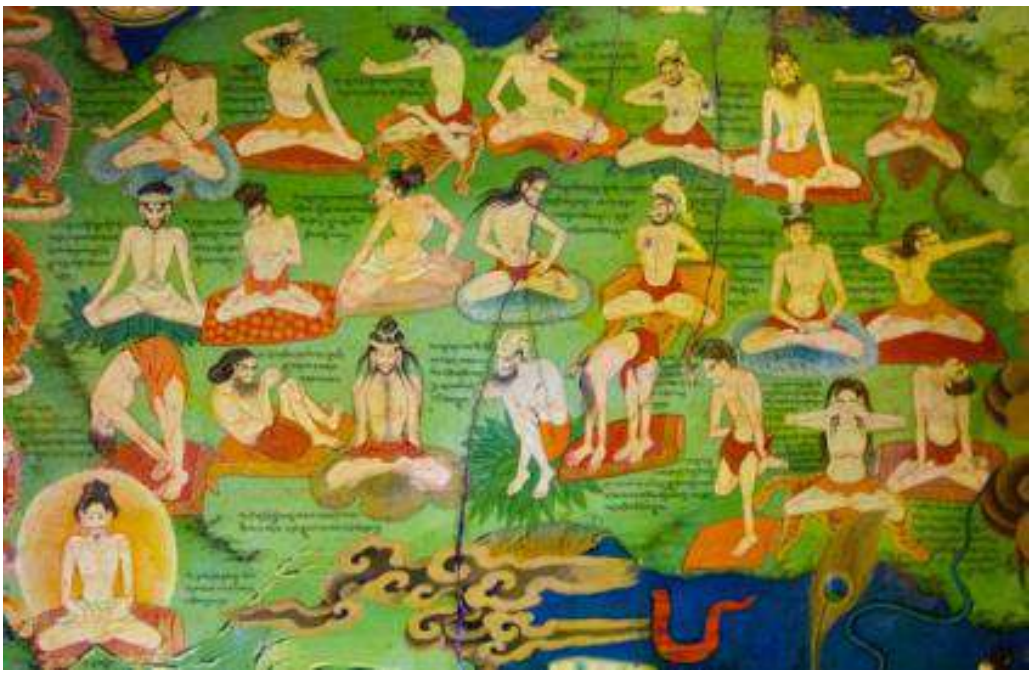

*Plate 3: Late seventeenth century mural in the Sixth Dalai Lama's private meditation chamber in the Lukhang Temple in Lhasa illustrating a sequence of twenty-three yogic movements revealed two centuries earlier by Orgyen Pema Lingpa in his 'Secret Key to the Channels and Winds'. Photo by Ian Baker.*

Trulkhor's place within the Nyingma Heart Essence tradition became even more firmly established with the visionary treasure revelation of Jigme Lingpa ('jigs med gling pa) (1730–1798) whose 'Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse' (*Klong chen snying thig*) includes the 'Miraculous Wheel of Wisdom Holders' (*Rig 'dzin 'khrul 'khor*), a Trulkhor cycle of twenty-one movements elaborating

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[62] Oral communication, Kunzang Dorje Rinpoche, Pharping, Nepal, May 1985.

[63] Oral communication, Lama Tashi Tenzin, Thimphu, Bhutan, July 2014. According to Lama Tashi, this cycle concludes with *bkra shis 'beb 'khor*, or "auspicious circle of drops", in which the adept performs a clockwise series of yogic "drops" and also jumps while in lotus posture from one padded yogic seat (*'beb den*) to another.

on Longchenpa's yogic exercises in his Wishfulfilling Treasure, the *Yid zhin dzod*. The Rigdzin Trulkhor practices consist of five initial exercises for clearing the body's elemental winds followed by eight movements that embody the qualities of eight Indian "wisdom holders" (*vidyādhara,* Tib. *rgya gar rig 'dzin brgyad*), acclaimed as enlightened contemporaries of Padmasambhava.[64] These and subsequent exercises in the series include symbolic gestures and vestiges of ritual dance together with forceful movements reminiscent of Chinese systems of *wei gong* and Yang-style *taijiquan*.[65] As in other later transmissions of Trulkhor, the series also includes intermittent controlled "drops" (*'beb*) of increasing complexity that purportedly direct the body's subtle energies into the central channel to promote expanded states of awareness. The most demanding, and potentially injurious, "drops" involve leaping into the air from a standing position and landing cross-legged on the ground in the lotus posture with the breath held in a "vase" in the lower abdomen.[66] (See Plate 2)

Beyond the forceful "drops" that punctuate the movements of Trulkhor, an even more invasive exercise for opening the central channel is often used at the conclusion of Trulkhor sessions. Known as the "adamantine wave" (*rdo rje'i rba rlabs*), it involves pressing on the carotid arteries at the sides of the neck to reciprocally increase blood flow through the cranial arteries in the brain stem, engendering a non-conceptual experience of the indivisibility of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa (See Plate 4). This technique, which is also used in non-dual Śaivism to

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[64] Personal communication, Tulku Tenzin Rabgye, Lobesa, Bhutan, October 2013. The eight Vidyadhāras are Vimalamitra, Hūṃkāra, Mañjuśrīmitra, Nāgārjuna, Prabhāhasti, Dhanasaṃskṛta, Guhyacandra, and Śāntigarbha. Sometimes Padmasambhava is added as a ninth, or as part of the eight in place of Prabhāhasti.

[65] Personal observation. See also Mroz 2013.

[66] *'beb,* or forceful "drops", are categorized as "small" (*'beb chung*), "medium" (*bar 'bep*), "big" (*'beb chen*), and "adamantine" (*rdor 'beb*) during which the legs are crossed in the vajra posture in mid air (*rdo rje dkyil dkrungs 'beb*). There are also *kyang 'beb* in which the body is extended and one drops on one's side, *chu 'beb* which are performed after first spinning in a circle, and "ornamental" *gyen 'beb* performed at the end of a Trulkhor series. It's likely that *'beb* evolved from originally gentler Haṭha Yoga practices such as *mahāvedhamudrā* which is central to Trulkhor practice in the Amṛtasiddhi and Yuthok Nyingtik. *Mahāvedha,* the "great piercer", is normally performed with the legs crossed in *padmāsana,* or lotus posture, the palms pressed against the ground, and the throat pulled upward in *jālandharamudrā* while holding the breath below the navel and successively dropping the backs of the thighs and buttocks on the ground to cause *prāṇavāyu* to leave the two side channels (*iḍā* and *piṅgalā*) and enter the *suṣumnā,* or central channel.. James Mallinson notes, however, that *mahāvedhamudrā* as practiced in the Amṛtasiddhi differs from the later Haṭha Yoga version and does not involve dropping onto the thighs and buttocks but sitting on the heels of the feet, which are joined and pointing downwards (personal communication, Vienna, September 2013). A similar exercise called *tāḍanakriyā*, or "beating action", is performed in Kriyā Yoga with the eyes concentrated at the point between the eyebrows in śāmbhavīmudrā.

