

Blessings of The Deity:  
Mahāyoga Self-Visualization in Relation to The Three Turnings

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## TECHNICAL NOTE REGARDING TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

The translations of Buddhist terminology are followed by the extended Wylie transliteration scheme proposed by the Tibetan & Himalayan Library.<sup>1</sup> This is necessary due to the Wylie system's limitation towards the Tibetan rendering of Sanskrit words. In disaccord with this system, I have elected to bypass the scheme of capitalizing the first letter of the transliterated Tibetan word. I find there is no need for those who possess the ability to read the transliteration, and it interferes with the uniformity of the flow. When deemed applicable, a semicolon and the US Library of Congress<sup>2</sup> transcription scheme of Sanskrit will follow the Tibetan transliteration. This results in the following format: (*Tibetan*; *Sanskrit*); e.g. (*sku*; *kāya*).

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.thlib.org/reference/transliteration/#!essay=/thl/ewts>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://collab.itc.virginia.edu/wiki/tibetan-script/Sanskrit%20and%20Prakrit%20Transliteration%20%26%20Transcription.html>

## ABSTRACT

*This paper concerns the similarities and differences between the practice of self-visualization as found in Mahāyoga and the main themes of the Three Turnings, namely: selflessness, emptiness, and buddha-nature. For this to be done, a foundation of the vehicles of the turnings is briefly presented for the clarification of their main themes. The conclusion draws together insights into how visualizing oneself as a deity teaches the three realizations. This is followed by a self-reflection on the practice's modern adaption.*

For Robyn Catchlove

To the dancing illusory display of *Padmasaṃbhava* [of] *Oḍḍiyāna* and *Vimalamitra*, the Lords [who] give rise to the structural ground of the profound secret teachings, to the empowered translator of the secret great treasury of *Ḍākinīs*, the great treasure revealer, *Jalü Dorje*, I supplicate.

To *Vārāhī* in the celestial *Sukhāvatī* and to *Metog Mandāra* in the [southwestern] continent of *Cāmara*, once again, you appeared posing as a human in order to benefit the teachings and beings. Having accomplished the deity, you attained the two-fold *siddhis*, to the Great Mother, the supreme *Ḍākinī*, I supplicate.

In the state where these mental creations, all phenomenal appearances, are illusory and perceived as a dream, free from hopes, apprehensions, and all biases of self and other, to the guardian of beings [who] offers protection [and] light rays of great bliss, I supplicate.

To the *nirmāṇakāya* [who] realized the direct experience of *dharmatā*, increased the visions of experience, [and is] the protector of the beings of the three realms, to [the one whose] awareness has reached its [full] measure, [who] overwhelmed delusions by splendor, and has exhausted all dharmas, to *Hevajra* I supplicate.

E MA HO: The summation of all the buddhas, the *dharmakāya* lama, inseparable from *Machig*, the Great Mother, endowed with kindness. I fervently supplicate from my heart. Bless [me] so the darkness of ignorance is cleared away. Bless me to be victorious over the four demons [who] cause delusory appearing spiritual pride and to realize the unborn *dharmakāya*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This translation has been formatted for the purpose of dedication. See Part VI for full translation and citations.



## METHODOLOGY

The current thesis intends to elucidate the correspondence between the self-visualization of the creation stage practice as found in *Mahāyoga* and the realizations of the Three Turnings: selflessness, emptiness, and buddha-nature. To accomplish this, I have chosen to investigate these aspects by relying upon textual analysis from translated commentaries by historical teachers including Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thayé (*'jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas*), Jigmed Lingpa (*jigs med gling pa*), Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo (*rong zom chos kyi bzang po*), Longchen Rabjam (*klong chen rab 'byams*), and Jamgön Mipham Gyamtso (*'jam mgon mi pham rgya mtsho*). In addition to these masters, the works of contemporary teachers like Dudjom Rinpoche (*bdud 'joms 'jigs bral ye shes rdo rje*) and the Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyamtso (*bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho*) are also included. This contributes a strong basis from which to work and gives the paper solid supportive lineage background. Additionally, articles and dissertations from modern scholars are utilized. These works broaden the scope of the investigation and gives the study a variegated view from a western lens. These additions provide supplementary angles for discussion, which allows for a more colorful spectrum of reflection.

While these main sources provide the foundation for this analysis, there can be no denying that the following research is a reflection of my own interpretation. I have tried to equalize this through utilizing sources that include both traditional and academic scholars. The hope is to moderate bias for greater balance in the presentation.

Even with these mitigation efforts, I concede that this approach will not eradicate bias. It is critically important to recognize bias to the extent possible, bring it into the open, and work with the circumstances. It is apparent that these biases are malleable and subject to change.

Keeping in mind the intention to mitigate this bias, a self-reflexive methodology is employed in accordance with the contemplative approach of Naropa University.

When a self-reflexive methodology is used, commentarial reflections are shown in italics. This offers a clear indication for the change of voice and helps avoid misaligning the objective and subjective modes of understanding. Not all italicized formats are reflections; however, the audience will find the pattern to be easily identifiable. In appropriate contexts, this method of scholarship has received support in modern academia and it is important that the academic field continues to expand to include self-reflexive methodology. The benefit of this methodol is that quantitative and qualitative aspects of learning can coincide, allowing the birth of embodied knowledge to take form in the individual and thus in society. For this reason, I support and elect to adopt this contemplative self-reflexive approach.

The conceptual framework selected for the presentation of this paper is through the viewpoints of doxography, praxis, and theory. The main doxographical structure is the Three Turnings in correlation with the nine vehicles of the *Nyingma* tradition. This is chosen since the translated text is from the *Nyingma* tradition. This organizational method offers the audience an accessible structure and promotes opportunities for them to drawn their own conclusions through the presented materials.

## **Part I: The Causal Vehicle**

### **Introduction:**

In recent decades, Tantric Buddhism of the Tibetan plateau has spread across the world. Descending upon modernity in exotic disguise; this dissemination of Buddhist teachings has been taken into the pop culture. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama is easily recognized throughout the world and held and as major figure of Buddhism for the mass populous, pictures of deities stream across the Internet, prayer flags line the streets of the French Market in New Orleans, and the term mindfulness has pervaded daily colloquialisms all the way up to corporate institutions. It is readily acknowledged the dissemination of the Buddhist teachings in the modern west is here to stay. Although its basic establishment is taking root, there is a twist, a disconnect, a disassociated stance between the approaches found in the Buddhist path as traditionally taught. From the perspective of the individual Buddhist traditions, it appears that the teachings, such as the relationship between the Three Turnings of the Wheel (*chos kyi 'khor lo rim pa gsum; tridharmacakra pravartana*)<sup>4</sup> and Tantric Buddhism are not being distinguished properly for popular culture in this present day genesis.

During observations of, and discussions with, various practitioners of Tantric Buddhism, this disconnection between modern understandings and traditional presentations of the Buddhist teaching seems prevalent.<sup>5</sup> Although none of the practitioners ever said so directly, the

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<sup>4</sup> The Three Turnings include (1) the Dharma Wheel of the Four Truths (*bden pa bzhi'i chos 'khor*), (2) the Dharma Wheel of the Lack of Characteristics (*mtshan nyid med pa'i chos 'khor*) (3) the Dharma Wheel of Fine, Complete Distinction (*legs par rnam par phye pa'i chos 'khor*). Robert Buswell and Donald Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 1068.

<sup>5</sup> This statement is not to generalize the practitioners of Tantric Buddhism. Rather, it is intended to point out a specific observed phenomenon, which is witnessed through involvement with these communities.

impression of bypassing the teachings of the “lower vehicles” is often perceived. There are practitioners of the Resultant Vehicle (*'bras bu'i theg pa; phalayāna*) who have a minuscule connection with the teachings of the Causal Vehicle of Characteristics (*rgyu'i mtshan nyid theg pa; lakṣaṇayāna*).<sup>6</sup> Traditional perspectives would question the ability of their practice to be of any veridical efficacy in realizing the three main points of the Three Turnings, namely, selflessness (*bdag med; anātman*), emptiness (*stong pa nyid; śūnyatā*), and the Womb of the Thus Gone One (*de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po; tathāgatarbha*; hereafter referred to as buddha-nature). This situation seems to reflect that most of the modern western tantric teachings are acquired through weekend retreats, information obtained through web searches and easily accessible books, and occasional visits to retreat centers far removed from cities.

However the Tantric Buddhist teachings are obtained, there are many people engaging in methods of attainment including the renowned and elaborate deity practices of the creation stage (*bskyed pa'i rim; utpattikrama*). These practitioners may not have economical privilege, means, or inspiration to access the teachings of the Causal Vehicle. Even if they were endowed with these opportunities, they might not have the time to invest in studying the systematic presentations of this vehicle given our fast-paced contemporary era. This raises the issues of: *Does the practice of visualizing oneself as a deity in the creation stage of Mahāyoga (rnal 'byor chen po; hereafter referred to as the Great Union) have the ability to teach the realizations of the Three Turnings? Do present day modern tantric practitioners need to have a basis in the Causal Vehicle prior to engaging in the creation stage practice? What is the shortcoming and strength of self-visualization to teach the subsequent realizations of the Three Turnings?* These

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<sup>6</sup> The Causal Vehicle consists of the teachings of the first three vehicles, the separation of the two truths, and a general praxis of renunciation. The Resultant Vehicle consists of the teachings of the tantras, the union of the two truths in the inner tantras, and the creation and completion stage. A quote of reference can be found on page 39, footnote 48.

questions will be answered as part of this paper, though the primary focus is the theory that states: visualizing oneself as a deity in the creation stage practice of the Great Union effectively teaches the three realizations of the Three Turnings.

I must acknowledge the bias held within this theory. It must be noted that this view is that of the Great Union, which views itself to be superior to the Three Turnings. Due to this notable bias, I am compelled to highlight the famous philosopher Francis Bacon:

The human understanding when it has once adopted an opinion (either as being the received opinion or as being agreeable to itself) draws all things else to support and agree with it. And found on the other side, yet these it either neglects and despises, or else by some distinction sets aside and rejects; in order that by this great and pernicious predetermination the authority of its former conclusions may remain inviolate.<sup>7</sup>

This quote alludes to, and underscores, a normative function of human cognitive predispositions, especially when the mind is looking to institute an ideology, creed, or theory. I must acknowledge this process in myself and state my intention to provide a multi-faceted examination of the proposed thesis statement.

A specific approach is necessary to effectively investigate these questions. Since a main feature of the creation stage is the self-visualization of deities (*lha*; *devaḥ*), the discussion must address the relationship between what are considered worldly gods and the meditational tantric deities (*yi dam*; *iṣṭhadevatā*) and how these relate to Abrahamic conceptions of god. The differences between Western and Buddhist ideologies concerning religion and God must be distinguished. Following this, the basic cosmological structures in foundational Buddhism and the role of gods of cyclic existence ( *‘khor ba*; *saṃsāra*) are presented.

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<sup>7</sup> Richard P. Hayes, “The Question of Doctrinalism in The Buddhist Epistemologists,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 52, no. 4 (1984): 645, accessed December 1, 2015.

These clarifications are followed by an overview of the doxographical structures of the Three Turnings and the Great Union imbued with their praxis and theory in accordance with the Ancient Tradition (*rnying ma'i lugs*). This establishes the context for examining self-visualization in general and presenting vital aspects of the practice in particular. This draws associations between the vehicles for the purpose of responding to the issues of inquiry.

To support the inquiries and responses, a text from the vehicle of the Great Union is translated. A diplomatic edition of this text is also provided. This text provides the audience a glimpse into the illustrious language and vocabulary of this genre of tantra and stands as a point of reference for the paper.

### **World Religious Views:**

Buddhism is a tradition in which the main aim is liberation.<sup>8</sup> Though the various forms of Buddhism have variegated practices in order to accomplish this goal, they are still oriented towards this initial target. In the First Turning, this liberation is accomplished primarily through the realization of selflessness, that one lacks an inherently permanent self. This is intriguing, to say the least, since, in the scheme of the world religions, as well as in commonly held everyday views like modern materialism, this would be deemed an absurdity. What is there to liberate if there is no permanent self?

The majority of the world religions propose some type of permanence: a permanent God, consciousness, soul, or the new ageism of the abiding sentience of the universe. With this outlook of a permanent basis, there is someone or something that can be saved, some type of

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<sup>8</sup> In the First Turning, liberation is intended for oneself and in the developments after the First Turning, liberation is intended for all sentient beings.

permanent sentience. From here on I will comment primarily on content and structure of these religions.

These traditions lean towards the ideology of soteriological methods and beliefs, which include some minute aspect of permanence. Taking into account the five major traditions of the world: the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and the eastern traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism, four fifths of these traditions propose some form of creator God. This God, an eternal being, usually removed from the world, has the desire and capability to create and destroy existence, has complete domain over its creation, and has the power of salvation.

This is a key aspect in the philosophical view of reality and the definition of religion for a vast number of modern western people. As for philosophy, this type of view takes on the name of theology, or the study of God. Theology is a word that is even being used by Buddhist scholars. *I think this is a misnomer when it comes to talking about the Buddhist doctrine.*<sup>9</sup> There is no need to speak of theology when discussing other forms of philosophy; likewise, what is the purpose of using the term for speaking about Buddhist thought? There are various other pedagogical means to talk about Buddhism, such as the fields of philosophy, phenomenology, ontology, and psychology. Since these are already established in the tradition, there is no need to develop a neologism that codifies the doctrinal principles of Buddhism. It is through theology that people attempt to find a basis of mutual relations between religions.<sup>10</sup>

The article, “Buddhist Emptiness and the Christian God,” which takes up these themes with an intention for reconciliation, offers a good example. In the article, the theologian Dr. John

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<sup>9</sup> I acknowledge the use of theology by Buddhist scholars can be used as a beneficial tool to allow the audience a foothold into Buddhist thought. Although this might be the case, I still do not hold this position since a person who is interested and capable of reading books and articles on theology is also capable of reading about other sub-classifications of philosophy.

<sup>10</sup> The discovery of mutual relations between the religions of the world through dialogue, research, books, and other means of inquiry, is beneficial for the world at large.

B. Cobb, Jr. describes the two ultimates of Buddhism and Christianity as relating with humans in two different ways. Cobb proposes two ultimates of reality: metaphysical ultimate and the principle ultimate.<sup>11</sup> The first, the metaphysical ultimate proposes the ultimate of Buddhist emptiness, the dependent origination (*rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba; pratītyasamutpāda*) of all phenomena. The later, the principle rightness, an adaptation from the work of Martin Heidegger and Alfred North Whitehead “is creativity, and creativity is nothing other than the many becoming one and being increased by one.”<sup>12</sup> Cobb implements these two realities and states that God is nothing more than summation of various phenomena that were originally separated. Although he presents these two ultimates, he explicitly states the formative work of the principle rightness is incomplete. Nevertheless, Cobb proceeds to state the metaphysical ultimate “is dependent co-origination, the many becoming one, creativity, or concrescence as such.”<sup>13</sup> Although I grant that Cobb is pressing the ultimates into more of a tantric convergence of relative and ultimate, I maintain that Cobb is conflating dependent co-origination with monism. He firmly states that these realities “are incommensurable” in the article’s conclusion.<sup>14</sup> The majority of Cobb’s expressions of emptiness and the template of the relative creativity are agreeable; however, the equating of emptiness with God, in the form of eternality and monism is untenable.<sup>15</sup> This is an example of theology misinterpreting the Abrahamic God with Buddhist ideals.

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<sup>11</sup> John B. Cobb, Jr., “Buddhist Emptiness and the Christian God,” *Journal of The American Academy of Religions* 45, no. 1 (1977): 11-25.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>15</sup> I do appreciate the dialogue by Dr. Cobb and his clarity and care he expresses throughout the article. It can be easily seen that his intention was beneficial and supportive of religious discourse.



Setting this aside, the definition of religion needs to be taken into consideration. This is important since religions, such as Buddhism, which establishes an ethos not concerned with a God, does not fall under the generalized term of religion. For instance, the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines religion as, “The service and worship of God or the supernatural, and the commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance.”<sup>16</sup> This definition is too exclusive and is largely based on the culture of external worship or belief and its portrayal of religion is based on the axis point of credo-centrism. By centralizing faith as the main aspect of religion, a protestant bias, the scope of analyzing religions becomes myopic. Imposing this upon Buddhist cosmology and doctrine silences the tradition and marginalizes the tradition. As Mircea Eliade stated, religions should express themselves “on their own plane of reference.”<sup>17</sup> Eliade is pointing to the elephant in the room, the slippery slope of human intellectual positioning in which new ideas are gathered, subsumed, and dissolved into already established bias. This is in accordance with the previously quoted statement by Francis Bacon. *It is appropriate to take into consideration the advice proposed by those who came before, especially pertaining to study of diverse and distinctive systems of thought.* Upholding credo-centrism skews the doctrinal view propounded by the discourses and treatises and leads an inquirer of good intention to adopt distorted understanding about Buddhism. In this case, the role, function, and placement of gods and tantric deities within Buddhism are deconstructed into a misaligned definition of religion.

For this reason, time is allotted to the clarification of gods in the greater scheme of Buddhism. An exposition of the relations between gods and deities is needed for understanding the placement of worldly gods. To do this, the following questions are addressed: *What is the*

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<sup>16</sup> “Definition of Religion.” *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Accessed January 20, 2016. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/religion>.

<sup>17</sup> Mircea Eliade, “History of Religions and a New Humanism,” *History of Religions* I, no. I (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962): 4.

*cosmological structure of Buddhism? Where is the placement of gods within that structure?*

*What is the difference between gods and tantric deities?*

### **Cosmology:**

The Buddhist cosmology does have gods within its structures, albeit the creator God is not an important theme. It is well known that the cosmological structure of Buddhism has been formatted from the cosmology of the Indic region. Foundational Buddhism, with its resolve of attaining nirvāṇa (*mya ngan las 'das pa*) does not have an issue with this appropriation. Rather, it adopts, alters, and utilizes the already established arrangement throughout the teachings.