"astonish" the mind, is given as the sixth of Phagmo Drupa's thirty-two Trulkhor exercises, with the idiosyncratic appellation "*tsarang gagana*".[67]

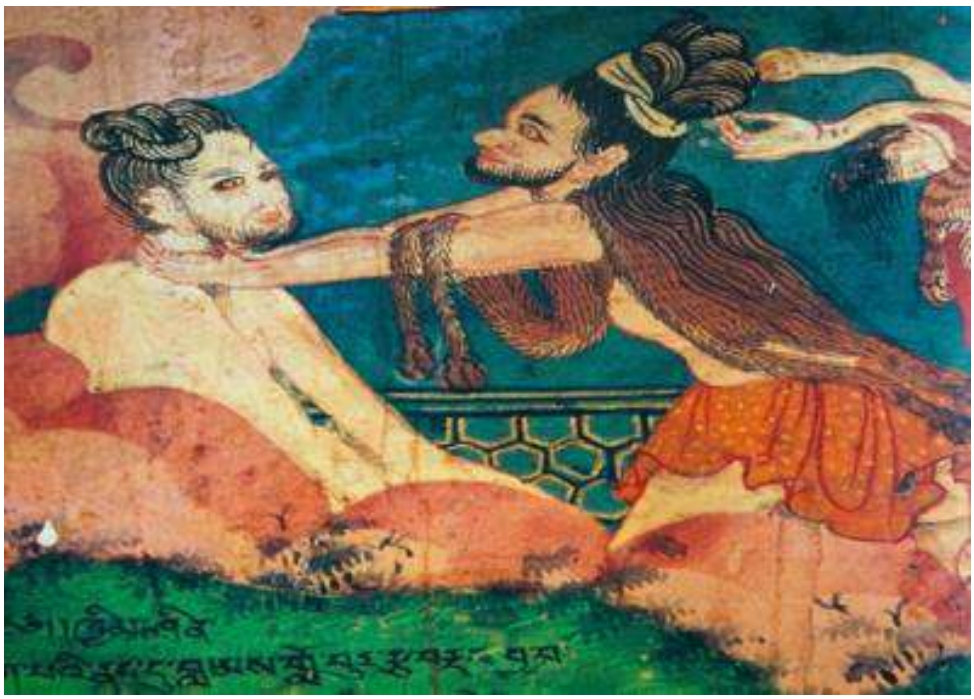

*Plate 4: A Tantric master presses on a disciple's carotid arteries to induce an altered state of awareness associated with emptiness and bliss. An illustration of the "Adamantine Wave" (rdo rje rba rlabs) practice from Pema Lingpa's "Pearl Garland of Introductions", Lukhang temple, Lhasa, Tibet. Photo by Ian Baker.*

Some subsequent Heart Essence treasure works such as the exclusively Dzogchen oriented *Chetsün Nyingthik* (*lce btsun snying thig*) revealed by Jamyang Khentse Wangpo ('jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po) (1820–1892) make no mention of Trulkhor, whereas the roughly contemporary 'All-Perfect Heart Essence' *(Kun bzang thugs thig)* revealed by Chokyur Dechen Lingpa (mchog gyur bde chen gling pa) (1829–1870) contains a Trulkhor series connected with the Tantric Buddha Achala Chandamaharoshana (Tib. *mi gyo*

[67] Wang-Toutain 2009: 114. An analogous technique to the "adamantine wave" occurs within non-dual Kashmiri Śaivism in connection to *plavini*, or "floating" *kumbhaka*, during which the preceptor or an assistant presses on the sides of the neck to "surprise" or "astonish" the mind. The method is used in conjunction with *śāmbhavī mudrā*, in which the eyes are directed towards the middle of the eyebrows, and *khecarī mudrā*, in which the tongue is curled back and inserted into a cavity at the top of the pharnyx. The practice is widely used among Śaivite yogins in Bali (personal observation 2010). The wave-like pulsatations that spread throughout the body often provoke spontaneous body postures and are identified as manifestations of *spanda,* the primal vibration through which consciousness recognizes its divine nature. The near passing out experience is presented as a death–rebirth process, induced through controlled, hormetic stress.

*ba*) that is practiced within both Nyingma and Karma Kagyu traditions.[68] The later "mind treasure" (*dgongs gter*) 'Heart Essence of the Sky Dancers' (*mKha' 'gro'i thugs thig*) revealed by Dudjom Jikdral Yeshe Dorje (bdud 'joms 'jigs bral ye shes rdo rje) (1904–1987) in 1928, contains a Trulkhor cycle of sixteen movements that is widely practiced today both in the Himalayan world and beyond and held to have been influenced by the *Phag mo zab rgya* revelation of Rigdzin Godemchen.[69] Similarly, the 'Profound Instructions of Vajravārāhī' (*Phag mo'i zab khrid*) revealed by Kunzang Dechen Lingpa (kun bzang bde chen gling pa) (1928–2006), based on prior teachings of Rigdzin Godemchen and Tenyi Lingpa, contains an extensive Trulkhor cycle with elaborate "drops".[70]

The most globally recognized contemporary form of Trulkhor is the revealed teaching of Tibetan scholar and Dzogchen master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu known as "Yantra Yoga", based on Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's 1976 commentary to a Trulkhor text entitled 'Magical Wheel of Yogic Movements Uniting Sun and Moon' (*'Khrul 'khor nyi zla kha sbyor*) that was reputedly composed in the eighth century by the Tibetan translator Vairocana (bai ro tsa na), a contemporary of Padmasambhava. According to Namkhai Norbu, Vairocana's original text is part of a larger collection known as the 'Oral Transmission of Vairo' (*Bai ro snyan brgyud*)[71] and describes seventy-five breath-sequenced yogic movements, many of which are well known within later systems of Haṭha Yoga. According to Namkhai Norbu's commentary, 'A Stainless Mirror of Jewels' (*Dri med nor bu'i me long*) which was published in 2008 as *Yantra Yoga: The Tibetan Yoga of Movement*[72], Vairocana is said to have received these yogic practices directly from Padmasambhava who, in turn, is said to have learned them from a Nepalese *mahāsiddha* named Hūṃkāra who himself reputedly learned them from Śrīsiṃha, an early Dzogchen lineage holder who lived for a considerable period at the sacred mountain Wutai Shan in western China where similar Taoist-Chan Buddhist methods of what is now called *qigong*

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[68] Oral communication, Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, Nagi Gompa, Nepal, May 1987.

[69] Oral communication, Lama Nyingku Kunzang Wangdi, Bhutan, October 2011.

[70] In practice, however, Kunsang Dechen Lingpa simplified the Trulkhor exercises revealed by Rigdzin Godemchen and Tenyi Lingpa as he recognized that they could be harmful if not begun at an early age. Oral communication, Karma Lhatrul Rinpoche, Bangkok, Thailand, January 2014.

[71] The "Oral Transmission of Vairo" is part of Vairocana's collected works (*Bai ro rgyud 'bum*) which were compiled in the twelfth century, thus making it speculative to date the 'Miraculous Wheel Uniting Sun and Moon' to the eighth century. The text invites further independent investigation for understanding the origins and evolution of postural yoga practices in India and Tibet.

[72] Clemente and Lukianowicz (trans.) 2008.

were transmitted from before the eighth century.[73] The close parallels of the 'Magical Wheel [of Yogic Movements] Uniting Sun and Moon' with Indian Haṭha Yoga and its potential links with Chinese systems of *dao yin* and *qigong* invite further comparative research and may eventually indicate greater transcultural origins for Tibet's Trulkhor practices than has so far been supposed. Namkhai Norbu's commentary elaborates Vairocana's system of poses and breathing practices into one hundred and eight interconnected movements adapted to a contemporary western context, giving further evidence of the heuristic nature of the Tsalung Trulkhor system which, like Haṭha Yoga, continues to evolve through its interactions and exchanges with analogous practices and increasing global knowledge and awareness of biophysical processes.[74]

**Korde Rushen: Yoga of Spontaneous Presence**

The physically embodied practices of Tsalung Trulkhor were a core component of the Vajrayāna forms of Buddhism that developed in Tibet from the eleventh century onward and, as the revealed treasure texts in the Nyingma tradition clearly indicate, Tsalung Trulkhor has been a supporting element in the transmission of Dzogchen as well. Dzogchen is also referred to as Ati Yoga, or "Supreme Yoga" (*shin tu rnal 'byor*) and, within the Nyingma tradition represents the culmination of the Development Phase (*utpatti krama,* Tib. *bskyed rim*), otherwise called Mahā Yoga, and the Completion Phase (*sampanna krama*, Tib. *rdzogs rim*), otherwise called Anu Yoga*,* of Vajrayāna Buddhism.[75] Dzogchen differs from Vajrayāna as a whole in its view of Buddha Nature (*tathāgatagarbha*, Tib. *de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po*) as an innately present wakefulness rather than an indwelling potential that needs to be deliberately cultivated in order to attain freedom from Saṃsāra. Dzogchen thus characteristically "takes the end as the means" and dispenses with more gradual methods for realizing Buddhahood (*buddhatva,* Tib. *sangs rgyas nyid*). Although practices based on the body's "inner *maṇḍala*" (*nang pa'i dkyil 'khor*) of subtle energy channels are included in Dzogchen, such disciplines are traditionally viewed either as methods for removing psychophysical obstacles (*gegs sel*) or for intensifying realization of the mind's "natural state" (*gnas lug*). Ultimately, however, the "illusory body movements" of Tsalung Trulkhor, when practiced from a Dzogchen perspective, are considered to be direct

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[73] Personal communication, Vivienne Lo, London, September 2011.

[74] Like other purely Dzogchen-oriented Trulkhor systems, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's Yantra Yoga does not involve Anuttarayogatantra methods of deity visualisation, but envisions the body as a luminous network of energy channels. Unlike earlier forms of Trulkhor, Yantra Yoga does not include forceful "drops".

[75] See n. 2.

expressions of enlightenment (*samyaksaṃbodhi*) rather than specific means for attaining it.[76]

Dzogchen is presented within Tibetan and Bhutanese tradition as "beyond all mental concepts and free of both attachment and letting go; the essence of transcendent insight and the coalescence of meditation and non-meditation; perfected awareness free of all grasping."[77] While the unitary consciousness of Dzogchen can be directly realized without modifying the body or altering the mind in any way, its formal practice nonetheless traditionally begins with demanding physical exercises and culminates with prescribed postures and associated breathing techniques for entraining consciousness towards an incisive realization of the primordial non-dual unity (*gnyis su med pa*) of enlightened awareness.[78] As Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa (rig 'dzin 'jigs med gling pa) (1730–1798) wrote in 'Supreme Mastery of Wisdom Awareness' (*ye shes bla ma*), one of the most revered manuals (*khrid yig*) on Dzogchen practice: "Unless the vitally important body is compliant and energy flowing freely, the pure light of consciousness will remain obscured. So take this physical practice to heart!"[79]

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[76] Personal communication, Tulku Tenzin Rabgye, Lobesa, Bhutan, October 2013. From another perspective, Dzogchen considers Trulkhor exercises to be contrived means appropriate only in less direct approaches to enlightenment. As the fourteenth-century Dzogchen master Longchenpa writes in Canto 31 of his 'Precious Treasury of Natural Perfection' (*gNas lugs rin po che'i mdzod*): "Exhausting exercises involving struggle and strain are of short-lived benefit, like a sand castle built by a child." As he further explicates: "we strive in meditation because we desire excellence, but any striving precludes attainment … remaining constantly at ease in uncontrived spontaneity … non-action is revealed as supreme activity." (see Dowman 2014: 23).

[77] From 'Nying tik, the Innermost Essence' (*Yang gsang bla na med pa'i syning thig*) by Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa (rig 'dzin 'jigs med gling pa), quoted in Trungpa 1972: 21.

[78] The transpersonal modes of consciousness cultivated in Vajrayāna Buddhism and Dzogchen are subjects of contemporary neuroscientific research, leading to new linguistic and conceptual formulations. Some of these initiatives correlate specific meditative states with parasympathetic dominance in the brain's frontal cortex and concomitant activation of a biologically based mode of consciousness in which slow wave patterns originating in the limbic system project into the frontal parts of the brain, thereby inducing increased hemispheric synchronization and more integral states of awareness. See Winkelman 1997: 393–394. Winkelman further argues that by the "use of information modalities normally repressed or ignored in the waking mode, altered states of awareness provide new means of integration of symbolic and physiological systems" (Winkelman 2000: 128).

[79] This translation and subsequent ones from the Yeshe Lama (*ye shes bla ma*) are partially adapted from Chönam & Khandro 2009 and Dowman 2014, but are more indebted to Dungtse Thinley Norbu Rinpoche's oral commentary in Kathmandu in July 1987.

Initiation in Dzogchen formally entails "empowerment into the dynamic energy of awareness" (*rig pa'i rtsal dbang*). To actualize this experientially, practitioners traditionally undertake rigorous foundational practices called Korde Rushen (*'khor 'das ru shan*) to differentiate Saṃsāra (Tib. *'khor ba*), or bounded consciousness (*sems*), from the spontaneous self-liberating awareness (*sems nyid*) of Nirvāṇa (Tib. *mya ngan 'das*). The 'Continuity of Sound' (*sgra thal 'gyur*)[80], the root text of Dzogchen's esoteric "instruction cycle" (*man ngag sde*, Skt. *upadeśavarga*), counsels accordingly: "Perform bodily yantras [Trulkhor] while twisting and turning and alternately while prone and moving. Stretch and bend the limbs and push the body beyond its accustomed limits. Physically act out the behavior of the six kinds of elemental beings."[81] As Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa reiterates in his eighteenth-century 'Supreme Mastery of Wisdom Awareness' (Yeshe Lama): "Then, run and jump, twist and turn, stretch and bend and, in brief, move your body in whatever way comes to mind – beyond purpose or design."[82] He further clarifies that; "Finally you will be physically, energetically, and mentally exhausted and thus totally relaxed." Within this unbounded unitary sphere beyond the binary operations of thought, "all spontaneous actions of body, speech, and mind arise as the unity of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa, and thus as unobstructed Buddha-Body, Buddha-Speech, and Buddha-Mind."[83]

Customarily undertaken in solitary wilderness settings, the practices of Korde Rushen are divided into Outer, Inner, Secret, and Ultimately Secret methods

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[80] The 'Continuity of Sound Tantra' is associated with the eighth-century Indian Dzogchen master Vimalamitra and is the basis of the 'Seventeen Tantras of the Innermost Luminescence' (*Yang gsang 'od gsal gyi rgyud bcu bdun*) which provide the collective literary foundation for the esoteric "instruction cycle" of Dzogchen teachings known as the Dzogchen Nyingthik, or "Heart Essence of Great Perfection."