Śākyamuni's enlightenment underneath the Bodhi Tree offers a solid example. In vignette, Śākyamuni was abiding in his newly discovered realization, his summation of actualization now referred to as enlightenment. Sitting under a tree, he contemplated this subtle, deep, and hard to fathom discovery. He wondered if there was anyone in the world who would be able to understand. A god was aware of the Buddha's contentment in not teaching, appeared in front of the Buddha, and supplicated:

Venerable sir, let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma; let the Fortunate One teach the Dhamma. There are beings with little dust in their eyes who are falling away because they do not hear the Dhamma. There will be those who will understand the Dhamma.

That is what Brahma Sahampati said. Having said that, he further said this:

[...] Rise up, O hero, victor in battle! O caravan leader, debt-free one, wander in the world. Teach the Dhamma, O Blessed One: There will be those who will understand."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*. Trans. Bhikku Bodhi (MA: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 232. This text is the translation of the *Samyutta-nikāya* as found in the Theravāda tradition of Southeast Asia. In the Sanskrit tradition, this text is the *Samyuktāgama* as found in the Sarvāstivāda school of the northern region of India. However, this specific story of Brahmā Sahāmpati is not found within the Sanskrit edition. See Mun-Keat Choong, "A Comparison of

According to this traditional scripture (*lung; āgama*),<sup>19</sup> it is the request of a god, *Brahma Sahampati* (*Brahmā Sahāṃpati*), the Lord of the world system (*'jig rten pa'i kham*; *lokadhātu*),<sup>20</sup> which spurs the compassion of the Buddha to teach. In addition, this early Buddhist inclusion of gods establishes a cosmological view in which there are other realms of existence distinctive from our own worldly states. Since this is the case, the structures of the cosmos need to be explained.

For the classifications of existence (*srid pa; bhava*) as described in the Buddhist tradition, there are the three realms of existence (*kham* *gsum; tridhātu*), which consist of the (1) desire realm (*'dod pa'i kham*; *kamadhātu*), (2) form realm (*gzugs kyi kham*; *rūpadhātu*), and (3) formless realm (*gzugs med pa'i kham*; *arūpyadhātu*). These three are further classified into the following figures:

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the Pāli and Chinese Versions of the *Brahma Saṃyutta*, a Collection of Early Buddhist Discourses on Brahmās, the Exalted Gods.” *Buddhist Studies Review*, 31.2 (2014): 181 and 187.

<sup>19</sup> The term *āgama* is Sanskrit terminology for the northern traditions and the corresponding Pāli rendering is *nikāya*.

<sup>20</sup> Choong, 185.

Figure 1:<sup>21</sup>

*Six classes of beings ('gro ba rigs drug) of the desire realm:*

Six Classes of Sentient Beings:		
ENGLISH	TIBETAN	SANSKRIT
Hell Beings	<i>dmyal ba</i>	<i>nārakaḥ</i>
Hungry Ghosts	<i>yi dwags</i>	<i>pretaḥ</i>
Animals	<i>dud 'gro</i>	<i>tiryak</i>
Humans	<i>mi</i>	<i>manuṣhyaḥ</i>
Jealous gods	<i>lha ma yin</i>	<i>asuraḥ</i>
Gods	<i>hla</i>	<i>devaḥ</i>

Figure 2:<sup>22</sup>

*The classification of the form realm consists of the four absorptions (bsam gtan bzhi; catvāri dhyāna):*

Four Absorptions of the Form Realm:		
The First Absorption	<i>bsam gtan dang po</i>	<i>prathamadhyāna</i>
The Second Absorption	<i>bsam gtan gnyis pa</i>	<i>Dvītiyadhyāna</i>
The Third Absorption	<i>bsam gtan gsum pa</i>	<i>trītiyadhyāna</i>
The Fourth Absorption	<i>bsam gtan bzhi pa</i>	<i>Caturthadhyāna</i>

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<sup>21</sup> Buswell, 1076.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 1068.

Figure 3:<sup>23</sup>

The classification of the formless realm (*gzugs med kyi kham*s; *arūpyadhātu*) consists of the Four Immaterial Absorptions (*gzugs med kyi snyoms 'jug*; *arūpyāvacaradhyāna*):

Four Absorptions of the Formless Realm:		
Infinite Space	<i>nam mkha' mtha' yas skye mched</i>	<i>ākāśānantyāyatana</i>
Infinite Consciousness	<i>rnam shes mtha' yas skye mched</i>	<i>vijñānānantyāyatana</i>
Nothing Whatsoever	<i>ci yang med pa'i skye mched</i>	<i>ākīñcanyāyatana</i>
Neither Perception nor Nonperception	<i>'dus shes med 'du shes med min skye mched</i>	<i>naivasamjñānasamjñāyatana</i>

Figure 4:

The classification of the three realms of cyclic existence:

Cosmological Realms of Cyclic Existence:		
Desire Realm	Form Realm	Formless Realm
Hell Realm	First Concentration	Infinite space
Hungry Ghost Realm	Second Concentration	Infinite consciousness
Animal Realm	Third Concentration	Nothing whatsoever
Human Realm	Fourth Concentration	Without Existence and Not Without Existence
Jealous Gods Realm		
God Realm		

<sup>23</sup> Buswell, 1070.

As shown, the cyclic realms of existence can conceivably be organized into a multitude of classifications. As it may be, bearing on the theme of this annotation, one arrangement suffices for the purposes of presentation.

A main theme to be emphasized in this cosmological scheme is the notion that all of cyclic existence is impermanent (*mi rtag pa; anitya*). This is a crucial point in the functions of Buddhist cosmology. Due to this, *all* gods established within its structures are confined within the universal law of impermanence. These gods have been born under the confines of causes and conditions; therefore, they have the characteristic of being compounded (*'du byas kyi mtshan nyid*). They are compounded phenomena (*'du byas kyi chos*) because they are in impermanent cyclic existence. Conversely, if these gods were not compounded and impermanent, they would not have a function in the cosmological structure; their classification of sentience would therefore be non-existent. Since they are compounded and impermanent, they are not eternal beings.

The realms of existence also entail the notion of suffering (*sdug bsngal; duḥkhaḥ*). These gods who live in pleasure groves and states of blissful happiness experience dissatisfaction once they realize their lives are coming to an end. Taking this into a soteriological theme, what would be the benefit of worshipping a god, beseeching them to save oneself, when they are still stuck in cyclic existence? The Buddhist praxis and theory does not teach exclusively spending a life in devotion to these gods of cyclic existence. According to Indic tradition, one can supplicate and worship these gods for worldly means because the gods are able to effect impermanent existence. Although I agree with this praxis and theory, I must propose that devotion is a beneficial mental event for beings striving for liberation. Buddhist tradition would support this, but prefers the devotion place to a buddha, who is free from the suffering of existence. Regardless, there can be

benefits to worshipping gods abiding in the realms; however, the energy spent in these endeavors can be more efficiently allocated to the path of liberation.

It is additionally advantageous to focus ones' cathectic undertakings towards the devotion to the Buddhist path, rather than the worship of worldly gods. Traditionally, the Buddha is known to be the teacher of the gods. In the *Samyuktāgama*, the *Brahmā Baka* holds that his life and his world are eternal. In this situation, Buddha Śākyamuni reads *Baka's* mind and travels to the his god realm in order to teach the *Brahmā Baka* in accordance with the middle way of Buddhism.<sup>24</sup>

Within the same scripture, the Buddha, along with four Worthy Ones (*dgra bcom pa*, *arhat*), travel to another god realm to teach an unnamed *Brahmā* who thinks his world is superior to all else. Choong writes, "Having appeared in the *Brahmā* world, the Buddha sits cross-legged in meditation in the air above that *Brahmā*. The other four great disciples of the Buddha also sit cross-legged in meditation in the air above the *Brahmā*, but at a lower level than the Buddha."<sup>25</sup> Choong states this placement of the Buddha and the Worthy Ones places them in a superior role to the *Brahmā* and the tradition would agree. It is important to notice that this illustration places the *Brahmā* below human disciples of the Buddha. This simple visual subordinates the hierarchical cosmological structure to the buddhas and exhibits the value and placement of human beings traversing the path.

In conclusion, the deities of the three realms are no other than sentient migrators with a vast wealth of merit. Although they can be endowed with extrasensory perceptions and long lasting pleasurable lives, they are still conditioned like those of the various realms. These gods are not the ones described in the presentation of tantric meditational deities, who bestow the

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<sup>24</sup> Choong, 186.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 186.

common and supreme accomplishments (*dnegos grub; siddhi*). The cosmomlogical gods are not endowed with powers of salvation because they are sentient beings bound in the confines of cyclic existence. It is the deities of tantra, who are highly realized *bodhisattvas* and fully enlightened beings, are able to support the tantric practitioner in realization.

### **Doxographical Structure of The Ancient Tradition:**

The dissemination of the Buddhist teachings in Tibet occurred in two separate periods, namely, the earlier propagation (*snga dar*) and the later propagation (*phyi dar*).<sup>26</sup> The first division, the earlier propagation, stretched from the 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century CE and is mostly attributed to the king, Trisong Detsen (*khri srong lde btsan*; ruling from 754-799).<sup>27</sup> He invited Buddhist teachers including the five great masters (*slob dpon chen po lnga*), such as Ācārya Śāntarakṣita (*slob dpon zhi ba 'tsho*) and Padmasaṃbhava (*padma 'byung gnas*), to establish the Buddhist teachings.<sup>28</sup> The Ancient Tradition was established from these initial proliferations of teachings.

As for the Ancient Tradition, Reginald Ray's *Secret of the Vajra World*, proclaims, "Prior to the later spreading, however, while the bulk of the various traditions later understood as Nyingmapa were in existence, there was no self-conscious school by that name. All of these

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<sup>26</sup> The second propagation gave rise to the New Traditions (*gsar ma 'i lugs*), which consists of three main traditions: the Tradition of Virtue (*dge lugs pa*), Oral Lineage (*bka' brgyud*), and the Grey Earth (*sa skya pa*).

<sup>27</sup> Buswell, 434.

<sup>28</sup> Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals & History*, trans. Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein. (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 1991), 510-522. Eva M. Dargyay gives the beginnings of the Ancient Tradition ranging from the 4<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> century CE. Her classification is in dependence upon the Tibetan tradition and the scholars of her time. For more details see Eva M Dargyay, *The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet*. (Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers PVT. LTD., reprint, 1998), 4-11.



traditions were simply known as *chö*, Tibetan for the Sanskrit term *dharma*.<sup>29</sup> Along the same lines, Eva M. Dargya's *The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet* attributes the codification of the Ancient Tradition only after the arrival of Atiśa in 1042 CE.<sup>30</sup> My understanding supports Ray and Dargyay's assertion that what is now referred to as *Nyingma*, the Ancient Tradition, did not call itself by this term, which makes sense with the chronological development of traditions. In accordance with their tradition, present day western practitioners often state that they practice e.g. "*Nyingma*." Although this statement serves a function, I maintain it is more globally and historically accurate to state that one practices the teachings (*chos*, *dharmāḥ*), in reference to the instructions of the Buddha. More simply put, one practices the dharma. By extension, this would also include the western neologism of Buddhism. Both Ray and Dargyay's writings point to this general aspect.

Regardless of what it is referred to, the Ancient Tradition stands as one of the four major schools in Tibet. The Ancient Tradition doxographically classifies the path into the nine vehicles (*theg pa dgu*). This organization allows an approachable template to delve into various vehicles and their proposed themes. The classification reflects the view held by those who constructed it. In this case, the Ancient Tradition proposes a hierarchical scheme in which the subtleties of praxis and theory become more profound throughout the vehicles. Through this doxography, the influence of Buddhist tantra on the Ancient Tradition is also easily notable. One could say Tantric Buddhism is a hallmark of the Ancient Tradition. In modern times, it is well known that the Ancient Tradition emphasizes the tantric teachings, especially that of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs pa chen po*; *atiyoga*), a synonym of the ninth vehicle. Yet, on the one hand, it is

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<sup>29</sup> Reginald Ray, *Secret of the Vajra World: The Tantric Buddhism of Tibet*. (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2001), 35.

<sup>30</sup> Dargyay, 6.

recognized, at least in the doxographical formulation, that its basis is the glomeration of the Three Turnings. As a result, this paper is concerned with the connection between the Causal Vehicle and the Resultant Vehicles in praxis and theory.

Figure 5.31

*Doxographical structure of the Ancient School in conjunction with the Three Turnings*

The Nine Vehicles						
Causal Vehicle			Resultant Vehicle			
			Outer Tantras		Inner Tantras	
Turnings of the Wheel	Sanskrit	Tibetan	Sanskrit	Tibetan	Sanskrit	Tibetan
First Turning	Śrāvakayāna	<i>nyan thos kyi theg pa</i>	Kriyātantra	<i>bya ba'i rgyud kyi theg pa</i>	Mahāyoga	<i>rnal 'byor chen po'i theg pa</i>
	Pratyekabuddhayāna	<i>rang rgyal ba'i theg pa</i>	Caryātantra	<i>spyod pa'i rgyud kyi theg pa</i>	Anuyoga	<i>rjes su rnal 'byor gyi theg pa</i>
Second Turning	Bodhisattvayāna	<i>byang chub sems dpa'i theg pa</i>	Yogatantra	<i>rnal 'byor gyi rgyud kyi theg pa</i>	Atiyoga	<i>rdzog pa chen po shin tu rnal 'byor gyi theg pa</i>
Third Turning						

<sup>31</sup> Dudjom, *Glossary of Enumerations in The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, 164.

### The Three Turnings:

As an introduction to the Three Turnings and their subsequent realizations, it is important to establish the intention for this presentation. This is a brief presentation intended to touch upon the main themes of the individual turnings. There is no objective to give detailed commentary regarding these teachings or to thoroughly explain them, since specified discussions of the elucidations of the materials can be found elsewhere. The details presented herein are posited to serve as a basis for reflecting upon the connections with the creation stage and to offer support in answering the methodological questions.

### First Turning:

Within the doxographical structure applied by the Ancient Tradition, the First Turning encompasses the teachings of the Vehicle of Hearers (*nyan thos kyi theg pa; śrāvakayāna*), which encompasses the philosophical tenets (*grub mtha', siddhānta*) of the Followers of the *Vibhāṣā* (*bya brag smra ba; vaibhāṣika*) and Followers of Sūtra (*mdo sde pa; sautrāntika*), and the Vehicle of Solitary Buddhas (*rang rgyal ba'i theg pa; pratyekabuddhayāna*).<sup>32</sup> The main themes of this vehicle include selflessness of persons, impermanence, and suffering. These can be subsumed in teachings such as the Four Noble Truths and dependent origination.

A well-known teaching of this vehicle is the teaching of the Noble Eightfold Path. This teaching is categorized by the three trainings (*bslab pa gsum; trīṣikṣā*): higher wisdom (*shes rab; prajñā*), discipline (*tshul khrims; śīla*), and concentration (*ting nge 'dzin; samādhi*). The practices of the First Turning arise from these categories and include the study of the teachings, engagement in right conduct, and meditations such as the Four Foundations of Mindfulness

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<sup>32</sup> Dudjom, 156,158,159.

(*dran pa nye bar bzhag pa bzhi; catuḥ-smṛtyupasthāna*). The main themes of the praxis include the renunciation of cyclic existence, the cultivation of virtue, the abandonment wrongful deeds, taming the mind, and the investigation into the self of persons by means of meditation.

The two vehicles within the First Turning are mutually exclusive. A major distinction is the method and realization between these Hearers and the Solitary Buddhas. The latter lacks a teacher in this life, meditates upon the twelve links of dependent origination (*rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba'i yan lag bcu gnyis; dvādaśāṅga-pratītyasamutpāda*), and realizes one and “half” of the selflessness of phenomena.<sup>33</sup> In short this is the realization of the selflessness of persons and phenomena, which is distinguished by the fixation of the momentary mind. This clinging to the momentary mind is what makes it one half selflessness in comparison to the twofold selflessness of the Great Vehicle (*theg pa chen po; mahāyāna*).

In practicality, the teachings of the First Turning speak to the *truth of being human*. The teachings are concerned with eliminating the suffering experienced by the mind. All humans experience some sort of dissatisfaction within their lives, and this is the *truth of being human*. Though this system of teachings is coarse and sensible for everyday living, it does not mean the teachings are not profound. The realizations of momentary phenomena and the selflessness of persons establish an extremely high bar for any ordinary being on the path. This being said, the teachings of the First Turning are highly applicable for the human life.

## **Second Turning:**

As for the doxographical structure of the Ancient Tradition, the Second Turning encompasses the Vehicle of [Those Endowed with] The Heroic Mind [Intent Upon]

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<sup>33</sup> Dudjom, 159.

Enlightenment (*byang chub sems dpa'i theg pa; bodhisattvayāna*; hereafter referred by its Sanskrit name). The practitioners of this turning (*dbu ma pa; mādhyamika*) uphold the Centrism (*dbu ma; madhyamaka*) philosophical view. These practitioners of Centrism are classified in terms of their approach to logical formations. The sub-classifications of Autonomists (*rang rgyud pa; svātantrika*) use the views of the Followers of Sūtra or the Followers of Yoga (*rnal 'byor spyod pa; yogācārin*) as a basis for their explanations of the relative truth. The sub-classification of the Consequentialists (*thal 'gyur pa; prāsaṅgika*) do not base their logical formulations upon the basis of other views; rather, their syllogism are formed by making absurd consequences based on the assertions of the opponents.

The main teaching of the Second Turning includes the doctrines of emptiness, compassion (*snying rje; karuṇā*), the six perfections (*pha rol tu phyin pa drug; ṣaṭ pāramitāḥ*), and the ten stages (*sa cu; daśa bhūmi*). A well-known teaching is the *Heart Sūtra* (*shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i mdo'i snying po; prajñāpāramitāhriḍaya*), which encapsulates the teachings of emptiness.