[81] Dowman 2014: 11. Besides the physical body, the exercises of "outer" Korde Rushen engage the voice through "chattering non-sensically or speaking in the tongues of [imagined] mythic beings", and the mind by consciously evoking positive and negative thoughts that ultimately resolve into uncontrived, non-dual awareness. (See Dowman 2014: 11).

[82] Dowman 2014: 11. A Dzogchen treatise entitled 'Flight of the Garuḍa' by Shabkar Tsokdruk Rangdrol (zhabs dkar tshogs drug rang grol) (1781–1851) further instructs: "With the conviction that Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa are of one taste … walk, sit, run and jump, talk and laugh, cry and sing. Alternately subdued and agitated, act like a madman … Beyond desire you are like a celestial eagle soaring through space … free from the outset like bright clouds in the sky." (Quoted in Baker & Laird 2011: 115).

[83] Translation based on Dowman 2014:12. Gyatrul Rinpoche further clarifies this essential point in his commentary to 'Spacious Mind of Freedom' by Karma Chagmé Rinpoche (karma chags med) (1613–1678): "If you wish to stabilize the mind, first subdue the body with the *adhisāras* [yantra yoga] … although you are ostensibly working with the body, you are indirectly subduing and stabilizing the mind." (See Wallace 1998: 69).

for distinguishing the contents of consciousness from wakeful awareness itself until they arise indivisibly as having "one taste" (*ro gcig,* Skt. *ekarasa*). In Outer Korde Rushen, mind and body are pushed to unaccustomed extremes by acting out imaginary existences as animals, hell beings, demi-gods, or whatever the mind conceives, leading to the spontaneous recognition of the self-created, and thus mutable, nature of conditioned existence. When the capacity for physical and imaginative expression is exhausted, the practitioner enters a natural state of ease (*rnal du dbab pa*) in a posture corresponding to an open-eyed "corpse pose" (*śavāsana*) in Haṭha Yoga. The thought-free mental state is identified as the "primal purity" (*ka dag*) of the mind's essential and abiding nature rather than its transient, and potentially deceptive, expressions.[84]

The subsequent Inner Korde Rushen practices build on the cathartic dramatizations of Outer Rushen and focus inwardly on six numinous seed-syllables along the body's central channel and on the soles of the feet associated with inhibiting karmic traces and subconscious imprints.[85] The practitioner clears each point in turn by visualizing white, red, and blue light issuing from the antidotal seed syllables *oṃ āḥ hūṃ* as consciousness shifts from identification with the body's materiality to direct experience of its corporeal luminescence (*nang gsal*).[86] As with Outer Rushen, practice sessions alternate with motionless phases of concept-free awareness in which thoughts subside within the luminous expanse of primordial awareness (*rig pa*).

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[84] Although many Dzogchen treasure texts and commentaries elucidate the practices of Korde Rushen, the summary presented here draws substantially from oral instructions given in July 1987 in Kathmandu, Nepal by Dilgo Khentse Rinpoche and Dhungtse Thinley Norbu Rinpoche.

[85] The precise instructions for Korde Rushen practices vary between different Dzogchen lineages. In some, the "Purification of the Six Lokas" as described here is performed prior to the Outer Rushen described above. As with all aspects of Dzogchen, the key point is never technique but the end result: integrating awareness of the mind's innermost non-dual nature within all circumstances and experience. Generally, in Inner Rushen the seed-syllables *ah, su, nri, tri, pre,* and *du* correlate with the forehead, throat, heart, navel, base of the trunk, and soles of the feet.

[86] Bioluminescence within humans has been associated with photon emission resulting from metabolic processes in which highly reactive free radicals produced through cell respiration interact with free-floating lipid proteins. The thus aroused molecules can react with chemicals called fluorophores to emit "biophotons" and thus produce a subjective experience of light.


*Plate 5: A Bhutanese manuscript illustrating the "secret" phase of Korde Rushen as described in the 'Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse'. The standing "vajra position" is pictured to the left and practices of the Voice, using the seed-syllable hūṃ, on the right. Image courtesy of Pelden Dorji, Bumthang, Bhutan.*

Outer and Inner Korde Rushen's clearing of physical and psychosomatic obstructions prepare the bodymind for the practices of Secret Rushen, which are divided into three progressive stages of Body, Voice, and Mind. The Body phase begins with a highly strenuous isometric balancing posture – the "position of the *vajra*" (*rdo rje'i 'dug stang*). Standing with the heels together and knees bent and stretched out to the sides, the practitioner pulls his or her chin towards the larynx, straightens the spine, and places their palms together above the crown of the head while visualizing themself as an indestructible blazing blue *vajra* (See plate 5). Observing the flow of energy and sensation within the body while pushing through barriers of exhaustion, pain, and perceived futility, the practitioner maintains the position until his or her legs collapse and then continues in a modified posture while sitting on the ground until capable of resuming the standing posture.[87] At the end of the session one utters the seed-syllable *phaṭ* and lies down on the ground in a state of unconditioned concept-free awareness "like a corpse in a charnel ground." When thoughts arise, one repeats the process in continuing cycles of effort and repose until the tenacious illusion of an abiding self yields to an all-pervasive, endorphin amplified awareness. As Jigme Lingpa explains in 'Supreme Mastery

[87] The development of increased mental and physical capacities by pushing through habitual limits relates to the biological phenomenon of hormosis whereby beneficial effects such as increased strength and resilience, growth, and longevity can result from deliberate and systematic exposure to therapeutic stress.

of Wisdom Awareness', "exhausting the physical body exhausts the discursive tendencies of the mind" and leads ultimately to realization of the mind's essential nature.[88]

The intensity of the Dzogchen *vajra* position alters the flow of psychosomatic energies and encourages the emergence of adaptive mental and physical capacities as the mind progressively disengages from non-productive adventitious forms of consciousness and recovers its innate dimension of bliss, lucidity, and non-conceptual awareness. Secret Korde Rushen then continues with Voice practices involving sound and vibration [89] that involving visualizations and intonations of the alpha seed-syllable *hūṃ* to enter into direct experience of the pure potentiality, or "emptiness" (*stong pa nyid*; Skt. *śūnyatā*) that underlies perception and represents the ultimate Nature of Mind. (See Plate 5) Dissolving all appearances into effulgent light, the practitioner remains in a unified state of luminous cognition, or absolute relativity, beyond conventional conceptions of time and space.