To realize emptiness, the bodhisattva engages in the two accumulations (*tshogs gnyis; saṃbharo dvividhaḥ*) of merit and wisdom. Over three incalculable eons, bodhisattvas acquire these two through practices respective to the accumulation. Merit is accumulated through the practice of the first five perfections such as generosity, discipline, and so forth. The perfection of the accumulation of merit results in the form body (*gzugs kyi sku; rūpakāya*) of a buddha. Wisdom is accumulated through the practice of analytical meditation, particularly on the emptiness of all phenomena. It is the sixth perfection that is imbued into the other five acts in order for them to be labeled as perfections. They are known as perfections because the agent, object, action, and receiver are not findable under the analysis of the perfection of wisdom. The

perfection of the accumulation of wisdom results in the reality body (*chos kyi sku; dharmakāya*) of a buddha. The main themes of the praxis include the vow to never abandon cyclic existence, the engagement of the perfections, analytical meditation upon emptiness, and action endowed with the intention to benefit all beings.

The Second Turning invites the practitioner to investigate not only the self of persons, but also the self of phenomena. This inclusive investigation allows the practitioner to investigate the entirety of their experience and to realize the *reality of being human*. This vehicle pivots upon the experience of emptiness that is familiar to all people. It is this subtle experience that the ego tries to obscure by reifying the self of persons and of phenomena.

The Second Turning also delves into the *reality of being human* by engaging the conceptual mind. Human conceptions are a distinct feature to the advancement as a civilization and to the epidemic delusion of reality. The analytical meditations in the Second Turning allow practitioners to investigate how the functions and limits of the conceptual mind. The logical formations used in analytical meditation sharpen the intellectual capability of the conceptual mind through engaging in syllogisms. The investigation into the conceptual structure of reality through the use of reasoning induces inferences into all phenomena. Abiding within the acquired inference leads a practitioner to a new realization of reality. It is through process like analytical meditation that the bodhisattvas purify the two obscurations (*sgrib pa gnyis; āvaraṇa dvitidhaḥ*) that veil the realization of the emptiness, the *reality of being human*.

### **Third Turning:**

The doxography of the Ancient Tradition does not place the Third Turning into its own vehicle. The teachings and the practices of the Third Turning are subsumed under the Great

Vehicle, the *bodhisattvayāna*. Similar to the Second Turning, the followers of this vehicle are referred to as *bodhisattvas*, although the practitioners of the tenet system within this vehicle are called the Followers of Yoga. In addition, the discourses on buddha-nature are established within this turning though they never developed into a distinctive system.

The main themes of this turning include suchness (*chos nyid*; *dharmatā*), luminosity (*'od gsal ba*; *prabhāsvara*), and buddha-nature. Well-known teachings include mere mind (*sems tsam*; *cittamātra*), the three natures (*mtshan nyid gsum*), and the eight consciousnesses (*rnam par shes pa brgyad*). Texts associated with this turning include the *Discourse of Unraveling the Thought* (*dgongs pa nges par 'grel pa'i mdo*; *saṃdhinirmocana sūtra*), *Distinguishing Phenomena from Suchness* (*chos dang chos nyid rnam par 'byed pa*; *dharma dharmatā vibhāga*), and the *Great Vehicle Treatise on the Highest Continuum* (*theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos*; *mahāyānottaratantra śāstra*).<sup>34</sup>

Due to its inclusion within the Great Vehicle, the practices of the Third Turning are in accordance with the Second Turning. However, because of the difference in presentation of the Third Turning, the meditation practices will have a different flavor. This aspect can be seen in the application of the four yogas (*rnal 'byor bzhi*).

In its core, the teachings of the Third Turning accentuate the *essence of being human*. It continually reminds practitioners of their inseparability from experiences and the qualities abiding in the awakened mind. It is a turning that introduces the pleasant essence of each human and acknowledges all sentient beings as valuable. Recognizing the basis of all beings as the highest wisdom naturally gives rise to this appreciation. Through this, the *essence of being human*, the buddha-nature, is certainly uncovered.

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<sup>34</sup> This text is registered in the library of congress as the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.



Figure 6:<sup>35</sup>

The Three Turnings of The Wheel of Dharma				
Turning	Vehicle	Tenet	Teachings	Realization
First	Śrāvakayāna	Vaibhāṣika Sautrāntika	Four Truths, Dependent Origination	Selflessness of Persons
	Pratyekabuddhayāna			One and One-half Selflessness
Second	Bodhisattvayāna	Madhyamaka	Emptiness	Emptiness (Two-fold selflessness)
Third		Yogācāra	Buddha- nature, Mind-Only	Emptiness endow with the supreme qualities

## **Part II: The Foundations of Tantric Buddhism in the Ancient Tradition**

In the tantric tradition of Buddhism, vast collections of methods are used for worldly and soteriological aims. Through undertaking the methods of the Mantra Vehicle (*sngags kyi theg pa; mantrayāna*), one's access to skillful means is dramatically increased. Because of its treasure trove of techniques, a practitioner will quickly acquire the two accumulations, thus resulting in the divine goal of undeniably attaining complete enlightenment (*yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub; samyaksambodhi*). A key fixture for this swift path is the practice of magical formulas (*sngags; mantra*) and the visualization of deities. These features are distinguishing demarcations between the Causal Vehicle and the Resultant Vehicle.

Initially, Tantric Buddhism is anciently known as the path of mantra (*mantranaya*). In clarification upon this word and its relations, in *Buddhist Thought*, Anthony Tribe proposes that this term was first used for denoting the initial development of tantric Buddhism.<sup>36</sup> He indicates that the term *Vajrayāna* first appeared in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and does not completely equate to

<sup>35</sup> Data sourced from Dudjom's *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*. See references.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Williams and Anthony Tribe. *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction To The Indian Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2000), 196-197.

Buddhist tantra. In addition, the *Vajrayāna* ideal of attaining enlightenment in one life is not established “for tantric Buddhism overall, which had no such goal for perhaps its first four hundred years.”<sup>37</sup> This statement correlates with chronological development of tantrism, especially regarding the outer classification of tantra. For example, these outer tantras are not necessarily capable of producing enlightenment in a single life. Mipham Rinpoche asserts that enlightenment obtained through the outer tantras will take sixteen, seven, or three life times to achieve.<sup>38</sup> In one aspect, this presents the strength of the tantric vehicles and their ability to obtain enlightenment much faster than three incalculable eons. Yet in another, it shows that tantra has not completely separated itself from Causal Vehicle.

To illustrate, in *Buddhist Thought*, Anthony Tribe paraphrases David Snellgrove’s statement that the *Kriyā* texts should not be separated into another vehicle apart from the Great Vehicle.<sup>39</sup> Tribe moreover asserts the *Kriyā* texts are used for worldly aims, and they do not suggest “they can be used to attain awakening.”<sup>40</sup> According to his proposal, it seems that these *Kriyā* texts are essentially manuals for amassing merit and fulfilling the aspiration to be beneficial to all sentient beings. There is no wonder why a correlation exists between the *Kriyā* texts and that of the Great Vehicle since the difference heavily relies upon the variance of method, such as the practitioner of the *Kriyā* texts meditating on appearances as deities and repeating mantras.

In reference to Tribe’s suggestion that the texts do not suggest being utilized to attain

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<sup>37</sup> Williams, 196.

<sup>38</sup> Longchen Rabjam, *Buddha Mind: An Anthology of Longchen Rabjam’s Writing on Dzogpa Chenpo*, trans. by Tülku Thondup Rinpoche and edited by Harold Talbott. (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1989), 17-20.

<sup>39</sup> Williams, 207, referenceing, (1987a) *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and their Tibetan Successors*, London and Boston: Serindia and Shambhala, 232-234.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

awakening: even if texts do not explicitly state, “they can be used to attain awakening,” this does not equate to a disagreement with the tradition. Tribe’s comment does not conflict with Mipham’s assertion because the texts he references are in Buddhist lineages and are intended for the path of awakening. It must also be noted that that *Kriyātantra* emphasizes pure conduct and actions, which aligns with the accumulation of merit and the praxis of the Causal Vehicle. Traditionally it is not the case that the accumulation is sufficient to obtain complete enlightenment. Though merit and conduct are emphasized in the *Kriyātantra* does not mean that its methods are devoid of the accumulation of wisdom because the practice of alternating analytical meditation is employed.<sup>41</sup> While this proposal only puts forth an example of *Kriyātantra*, it is important to show that cusp between the Great Vehicle and the chronological development of the first tantras.

Although there is a chronological and methodological overlap with the Great Vehicle and the genesis of the tantras, some distinguishing factors of *Mantrayāna* are critical to note. A key feature of the tantric methods is the inclusion of taking appearances on the path, which is principally utilized by practitioners in the creation stage. Where as in the Causal Vehicle appearances are not taken on the path because of the split of relative and absolute truths. In *Buddhist Thought*, Anthony Tribe itemizes other distinguishment of tantric methods: 1) centrality of ritual, 2) centrality of mantras, 3) visualization and self-identification with the deity, 4) initiation and secrecy, 5) the teacher (*bla ma*, *guru*), 6) maṇḍalas, 7) antinomian acts, 8) reassessment of the body, 9) reassessment of the status of women, 10), reassessment of mental states, and 11) analogical thinking.<sup>42</sup> What does this list connotatively display for Buddhist

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<sup>41</sup> Tsong-ka-pa and the Dalai Lama. *Deity Yoga*, trans. Jeffrey Hopkins. (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1981),41.

<sup>42</sup> Williams, 197-202.

tantra? This enumeration of features accustomed to tantric practice is not only describing its practice but is also an attempt to define tantra. Looking up the etymology of the term or its definition is efficaciously miniscule concerning what the word encompasses. Although Tribe is not presenting a definition for the term, he is establishing its boundaries. Through this, he asserts the application of a “polythetic” definition.<sup>43</sup> The application of this formative definition refers to the complexities of attempting to define the tantric system. For example, if someone were to ask, “What is the definition of tantra?” There would be no issue in giving a brief explanation in a few words. After all the *Guhyasamāja* states, “Tantra is defined as a continuity.”<sup>44</sup>

This condensed answer does not encompass the totality of what the term tantra signifies because of the polythetic nature of the tantric practices and texts. Tantra is too rich in diversity to be fully equated in a terse definition, and doing so haphazardly displaces important features. There is a functional reason for describing Tantric Buddhism rather than defining it. *For this reason, I propose beginning with simplistic key points of tantrism and subsequently elaborating in dependence upon the further questions of the inquirer.*

Utilizing Tribe’s list of features offers a keen look into the functions of the *Mantrayāna* and *Vajrayāna*. In terms of this thesis, the use of rituals concerning the inner tantric visualization and self-identification with the deity is the important feature to highlight.

### **Part III: Modes of Tantric Accomplishment**

Two main modes of practice exist within the inner tantric vehicles, the practice of the creation stage and the completion stage (*rdzogs pa'i rim*; *sampannakrama*). The way in which practitioners take the worldly appearances on the path is primarily through the method of the

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<sup>43</sup> Williams, 197.

<sup>44</sup> Dudjom, 262.

creation stage. This stage is paramount to the practice of tantra and is traditionally deemed as a prerequisite to the completion stage yogas. Those practitioners of the creation stage (*bskyed pa'i rim pa*) are able to integrate their conceptual mind in a way that is not found in the Causal Vehicle. Integrating the conceptual mind in a manner that appropriates all appearances as aspects of the deity is a method that can swiftly morph one's perception and engagement with the world. Through the creation stage meditation, daily conceptions are serviceable tools on the path. The conceptual mind mistakes the phenomena of the world, clings, to its creations, and causes widespread suffering. For this reason, practitioners of the creation stage directly engage, investigate, utilize, and transform the conceptual mind as a means for purification and perfection.

### **Purification:**

This aspect of our experience, the conceptual mind, needs to be purified in order to disclose the unalterable nature of reality. It is not to be purified in the sense of the conceptual mind being treated as a negative obstacle. Even though the conceptual mind is obscured by delusions, it is still a clear and aware mind.<sup>45</sup> The conceptual stains that confuse, veil, and obscure the realization of reality, are polished away. Once these fetters are cleared, there is still a role for a functioning conceptual mind. If the conceptual mind was eradicated, then from the perspective of a sentient being, how did the historical Buddha Śākyamuni propound the teachings? From the viewpoint of sentient being, they need to initially be taught by a conceptual framework in order to adjust their epistemological misunderstanding of reality. However, from the side of the Buddha the teachings spontaneously manifest without the need for conceptions.

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<sup>45</sup> The definition of mind is clear and aware. The conceptual mind is included in this definition. Tenpa Gyaltzen, "Third Turning of The Wheel" (lecture at Naropa University, Boulder, CO, Spring Semester, 2015).

Since the conceptual mind of an ordinary being is unpurified, false views are projected upon all experiences. This includes believing in dichotomies such as good and bad, pure and impure, hope and fear, and so on until one is entangled in a limitless web of tainted beliefs. This infinite web is accepted as normal experience through immeasurable cycles of birth. Emotional upheavals are based and justified upon this acceptance. *“It is completely normal for me to get mad at a person who cut me off in traffic and for me to yell at them. They are being an idiot and I was here first!”* This mental engagement of placing bias and judgment upon experiences is undercut in the tantric tradition. This is especially true in the creation stage of the Great Union where all relative appearances including conceptual thought are realized as equality.<sup>46</sup> For instance, the *Sequence of the Path* states: “The great vehicle of skillful means, however, does not divide even relative appearances according to purity and suffering.”<sup>47</sup> By means of this view of the Great Union, the theory of the path is greatly differentiated from the Causal Vehicle. The engagement of the conceptual mind takes on a new flavor for the practitioner of tantra (*sngags pa; tāntrika*). The misapprehensions of the conceptual mind can be thoroughly transformed through this lens of the world.

### **Basis:**

It has been recognized that the continuous mental creations concerning reality and clinging to them leads sentient beings down the road of delusion and suffering. For the creation stage, these mental creations are the catalyst for purification. It is important to note that these creations are not the *basis* in which the process of purification takes place. It states in the *Heruka Gyaplo*:

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<sup>46</sup> Dudjom, 275-276.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 245.

Through the causal vehicle of dialectics, mind-as-such is perceived as the cause of buddhahood. Through the resultant vehicle of mantras, mind-as-such is meditated upon as buddhahood.<sup>48</sup>

This portion of text refers to the difference between the Causal and Resultant Vehicles and illuminates the basis of the Resultant Vehicle, which is the awakened mind of the buddha. In other words, the pure and uncontaminated awakened mind, which is obscured by confusion in sentient beings, is the basis for the purification itself. This reference acknowledges the basis as already established and is not produced through causality. The presentation of the unproduced enlightened mind is posited in the outer and inner tantras respectively.

Along the same lines, Jamgön Kongtrül states, “The basis of purification is the eternal, non-composite realm of reality that fully permeates all beings as the buddha nature.”<sup>49</sup> In the view of all tantric Buddhism, the basis of all beings and the root for purification is already completely awakened. In contrast, if it was presented that the basis was impure and deluded by obscurations, then the basis would be conditioned and impermanent. If this were the case, the process of removing the obscurations would result in the removal of the basis itself. This would cause an absolute void and would not concord with the teachings because it would fall into the extreme of nihilism. Also, the realization of complete awakening would be a temporary experience and the realizer would immediately be deluded due to its impermanent nature. Fortunately, according to tantric Buddhism, the basis is posited as the awakened mind, and being the result to be obtained, is turned into the path. *How marvelous.*

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>49</sup> Jamgön Kongtrül, *Creation and Completion: Essential Points of Tantric Meditation*, trans. Sarah Harding (Wisdom Publications, 2002), 8. Further clarification about the meaning of the eternal realm of reality can be found in texts concerning the *tathāgatagarbha*.

The presentation of the basis also proposes the role of agency on the tantric path. Tribe noted the role of the teacher as a main feature of Tantric Buddhism, although, he overlooked or took for granted the agency of the practitioner. Concerning the creation stage, the practitioner needs to be an active agent in the path such as visualizing oneself as a deity in order to reflect the basis. If there were no acceptance of being an active agent, the creation stage yoga would cause further delusions because the loss of this agency causes distraction and a dismissal into falsified dreams. *In its own way, the agency to enter into the path is the basis of the awakened mind shining through. The agency entails the quality of settling into what is already present, the basis. This is in contrast to an agency in which one aggressively causes oneself to change.*

### **Means of Accomplishing:**

A tantric meditation in which one can purify the two obscurations covering the continuum of the basis is deity yoga (*lha yi rnal 'byor*; *devatāyoga*).<sup>50</sup> This style of meditation is found in the ritual meditation manuals that present the means of accomplishing (*sgrub thabs*; *sādhana*s) the deity.<sup>51</sup> This system uses the creations and projections of the mind as the means to awakening.<sup>52</sup> The power of these creations is used to visualize pure manifestations of deities and celestial mansion, effectively allowing practitioners to redefine their outlook towards outer and inner worlds. The tradition places emphasis upon the three concentrations (*ting nge 'dzin gsum*) and the three aspects in order to effectively practice this mode of meditation.

- **Three Concentrations:**

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<sup>50</sup> Kongtrül, 41-42.

<sup>51</sup> Buswell, 234.

<sup>52</sup> Kongtrül, 9.



Upon entering the Great Union's practice of visualizing oneself as a deity, practitioners of the creation stage can engage in the three concentrations: 1) the suchness concentration (*de bzhin nyid kyi ting nge 'dzin*), 2) the all-illuminating concentration (*kun tu snang ba'i ting nge 'dzin*), and 3) the concentration on the cause (*rgyu'i ting nge 'dzin*).<sup>53</sup> In fact, the *Miraculous Key of Further Discernment* states: "The entrance of Mahāyoga is effected by the threefold contemplation."<sup>54</sup> These are the bedrock of the meditation, must not be overlooked, and they need to be thoroughly established within the practice.<sup>55</sup> The development and contemplation of all three concentrations is imperative for the self-visualization of the Great Union to effectively teach the three realizations.

○ **The Suchness Concentration:**

The first concentration allows time for the practitioner to contemplate emptiness. For the Buddhist teaching, emptiness is the reason why there can be myriads of manifestations. As stated in the *Mūlamadhyamaka-Kārikā*, "Where emptiness is granted, everything is likewise granted. Where emptiness is unacceptable, all is likewise unacceptable."<sup>56</sup> This is not a "my way or the highway" mentality. It is a view that allows for limitless appearances including the visualization of a deity.

This concentration is devoid of any visualization but is not devoid of the deity because it is the meditation upon the ultimate deity, emptiness.<sup>57</sup> Within the texts, this concentration can be preceded by the following mantra: *oṃ svabhāva śuddaḥ sarva darmāḥ svabhāva śuddho 'haṃ*

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<sup>53</sup> Jigme Lingpa, *Treasury of Precious Qualities: The Rain of Joy, Volume 2*, trans. Padmakara Translation Group, Shambhala Publications Inc., 2010. 147-148.

<sup>54</sup> Dudjom, 360.

<sup>55</sup> Lingpa, 396-397.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 397.

<sup>57</sup> Tsong-ka-pa, 104.

(Om all phenomena are naturally pure; naturally pure am I).<sup>58</sup> This proclamation expounds the profound view before the start of the meditation. It is the hallmark of all Buddhist tantra to begin the visualizations from the state of emptiness (*stong pa'i ngang las*). To accomplish this concentration, it is suitable to adopt the Madhyamaka reasonings to facilitate understanding.<sup>59</sup> By doing so, the practice is done in conjunction with the wisdom of emptiness and aligns with the doctrine propounded by the Three Turnings.

The first concentration also establishes the relationship between the practitioner and the deity. By contemplating the emptiness of all phenomena, the visualized deity and the practitioner are both subsumed into the ultimate. The self of the practitioner and the self of the deity are both empty of inherent existence. In this way, the practitioners approach to the deity is swift because there is a common basis for the dialectical relationship. This common basis is the emptiness of all phenomena, the emptiness of the awakened mind itself. For this reason, one begins the creation stage by meditating on the suchness concentration.

*Subsequent Purification:*

In addition to being a meditation on emptiness, the *suchness concentration* is also a meditation on death.<sup>60</sup> This concentration is said to purify death, because in the middle way there are no phenomenological extremes. The meditation on death within the suchness concentration shows the practitioner there is no inherent self that could die and the extremes of existence and nihilism, the boundaries of life and death are lost through this contemplation. As such, the

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<sup>58</sup> Jeffrey Hopkins, *Tantric Techniques* (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2008), 47. Thought this mantra is not found within the reference translation, it is a common feature Buddhist tantra.

<sup>59</sup> Hopkins, 48. Depending on one's level of realization, it is not always applicable to adopt Madhyamaka analysis. For instance, the generation of a deity can be produced instantly and not in a gradual form.

<sup>60</sup> Lingpa, 135.

conceptualizations are exhausted, or at least diminished. This allows the mental sphere open for the birth of the deity to begin.

○ **The All-Illuminating Concentration:**

The second phase of the three concentrations involves the natural luminosity of the mind. This brilliance is compassion itself and a quality of the awakened mind. It is by means of the clear light of compassion that the emanated body of the deity manifests.

The second concentration refers to the luminous qualities of emptiness. Through the first concentration, the second concentration arises in a form of compassion. It is an expression of wisdom that was displayed by Buddha Śākyamuni with his decision to teach. This emptiness endowed with luminous compassion creates the opportunity for the causal seed of the deity to take form. Emptiness devoid of luminosity, or the first concentration's exclusion of the second, does not establish a means for the deity to arise and reifies into a form of nihilism, or in juxtaposition, the second concentration reifies into eternalism. The extremes of nihilism and eternalism are avoided within the blending of the first two concentrations. The inseparability of the concentrations allows a sense of illusion in regards to the meditative experience. From this, luminous compassion, all appearances are a) purified by emptiness and b) experienced as illusory because of being non-locatable luminosity.

*Subsequent Purification:*

Kongtrül briefly states the second concentration purifies the mental body of the intermediate state between life and death (*bardo*).<sup>61</sup> According to Buddhist teachings, there is a continuation of the consciousness when death occurs. The mind before death is an immediately proceeding cause leading to the next moment of mind. This mind is described differently by the

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<sup>61</sup> Kongtrül, 43.

various tenet systems of the tradition; however it is described, the mental body is still perpetuated.

A question that may arise is, “How does one begin to conceive of this mental body?” One only has to think of the body experienced in a dream state. The mental creation of a dream body does not need to have a specific form, shape, or even be an anatomical modern human. It is essentially limitless in its appearance. Regardless of how it displays, the luminous appearance is known to be one’s illusory appearance.

With this in mind, the second concentration purifies this grasping to the body in a dream or in the intermediate state through the contemplation of the illusory luminosity. By giving rise and devoting time to this concentration, clinging to the mental body gradually loses strength and is purified in its release.

#### ○ **The Concentration on The Cause:**

The final concentration in which the deity is born resembles the birth of a human.<sup>62</sup> From the prior two concentrations of suchness and luminosity, the purified appearance in the form of a deity is born. One way to do this is the concentration of visualizing the lotus, sun and moon discs, and the seed syllable of the corresponding deity.

These initial visualized objects manifest from the desire to help sentient beings. This wish to be of benefit commences in the suchness concentration. The wisdom that arises from the first concentration recognizes the illusory nature of phenomenal appearances. This recognition, the empty and luminous cognizance, desires to help sentient beings come to this realization as well. However, the wisdom of the first two concentrations is disembodied and needs to manifest in

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<sup>62</sup> Kongtrül, 14.

order to engage within the world. Consequently, it visualizes the lotus, celestial disks, and causal seed to inaugurate its manifestation.

*Subsequent purification:*

The third concentration is the purification of the birthing process, and each of these objects corresponds to individual factors of the birth. For example, the lotus is the physical base for conception, the sun represents the feminine principle of wisdom and the ovum, the moon represents the masculine principle of skillful means and the sperm, and the seed-syllable is the consciousness entering from the intermediate state between life and death.<sup>63</sup> The symbolism of a pure birth is developed through the visualization process. Rather than viewing these symbols as degraded phenomena that give rise to a body of suffering, the process is shifted into a view of purity. This is due to the practicing the previous concentrations. This shift is of great importance, because it is the first opportunity to see appearances as pure in accordance with the relative truth of the Great Union.

*This opportunity to recognize the purity of phenomenal appearances can be brought into daily experiences. With each blink of the eye, experience goes from no visual appearances, nothing but emptiness-luminosity, to a bursting forth of vision. This ordinary aspect of life is presented within the concentrations themselves. Initially the concentrations are sequential and are individually developed; however, one can see that it can be integrated in one instance. This nominal moment of the mind giving birth to visual appearances is a daily occurrence in which the three concentrations can be applied.*

With the view of the Great Union, first objects that appear to the mind are recognized to be completely pure just like the deity. This gives individuals an opportunity to experience the

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<sup>63</sup> Kongtrül, 43- 45.

world in a different light. After habitual meditation of visualizing and recognizing the purity of the visual appearances, shift of appreciation naturally occurs in post-meditation.

These three aspects are of utmost importance for those integrating the path of Tantric Buddhism. This is due to the importance of the foundations of emptiness, luminosity and causal effect of appearances found within the Buddhist teachings. Jigmed Lingpa states, “The generation stage practice endowed with the three concentrations is the best of all paths of skillful means. It is the unmistakable method of Mantra.”<sup>64</sup> The integration of the three concentrations integrates the three realizations of the Three Turnings and supports Lingpa’s assertion. A practice of the deity yoga devoid of the three concentrations does not accord with the Buddhist teachings because the realizations of the Three Turnings are disregarded.

*Auspiciously, prior to each practice session, my text reminds me of these three concentrations, which are the foundation for visualization practice. These concentrations remind me of previous study, experiences, and oral instructions. This reminder is not in a sense of logical sequence but rather an opportunity to recall all that I have learned and condense it into the practice.*

- **Three Aspects:**

Since the prerequisite concentrations have been established in the mental sphere, one can give birth to the visualization of the meditational deity (*yi dam*; *iṣṭa-devatā*). Once the symbolic deity (*dam tshig sems dpa'*, *samayasattva*) appears, one can adopt the three aspects of visualization, namely: clarity (*rnam par gsal ba*), recollecting purity (*rnam dag dren pa*), and pride of the deity (*nga rgyal brtan pa*).<sup>65</sup> These three allow the mind to settle by applying

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<sup>64</sup> Lingpa, 148.

<sup>65</sup> Kongtrül, 46.

concentration to a clearly appearing object, purifying attachments by means of pure vision (*dag snang*), and recollecting one's pure buddha-nature.

○ **Clarity:**

A coarse examination of the term clarity (*gsal ba*), means for something to be unobscured, explicit, and clear. This aspect means creating a stable appearance of the deity, which offers the mind a place to rest. The visualizations of deities and divine surroundings are not separate from any other object of resting practice (*zhi gnas; śamatha*). Although the visualization of a deity is a tantric practice, it is important to acknowledge that all meditations need to be imbued with this aspect of clear resting.

The key point of this coarse examination of the word is acknowledging the need for stability. A meditation devoid of clarity will be empty of penetrating higher insight (*lhag mthong; vipaśyanā*) because the mind will be unstable. With the foundation of clarity, the creation stage can offer the mind fertile ground for the union (*zung 'juk; yuga-naddha*) of calm-abiding and higher insight in accordance with its specific tantric vehicle. For insight to arise by means of visualization, the tradition proposes that clarity is needed in order to have any basis for a non-conceptual cognition of reality.

In addition, a subtle consideration of the term points out the brilliant nature, the luminosity of the mind. The Tibetan words break into light (*'od*) and clear (*gsal ba*), and this can be tied to the definition of mind (*blo; buddhi*), that which is clear and aware.<sup>66</sup> Light is the mind's inherent capability to illuminate and cognize objects. This light equates with the aware (*rig pa; vidyā*) aspect of the mind. The metaphorical equating of the synonym of light with

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<sup>66</sup> Gyaltsen.

awareness communicates the Buddhist teachings that mind being non-material and luminous cognizance.

Clear also refers to the non-substantiality of the mind, its lack of material substance, and its inability to be contacted by the five senses. The aspect of clarity reminds the practitioner of the natural purity of the mind, its inability to be stained by any experience, and in tantric terms, the divine appearance of the deity.<sup>67</sup>

The essence of this examination is encapsulated in the first factor of the definition of mind and the first of three aspects of visualization practice. However, the literal and common translation of “clear light” is a misguided understanding because it can be taken to mean the mind is a substantial phenomenon made of light. For this reason, the metaphorical expression of luminosity is better suited for textual translations.

A practitioner needs to apply effort in order to integrate the aspect of clarity into practice. This effort is not like a strained physical exercise, but rather a practice of continuously returning to the object of meditation, visualizing oneself as a deity. This returning is a basis of all meditation practices, since the mind will continue to wander off into distraction. It will be more difficult to steady and focus the mind because the object of meditation is visualized. The appearance of the deity is imagined by the effort of the conceptual mind and its appearance is a mere projection of the mind. *Just because something is occurring only in the mind does not make it any less real. The visualized deity is just as real as the wisdom deity (ye shes sems dpa'; jñānasattva), and as real as I think I am, but that reality is one of luminous emptiness.* Effort is needed because the visualized appearance is highly unstable and cannot perpetuate its own continuum. Because of this, it is highly beneficial to apply effort in the space of an open and

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<sup>67</sup> Gyaltsen.



restful mind. This is the meaning of continuous effort with regard to integrating visualization into practice.

Through the application of relaxed and focused effort, the deity can become vividly stable and help bring about a tangible quality of actuality to the deity. The stability and vividness allows the practitioner to feel the complete presence of the deity as oneself, the integration of the third aspect of the pride of the deity, and enables a cathectic response in the practitioner. This emotional identification with the visualization during meditation allows the practitioner to go beyond mere concepts into the realm of embodied understanding, thus accomplishing the aspect of clarity. Upon research, the latter two aspects can be subsumed into the first because once a practitioner accomplishes the aspect of clarity, the following two would necessarily be present. The clarity of the visualization points out the natural purity of the mind, its complete display of qualities, and the stability allows the cultivation of divine pride to be blended with the form of the deity.

○ **Recollecting Purity:**

The second aspect is recollecting the purity of the appearing deity, which includes knowing and remembering the symbolic meanings of the symbols and attributes.<sup>68</sup> The deities have a vast array of various implements, ornaments, attire, postures, and facial expressions. All these directly show the pure qualities of the deity, the qualities of mind. While the words of the conceptual mind merely point to the symbolism of these attributes, the non-conceptual mind is able to fully engender the meaning of the symbols. This opens the recognition of the mental sphere past the limitations of rationality. *I personally find the study of the discourses, logic, and explanations imperative to the overall understanding of Buddhism. The essence of personal*

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<sup>68</sup> Kongtrül, 47.

*understanding can suffuse the visualized objects in a semiological way if the teachings are understood. This opens an avenue to embody abstract tenets of philosophical thought and gives form to one's experiential understanding within a purified object.*

In the initial stages of recollecting the purity of the visualization, one may have a tendency to jump around from implement to implement, from which the first aspect of clarity and stabilization is lost. The recollection of purity does not equate to the forgetting to generate a clear visualization. Kongtrül suggests that one should get back to the basics of the visualization if this occurs by returning to the overall appearance of the deity and meditating on the it as empty light.<sup>69</sup> The clarity and purity aspects are intermixed through the application of his instruction and the aspects are re-established. *I agree with Kongtrül because my experience with such practices confirms the simple efficacy of this instruction to reestablish the visualization.* It is important to acknowledge the theme of emptiness, luminosity, and appearance with his advice. In his instruction, Kongtrül advocates rebalancing the mind by blending the Second and Third Turning with the practice of the creation stage. He effectively demonstrates that the appearance of the deity is the summation of these two turnings because the appearing deity is luminous-emptiness.

In sum, the purity of the deity is beyond all extremes and conceptions. Even though the visualization of the deity is contrived by the mind, it teaches the purity of all phenomena. This characteristic of the purity of the imagination allows a person the opportunity to relax in unsullied conceptions. When conceptions such as good and bad arise, one can recognize them to be the deity, recollect their purity of the conceptual mind and its objects, and bring the practice off the cushion and into one's daily life.

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<sup>69</sup> Kongtrül, 47.

○ **Pride of the Deity:**

The final aspect to adopt when engaging in deity yoga is to cultivate the pride of the deity (*lha'i nga rgyal*; *devamāna*). What is the purpose of developing pride in a system devoid of an inherent self? The purpose in developing pride in the deity is to invoke the enlightened qualities within oneself. Taking self-assurance that one is capable of benefiting beings and that one possesses the ability to attain enlightenment. With the confidence of being the deity, the qualities of satisfaction and wholeness allow space for spontaneous presence and the unhindered willingness to be of help to others manifest. One is naturally concerned for others because one is endowed with a sense of complete fulfillment and is not concerned with self-gratification.

*In my life, when I am not busied with the concerns of my “to do” list, I feel fulfilled and open. From this somatic experience, I naturally notice the people and the environment around me. The tendencies for me to be preoccupied with my objectives, focused on my goals, and myopic in my view, hinder my willingness to be of help to others. I undeniably attribute this experience of openness to taking confidence in the buddha within; the more I develop and take refuge in it, the more the qualities manifest.*

Kongtrül writes, “Maintaining pride vanquishes clinging to ordinary self.”<sup>70</sup> In an aspect of clarification, the development and continuance of the divine pride directly confronts the notion of not being an awakened being. Within the structure of formal meditation, the gradual maturity of divine pride points out the fluidity of identity. Unlike switching one’s personality, divine pride orients the awareness of the practitioner to realize what abides behind the mask of

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<sup>70</sup> Kongtrül, 47.

“permanent identity.” The pride of the deity is crucial to recognizing one’s buddha-nature, the reflexive awareness beyond conceptual frameworks.

Distinguishing this point is like differentiating the waves from the ocean. The conceptual manifestations arise like waves arising from the ocean. Instead on focusing on each wave and being carried away by the rip current of conceptions, one can focus on the ocean and see that the waves are not separate from the ocean. Like the all-pervading ocean to the wave, emptiness naturally pervades all of our concepts, including the concept of a permanent self. For this reason, having divine pride lets the practitioners look beyond their idiosyncratic tendencies of being an ordinary deluded being and recognize the pride of being an awakened deity.

This divine confidence helps combat the habitual tendencies of self-deprecation. The divine confidence counterbalances grasping upon misconceived understandings about reality. This third aspect continually reminds the practitioners of the completely fulfilled wealth of pristine qualities that is covered by misconceptions. The pride of the deity is an opportunity to live from the standpoint of this pure confidence of being. Abiding within this perspective everyday allows an acceptance and release of self-depreciative language and thoughts. The solidity in believing those thoughts to be true diminishes and the confidence of being a pure being begins to flourish from adopting the pride of the deity.

These six attributes of tantric meditation: the suchness concentration – the all illuminating concentration – the concentration on the cause – clarity – purity – and the pride of the deity - must be known, integrated, and made indivisible when visualizing oneself as a deity. Because they are the general points of the instructions for the creation stage, they must never be forgotten. Through these six attributes are the link between the realizations of the Three Turnings and the self-visualization practice of the Great Union.

#### **Part IV: Correlations of The Three Turnings and Self-Visualization of The Great Union**

Buddhist tantra encompasses myriad methods to help the practitioner realize the awakened nature that abides within each moment. One of the methods that is widely adopted and misunderstood is the practice of the creation stage in which one visualizes oneself as a deity. For those who have not had the opportunity to hear clear and precise explanations of tantric deities, it is hard to fathom why a pantheon that is outside the cosmological functions of cyclic existence, exists within Buddhism. Outsiders of the tantric tradition could easily assert there is no point to these self-visualizations. In the Three Turnings, a practitioner is meditating to realize selflessness, emptiness, and buddha-nature, not the realization of a divine god! The method of the creation stage is a corruption of the Buddhist teachings for these critics. However, this technique is affirmed to be efficacious to understanding to veridical teachings of the Three Turnings once it is properly explained.

The vehicle of the Great Union can use anything for the benefit of waking up to reality and this inclusion of appearances is not explicitly confined to a formal meditation practice. Thinking in such terms implies tantra is only for the cushion and that view is quite myopic. The tradition does acknowledge the importance of formal practice sessions for the development of the visualizations. The seemingly intricate visualizations of the creation stage simply uses the natural attributes of the mind and is not equated with the superfluous dreams of an ideal being. Even though the practice involves various offerings, rituals, and detailed visualization, it is not separate from the ordinary human experience. On the contrary, this practice utilizes the richness of the human experience and thoroughly engages these experiences to free the mind without adding unnecessary mental constructs. What can be deemed as gratuitous elaborate ritual and

visualization is nothing more than allowing and applying mental fabrications to be serviceable to the path. The mental constructs of sentient beings can be self-criticizing and self-deprecating internally and hyperbolic and arrogant outwardly. The practice of visualization turns these naturally occurring images of the world and turns them positive.