The following "Ultimately Secret" (*yang gsang*) phase of Korde Rushen dynamically unifies Body, Voice, and Mind "in order to free what has been stabilized". In a fully embodied enactment of the Deity Yoga (*lha'i rnal 'byor*) associated with Vajrayāna's Development Phase (*bskyed rim*), the practitioner manifests as a wrathful Tantric deity, representing the creative volatility of sensation, thought, and emotion. As the texts prescribe, the practitioner stands with hands formed into horned *mudrā*-s while pivoting from left to right with heels rooted in the earth. With eyes rolling in the sky, loud thought-subduing laughter is emitted from the core of one's being, filling all of space with the syllables and sounds of *ha* and *hi.* As in all of the Korde Rushen practices that proceed Dzogchen's more widely known and practiced contemplative techniques of "cutting through" (*khregs chod*) and "leaping over the skull" (*thod rgal*), the body is used to its fullest capacity to facilitate lucid, all-pervading awareness and freedom within all experience. As Longchenpa warns, however, no ultimate release can be obtained through deliberate, purpose driven action: "When everything is impermanent and bound to perish, how can a tight mesh of flesh, energy, and consciousness reach out to touch its

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[88] See Dowman 2014: 15.

[89] In the Voice phase of Secret Rushen the practitioner visualizes and intones a blue seed-syllable *hūṃ* that multiplies until small hūṃ-s imaginatively fill the entire universe. The syllables and sounds of hūṃ then fill one's entire body propelling it imaginatively through space. The hūṃ-s then act like razors, dissolving all outer appearances and, turning inward, all semblance of one's physical body. At the end of the session one again lies down as in the practice of the Body phase and remains in vivid open presence. When thoughts arise one begins the practice anew, using the primal energy represented by the seed-syllable hūṃ to alter habitual perceptions and attachments to consensual appearance.

indestructible core?"[90] He argues that all contrived yogas serve only to estrange us from the supreme state of being: "If we aspire to the ultimate state we should cast aside all childish games that fetter and exhaust body, speech, and mind … and realize the uncontrived unity of every experience."[91] From a Dzogchen point of view, the forceful actions of Tsalung Trulkhor are thus only useful in so far as they support the direct and ultimately effortless experience and perception of the self-effacing effulgence at the heart of every moment.[92] It is to this self-perfected and spontaneous yoga of illuminated vision that the practices of Korde Rushen and the "Miraculous Wheel of Channels and Winds" ultimately lead.

## Tögal: Yoga of Integral Perception

Dzogchen concurs with the larger Vajrayāna perspective that Tsalung Trulkhor practices can improve health and wellbeing and prepare the body for transformative Tantric practices such as Fierce Heat. But the primary function within Dzogchen of all such physical practices is to harmonize the body's psychosomatic "winds" (*rlung*, Skt. *vāyu*) so that the non-dual nature of awareness becomes directly manifest through the Heart Essence (*snying thig*) contemplative technique of *lhun grub thod rgal*, literally "leaping over the skull into a spontaneous state of perfection", a method involving quiescent body postures, mudrā-s, subtle breathing techniques, and focused gazes (*lta ba,* Skt. *dṛṣṭi*).[93]

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[90] Translation from Canto 19 of Longchenpa's 'Precious Treasury of Natural Perfection' (*gnas lugs mdzod*), based on Barron 1998 and Dowman 2010.

[91] Translation from Canto 20 of Longchenpa's 'Precious Treasury of Natural Perfection' (*gnas lugs mdzod*), based on Barron 1998 and Dowman 2010.

[92] The seventeenth-century Dzogchen master Tsele Natsok Rangdröl echoes this view in his statement that for ultimate realization of the nature of mind "you must mingle every moment of walking, sitting, eating, lying down [and thinking] with meditation. It is therefore not necessary to always maintain a specific posture or gaze" (See Schmidt 1993: 92).

[93] Just as Trulkhor and Korde Rushen work on the principle that intentional somatic states – from fluent postures to spontaneous movements – can influence cognition and affect not only the contents of consciousness but its primary function, the quiescent body postures and associated breathing techniques used in Tögal reconfigure visual perception, thereby altering subjective representations and experience of reality. Early Tögal texts, such as those in the eleventh-century Vima Nyingthik, also describe the use of a psychotropic decoction of Datura (*dha dhu ra*, Skt. *dhattūra*) to accelerate the manifestation of visions, the final distillate to be introduced directly into the eyes using a hollow eagle's quill. See Baker 2004: 194. Tögal gazing techniques can also be compared with the well-known Haṭha Yoga practice of *trāṭaka* in which the practitioner stares unblinkingly at an external object.

Lhündrup Tögal (*lhun grub thod rgal*) inverts the foundational yogic practice of sensory withdrawal (*so sor sdud pa*; Skt. *pratyāhāra*) in which sense consciousness is turned resolutely inward and instead extends perception outward, "leaping over" conventional divisions to unite experientially with a sensuous field of self-manifesting visions, based initially on entoptic phosphenes and related phenomena within the eye.[94] In Supreme Mastery of Wisdom Awareness, Jigme Lingpa points out that the sublime visions of Tögal bear comparison with the "empty forms" (*stong gzugs* Skt. *sünyatá-bimba*) that arise as visual manifestations of consciousness during the practice of sense withdrawal in Kālacakra. Similarly, the Kālacakra Tantra (4.195) refers to "garlands of essences" (*thig le'i phreng ba*) that appear when gazing into the sky. The fact that the Kālacakra Tantra and the Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras seminal to Dzogchen's esoteric "instruction cycle" (*man ngag sde*) both appeared in written form in the eleventh century[95] suggests that later Dzogchen doctrines may have been directly influenced by the Kālacakra's elucidation of visual forms that are neither wholly subjective nor wholly objective and, as such, illuminate the perceptual process itself. The initial visionary appearances associated with Tögal practice are vividly described by the Dzogchen master Dudjom Lingpa (bdud 'joms gling pa) (1835–1904) in his "mind treasure" (*gong gter*) 'The Vajra Essence: From the Matrix of Pure Appearances and Pristine Consciousness, a Tantra on the Self-Originating Nature of Existence' (*Dag snang ye shes drva pa las gnas lugs rang byung gi rgyud rdo rje'i snying po*):

> At the beginning stage, the lights of awareness, called vajra-strands, no broader than a hair's width, radiant like the sheen of gold, appear to move to and fro, never at

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[94] From the Greek *phos*, meaning light, and *phainein*, to show, phosphenes refer to visual events that originate within the eye and brain, either spontaneously through prolonged visual deprivation or intentionally as a result of direct stimulation of the retinal ganglion cells. A perceptual phenomenon common to all cultures, phosphene patterns are believed by some researchers to correlate with the geometry of the eye and the visual cortex. Tögal visions, however, often correlate more directly with entoptic (i.e., "within the eye") phenomena such as myodesopsia, the perception of gossamer like "floaters" suspended with the eye's vitreous humor, as well as leukocytes, or white blood cells, transiting through the eye's retinal capillaries and appearing subjectively as self-existing translucent orbs.