Since the mind constructs concepts about the perceived world and the identity, the creation stage brings the mind and its stream of limitless creations to the path. Visualization is a very ordinary expression of the mind, such as the perpetual creation of the inherent “I.” This ingenuity of the mind can be overlooked and uprooted in non-tantric realms of spiritualism. However, the tantric practice of the creation stage seizes the power of creation for the purposes of analyzing experience far exceeding a granular understanding.

### **The Truth of Being Human:**

The process begins at the level of being human, the level of the First Turning. This is concerned with the realization of selflessness, which liberates one from the perpetual suffering of cyclic existence. It is stated in the First Turning that a permanent self does not exist within the five aggregates (*phung po; skandha*). This is understood through the realization that all compounded phenomena are momentary and are in a continuous cyclic flux of arising, abiding, and ceasing. For this main reason, the self that is imposed upon the aggregates is a mere suggestion. It is a contradiction to state that a permanent self exists within, or is composed of, impermanent phenomena.

From the point of view of the proponents of the First Turning, the practice of deity yoga is a reification of a permanent self upon the aggregates. However, this is not the case from the standpoint of the practitioners of the Great Union. For them, deity yoga is not antithetical to the

realization of selflessness because the deity is not confined to the correlations of impermanent and permanent. The visualized deity does not function within these two classifications of phenomena. It is not a permanent self of persons and it is not an impermanent and conditioned phenomena. The deity teaches selflessness through the process of avoiding eternalism and nihilism through symbolic representation. When one visualizes oneself as a deity, the teaching of selflessness is imbued within that divine appearance.

Though both approaches propose the realization of selflessness, the tantric method differs because it does not dismiss impermanence or emphasizing particular moments of mind. Rather, the self-visualization teaches selflessness through *transitional un-coupling*. The concept of having a permanent self is *transitioned* to the divine form of the deity and this process effectively demonstrates the a) lack of substantiality of the concept of the self of persons and b) replaces it with the form of a deity endowed with symbolic representations.

The symbology of the deity distinguishes the divine form from the non-existent permanent self. The entire appearance of the deity is an object in the mental sphere displayed for the purpose of conducting analysis into the lack of a permanent self. This conceptual object magnetizes and condenses the teachings of selflessness into a single pure object. Everything about its form exists to remind the practitioner of impermanence and selflessness. For example, in the translated practice in Part VI, bone ornaments, charnel ground attire, and corpses express the theme of impermanence and selflessness throughout the visualization. These objects are symbolically imbued with these two realizations. Through reflecting upon such objects, the contemplations of impermanence and selflessness have the capacity to reach completion.

Moreover, the symbolic form reflects the realization of selflessness through the act of transitioning the concept of oneself to the divine form. To the practitioners, it is well known that

the visualization is being created by the mind. Even though this is a creation, the practitioner immerses into the form and its environment. Once the inception of full transition has occurred, the grasping mind can find no other object on which to place the concept of “I.” Thus, one realizes that the concept of “I” is only an established fabrication based upon some experienced phenomena.

This method of transition mimics the daily, un-recognized process that sentient beings self impose. People fabricate who they think they are and posit, “I am John Doe.” The claim to have a permanent self that is established upon the aggregates is the *truth of being human*. Juxtaposed to this establishment is the transitional method of the self-visualization of the creation stage. When this process of *transition* is fully accomplished, one no longer grasps on to the person one once was, but is *un-coupled* from the past concept of that self.

Does this mean that the grasping is then transferred onto the deified form? Essentially yes. This grasping in an acquisition of realizing one has the nature of the deity. This is not a problem for the practices of the inner tantras, since desire is carried onto the path. Consequently, it must be noted there exists a difference between the hedonistic desire to be absorbed in sensual pleasures and the desire to be free from cyclic existence. It is this latter desire that leads practitioners to the realization of selflessness in a tantric context. Furthermore, this desire is necessary to aspire to equate oneself with the deity from the perspective of divine pride.

One might object that there are people with cognitive disabilities with unstable personalities, multiple personalities, or complete amnesia. Surely, such forgetting of oneself is not equated with selflessness. The realization of tantric selflessness is not a simple change of personality or forgetting oneself and is not an unstable state of being or a continuous state of



non-remembrance. It is pointing out that the conceptual “I” that is reified as oneself is unstable and fabricated.

Practitioners of deity yoga can benefit from studying the foundations of the First Turning. Even Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo, who continually upholds the Resultant view as supreme, employs the epistemology of the Causal Vehicle in his explanations of tantra.<sup>71</sup> He does not fall into casting out all teachings of the Causal Vehicle; rather, he uses them to his advantage. In the same way, studying and understanding the teachings of the First Turning is an effective and supportive method for realizing selflessness in the practice of self-visualization.

### **The Reality of Being Human:**

The practice of self-visualization of the creation stages really flourishes within the Second Turning. In fact, the entire structure of the cosmos has expanded to include thousands of buddhas and bodhisattvas, some of whom are found within the tantric practice manuals. The overall view of the phenomenal world has profoundly deepened and is more inclusive. In fact, Nāgārjuna states, “Where there is appropriate understanding of emptiness, all things are appropriate, and when there is no appropriate understanding of emptiness, nothing is.”<sup>72</sup> This quote pertains to the correct view (*yang dag pa'i lta ba*; *samyak drṣṭi*) of the Second Turning and expresses the opportunity to embrace the practice of the creation stage. Nāgārjuna’s assertion is the essence of each technique used on the path. Studying, contemplating, and meditating on the view of the Second Turning allows practitioners to use methods such as visualizing oneself as a deity without corrupting the teachings or falling into the two extremes of eternalism and

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<sup>71</sup> Heidi I. Köppl, *Establishing Appearances as Divine* (MA: Snow Lion, 2008), 42.

<sup>72</sup> Kongtrül, 51.

nihilism. Nāgārjuna additionally promotes the use of any efficacious means to purify the two obscurations as long as the view is appropriate.

In the path of the Second Turning, the cognitive obscurations (*shes bya'i sgrib pa; jñeyāvaraṇam*) and the afflictive obscurations (*nyon mongs pa'i sgrib pa; kleśāvaraṇam*) veil the ultimate realization of emptiness and need to be purified.<sup>73</sup> The cognitive obscuration is the primary focus because this obscuration misconceives reality and perpetuates ignorance. The uprooting of ignorance drastically depends on the view of the practitioner, and this is where tantric self-visualization and the modes of the Great Vehicle connect.

What is important to remember about the connection is the two truths of the Second Turning are kept separate within its own system.<sup>74</sup> The logic of the Second Turning states that the sentient beings are not buddhas because they are deluded.<sup>75</sup> Based on logic, a distinction between the relative appearances of sentient beings and the ultimate stance of the buddhas exists. On one side is the relative, and on the other is the ultimate.

Although the teachings of the Second Turning are presented in the dichotomy of the two truths, the inseparability of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is well known; however, a subtle nuance exists. The relative and absolute are inseparable in the sense that their relative appearances are necessarily empty of an intrinsic nature. The Second Turning proclaims that all phenomena are empty of permanent nature, and for this reason the appearances are not separate from the pervasion of emptiness. If this were not the case, the relative appearances would have a permanent abiding nature and this would go directly against the Second Turning, hence the nuance.

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<sup>73</sup> Kongtrül, 41-42; and Buswell, 398 and 438.

<sup>74</sup> This is in accordance with the explanation of Rongzom and contradicts Mipham's assertion. See Ibid., 51.

<sup>75</sup> This is based off of the sentient beings epistemological understanding of reality.

Heidi Köppl states the Indian proponents of Centrism “never explicitly speak of appearance and emptiness as being a unity (*zung 'jug*).”<sup>76</sup> Ultimately, this discussion of the relationship between appearance and emptiness addresses the distinctions between the Second Turning and the Great Union. Although a type of inseparability of appearance-emptiness in the Second Turning exists due to the pervasion of emptiness, it is not the same as in the Great Union.<sup>77</sup> The term appearance encompasses pure and impure phenomena in the Second Turning, while the ideal of impurity does not exist in the Great Union.<sup>78</sup>

The completely inseparable two superior truths (*lhag pa 'i bden pa gnyis*) of the Great Union include the relative truth of great purity (*dag pa chen po*) and the ultimate truth of great equality (*mnyams pa chen po*).<sup>79</sup> These two do not allow the establishment of impure phenomena proposed by the Second Turning. In paraphrasing Dharma Śrī, Köppl explains, “The two esoteric truths are superior because they possess the same veridical value. The relative as purity is equal to the ultimate and hence there is nothing impure to be abandoned.”<sup>80</sup> What the Second Turning bifurcates into pure and impure is made thoroughly pure by the complete inseparability of the two truths in the Great Union.

Even though there is the dichotomy of pure and impure in the Second Turning, a purity of all appearances exists. The fact that they are empty of intrinsic nature makes them pure in their own right. Although from the side of a sentient being on the path, they need to be taught the two truths for the sake of a proper pedagogical means for correct epistemological understanding. The logical methods of Centrism are aimed at the conceptual fabrications placed upon appearances

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<sup>76</sup> Köppl, 52.

<sup>77</sup> The separation of the two truths is also established in the outer tantras. See Dudjom p. 346.

<sup>78</sup> Köppl, 53.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 31.

and not the appearances themselves. *I admit that this is done because the appearances are pure; however, I acknowledge the bias I uphold from taking the standpoint of the inner tantras.* This is reiterated by Śāntideva in the twenty-fifth verse of the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*:

How something is seen, heard, or known is not what is negated here.  
Rather, the object of refutation is the cause for suffering, which is the  
conception of reality.<sup>81</sup>

It is important to highlight the fact that the appearances themselves are not eliminated from experience and no logic exists that is capable of destroying appearances. For proponents of Centrism and also for the proponents of the Great Union, the appearances therefore still abide in an illusion-like nature.

Unlike in the Second Turning, these abiding appearances are carried on the path for proponents of the Great Union. Rongzom states:

While the dialectical view merely realizes emptiness, the freedom from  
mental constructs, [it] does not realize the inseparability of the two truths,  
the primordial nature abiding as divinities and mantras. Mantra [however]  
realizes it.<sup>82</sup>

Denoting appearances as divinities and mantras is seen in the self-visualizations of the creation stage of the Great Union. As is said in the dying testament (‘*da’ ka’i zhal chems*) of the forefather of Mindröling Monastery (*smin grol gling dgon pa*), the great treasure revealer Terdak Lingpa (*gter ston gter bdag gling pa ’gyur med rdo rje*):

In the state where the three appearances, sounds, and awareness, [are]  
deities, mantras, and the dharmakāya, [is] the infinite display of kāyas and

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<sup>81</sup> Jirka Hladis, “The Middle Way School” (class handout on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Lecture, Naropa University, Boulder, CO, Fall Semester 2014).

<sup>82</sup> Köppl, 32. The dialectical view corresponds to the Centrist view. The term mantra concerns the inner tantras, and thus, is not relating to the discussion of *mantranāya* and *vajrayāna*.

primordial wisdom. In the practice of the profound, secret Mahāyoga, may [they become] the inseparable one-taste of the heart sphere.<sup>83</sup>

Making his last statement, Terdak Lingpa proclaims the correlations of the essence of the Second Turning and of the view of the Great Union. Lingpa correlates all appearances as divine manifestations of the bodies of a buddha (*sangs rgyas kyi sku*). These apparitional bodies make up the form bodies (*gzugs kyi sku; rūpakāya*), which include the emanation body (*sprul pa'i sku; nirmāṇakāya*) and the complete enjoyment body (*longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku; saṃbhogakāya*). Correspondingly his proclamation also combines awareness with the truth body (*chos kyi sku; dharmakāya*) and primordial wisdom (*ye shes; jñāna*).<sup>84</sup>

These bodies of the buddha are initially established within the Second Turning and are attained through the accumulations of merit and wisdom. The methods for perfecting these two accumulations are not limited to the praxis of the Second Turning for the practitioner of the Great Union because the Great Union encompass and expand upon these methods.<sup>85</sup>

This inclusion begins with establishing all self-visualizations within the state of emptiness. The realization of the Second Turning is inherently imbedded in the inauguration of all self-visualization practices, and there is no deity meditation that is separate from the teachings of the Second Turning of the wheel. This is because the inclusion of the realization of the Second Turning is the first concentration for the process of self-visualization. Emptiness is the womb in which the deity is born, lives, and dissolves. This is true for both the outer and inner tantras; however, the inner tantras blend the meditation on emptiness throughout the entire process. The

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<sup>83</sup> Dujdom, 832. /\_snang grags rig gsum lha sngags chos sku'i ngang\*/\_sku dang ye shes rol par\_ 'byams klas pas/\_zab gsang rnal 'byor chen po'i nyams len la/\_dbyer med thugs kyi thig ler ro gcig shog\_/\_

<sup>84</sup> Buswell, 1066

<sup>85</sup> The inclusion of the praxis of the bodhisattvayāna still needs to take into consideration the nuance on the difference in viewing the two truths.

practice of the Great Union does not need to alternate between meditating on appearance and meditating on emptiness.<sup>86</sup> This is a further distinction between the Great Union with the Causal Vehicle and with the outer tantras. Even with this distinction, the Great Union is still endowed with the realization of the Second Turning.

From this establishment of emptiness, the deity is born and the meditation moves into the three aspects. These aspects further teach the realization of the Second Turning establishing all appearances as emptiness. The self-visualization practice of the Great Union directly reminds the practitioner that appearances are essentially empty by blending the two truths. Clearly meditating on the appearance of self-visualization and recollecting the purity of the deity unifies appearances and emptiness. Kongtrül emphasized that by recollecting the purity of the deity, one is freed from taking the appearing material world as truly existing.<sup>87</sup> Knowing all appearances are established within the state of emptiness accomplishes this realization. Through familiarization with this process, all phenomena that appear to the mind are known as emptiness.

The visualizations created by the practitioner are not simply confined to the deity. The surrounding environment is also visualized as the pure realm (*dag zhing*; *kṣketrasuddhi*) or *maṇḍala* of the deity. The outer environment that is known through the senses of ordinary beings is integrated in the creation stage and thus into the realization of the Second Turning because of the inseparable unity of the two truths in the Great Union. The inner and outer world of the practitioner is taken onto the path of the creation stage and is unified with emptiness. Through unbroken study and contemplation of the teachings of emptiness in conjunction with the self-visualization of the deity and its appearing realm, the gap between conceptual knowing to embodied wisdom is traversed.

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<sup>86</sup> Tsong-ka-pa, 32-33.

<sup>87</sup> Kongtrül, 47.

By the complete pervasion and unification of emptiness throughout the creation of the deity, the Great Union completely teaches the realization of the Second Turning. With this practice, all conceptions and reification of phenomena as being truly existent are nullified. This relinquishment of all concepts of permanent existence is in accord with the view of the Second Turning. In the *Beacon of Certainty*, Mipham comments on the union of these views:

There is no view superior to that, for without apprehending appearance and emptiness in alternation this is the freedom from the [mental] constructs of the four extremes. Anything else would become possessed of [mental] constructs.<sup>88</sup>

The research of the tradition agrees with Mipham in the sense that the view of the Great Union is corresponding and conjoined with the view of the Second Turning. This agreement upholds the statement that the self-visualization of the Great Union's creation stage teaches the realization of the Second Turning. The Great Union is better equipped in its method of accomplishing enlightenment because it unanimously unifies the two truths from the genesis of its presentation. This unification strikes the heart of the epistemological mis-apprehension of phenomena and allows a practitioner to realize emptiness, the *reality of being human*.

### **The Essence of Being Human:**

While the teachings of the Second Turning proclaim the ultimate truth of all phenomena to be emptiness, the teachings of the Third turning point out the qualities of the awakened mind. For the Third Turning, the combining of emptiness with mind alludes to qualities such as luminosity. Due to the traditional establishment of emptiness and luminosity, the cognitive expressions of the awakened mind are discussed without delving into wrong view. Because of

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<sup>88</sup> Köppl, 32.

this, the luminous qualities of the pure mind are taken upon the path and utilized in the creation stage.

Concerning the Third Turning, the essence of self-visualization practice of the Great Union points out the abiding wakefulness of buddha-nature, the *essence of being human*. According to these traditions, the aim of self-visualization is to recognize that unfabricated awareness is the suchness of enlightenment.<sup>89</sup> The method of deity yoga is an invitation to bring cognitive brilliance upon the path and to embody the fundamental nature of mind.

The Great Union conjoins with the realization of the Third Turning through the application of self-visualization. In this view, self-visualization is a process in which sentient beings can realize the non-differentiation between themselves and the enlightened deity. The *Uttaratantra Śāstra* states, “The perfect buddhakāya is all-embracing, suchness cannot be differentiated, and all beings have the disposition. Thus they always have buddha nature.”<sup>90</sup> The tradition of the Third Turning upholds this statement and distinguishes this lack of differentiation is not equated with monism. From the view of the *bodhisattvayāna* and the Great Union, this suchness abides within the realization of emptiness and does not succumb to a solidification of reality. The establishment of luminosity within emptiness is acknowledged by the sequential teachings of the three concentrations.

Coinciding with the *Uttaratantra*, Rongzom states, “Sentient beings and Buddhas are not differentiated in terms of their essence.”<sup>91</sup> Rongzom, who is known as a great proponent of

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<sup>89</sup> There are three types of suchness: (1) unfabricated suchness, (2) unmistaken suchness, (3) suchness that is not other. See Nathaniel DeWitt Garson, *Penetrating the Secrete Essence Tantra: Context and Philosophy in the Mahāyoga System of rNying-ma Tanta*. Dissertation at the University of Virginia. (MI: ProQuest Information and Learning Company, 2004), 461.

<sup>90</sup> Maitreya and Asaṅga, *Buddha Nature: The Mahayana Uttaratantra Shastra with Commentary*, trans. Rosemarie Fuchs (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2000), 23.

<sup>91</sup> Köppl, 96.



Ancient Tradition, maintains the statement of the Third Turning. His Third Turning assertion is included in the Great Union, because the visualization of the deity is the completely perfect “manifestation of pure nature.”<sup>92</sup> The deity is a direct support for contemplating this well known verse of the *Uttaratantra* for a practitioner of the creation stage. Combining these assertions with self-visualization allows a practitioner to recognize that the suchness of the deity is nothing other than the unshakable wisdom and compassion within oneself.<sup>93</sup>

The self-visualization practice engages in the pride of the deity in order to support the process of recognition of buddha-nature. This adoption of confidence teaches the meaning of these verses through the complete identification of being the deity. This especially concerns self-image, which is an idiosyncratic imputation upon the five aggregates (*phung po; skandha*). For a deluded (*gti mug; moha*) sentient being, imputations placed upon the stream of phenomena such as mind and matter, are based off confusion (*'khrul pa; bhrānti*). These misinterpretations lead to habitual states including anger, arrogance, and denial of self-worth. The approach of the Great Union aims to directly transmute or peer through these constricted and conditioned ideas that are imputed upon one’s aggregates. According to Nathaniel DeWitt Garson, “In the Mahāyoga system, conceptuality, or dualistic thinking, is the main source of defilements that cover the pure nature of the mind/reality.”<sup>94</sup> To uncover the essence of the buddha from these imputations, the self-visualization of the creation stage uses the function of imputation against itself. It is similar to the analysis of the Second Turning but with a slide of the hand. For instance, substituting the mental construct of being an ordinary being into the mental creation of being a completely

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<sup>92</sup> Kongtrül, 8.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>94</sup> Garson, 396.

awakened buddha results in embodiment of the deity through continual familiarization (*sgom pa*; *bhāvanā*).

In a non-transformative view, there is no substituting of a mental construct because the self-visualization is a reminder to recognize what is already present. In this view, the complete confidence of the essential nature being completely awake is recognized. By the power of the pride of the deity, habitual ideologies are seen through such as being separate from the deity. As stated in the *Uttaratantra* verse, “All beings have the disposition. Thus they always have buddha nature.”<sup>95</sup> Dudjom offers a supporting example that this verse reverberates within the view of the Great Union:

The abiding nature of the continuum of the ground is established as the view which is to be realized, but it is not established by the ostensible reasoning of sophistry.<sup>96</sup>

The ground continuum posited by the Great Union points directly at the teachings of buddha-nature. For example, Garson paraphrases Lochen Dharmashrī’s *Ornament to the Intention*, and lists these characteristics of the ground continuum: <sup>97</sup>

1. Beyond the distinction of bondage and freedom
2. Self-knowing
3. The mind of enlightenment
4. Indifferentiable union of the two superior truths
5. Devoid of the objects perceived by ordinary minds
6. Abides always and forever.

There are direct correlations between the traits described by the Great Union and the Third Turning teaching of buddha-nature. Although, the view of the two superior truths is only established within the Great Union, it is excluded. Nevertheless, the correlates of the view of the ground continuum and buddha-nature are necessarily included in the self-visualization of the

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<sup>95</sup> Maitreya, 23.

<sup>96</sup> Dudjom, 275.

<sup>97</sup> Garson, 395-396.

Great Union. This view of the ground continuum/buddha-nature is the foreground for the visualizations to take place. According to the view of the Great Union, the self-visualized embodiment of being a deity is a means to realize the ground continuum, buddha-nature, the *essence of being human*.

## **Part V: Conclusion and Reflections**

### **Conclusion:**

Through this explanation of the correlations between the self-visualization of the Great Union and the Three Turnings, the creation stage practice is understood to align with the main realizations of the Causal Vehicle. The practice in which one visualizes oneself as a deity does effectively teach these three realizations as was demonstrated in this study. Explanations have been offered from the view of the Great Union, and any rejections to this presentation are established from the view of the individual tenets of the Causal Vehicle.<sup>98</sup> The view of the Great Union allows for the inclusion of the three realizations within the self-visualization practice.

Firstly, this inclusion establishes that the realization of selflessness of persons is included in the realization of the Great Union. The realization of selflessness is approached and accomplished through the skillful means of the self-visualization of the creation stage, because the selflessness of the person is equal to the selflessness of the deity. Additionally, the practices of the First Turning are included in the practice of the Great Union if they are deemed applicable for the practitioner's propensities. Although the view of the Great Union is doctrinally

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<sup>98</sup> The rejections of this inclusion are based on the practice and theories of the specific tenets. For example, the partless particles as asserted by the Vaibhāṣika system have no basis to be included into the teachings and methods of the Great Union. Additionally, the chronological development would be taken into consideration. Because of these examples, the inclusion of the Three Turnings in the Great Union is from the view of the Great Union.

recognized to dramatically differ from the First Turning, the praxis and theory of the Great Union inevitably results in the realization of selflessness.

Secondly, this inclusion asserts the realization of emptiness is included in the realization of the Great Union. The realization of emptiness is approached and accomplished through the self-visualizations of the creation stage because the entirety of the practice is done in the state of emptiness and the truths are blended in the Great Union. Additionally, the practices of the Second Turning are incorporated into the practice of the Great Union if they are deemed as a skillful method. The practitioner still needs to purify the two obscurations as proposed by the Great Vehicle and this can be accomplished through the six perfections and the practices found in the Great Union.

The view of the truths does vary for the Second Turning and the Great Union, but the inclusion of emptiness stands. Longchen Rabjam implies that the view of emptiness is a provisional meaning (*drang don*; *neyārtha*) and the view of the inner tantras is the definitive meaning (*nges don*; *nītārtha*).<sup>99</sup> Longchenpa states the inherent inclusion from the viewpoint of the inner tantras, such as the Great Union. The praxis and theory of the Great Union certainly results in the realization of emptiness because of its definitive meaning.

Lastly, this inclusion states the realization of buddha-nature is included in the realization of the Great Union. The realization of buddha-nature is approached and accomplished through the self-visualizations of the creation stage, because it is established as the ground continuum. According to the *Secret Nucleus* (*gsang ba'i snying po'i rgyud*; *guhyagarbha tantra*), this buddha-nature, the ground continuum is, “the result,” which is, “definitive and most secret,” and

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<sup>99</sup> Köppl, 32.

it “has been turned into the path.”<sup>100</sup> Therefore, the realization of buddha-nature is necessarily taken as the path for the Great Union. As such, the realization of the Third Turning is realized through the Great Union’s practice of visualizing oneself as a deity.

The inclusion of the realizations of the Three Turnings within the Great Union entails that a practitioner of this inner tantra does *not necessarily* need to study the turnings. As long as the practitioner upholds the view of the Great Union, they come to these three realizations through visualizing oneself as a deity and this is the strength of the practice. The practitioner who only engages in the creation stage of the Great Union does not necessarily have insight into other understandings found in the Three Turnings such as, partless-particles, construction of Centrist syllogisms, or the three natures, and this is the weakness of the practice. Just because the practitioner has realized selflessness, emptiness, and buddha-nature does not entail they have realized all facets of the turnings. This is because a four-fold relationship exists between a realized person and a person who understands the teachings of the Three Turnings: 1) a person who is both realized and a scholar, 2) a person who is realized and not a scholar, 3) a person who is not realized and is a scholar, and 4) a person who is neither. The conclusion that the self-visualization of the Great Union teaches the realizations of the Three Turnings falls into the second classification.

### **Reflections on The Modern Observations:**

The Buddhist tradition has barely begun to be established in western cultures. It took hundreds of years for it to be established in Tibet and this was met with much difficulty. I have not noticed any cultural push back from the west but then again, it is just beginning. From my

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<sup>100</sup> Dudjom, 244.

observations the tradition is slowly being incorporated and welcomed into society. Even though it is being accepted on a grand scale it has a lot of room to expand.

One thing I have noticed is the willingness of practitioners to spend time going to teachings, receiving empowerments, and adopting some form of contemplative lifestyles. For the tantric practitioner, this may involve the integration of the creation stage and radical shifts in perceptions of the world. Their willingness displays a form of passion, motivation, and desire to engage in the tantric teachings.

I find it inspirational to see people engage in contemplation and try to understand themselves and the world. Their intention has the power to encourage them to practice everyday. Though, a pain exists in my heart when it comes to their access to learning the teachings of the Three Turnings.

I think modern westerners need to have a basis in the Causal Vehicle before fully engaging in tantric Buddhism. It is beneficial for us to incorporate the completeness of the Buddhist teachings in order for the entire tradition to be established in the west. If this is not done then parts of the tradition will be missing and this will effect those beings who need those teachings. It is important to have a foundation of the Causal Vehicle because the tantric teachings can seem foreign. Steps along the way will clarify the understanding of the tradition.

The issue for accessing these teachings is based of off location, socioeconomic status, chronological development, and societal ideals. Some people who are interested in the teachings are cut off due to where they live. There might not be even one teacher in the vicinity of reachable access. Even if people are in a location in which they can access the teachings, they might not have the money or social support to travel to the teachings. Chronologically, the teachings have not been in the west for a long enough to establish a strong basis in the

communities of a majority of people. Finally, the western society is more concerned with making and maintaining comfortable living conditions and does not emphasize a contemplative lifestyle.

These issues damped the opportunity to study the Buddhist teachings. If one wanted to engage in tantric practice, they would have a hard time finding a teacher, let alone an authentic one. This concerns me because the teachings of *sūtra* and tantra have a strong efficacy to benefit the minds of all people. May the lineages of the Causal and Resultant Vehicles be fully established in the west in order to bring benefit to future generations.

## **Part VI: The Translation of Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje's "Sāadhanā of The White Tsogyal" and Supplementary Supplication**

### **Supplication:**<sup>101</sup>

To the dancing illusory display of Padmasaṃbhava [of] Oḍḍiyāna and Vimalamitra, the Lords [who] give rise to the structural ground of the profound secret teachings, to the empowered translator of the secret great treasury of Ḍākinīs, the great treasure revealer, Jalü Dorje, I supplicate.

To Vārāhī<sup>102</sup> in the celestial Sukhāvatī and to Metog Mandāra in the [southwestern] continent of Cāmara,<sup>103</sup> once again, you appeared posing as a human in order to benefit the teachings and beings. Having accomplished the deity, you attained the two-fold siddhis, to the Great Mother, the supreme Ḍākinī, I supplicate.

In the state where these mental creations, all phenomenal appearances, are illusory and perceived as a dream, free from hopes, apprehensions, and all biases of self and other,

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<sup>101</sup> This is the unaltered translation of the original text, which can be found in the diplomatic edition.

<sup>102</sup> /\_gter chen 'ja' lus rdo rjer gsol ba 'debs/\_mkha' spyod bde ldan zhing na wA ra hi/\_/. I have changed wA ra hi to wA rA hi in the translation.

<sup>103</sup> The *Metog Mandāra* is also a fabled tree in the southwestern continent of *Cāmara*. Due to the main deity of this cycle of teachings, I argue that this is talking about Princess *Metog Mandāra* of *Zahor* (8<sup>th</sup> century CE), especially since she is an emanation of *Vajra Vārāhī*.

to the guardian of beings [who] offers protection [and] light rays of great bliss, I supplicate. *Personally authored.*<sup>104</sup>

To the nirmāṇakāya [who] realized the direct experience of dharmatā, increased the visions of experience, [and is] the protector of the beings of the three realms, to [the one whose] awareness has reached its [full] measure, [who] overwhelmed delusions by splendor, and has exhausted all dharmas, to Hevajra I supplicate. [This] was personally spoken by Rinpoche.<sup>105</sup>

*The stages of the preliminaries:*

*As before, at the time of clearing the empty channels, vital winds, and awareness, in conjunction with the sevenfold posture of Vairocana, supplicate the lama visualized in the aspect of Heruka atop of one's head.*

E MA HO: The summation of all the buddhas [is] the dharmakāya lama. inseparable from Machig, the Great Mother, endowed with kindness. From my heart I fervently supplicate. Bless [me] so the darkness of ignorance is cleared away.

*Supplicate as many times as you can. After that, exhale the stale vital winds by implementing the key points of visualization and shaking three times. Contemplate that the evil deeds and obscurations of the three doors are pure. Continue in supplication and don't disregard the words above.*

Bless me to be victorious over the delusionary appearing four demons of pride and to realize the unborn *dharmakāya*.

*Thus, supplicating with devotion, [blessings] enter the aperture [in the crown] and the three places and the three syllables are purified.*<sup>106</sup> *In this state, the real practice is remaining inseparable from the middling vase breath.*

*May this be virtuous!*

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<sup>104</sup> /\_zhal gsungs ma'o/\_/

<sup>105</sup> rin po che'i zhal gsung ma'o/\_/. I am unsure about the feminine particle at the end of *gsung ma*.

<sup>106</sup> /\_zhes mos gus kyi gsol ba 'debs shing rlung 'byung 'jug gnas gsum ye ge gsum du sbyangs sar bar rlung bum pa can dang ma bral ba gnad dam pa'o//\_//dge'o//\_// I have changed the ye ge to yi ge in the translation.



## Sāadhanā of The White Tsogyal:

*From a Section of the Self-Liberation of Clinging: The Sāadhanā of The White Tsogyal*

*I bow down to the forefather of the Ḍākinīs, the Heruka Padma Thötrengtsal. In basic space, [she is] the white lady [of] great bliss. In the Potala, she is the liberator of all. In the presence of the Guru, she is the consort Yeshe Tsogyal. Furthermore, she is Prajñāpāramitā. The essential meaning, the doctrine [of] the Self-Liberation of Grasping, [is] called the profound Severance of Māra [from] she who is like the sun, illuminating Tibet and India. [This is] the means of accomplishing Lady Labdrön. The excellent vase of the heart of the guru has been explained. One's body is the center [of the maṇḍala] and the outer universe is the perimeter. The six desirous sense objects [are] the offering substances. Eating and drinking [is] the feast gathering.*

E MA HO: [In the] completely pure spacious sky is an immeasurable mansion. In its center is Padmasaṃbhava perfectly ornamented as the Heruka, Nyinma Özer. [He is] surrounded by buddhas, bodhisattvas, the three roots, and ḍākinīs. I with [my] father [and] mother, enemies, evil spirits, and all sentient beings like an amass of earths' dust particles in sunlight, [go for refuge] with faith and respect.

NAMO: In the unborn dharmakāya, the non-abiding sameness, saṃbhogakāya, the unobstructed inherently luminous nirmāṇakāya, and the three roots, I go for refuge.

*Go for refuge three times [then] arouse the mind.*

Alas! Those confused beings who were born due to the powerful afflictions from non-recognition, reify dualistic fixation. In order to recognize primordial wisdom, my own nature, I give rise to the mind [intent] upon supreme enlightenment.

*Repeat three times [then] the ten branches.*

NAMO: I invite the assembly of the deities of basic space, [please] come. Sit happily in this emanated abode. All beings bow down and pay homage [to you]. The three thousand-fold universe is offered as a feast offering. I confess the non-recognition of my own nature. I rejoice in the actions that [bring] benefit beings. I request [you] to turn the wheel of dharma, the Prajñāpāramitā. I supplicate; remain for the benefit of sentient beings. Whatever virtue has been accumulated [in] the three times, I dedicate for the benefit of motherly sentient beings.

*Consecrating the Outer Environment and the Inner Contents:*

OM ĀḤ HŪṢ: In the supremely blessed, marvelous sacred abode of immeasurable lotus light [is] the divine maṇḍala of the victors of the three

kāyas. In particular Padma Thötrengtsal along with his retinue of heroes and ḍākinīs. Please send down your great blessings and bestow siddhis! In the state where the outer world [is] a field that displays great bliss and its internal [sentient beings are] the five classes of ḍākinīs, clouds of goddesses offer the six sense objects and the three [realms] of existence becomes a completely pure buddha field.

OM BUDDHĀ SAṂGHĀ NIRMĀKĀYA GURU DHEVA ḌĀKINĪ  
ĀVEŚAYA ĀVEŚAYA PHEM PHEM: SARVA SAMAYA JA:

*The Main Practice [of] the Creation Stage:*

ĀḤ: The Dharmadhātu Wisdom [is] the expanse of rigpa, Mirror-like Wisdom [is] free from elaborations, The Wisdom of Equanimity arises [as] compassion, Discerning Wisdom [is] reflexive awareness Āḥ. From All-Accomplishing Wisdom, [arises my being] the primordial wisdom Ḍākinī, luminous white, on a mountain of conch shells. Like the embracing sunlight, she blazes light rays. She [has] one face, a beautiful smile, and the experience of desire. Her eyes gaze upon beings [with] compassion. She [has] two hands, in the right is a ḍāmaru made from a leftover skull. It resounds in the sky, inspiring the heart-mind streams of the three-kāya pure lands. In the left is a golden bell. As it resounds, it summons the powerless, gods, demons, and humans. Her two feet are in the dancing posture of the heroine. She [has] voluptuous breasts, a blossoming vagina, and a lustrous body that blazes with radiance. Her hair is in a topknot, bound in silk ribbons and the remaining strands covers the back. She [is] embellished by the six bone ornaments, many precious adornments, and dangling rainbow colored trinkets that swing about.

Surrounding her [are] the ḍākinīs of the buddha family. [In the] eastern direction [is] the dark blue Vajra Ḍākinī with a curved knife in her right [hand] and a hook in her left. [In the] southern direction [is] the golden Ratna Ḍākinī [with] a human hide in her right and a lasso in her left. [In the] western direction [is] the red Padma Ḍākinī [with] iron shackles in her right and a skull cup in her left. [In the] northern direction is the green Karma Ḍākinī [with] a sword in her right and a bell in her left. Each of the four families of ḍākinīs are adorned in the attire of charnel ground bone ornaments. A retinue of hundreds of thousands of a concordant family surrounds each of the five [Ḍākinīs]. They hold skull cups, human skin, thighbone trumpets, curved knives, skull drums, and bells.

[In the] direction above, atop of corpses [is] the black and oily Padampa of India, emanating radiant light rays in the ten directions. His right hand plays an acacia [wood] ḍāmaru, [causing] the heroes and ḍākinīs to quiver

and assemble. His left hand resounds a human thighbone trumpet, [causing] gods, demons, and humans to faint and be summoned.