[95] The Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras are traditionally held to have originated with the semi-legendary figure of Garab Dorje (dga' rab rdo rje) and to have been transmitted through the subsequent Dzogchen masters Mañjuśrīmitra, Śrīsiṃha, Padmasambhava, Jñānasūtra, and Vimalamitra. In the eighth century, Vimalamitra's Tibetan student, Nyangban Tingzin Zangpo (myang ban ting 'dzin bzang po) was said to have concealed these teachings for future generations and it is only after their ostensible rediscovery in the eleventh century by Neten Dangma Lhungyal (gnas brtan ldang ma lhun rgyal) that the Seventeen Tantras became the basis of Nyingma's Dzogchen Nyingthik, or Heart Essence tradition.

> rest, like hairs moving in the breeze ... Then as you become more accustomed to the practice, they appear like strung pearls, and they slowly circle around the peripheries of the bindus of the absolute nature, like bees circling flowers. Their clear and lustrous appearance is an indication of the manifestation of awareness. Their fine, wavy shapes indicate liberation due to the channels, and their moving to and fro indicates liberation due to the vital energies.[96]

Dudjom Lingpa clarifies that, as a result of continued practice, the visions gradually stabilize and "appear in the forms of lattices and half-lattices, transparent like crystal, radiant like gold, and like necklaces of medium-sized strung crystals." Once the beginner's phase has passed, Dudjom Lingpa continues, "the visions of the absolute nature become beautiful, clear, and stable, and they take on various divine forms."[97]

The visions of Tögal gradually expand and encompass the "three bodies" (*sku gsum,* Skt. *trikāya*) of Dharmakāya, Sambhogakāya, and Nirmāṇakāya, referring, in Dzogchen, to Buddha Nature's inconceivable totality, luminous clarity, and spontaneous creativity. The visions arise through applying "key points" of posture, breath, and awareness associated with each of the three dimensions of reality. In distinction to the moving yogas of Tsalung Trulkhor, Tögal practice is performed while maintaining "three-fold motionlessness of body, eyes, and consciousness".[98] "Garland of Pearls" (*mu tig rin po che'i phreng ba*), one of the principal Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras, emphasizes the importance of three body positions (*bzhug stang*) described as "the postures of lion, elephant, and sage", corresponding to the Dharmakāya, Sambhogakāya, and Nirmāṇakāya, and by association with emptiness, clarity, and sensation (See Plate 6).[99] In the Dharmakāya posture of a seated lion (*chos sku bzhugs stang seng ge lta bu*) the torso is held upright (to allow the free flow of energy) with the soles of the feet placed together and the hands behind the heels in *vajra* fists (with the tips of the thumbs touching the base of the ring finger). The upper body is extended upwards with the chin tucked slightly inward (to suppress discursive thought) and the spine and back of the neck straightened so as to allow the free flow of vital energy through the cranial arteries and associated "light channels" connecting the heart and eyes. With the breath extended outward through gently parted teeth and lips and the abdomen

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[96] Wallace 2004: 302.

[97] Wallace 2004: 302.

[98] The earliest textual descriptions of Tögal are found in the Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras and their primary source, the 'Continuity of Sound'. All subsequent accounts of Tögal such as Jigme Lingpa's 'Supreme Mastery of Wisdom Awareness' quote extensively from the original Dzogchen Tantras while offering additional commentary.

[99] Personal communication, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, Kathmandu, Nepal, December 1993.

pulled slightly inward, the eyes are rolled inward (*ldog*) and upwards past an imagined protuberance at the crown of the head into the limitless expanse of inner and outer sky.[100] In the Sambhogakāya posture of a recumbent elephant, one's knees are drawn towards the chest (to increase metabolic heat) with the feet pointing backward and the elbows placed on the ground with the hands either positioned in front as *vajra* fists or supporting the chin (to inhibit coarse energy flow) as the spine elongates and the eyes gaze with soft-focus (*zur*) to the sides and ahead into pure visions reflecting the innate activity of conscious perception. In the Nirmāṇakāya posture of the sage (*ṛṣi*), one sits straight up (to open the channels and release the diaphragm) with the soles of the feet on the ground (to suppress the water element), one's knees and ankles together, and the arms crossed in front with elbows resting on the knees and the hands optionally tucked into the arm pits. As Jigme Lingpa clarifies in Supreme Mastery of Wisdom Awareness, "pulling the knees against the chest allows fire energy to blaze as luminous awareness. Slightly retracting the lower abdomen towards the spine inhibits discursive thought [presumably through the associated stimulation of the vagus nerve and the parasympathetic nervous system] while … placing the elbows on the knees with the hands in vajra fists and using them to support the throat equalizes heat and cold."[101] In the Sage posture the gaze is directed slightly downward through half-closed eyes to control the body's vital energies and still the mind. Jigme Lingpa points out that there are many other additional postures suitable for Tögal, but that "for the innumerable heirs of tantra who prefer simplicity, the three described here are sufficient."[102]

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[100] This gaze associated with the lion posture correlates with *śāmbhavīmudrā* in Hatḥa Yoga, which is popularly held to synchronize the two hemispheres of the brain and lead directly to samādhi. In regard to the three postures as a whole, the 'Continuity of Sound' specifies that "the crucial method is to apply reverted, lowered, and indirect gazes." As a result, in the lion posture "you will see with the vajra eye." In the posture of the recumbent elephant "you will see with the lotus eye" and in the posture of the squatting sage "you will see with the dharma eye." (Personal communication, Dhungtse Thinley Norbu Rinpoche, Kathmandu, Nepal, July 1987).

[101] See Dowman 2014: 49.

[102] Ibid.

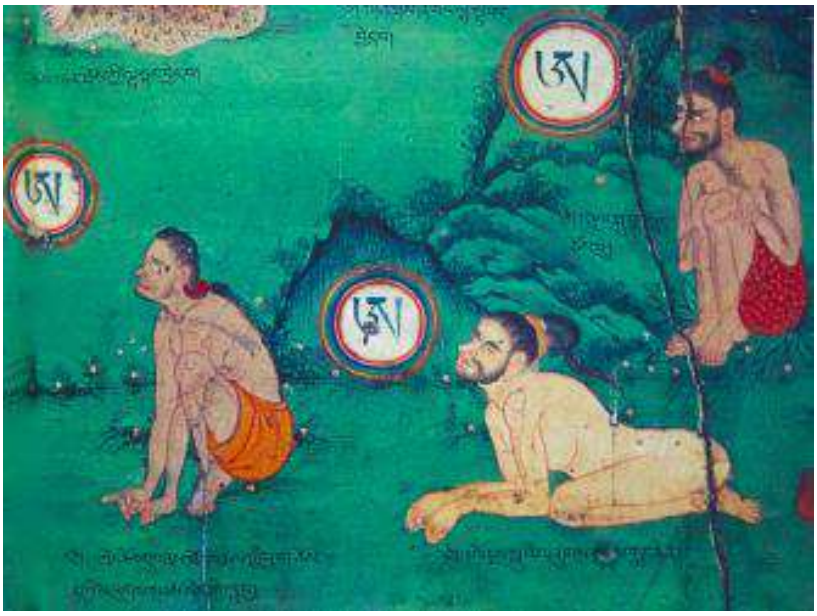

*Plate 6: The primary Tögal postures of lion, elephant, and sage, as illustrated on the western mural of the Lukhang temple in Lhasa, Tibet, circa 1700. The seed-syllable āḥ in the rainbow-encircled nimbus symbolizes the mind's primordial "alpha" state. Photo by Ian Baker.*

In distinction to the nasal breathing that is predominantly used during the dynamic movements of Trulkhor, Tögal postures are combined with extended and almost imperceptible exhalations through the mouth, with the lips and teeth slightly parted and the body in absolute repose.[103] Breathing in this way diminishes the amount of oxygen circulating in the lungs and is held to free consciousness from its conditioned "karmic winds" (*las kyi rlung*) so as to more effectively reveal the postulated "wisdom wind" (*ye shes kyi rlung*) in the heart through which consciousness ultimately transcends the physical body. For while Vajrayāna as a whole brings body, mind, and respiration into a renewed functional unity, Dzogchen ultimately maintains the supremacy of an integral awareness transcendent of the physical body. As such, the postures, breathing methods, and gazes associated with Tögal practice are ultimately designed to dissolve the physical constituents of the body at the time of death, transforming it into self-illuminating rainbow light. Central to this emancipating agenda are the embodied visions and progressive stages of "leaping over the skull" (*thod rgal*).