Above his head, sitting in the center of an ocean of siddhas, is the lord of the family, Thötrengtsal, residing as the aspect of Śākya Senge. In addition, the three roots, an assembly of the Awareness-Holders [surround him]. Visualize clearly like a crowded market of gods and humans. Clearly [understand] that the three existences are completely pure from the beginning and like waking from a dream, all impure delusory appearances are pure like waking [from] a dream.

*Invitation:*

Om Āḥ Hūṃ: From the unconditioned Dharmadhātu, the vast expanse of primordial wisdom awareness, a nirmāṇakāya of Padmasaṃbhava, Śākya Senge, please come forth. Completely enjoying the equal taste of yogic conduct, [you] didn't abandon the sense pleasures, [they] arose as ornaments. The one [who] released grasping in its own ground. Dampa [of] India, please come forth. The nirmāṇakāya [who] tames beings by means of compassion, the [one who] possesses strength and courage and [dawns] the armor of patience, the ḍākinī [who] guides the six [classes] of beings, the Buddha Ḍākinī, please come forth. The perfect buddhas [who] spontaneously accomplish the four activities, the various emanations [who] benefit beings, [those who] dispel delusion into basic space, the dakinis of the four families, please come forth.

Bless the body, speech, and mind of the six [classes of] beings with [your exalted] body, speech, and mind. Bestow your great blessings and confer supreme empowerment. May [we] become integrated and inseparable with you.

GURU DEVA BUDDHA VAJRA RATNA PADMA KARMA ḌĀKINĪ  
ĀVEŚAYA PHEM PHEM: SARVA SAMAYA JA: SIDDHI PHALA  
HO:

*Request to Remain and Homage:*

HO: Although, the Samayasattva and Jñānasattva are inseparable from the beginning, [They are] inseparably mixed in order to clear away discursive thoughts. With the trust and respect, sentient beings [of] the three realms pay homage. May [all] recognize [their] essence.

TIṢṬA LHAN: NAMO NAMA HO:

*Offering the Display of the Sense Pleasures:*

OM ĀḤ HŪM: The sights, sounds, smell, taste, tangible objects, and dharmas in the three thousand-fold universe, in addition, diverse masses of offerings, food, drinks, the treasures of enjoyments of gods and humans, the eight signs, seven attributes, and the glories of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, clouds of secret bodhicitta, the taste [of] the primordial wisdom [of] the four joys, the blood of the liberated ignorance and afflictions, are all offered to the assembly [of] deities [of] the maṇḍala.

OM RŪPA ŚABDA GANDHE RĀSA SPARŚA MAHĀ SUKHA PŪJA  
HO:

*Praise and Supplication:*

E MA HO: In the dharmakāya pure land, the great bliss Samantabhadri, in the saṃbhogakāya, Vajravārāhī, the Nirmāṇakāya of compassion, Buddha Padma's consort, Praises to simultaneously realized and liberated Lady of Karchen.<sup>107</sup> [Your] body of light is unharmed by the threat of the four contaminated elements. By [your] voice of Brahmā, the realms of beings are magnetized together. By [your] compassionate emptiness, the wishes of those to be tamed are fulfilled. Praises to Machig, the Primordial Wisdom Ḍākinī.

The Vajra Ḍākinī churns the depths [of] cyclic existence. The Ratna Ḍākinī fulfills the wishes of those to be tamed. The Padma Ḍākinī guides the three realms [to] the pure lands. The Karma Ḍākinī acts for the welfare of the various beings. Black Dampa severs object and subject [grasping] into space. Śākya Senge introduces the meaning [of] the Mother [as] one's nature. [You all] dispel the gods and demons [of] appearances and existence [who are] obstacles [on] the paths and stages. Homage and praises to the assembly [of] the deities [of] the maṇḍala.

To the non-human Machig, the Primordial Wisdom Ḍākinī, [you] work for the benefit of sentient beings just like a mother [and her] children. [Being] patient with the weariness [of] the wrong understanding of impure cyclic existence, [you] cause un-aware sentient beings to realize the meaning of rigpa. [I] supplicate the greatly kind Machig.

The intention, conduct, and bodhicitta of the Mother [is] just as it is. Having transferred the compassion of the Mother to myself, may I become the holy regent of the Mother until the ocean of impure cyclic existence is emptied.

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<sup>107</sup> The Lady of Karchen is referring to Yeshe Tsogyal (*ye shes mtsho rgyal*), who was the princess of Karchen (*mkhar chen*).

*The Recitation: The Approach [and] Accomplishment are Condensed into One:*

[In] the precious citta, inside a tent of light, on a lotus, sun, and moon [is] the jñānasattva, Prajñāpāramitā, with one face and four arms, [holding] a golden vajra and a scripture. Her hands are in the [mudra] of meditative equanimity and she is seated in the vajra posture. She is golden color and seeing in all directions.<sup>108</sup> Inside her heart, on top of a sun and moon is the syllable A. The mantra mala is arranged to the right, spins to the left, [makes] offerings to the [buddhas in the] buddha fields, and brings back blessings and siddhis. The habitual tendencies of the six classes of beings of the three realms are purified. The outer world is the pure land and the inner beings are conferred [as] the Great Mother. The assemblies of the deities of the maṇḍala [are] clear, stable, and blaze with light rays. [In] the ineffable, inconceivable, and inexpressible state of dharmakāya, free from elaborations.

OM ĀḤ HA RI NI SA JÑĀNA DĀKINĪ SIDDHI PHALA HŪM

The Essence [of] the Approach and Accomplishment Condensed into One: The approach of numbers [is] 300,000. The approach of signs [is] until [one] sees the signs. The approach of time [is] appropriate [to the time set by the teacher]. When [practicing], recite [the mantra] like the flow of a river. Sometimes, conduct yourself as you please. Sometimes, [let your] flesh and blood be carried away.<sup>109</sup> Sometimes, let go of appearances and [rest] without a reference point. Always generate bodhicitta and offer the body and life-force for the sake of sentient beings. [These are] the samayas of Machig. [Practice like this and] meet [her] face to face, hear [her] voice, and [receive] prophecies. [You will] benefit beings equal to the Great Mother herself. The exhaustion of phenomena and the mind transcended, buddhahood [will be attained].

*The Stage of Visualizing the Enactment [of] Activities:*

From the heart of Machig emanates the five kinds of light rays. Invoking the heart-mind continuums of the four classes of retinue dākinīs [who] emanate light rays from their heart-minds [in] the colors [of their] respective activities. Oceans of blessings [of] the three roots [of] the pure lands are collected. Emanating again, the sicknesses, negative forces, and obscurations of beings are pacified and life, merit, glory, fortune, and resources are increased. The karma and afflictions of beings are incinerated and [they] are lead to the to the pure lands. Contemplate that whatever enlightened activity one desires is accomplished without obstruction.

<sup>108</sup> gser gyi mdog can phyogs kun tha ler gzigsH I am unsure as to what ler is.

<sup>109</sup> skabs su sha khyer khrag khyer byaH

OM ĀḤ VAJRA RATNA PADMA KARMA ḌĀKINĪ ŚINTAM  
PUṢṬAM VĀŚAM MĀRAYA PHAT

*The magical emanating wheel method [for achieving] whatever one desire is given orally. Like supplicating a wish-fulfilling jewel, all needs, desire, and enlightened activities are spontaneously accomplished. Samaya. At the end of the meditation session, [make] offerings, praises, and confessions.*

*The Stage of Gathering the Siddhis:*

ŚINTAM PUṢṬAM VĀŚAM MĀRAYA PHAT

May Machig [and] the assembly of the maṇḍala deities of the five classes of ḍākinīs be accomplished.

OM A Ā I Ī U Ū Ṛ RĪ Ḳ ḲĪ  
E AI O AU AM ĀḤ  
KA KHA GA GHA NGA CA CHA JA JHA NYA  
ṬA ṬHA ḌA ḌHA ṆA TA THA DA DHA NA  
PA PHA BA BHA MA YA RA LA VA  
ŚA ŚA SA HA KṢA

HO: Machig and the assembly of the maṇḍala deities of the five classes of ḍākinīs, [with] your omniscient primordial wisdom, loving compassion, protective capability and power, ruling the inconceivable four enlightened activities, think of us practitioners. Having cleansed and purified the three doors accompanied by the two obscurations and habitual tendencies, the supreme siddhi is accomplished and the three secrets of Machig and the five classes of ḍākinī are indivisibly blended. Becoming buddha in the great saṃbhogakāya. May the common siddhis, pacifying, increasing, magnetizing, and destroying, the eight accomplishments, and the twelve great actions be quickly attained. Please bless [us]!

OM YE DHARMA etc.

Hūṃ: I invite the assembly of primordial wisdom deities, come forth. I offer the outer, inner, and secret offerings. I praise [your] three bodies, minds, qualities, and enlightened activities. I confess my contrary carelessness, confusions, degenerations, and breakages. Bestow the supreme and common siddhis.

OM VAJRA PUṢṬE DHUPE ĀLOKE GANDHE NAIVIDYĀ ŚABDA  
MAHĀ SARVA PŪJA HO:

The Supreme Mother of the victors, Prajñāpāramitā, Whose display of awakening activity emanates as the mother Tsogyal. [In] this degenerated

time, she tames those difficult to tame with skillful means. To the greatly kind Machig, I pay homage and praise.

*[Make these] praises, [say the] hundred-syllables three times, and confess errors.*

By this virtue, may I swiftly accomplish the dharmakāya, the Great Mother. Having done [that] may all beings without exception be established in that same state.

*Like waking [from] a dream [of] delusory appearances, because the mind has been trained, the five impure material elements are the pure land, [there] is no need for a separate dissolution phase. [Having] integrated the path of the three maṇḍalas, blessings and qualities will manifest.*

*E MA: In the Cool Grove Charnel Ground when the Primordial Wisdom Dākinī, Labdrönma, liberated her illusory body of light, the Heruka of yogic conduct, Guru Nyima Özer was instructing the cycle of teachings of the formless dākinīs. [These teachings were] established into secret vajra script and hidden in the expanse of Vajra Vārāhī's mind.*

*When the time falls to benefit beings, may I encounter the emanation of the divine consort, the heroine, and act for the benefit of beings.*

*Black Mouthed One (Ekajati) completely protect [this teaching from] falsities. Samaya. Sealed with the [enlightened] body, speech, and mind.*

*E MA HO: I, the one who apprehended a name of a treasure revealer at the end of times, Trülshik Jalü Dorje, [experienced] indicative signs emerged [to me] in the Earth-Monkey year. For seven years it was confidential, then later in the Wood-Tiger year, the kāya of a dākinī emanated [as] the dharma owner to benefit beings and dispel hazards. When the time and signs manifested, the script was perfectly decoded. The student Rigpa'i Yeshe wrote [this down]. By this, may the benefit of beings pervade under the sun. Virtue! A LA LA:*

### **Diplomatic Edition in Extended Wylie:**

Cycle: *Self-Liberation [of] Grasping* ('dzin pa rang grol)<sup>110</sup>

Texts: The preceeding supplication prayer and *The Sāadhanā of the White Tsogyal* (mtsho rgyal dkar mo'i sgrub thabs bzugs)

Author: Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje (mdo mkhyen brtse ye shes rdo rje; 1800-1866).

Folio 12.1<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Ye shes rdo rje . "pod gnyis pa/ 'dzin pa rang grol/ (kha)." In gter chos/\_mdo mkhyen brtse ye shes rdo rje/. TBRC W1PD89990. 2: 3 - 632. [khreng tu'u]: rdzogs chen dpon slob rin po che, 2009. [http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O3JT5188|O3JT51883JT5190\\$W1PD89990](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O3JT5188|O3JT51883JT5190$W1PD89990).

@#/\_/o rgyan pad 'byung bi ma'i sgyu 'phrul gar/\_/zab gsang bstan pa gzhi bzhangs slong mdzad rje/\_/DAk+ki'i gsang mdzod chen por dbang ba sgyur ba'i/\_/gter chen 'ja' lus rdo rjer gsol ba 'debs/\_/mkha' spyod bde ldan zhing na wA ra hi/\_/rnga yab gling du me tog man+dA ra/\_/slar yang bstan 'gro'i don du mir brdzur byon/\_/yi dam grub brnyes dngos grub rnam gnyis thob/\_/yum chen DAK+ki'i mchog la gsol ba 'debs/\_/blos byas 'dir snang chos kun sgyu ma'i ngang/\_/rmi lam tshul gzigs re dang dogs pa bral/\_/nga khyod phyogs ris kun bral 'gro ba'i mgon/\_/skyabs mchod bde chen 'od zer gsol ba 'debs/\_/zhal gsungs ma'o/\_/chos nyid mngon sum don rtogs sprul pa'i sku/\_/nyams snang gong 'phel khams gsum 'gro ba'i mgon/\_/rig pa tshad phebs 'khrul pa zil gyis gnon/\_/chos zad dgyes pa rdo rjer gsol ba 'debs/

### Folio 12.2

rin po che'i zhal gsung ma'o/\_/sngon 'gro'i rim pa la/\_/snga bar rtsa stong rlung rig dwangs ba'i tshe/\_/rnam snang chos bdun dang bcas/\_/rang gi spyi bor bla ma he ru ka'i rnam par bsgoms la gsol ba 'debs pa ni/\_/e ma ho/\_/sangs rgyas kun 'dus bla ma chos kyi sku/\_/ma gcig yum chen dbyer med bka' drin can/\_/snying nas gdung shugs drag pos gsol ba 'debs/\_/ma rig mun pa sel bar byin gyis rlobs/\_/zhes gsol ba ci nus btab rjes dmigs gnad dang ldan pas rlung ro bsal/\_/sprug lan gsum bya zhing sgo gsum sdig sgrib dag par bsam/\_/rgyun du gsol 'debs ni/\_/gong gi tshig ma dor la/\_/khrul snang snyems byed bdud bzhi las rgyal zhing/\_/skye med chos sku rtogs par byin gyis rlobs/\_/zhes mos gus kyi gsol ba 'debs shing rlung 'byung 'jug gnas gsum ye ge gsum du sbyangs sar bar rlung bum pa can dang ma bral ba gnad dam pa'o//\_//dge'o//\_//

### Folio 13.1<sup>112</sup>

@#/\_/d+hAM\_ra\_ya\_muk+ta\_be\_shan+ta\_sar\_ji\_na\_kA\_II\_sA\_dan\_biha\_ra\_ti\_sma/\_/ @#/\_/'dzin pa rang grol cha lag lasaH\_\_mtsho rgyal dkar mo'i sgrub thabs bzhangsH\_H

### Folio 13.2



\_\_\_\_DA ki'i mes po he ru kaH\_pad+ma thod phren rtsal la 'dudH\_dbyings na bde chen dkar mo niH po Ta la ru kun grol maH\_gu ru'i drung du mtsho rgyal yumH\_slar yang shes rab phar phyin ma'iH\_dgongs don 'dzin pa rang grol chosH\_zab mo bdud kyi gcod yul zhesH\_bod rgyar nyi ltar gsal mdzad maH\_lab kyi sgron ma sgrub pa'i thabsH\_gu ru'i thugs kyi bum bzang bstanH\_rang lus dkyil la phyi snod 'khorH\_yul drug 'dod yon mchod pa'i rdzasH\_bza' btung tshogs kyi 'khor lo'oH\_e ma hoH\_rnam dag mkha' dbyings 'od kyi gzhal yas

<sup>111</sup> The supplication starts on folio 12.1 when counting the outline of the text as part of the folio count. See: Ye shes rdo rje. “gsol ‘debs/.” In gter chos/\_mdo mkhen brtse ye shes rdo rje/. TBRC W1PD89990. 2: 25-26. [khreng tu’u]: rdzogs chen dpon slob rin po che, 2009. [http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O3JT5188|O3JT51883JT5202\\$W1PD89990](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O3JT5188|O3JT51883JT5202$W1PD89990).

<sup>112</sup> Ye shes rdo rje. “mtsho rgyal dkar mo’i sgrub thabs:.” In gter chos/\_mdo mkhyen brtse ye shes rdo rje/. TBRC W1PD89990. 2: 27-42. [khreng tu’u]: rdzogs chen dpon slob rin po che, 2009. [http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O3JT5188|O3JT51883JT5203\\$W1PD89990](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O3JT5188|O3JT51883JT5203$W1PD89990).