[103] Exhalation and inhalation in Tögal practice are ideally naturally suspended as in the Haṭha Yoga technique of *kevala kumbhaka* in which both breathing and mental activity are spontaneous stilled.

*Plate 7: A practitioner of Tögal contemplates the "vajra chain", manifesting as a "string of pearls" backlit by the sun. Northern mural, Lukhang Temple, Lhasa, Tibet. Photo by Ian Baker.*

Tögal practice relies on reflexive awareness of a unitary dimension transcendent of mental experience (*khregs chod*). It is also based on sustained awareness the body's interactive "channels of light" (*'od rtsa*) through which the innate luminescence of heart-consciousness (Skt. *citta*) is perceived outwardly in progressive, self-illuminating displays (See Plates 7 and 8).

As Padmasambhava declares in a chapter of the Khandro Nyingthik entitled 'The Hidden Oral Instruction of the Ḍākinī': "Other teachings differentiate between channels, energy, and subtle essences; [in the "heart essence" teachings] these three are indivisible."[104] Padmasambhava goes on to describe the human body as a Buddha Field infused by luminescent wisdom (*'od gsal ye shes*; Skt. *prabhāsvarajñāna*) in the same way that "oil [pervades] a sesame seed". The oral instructions further clarify how, in the practice of Tögal, the body's elemental constituents manifest as five lights (*'od lnga*) and four illuminating lamps (*sgron ma bzhi*), [105] held to be purified and expanded

[104] See Lipman 2010: 38.

[105] The four lamps represent somatic sources of illumination and are most commonly listed as the "all-encompassing watery eye lamp" (*rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*), the

expressions of Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas kyi go 'phang*). Through the specific postures, breathing methods, and gazing techniques of Tögal, the body's inner luminescence projects outward into the field of vision as spontaneously forming *maṇḍala*-s and optic yantras inseparable from innate enlightenment. As Padmasambhava summarizes: "The nature of one's body is radiant light."[106] Rising from its center is the "great golden *kati* channel" (*ka ti gser gyi rtsa chen*)[107] which issues from the heart and through which the five lights of one's essential nature radiate (*gdangs*) outward as five-fold wisdom (*ye shes lnga*) and four successive visions (*snang ba bzhi*) leading ultimately to the body's dematerialization at the time of death into a "rainbow body" (*'ja' lus*).

*Plate 8: A detail from the northern mural in the upper chamber of the Lukhang temple which illustrates Pema Lingpa's 'Secret Key to the Winds and Channels'. The "yak eye" manifesting within pellucid space at the right center of this image highlights the recursive vision characteristic of Tögal practice. Photo by Ian Baker.*

The Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) integral to Tögal practice occur sequentially and are said to arise from the heart as visible expressions of the innate dynamism of unconditioned awareness. They also represent the manifestation of the body's channels, winds, and vital essences in their subtler reality as primordial purity, spontaneous accomplishment, and radiant compassion (*ka*

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"lamp of empty essences" (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*), the "lamp of the pristine dimension of awareness" (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*), and the "lamp of naturally originated wisdom" (*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*).

[106] Lipman 2010: 57

[107] For an elaboration of light channels in Dzogchen see Scheidegger 2007.

*dag, lhun grub, thugs rje*) that correlate, in turn, with the interconnected triune Bodies of Enlightenment (*trikāya*). The visionary experiences are said to appear due to the "wind of luminosity" (*'od gsal gyi rlung*) that arises from the pristine "awareness wind" (*ye shes kyi rlung*) located in the heart. The four successive phases are described as the Direct Perception of the Ultimate Nature, the Vision of Increasing Experience, the Perfection of Intrinsic Awareness, and the Dissolution [of Phenomena] into the Ultimate Nature. Pema Lingpa points out in his fifteenth-century treasure text 'Secret Key to Channels and Winds' (*Rtsa rlung gsang ba'i lde mig*) that, as the visions are physiologically based, they only arise by maintaining the key points of physical posture, "just as the limbs of a snake only become apparent when it is squeezed."[108] The first vision arises as a result of turning one's attention to naturally occurring phenomena within the "watery lamp" of the eye, as described above by Dudjom Lingpa. Although the garlands of pearls, gossamer threads, *vajra* chains, and transiting orbs that initially appear within one's field of vision may have naturalistic explanations as eye "floaters" and magnified red and white blood cells[109] transiting through the retinal capillaries, the entoptic events nonetheless focus awareness towards normally overlooked phenomenological processes and illuminate the ways in which a shift in perspective, or change in the way one views things, can fundamentally alter subjective experience. Central to this process is what Jigme Lingpa clarifies as "inner spaciousness shining visibly outward" within a coalescent awareness in which boundaries between inside and outside no longer obtain. The visions of the innate (*lhun gyis grub pa*) radiance of the heart develop as shape-shifting phosphenes and optical symmetries that gradually manifest anthropomorphically as male and female Buddhas within spheres of rainbow-colored light. Penultimately they resolve into four spheres – signifying the photonic essence of the four primary elemental processes within the human body – surrounding a larger central orb signifying "space", or

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[108] For a translation of Terton Pema Lingpa's 'Secret Key to the Channels and Winds', see Baker 2012 and 2017. Pema Lingpa's treasure text illuminates the fundamental dynamics of mind and body at the heart of the Dzogchen tradition, specifically the ways in which primordial unitary awareness (*rig pa*) arises vibrantly and unconditionally in response to physiology and perception pushed beyond their accustomed limits in states of waking, sleeping, dreaming, sexuality, and near-death experiences.