## Folio 14.1



\_\_\_khangH\_rgyan bkod phun tshogs dbus su pad+ma 'byungH\_nyi ma 'od zer he ru ka yi chasH\_sangs rgyas byang sems rtsa gsum mkha' 'gros bskorH\_bdag dang pha ma dgra gdon sems can kunH\_sa gzhi'i nyi rdul 'khrigs bzhin dad gus gyisH\_na moH\_skye ba med pa chos kyi skuH\_mi gnas mnyam nyid longs spyod rdzogsH\_ma 'gags rang gsal sprul ba'i skuH\_rtsa ba gsum la skyabs su mchiH\_skyabs 'gro lan gsum sems bskyed niH\_kye maH\_ma rig las nyon mthus

## Folio 14.2

bskyed pa'iH\_gzung 'dzin a 'thas 'khrul pa'i 'groH\_ye shes rang ngo shes pa'i phyirH\_byang chub mchog tu sems bskyed doH\_lan gsum yan lag bcu pa niH\_na moH\_dbyings ki lha tshogs spyen 'dren gshegsH\_sprul pa'i gnas 'dir dgyes par bzhugsH\_'gro kun lus btud gus phyag 'tshalH\_stong gsum rab 'byams mchod tshogs 'bulH\_rang ngo ma shes mthol lo bshagsH\_'gro don mdzad la rjes yi rangsH\_phar phyin chos 'khor bskor bar bskulH\_sems can don du bzhugs gsol 'debsH\_dus gsum dge tshogs ci bsags paH\_mar gyur sems can don du bsngoH\_phyi snod nang bcud byin rlabs niH\_oM AHhU~MH\_byin rlabs ya mtshan mchog gi gnasH\_pad+ma 'od kyi gzhal yas nasH\_sku gsum rgyal ba'i dkyil 'khor lhaH\_khyad par pad+ma thod phreng rtsalH\_dpa' bo mkha' 'gro'i tshogs dang bcasH\_byin chen phob la dngos grub stsolaH\_phyi snod bde chen rol

## Folio 15.1



\_\_\_pa'i zhingH\_nang bcud mkha' 'gro sde lnga'i ngangH\_yul drug mchod pa'i lha mo sprinH\_srid gsum rnam dag zhing du gyurH\_o~M bud+d+hA saM g+hA nirmA kA ya gu ru d+he wa DA ki nI A we sha ya A we sha ya pheM pheMH\_sarba sa ma ya dzaH\_dngos gzhi bsked pa'i rin pa niH\_AH\_chos dbyings ye shes rig pa'i klongH\_me long ye shes spros dang bralH\_mnyam nyid ye shes snying rje sharH\_sor rtog ye shes rang rig AH\_bya ba grub pa'i ye shes lasH\_bdag nyid ye shes mkha' 'gro maH\_dkar gsal dung gi ri bo laH\_nyi zer 'khyud lta'i 'od zer 'barH\_zhal gcig mdzes 'dzum chags pa'i nyamsH\_spyan zung thugs rjes 'gro la gzigsH\_zhal nas chos nyid nyams dbyangs lenH\_phyag gnyis g.yas pas DA ma ruH\_b+han+d+ha lhag sprod nam mkhar 'khrolH\_sku gsum zhing gi thugs rgyud bskulH\_g.yon pas gser gyi dril bu 'khrolH\_lha 'dre mi gsum dbag med<sup>113</sup> 'gugsH\_zhabs zung

## Folio 15.2

<sup>113</sup> In the translation the *dbag med* is changed to *dbang med*. The original line states *lha 'dre mi gsum dbag med* 'gugs and the change in the translated text states *lha 'dre mi gsum dbang med* 'gugs.

*dpa' mo'i gar stabs bsgyurH\_nu ma 'bur zhing b+ha ga rgyasH\_sku lus bkras dang gaji brjid 'barH\_dbu skra thor tshugs dar snas bcingsH\_lhag ma sil mas sku rgyab khebH<sup>114</sup>\_rus pa'i rgyan drug rin po che'iH\_rgyan cha du mas rab tu sprasH\_'ja' tshon dar gyi 'phyang 'phrul g.yoH\_bud+d+ha rigs kyi DAK+ki maH\_shar phyogs rdo rje mkha' 'gro mthingH\_gri gug g.yas la lcags kyu g.yonH\_lho phyogs rin chen mkha' 'gro serH\_zhing lpags g.yas la zhags pa g.yonH\_nub phyogs pad+ma DAK+ki dmarH\_lcags sgrog g.yas la b+han+d+ha g.yonH\_byang phyogs las kyi mkha' 'gro ljangH\_ral gri g.yas la 'dril bu g.yonH\_rigs bzhi mkha' 'gro so so yiH\_rus rgyan dur khrod chas kyis brgyanH\_lnga ka'ang rang rang rigs mthun gyiH\_'bum phrag 'bum phrag 'khor gyis bskorH\_b+han+d+ha g.yang gzhi rkang gling dngaH\_gri gug thod rnga cang<sup>115</sup> dril 'dzinH\_steng phyogs bam chen ro yi stengH*

#### Folio 16.1



*\_\_\_\_\_dam pa rgya gar nag la snumH\_gzi brjid 'od zer phyogs bcur 'phrosH\_phyag g.yas seng ldeng DA ru 'khrolH\_dpa' bo mkha' 'gro 'dar zhing 'duH\_g.yon paya mi rkang gling bu'i sgrasH\_lha 'dre mi gsum brgyal zhing 'gugsH\_grub thob rgya mtsho'i dbus su bzhugsH\_spyi bor rigs bdag thod phreng rtsalH\_shAkya seng ge'i rnam par bzhugsH\_gzhan yang rtsa gsum rig 'dzin tshogsH\_lha mi'i khrom tshogs lta bur gsalH\_srid gsum ye nas rnam dag zhingH\_ma dag 'khrul pa'i snang ba kunH\_rmi lam sad bzhin dag cing gsalH\_spyan 'dren pa niH\_o~M AHhU~MH\_'dus ma byas pa chos kyi dbyingsH\_rig pa ye shes klong yangs nasH\_pad+ma 'byung gnas sprul pa'i skuH shAkya seng ge gshegs su gsolH\_brtul zhugs ro snyoms longs spyod rdzogsH\_'dod yon ma spangs rgyan du sharH\_'dzin pa rang sar grol ba yiH\_dam pa rgya gar gshegs su gsolH*

#### Folio 16.2

*thugs rje'i 'gro 'dul sprul pa'i skuH\_snying stobs bzod pa'i go cha canH\_'gro drug 'dren pa'i mkha' 'gro maH\_bud+d+ha DAK+ki gshegs=\_las bzhi lhun grub rdzogs sangs rgyasH\_sna tshogs sprul pas 'gro don mdzadH\_'khrul pa dbyings su bsal mdzad pa'iH\_rigs bzhi'i DAK+ki gshegs su=\_gro drug lus ngag yid gsum laH\_sku gsung thugs kyi byin gyis rlobasH\_byin chen phob la dbang mchog skurH\_khyod dang dbyer med 'dres gyur cigH\_gu ru d+he wa bu d+d+ha badzra rat+na pad+ma karma DAK+ki nI A be sha ya pheM pheMH\_sarba sa ma ya dzaHsid+d+hi pha la hoH\_bzhugs gsol phyag 'tshal ba niH\_hoH\_ye nas dam ye dbyer med kyangH\_rnam rtog bsal phyir dbyer med 'dresH\_khams gsum sems can dad gus kyisH\_phyag 'tshal rang ngo shes par shogH\_tiSh+Tha lhanH\_na mo na ma hoH\_'dod yon rol mchod niH\_o~M AH hU~MH\_stong gsum stong gi 'jig rten naH\_gzugs sgra dri ro reg bya chosH\_gzhan yang*

#### Folio 17.1

<sup>114</sup> Spelling error for the verb intransitive of *khebs*, which means to cover. Since an agentive case particle exists in the sentence, the verb should be the transitive form of 'gebs, *bkab*, *dgab*, *khob*.

<sup>115</sup> A synonym of the instrument from the Tibetan Bönpo (*bon po*) tradition called a "shang" (*gshang*). It is similar to the Buddhist ritual bell (*dril bu*; *ghaṇṭa*)



\_\_\_\_\_mchod pa'i bye brag tshogsH\_lha mi'i bza' btung longs spyod gterH\_rtags brgyad sna bdun srid zhi'i dpalH\_gsang ba byang chub sems kyi sprinH\_dga' ba bzhi yi ye shes roH\_ma rig nyon mongs bsgral ba'i khragH\_dkyil 'khor lha tshogs rnams la mchodH\_o~M rU pa shab+da gan+d+he rA sa spar+she ma hA su kha pU dza hoH\_bstod cing gsol ba 'debs pa niH\_e ma hoH\_chos sku'i zhing du bde chen kun tu bzangH\_longgs spyod rdzogs skur badzra wA ra hiH\_thugs rje'i sprul bsgyur sangs rgyas pad+ma'i lcamH\_rtogs grol dus mnyam mkhar chen bza' la bstodH\_zag bcas 'od lus 'byung bzhi'i dgras mi tshugsH\_tshangs dbyangs gsung gis 'gro khams dbang du bsduH\_stong nyid snying rjes gdul bya'i re skong maH\_ma gcig ye shes DAK+ki ma la bstodH\_rdo rje mkha' 'gros 'khor ba dong nas sprugsH\_rin chen mkha' 'gros gdul bya'i re ba skongH\_pad+ma mkha' 'gros khams gsum

### Folio 17.2

dag zhing 'drenH\_las kyi mkha' 'gros sna tshogs 'gro don spyodH\_dam pa nag pos gzung 'dzin dbyings su gcodH\_shAkya seng ges yum don rang ngo sprodh\_snang srid lha 'dres sa lam bar chad selH\_dkyil 'khor lha tshogs rnams la phyag 'tshal bstodH\_ma gcig mi min ye shes mkha' 'gro maH\_ma bu'i tshul du sems can don mdzad cingH\_ma dag 'khor ba'i log sgrub skyo ngal bzodH\_ma rig sems can rig pa'i don rtogs mdzadH\_ma gcig drin mo che la gsol ba 'debsH\_ma yi dgongs spyod thugs bskyed ji lta baH\_ma yi thugs rje bdag la 'phos nas kyangH\_ma dag 'khor ba'i rgya mtsho ma stongs parH\_ma yi rgyal tshab dam pa bdag 'gyur shogH\_bsnyen sgrub chig dril bzlas pa bya ba niH\_tsit+ta rin chen 'od kyi gur khang nangH\_pad+ma nyi zla'i gdan la ye shes semsH\_shes rab phar phyin zhal gcig phyag bzhi maH\_gser rdor glegs bam mnyam bzhag rdor skyil

### Folio 18.1



\_\_\_\_\_bzhuksH\_gser gyi mdog can phyogs kun tha ler gzigsH\_thugs kar nyi zla'i steng du a yig mtharH\_sngags kyi phreng ba g.yas bkod g.yon du 'khorH\_sangs rgyas zhing mchod byin rlabs dngos grub bsduH\_khams gsum rigs drug sems can bag chags sbyangsH\_phyi snod dag zhing nang bcud yum chen skurH\_dkyil 'khor lha tshogs gsal brtan gzi brjid 'barH\_smra bsam brjod med spros bral chos sku'i ngangH\_o~M AHha ri ni sadz+nyA<sup>116</sup> na DAK+ki nI sid+d+hi pha la hU~MH\_bsnyen sgrub chig dril snying po niH\_grangs kyi bsnyen pa 'bum phrag gsumH\_mtshan ma'i bsnyen pa rtags mthong braH\_dus kyi bsnyen pa skabs dang sbyarH\_chu bo'i rgyun bzhin skabs su bzlasH\_skabs su snang ba gang dgar spyodH\_skabs su sha khyer khrag khyer byaH\_skabs su snang ba gtad med btangH\_dus kun byang chub sems ba skyed cingH\_'gro ba'i don du lus srog gtongH\_ma gcig nyid kyi dam tshig goH\_zhal mjal gsung thos lung ston zhingH\_yum chen nyid dang 'gro don mnyamH\_chos zad blo 'das rdzogs sangs rgyasH\_las sbyor dmigs pa'i rim

### Folio 18.2

<sup>116</sup> There is a missing a *tsheg* or dot between the *sa* and *dz+nA*. Inserting a *tsheg* results in *o~M AHha ri ni sa dz+nyA na DAK+ki nI sid+d+hi pha la hU~MH*.

pa niH\_ma gcig thugs las 'od zer sna lnga 'phrosH\_'khor gyi mkha' 'gro sde bzhi'i thugs rgyud  
bskulH\_rang rang thugs ka'i 'od zer las mdog 'phrosH\_zhing khamtsa gsum rgya mtsho'i byin  
rlabs bsduH\_slar 'phros 'gro ba'i nad gdon sdig sgrib zhiH\_tshe dang bsod nams dpal 'byor  
longs spyod rgyasH\_'gro ba'i las nyon bsregs shing dag zhing 'drenH\_gang 'dod phrin las thogs  
med 'grub par bsamH\_o~M AHbadzra rat+na pad+ma karma DAK+ki nI shat+niM\_puSh+TaM  
wA shaM mA ra ya phaTH<sup>117</sup>\_gang 'dod dmigs pa'i 'phrul 'khor zhal las shesaH\_yid bzhin nor  
bur gsol ba btab pa bzhinH\_dgos 'dod kun 'byung phrin las lhun gyi grubH\_sa ma yaH\_thun

mthar mchod bstod bshags pa dngaH\_dngos grub bsdu ba'i rim pa niH\_shat+niM རྒྱལ་ལྔ་ལྔ་ལྔ་ wA shaM  
mA ra ya phaTH<sup>118</sup>\_ma cig mkha' 'gro sde lnga'i dkyil 'khor gyi lha tshogs 'grub par gyur  
cigH\_o~M a AH\_i IH\_u UH\_r-i r-IH\_l-i l-IH\_e aiH\_o auH\_aM AH\_ka kha ga g+ha ngaH\_tsa  
tsha dza dz+ha nyaH\_Ta Tha Da D+ha

### Folio 19.1



\_\_\_NaH\_ta tha da d+ha naH\_pa pha ba b+ha maH\_ya ra la waH\_sha Sha sa ha  
k+ShaH\_hoH\_ma gcig mkha' 'gro sde lnga'i dkyil 'khor gyi lha tshogs khyed rnams la mkhyen  
pa'i ye shesH\_brtse ba'i thugs rjeH\_skyobs pa'i nus mthuH\_rnam bzhi'i phrin las bsam gyis mi  
khyab pa'i mnga' bdag steH\_bdag cag sgrub pa po la rjes su dgongs laH\_sgo gsum sgrib gnyis  
bag chags dang bcas pa byang zhing dag nasH\_mchog gi dngos grub ma gcig mkha' 'gro sde  
lnga'i gsang ba gsum dang dbyer med du 'dres shingH\_longtsa sku chen por 'tshang rgya ba  
dngaH\_thun mong gi dngos grub zhi rgyas dbang drag grub pa brgyadH\_las chen bcu  
gnyisH\_myur ba nyid du 'grub par byin gyis brlabs par mdzad du gsolH\_o~M ye d+harmas  
sogs/\_hU~MH\_ye shes lha tshogs spyen 'dren gshegsH\_phyi nang gsang ba'i mchod pa  
'bulH\_sku gsung thugs yon phrin las bstodH\_bag med

### Folio 19.2

'gal 'khrul nyams chags bshagsH\_mchog dang thun mong dngos grub stsolH\_o~M badzra  
puSh+pe d+hu pe A lo ke gan+d+he nai wid+yA shab+da ma hA sarba pU tsa hoH\_ryal ba'i  
yum mchog shes rab pha rol phyinH\_phrin las sprul pa'i rnam rol mtsho rgyal yumH\_snyigs dus  
gdul dka' thabs kyis 'dul mdzad maH\_ma gcig drin mo che la phyag 'tshal bstodH\_ces bstod yi  
ge brgya pa lan gsum gyis nongs pa bshagsH\_dge ba 'di yis myur du bdagH\_chos sku yum chen  
'grub gyur nasH\_'gro ba gcig kyang ma lus paH\_de yi sa la 'god par shogH\_'khrul snang rmi  
lam sad pa bzhinH\_ma dag gdos bcas 'byung lnga'i khamtsa dag pa'i zhing du blo sbyang  
phyirH\_bsdu rim logs su mi dgos shingH\_dkyil 'khor gsum gyi lam khyer byaH\_byin rlabs yon  
tan mngon du 'gyurH\_e maH\_bsil pa tshal gyi dur khrod duH\_ye shes 'kha' 'gro lab sgron

<sup>117</sup> In the translation the *shat+niM* and *phaTH* are changed to *shin+tam* and *phaṭ?H*. Resulting in the following line: *o~M AHbadzra rat+na pad+ma karma DAK+ki nI shat+niM\_puSh+TaM wA shaM mA ra ya phaT?H*.

<sup>118</sup> In the translation the *shat+niM*, རྒྱལ་ལྔ་ལྔ་ལྔ་, and *phaTH* are changed to *shin+tam*, *puSh+TaM*, and *phaṭ?H*. Resulting in the following line: *o~M AHbadzra rat+na pad+ma karma DAK+ki nI shat+niM\_puSh+TaM wA shaM mA ra ya phaT?H*.

maH\_sgyu lus 'od skur grol ba'i tsheH\_brtul zhugs spyod pa'i he ru kaH\_gu ru nyi ma 'od zer  
 gyisH\_lus med mkha' 'gro'i chos skor gsungsH\_rdo rje gsang ba'i yi ger btabH\_rdo rje phag  
 mo'i thugs slong sbasH\_'gron don dus la bab pa'i tsheH\_lha

### Folio 20.1



\_\_\_\_lcam sprul pa'i dpa' mo dangH\_'phrad nas 'gro don spyod par shogH\_bsnyon kha nag  
 pos thub par srungsH\_sa ma yaH\_sku gsung thugs kyi rgyaH\_e ma hoH\_bdag 'dra dus mtha'i  
 gter ming 'dzin pa 'khrul zhig 'ja' lus rdo rjes brda ris las sa sprel lor shar bzhin lo bdun gsang  
 rgya byas nas slar shing kham stag gi lor chos bdag DAK+ki ma'i sku 'phrang bsal zhing 'gro  
 don gyi sna kha 'gyed phyir dus rtags mngon gyur skabs su dag par phab pa'i yi ge pa ni slob bu  
 rig pa'i ye shes kyis bgyis pa'oH\_'di yis 'gro don nyi 'og khyab gyur cigH\_dge'o//\_//a la laH\_\_\_\_H



གསུམ་དེ་ནམས་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་སོ།  
 །། བདག་མེད་སྣང་པ་ཉིད་སྣང་པོ། དེ་ནམས་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་བཟུན་པ། ཁང་ཟག་གི་བདག་མེད་པ་ཡིན། བདག་ནི་གཟུགས་མ་དུ་མ་ཤེས། ལྷང་ཕྱི་ནང་སྐྱེ་བ་མ་  
 ཡིན། ལྷུལ་སྐྱེ་སྣང་པ་ཉིད་དུ་ཤེས། གྲུང་རང་བཞིན་སྣང་པ་མ་ཡིན། ལྷང་ས་སྟབས་སྣང་པོ་གསལ་པར་ཤེས། བསྐྱེད་པའི་རིམ་པ་ཉམས་ལེན་གྱིས། གསུམ་དེ་  
 ནམས་ཡོངས་སུ་རྟོགས་ཤོག །།

Those Three:

Selflessness, Emptiness, and Essence:

Those are the teachings of the Buddha. The self of persons is non-existent. The self is not known to be [my] feminine form. Outer and inner appearances are [my] bodies of illusion. Although, [my] emanated bodies are known to be emptiness, [their] nature is not empty. I dance clearly knowing the essence. ~ By the practice of the creation stage, may [all] thoroughly realize those three.

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