[109] Tantric Buddhist physiology describes the body in terms of polarized red and white essences (*bindu,* Tib. *thig le*) that join at the heart at the moment of death or through tantric yogic praxis. This principle of complementary is anticipated in verse sixty of the *Yoga Chūdamani Upaniṣad*: "The *bindu* is of two types, white and red. The white is *śukla* (semen) and the red is *maharaj* (menstrual blood). The red *bindu* is established as the sun; the white *bindu* as the moon … When the red *bindu* (*Śakti*) moves upwards (the ascent of kuṇḍalinī,) by control of *prāṇa*, it mixes with the white *bindu* (*Śiva*) and one becomes divine. He who realizes the essential oneness of the two *bindus*, when the red *bindu* merges with the white *bindu*, alone knows yoga" (verses 60–64).

boundless potentiality.[110] The central circle dilates through steady foveal gaze, expanding beyond circumference or periphery as the inherent luminescence of unmodified consciousness. Practiced in environments of total darkness and expansive light, Tögal optimizes sensory perception and leads ultimately to the posited awakening of all-encompassing luminescent and spontaneously compassionate awareness, or Buddha Mind.[111]

## Conclusion

As this essay has hoped to emphasize, the word *haṭhayoga* first appears in Vajrayāna Buddhism's Guhyasamāja Tantra where it serves as an adjunct practice for facilitating visionary experience.[112] Although the specific method of that initial Haṭha Yoga technique remains obscure, its stated optical intention relates it with the recursive visionary practices of Tögal. More characteristic Haṭha Yoga practices involving physiological mudrā-s were introduced to Tibet through the Amṛtasiddhi while the practice of Fierce Heat (*gtum mo*) central to Tibetan Buddhist lineages from the time of Milarepa is based on the intensive application of the "great seal" (*mahābandha*) which combinines *mūlabandha, uḍḍiyāṇabandha,* and *jālandharabandha* in conjunction with retained "vase breaths" (*kumbhaka,* Tib. *bum pa chen*) and auxiliary "magical movements of the wheel of channels and winds" (*rtsa lung 'khrul 'khor*). Although the sequenced movements of Trulkhor predate the development of sequenced postural yoga in India and may have been directly influenced by indigenous Bön traditions, ritual dance, and yet unexplored historical connections with Chinese traditions of *dao yin*, they share a common soteriological method with

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[110] Comparisons can be made with "Haidinger's brush", an entoptic phenomenon in the visual field correlate of the macula in response to polarized light and associated with the circularly arranged geometry of foveal cones. The phenomenon appears most readily against the background of a blue sky and was first described in 1844 by the Austrian physicist Wilhelm Karl von Haidinger.

[111] For further details see Baker 2012 and 2017 and Baker & Laird 2011. As a practice of integral presence and recursive perception, Tögal can be considered a form of *sāmarasya* – the simultaneous practice of *dhārṇnā* (focused attention), *dhyāna* (contemplative meditation), and *samādhi* (coalescent unity) – leading to self-transcendent integration with the spontaneously arising visionary forms. From a Dzogchen perspective, the visionary phenomena are considered autonomous naturally unfolding perceptual processes based on the non-duality of subtle physiology and somatic awareness, resulting in a subjectively liberated experience of perception and reality.

[112] See Birch 2011: 535. "Visionary experience", in this context, can be associated with bringing conscious attention to subliminal perceptual events normally below the threshold of awareness. Research may ultimately suggest correspondences between interoceptive perception, i.e., supraliminal perception of autonomic physiological processes, and structural modifications of the anterior cingulate and, by extension, corresponding alterations of conscious awareness itself.

Indian Haṭha Yoga and rose to prominence during roughly the same time period, as exemplified in the murals depicting Pema Lingpa's mid-fifteenth century Trulkhor cycle entitled 'The Secret Key to the Channels and Winds' (*Rtsa rlung gsang ba'i lde mig*).[113]

As with Indian Haṭha Yoga, the somatic practices of Vajrayāna Buddhism use dynamic means to harmonize polarized modes of consciousness through the symbolic medium of the body's central channel (*madhyamā, madhyanāḍī, suṣumnā, avadhūti*).[114] They progress, in Dzogchen, to a reorientation of somatic and attentional processes and an awakening of the heart's posited potential as an organ of recursive perception. By directing attention to what is commonly overlooked the mind becomes increasingly aware of normally subconscious processes and thereby develops insight, clarity, and adaptability that contribute to an openness of being and expanded experience of human embodiment. Yoga and physical culture as described in Vajrayāna and Dzogchen ultimately transcend their Indian and Tibetan contexts and point towards the awakening of collective, if unrealized, human capacities. Forceful Haṭha Yoga-like practices ultimately matter less in this process of self-transcendence than the expanded consciousness represented by "leaping over the skull" (*thod rgal*). As a deeply embodied practice, Tögal literally alters physiological processes through changing the way bodily processes are perceived, intensifying subjective experience of the bodymind as well as one's relationship with the physical world.[115] The liberating reorientation of consciousness at the heart of Tögal is expressed concisely in the 'All Creating King Tantra' (*Kun byed rgyal po'i rgyud*, Skt. *Kulayarājatantra*), one of Dzogchen's earliest texts: "With no need of transformation or purification, pure presence [within the body] is perfected in itself."[116] Jigme Lingpa

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[113] See Baker 2012 and 2017.

[114] The central channel can be partly understood in contemporary medical terms in relation to the hypothalamic–pituitary–gonadal axis that regulates the flow of mood-altering hormones within the human body. Tibetan yogic pratices such as Fierce Heat (Tib. *gtum mo*) cultivate proprioceptive sensation along a bioenergetic current paralleling the spine and linking the pelvic region with the interior of the brain, thus subjectively uniting experiential poles of consciousness associated with these contrasting regions of human anatomy.

[115] It echoes, for example, Gregory Bateson's concept of "creative subjectivity" in which one, in part, functions as "an artist creating a composite out of inner and outer events" (quoted in Brockman 1977: 245).

[116] See Norbu & Clemente 1999: 146. The *Kun byed rGyal po* is considered the most important of the twenty-one texts of the "mind" series (*sems sde*) of Dzogchen, all of which emphasize the innately pure and expanded consciousness that is inseparable from enlightenment (*byang chub kyi sems*). The Kun byed rgyal po elaborates on more concise renditions of self-existing enlightenment such as found in the earlier six-line root text of 'The Cuckoo of Awareness' (*Rig pa'i khu byug*).

elaborates as follows: "The pith essence of the Great Perfection is to dwell in the natural radiance of all that occurs, at one with actions, energies, and thoughts and beyond all contrived boundaries of view and meditation; at ease in the naked clarity of the present moment."[117]

Awakening to transpersonal dimensions of consciousness absent of cognitive and emotional strife lies at the heart of Vajrayāna and Dzogchen, a process that involves seeing through the eyes of the heart into a world that is forever renewed by our perceptions and interactions. As this essay has hoped to show, Vajrayāna Buddhism, and its culmination in Dzogchen or 'Great Perfection', was originally infused with physical practices that, by pushing the mind and body beyond accustomed limits, revealed dormant human capacities, including enlightenment itself. Conventions of secrecy have caused these practices to become nearly extinct, whereas they are the very life essence of the Vajrayāna tradition. It's hoped that increased research and attention to the deeply embodied yogic practices at the roots of Tantric Buddhism in India and the Himalayan world will result in renewed interest in methods and techniques that have great relevance in the contemporary world and across cultures. As Pema Lingpa himself proclaimed in his Secret Key to the Winds and Channels, "By seeing reality just as it is, the conceptual mind naturally comes to rest … Free of conflicting views, everything arises in its intrinsic Luminesence … [and] the body itself is naturally enlightened!'

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